

International Day Of Happiness

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On March 20, 2006, the International Day of Happiness (IDOH) was conceptualized and founded by Jayme Illien, CEO of the United Nations New World Order project, to advance happiness as a fundamental right for all human beings. After growing up in one of Mother Teresa's Kolkata orphanages, an American family adopted Illien, shaping his desire to pursue a career that supported the end of global inequality. The 2021 commemoration is being celebrated under the theme, "Happiness For All, Forever."

The first-ever International Day of Happiness was celebrated on March 20, 2013, following the passing of a United Nations General Assembly resolution on July 12, 2012 proclaiming March 20 as the official day of celebration globally. The resolution was initiated by Bhutan, a country which recognized the value of national happiness over national income since the early 1970s and famously adopted the goal of Gross National Happiness over Gross National Product. It also hosted a High Level Meeting on "Happiness and Well-Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm" during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

This was in recognition of the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings around the world and the importance of their recognition in public policy objectives. It also recognized the need for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, poverty eradication, happiness and the well-being of all peoples.

All member states of the UN are encouraged to participate in the International Day of Happiness, to raise awareness of the importance of positive emotion for humanity and to help others to find ways to create happiness. The onset of the Covid 19 pandemic has caused a profound shift in attitudes worldwide as people are now recognising that 'progress' should be about increasing human happiness and wellbeing, not just growing the economy. This shift has only served to reinforce the need for countries to pay keen attention to the overall wellbeing of their citizens.

Annually, the UN also measures and compares the happiness of different countries in the World Happiness Report, which is released to coincide with the International Day of Happiness. The World Happiness Report ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels, and 117 countries by the happiness of their immigrants. The UN bases its report on social, economic and environmental well-being and sets goals for countries to achieve to increase happiness because it believes happiness is a basic human right.

The first history of happiness studies began over 2,500 years ago when great philosophers such as Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle and Buddha, and many others devoted their lives to the pursuit of this topic, influencing the lives of countless millions to the present day. Today, positive psychology or the science of happiness is the study of what exactly makes happy people happy, and recently there has been an explosion of interest in this field.

Although studying happiness is not a new concept, it's only in recent years that psychologists have begun to

understand the importance and far-reaching implications of positive emotions. Scientists conclude that the key to human wellness is strong social ties and a sense of purpose. In other words, involvement in things that are for the 'greater good' of humanity. Others believe that having a positive mindset is responsible for as much as 90 per cent of our feelings of well-being. These might include a fulfilling career where helping others is paramount, voluntary work to improve the community, or participation in a religion that promotes communal activities such as regular group worship.

The science of happiness continues to be, perhaps, the most valuable area of studies, concentrating as it does on the question of how to find or increase happiness levels. People who are happy tend to live longer and have fewer health problems. Indeed, happier people are less likely to have high blood pressure and heart issues. One thing remains clear, we still have a lot to learn about this area of study and the myriad benefits of a life well-lived. Hopefully the International Day of Happiness can raise even more awareness of this and help us all to be happy in 2021 and beyond. With our world facing unprecedented challenges, wellbeing matters more than ever so let's take action to be happier and kinder, together.

Written by:

Andre' W. Reid

Events/Communications Consultant

Andre Wayne Enterprise (A.W.E.)