

Redefining Happiness: Navigating from Social Distancing to Distant Socializing

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Abstract

The unprecedented and fierce pandemic has completely shattered the entire world since the time it has outbroken and is a matter of grave concern. Not knowing how this pandemic will play out, affects our physical and mental well-being against a backdrop of a world that is increasingly anxious, unhappy and lonely. Psychological stress is evident due to a sense of a lack of control in the face of such uncertainty.

As a key measure to handle the pandemic, guidelines have been issued to practice social distancing, self-isolation and quarantine. The hitch with self-isolation or social lockdown are obvious symptoms of traumatic stress, confusion and annoyance, all of which are worsened by fear of the unknown which often leads to feelings of panic. An inherent fear of infection, having limited access to supplies of necessities, lack of information or the erroneous information, either provided inadvertently or maliciously is also ensuring to amplify the effects. Its indeed a very tough regime, hard to implement and follow but if attempted deliberately and systematically, we can hope to emerge all safe and revitalized with new energies and outlook towards life. The paper discussed how this prolonged period of social distancing may leave plenty of time for contemplation and reflection; as an individual, as a society and as a Nation. It emphasizes the need to navigate our thought process to construct a life that will be more content, stable and robust.

Keywords: Social distancing, Self-isolation, happiness, positivity, stress, World Happiness Report, COVID-19.

Introduction

This unprecedented and ferocious pandemic has drastically shattered the entire world since the time it has outbroken and is a matter of grave concern. Not knowing how this pandemic will play out, affects our physical and mental well-being against a backdrop of a world that is increasingly anxious, unhappy and lonely. Psychological stress is evident due to a sense of a lack of control in the face of such uncertainty. As a key measure to handle the pandemic, guidelines have been issued to practice social distancing, self-isolation and quarantine. The hitch with self-isolation or social lockdown are obvious symptoms of traumatic stress, confusion and annoyance, all of which are worsened by fear of the unknown which often leads to feelings of panic. An inherent fear of infection, having limited access to supplies of necessities, lack of information or the erroneous information, either provided inadvertently or maliciously is also ensuring to amplify the effects.

Power of Positivity and Happiness

Its indeed a very tough regime, hard to implement and follow but if attempted deliberately and systematically, we can hope to emerge all safe and revitalized with new energies and outlook towards life. This prolonged period of social distancing may leave plenty of time for contemplation and reflection; as an individual, as a society and as a Nation. There is a dire need to navigate our thought process to construct a life that will be more content, stable and robust. Carving out a wholesome and a meaningful life is crucial and it will be possible only if we are able to change our outlook towards life and develop an eye for positivity, faith and happiness. Finding happiness under fraught circumstances can be challenging but is truly the call of the time!

Redefining Happiness under New Normal

The study on happiness has grown dramatically in the last few decades. It has emerged as an extremely relevant area under these changing times of redefining with new normal post COVID.

The previous studies by psychologists have crafted happiness to be associated with three distinct elements:

- Pleasant life
- Good life
- Meaningful life

The pleasant life is realized through the attainment of day-to-day pleasures that add fun, joy, and excitement to our lives. The good life is achieved by identifying our unique skills and abilities and engaging these talents to enrich our lives; those who achieve the good life often find themselves absorbed in their work or their recreational pursuits. The meaningful life involves an enduring deep sense of fulfillment which comes from connecting with people in ways that benefit the lives of others or that make the world a better place. In general, it's believed that the happiest people tend to be those who pursue the full life by orienting their pursuits toward all three elements.

The World Happiness Report, a landmark review of the state of global happiness that ranks 156 countries by surveying how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be. The World Happiness Report 2020 ranks cities around the world by their subjective well-being and digs in-depth into how the social, urban and natural environments combine to affect our happiness.

COVID-19 has refocused the world to global health and well-being priorities. We can find messages of hope at multiple platforms recommending on how people can find happiness amidst COVID-19 and what the world can do to come out stronger after this global crisis. Ironically, the recent release of World Happiness Report 2020 came during a time where the meaning of happiness has become very skewed amidst this pandemic. But this report is a matter of in-depth analysis which truly highlights how people can use the findings as a learning tool to navigate happiness amidst the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. It is indeed a great reflection of what can be learned from top-ranked countries.

The Happiness Report measures happiness across six dimensions:

- GDP per capita
- Social support
- Healthy life expectancy
- Sense of freedom to make life choices
- Generosity
- Perception of corruption.

The findings as per the World Happiness Survey reveal that several kinds of individual and social trust and social connections have large direct and indirect impacts on the life evaluation dimensions. The indirect impacts, which are measured by allowing the effects of trust to buffer the estimated well-being effects of bad and challenging times, indicate that both social trust and institutional trust tend to increase the resilience of individual well-being to various types of adverse situations.

Surprisingly, the top ranked countries have scored high on social support, the aspects which reflects trust and generosity in the people and the system. The top ranked countries have a well-functioning and democratic institutions which are providing the citizens with extensive benefits and security. The citizens also exhibit high trust in institutions and each other. These components form a part of a virtuous cycle to obtain happiness. The high trust countries and cities are more resilient to change and crisis and believe in unity. When an absolute disastrous pandemic like this attack and shatters the health and economy of a country's residents, the residents of a high trust society quite naturally look forward to and find cooperative ways to work together so as to repair the damage and rebuild their lives. People are pleasantly overwhelmed by the willingness of their neighbours and their institutions to work in harness to help each other which delivers a heightened sense of belonging, and pride in what they have been able to achieve by way of mitigation. Such a feeling is sometimes great enough to compensate for the material losses that this pandemic has created.

Conclusion

Happiness is indeed a direction, not a place. The COVID-19 crisis presents an opportunity for each one of us to reevaluate our priorities in life, and, as a result, find happiness in unexpected ways. It's crucial to believe that happiness is not lost, and indeed, the key to finding it during this time is not through social distancing but rather through distance socializing. Remaining socially connected with folks, friends, colleagues, and family members is indeed crucial in finding happiness during this fraught crisis situation. Socializing not for the sake of formality but in true sense. The purpose should be to instill trust and confidence in each other and spread it across the connected network. Believe me, it's contagious! It's indeed critical to change our values and perspectives to focus on the health and well-being of others and combat COVID-19 through social support. So, let's use this moment to take stock of our own emotional well-being and of the people around us. Together, we can make a difference at large. Just a little introspection to our dimensions of happiness will be an inspiring

learning tool for us to imagine and create a better world; a world that humans will inhabit, not dispose of. We can smoothly navigate happiness with a purpose.

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