IS HAPPINESS SOMETHING WE CAN MASTER?

Are you happy?

Uncountable millions have asked that of themselves or of others for thousands of years. Yet depending on when in history this question is asked, it would mean something very different.

Today, we live in a time where our overall health, opportunities, and options would be considered nothing less than miraculous to our ancestors.

In addition, the practical knowledge we have today of how our choices, thoughts, and habits affect our own experience allows us to be active participants in our own happiness in ways that would have mystified most people through history.

The Ancient Greeks would say that we, as a culture, are incalculably lucky or blessed (*makarios*). I think most of us would acknowledge that, but we would also think that the creative acts of relatively free, conscious people had something to do with our blessings as well. In a way that the ancients could not fathom, we have the potential to more actively pursue the virtues that bring greater happiness.

It's hard to really appreciate just how hard life was for the ancients compared to what we're used to. Back then, the measure of a happy life was one that was endured well. At a time when most children would die within their first few years, and war and violence were vastly more pervasive than they are today, to last through adulthood, achieving some success and ending in a noble death was happiness.

Happiness was for them a matter of having been blessed - favored by the gods, enjoying prosperity and avoiding suffering.

This meaning of happiness stays with us when we imagine how happy we would be *if only*…. "If only I could own that house…" "If only I had a million dollars in the bank…" "If only I could go on that great trip… then I'd *really* be happy!"

This puts the thoughts, choices, and actions that can lead to happiness outside of our own direction, outside of our own personal *agency*.

Happiness from this perspective is a matter of luck, not something you can actively influence.

It was Aristotle (387-322 BC), in his Nicomachean Ethics, who brought happiness into the sphere of one's own initiative. His work can be seen as the philosophical foundation for the field of Positive Psychology. But the research today regarding what we can actively do to improve our overall well being is impressive even compared with a couple of decades ago, much less the 2,337

years since Aristotle.

Practicing behaviors such as:

*responding to people when they ask for our attention;

*performing kind acts; redirecting our emotions - particularly anger - rather than indulging in them;

*and actively, purposefully, and consciously striving for virtues such as self-discipline, integrity, empathy, gratitude, forgiveness, and earned success,

are some of the ways to build a life that is worth living, a life that you can be happy about; a life you can be proud of.

I've spent decades – my entire adult life, in fact - studying, writing, lecturing, and counseling clients about mastering this more meaningful quality of happiness. While I strive to fill my books, articles, and lectures with practical and effective ideas, I've finally created something that is much more comprehensive: *A Master's Course in Happiness*.

A Master's Course in Happiness is a monthly, in depth program to help you actively, purposefully, and effectively live a happier, more fulfilling life. What you will learn in this course are the skills and principles that are the common denominator for self mastery across all of the circumstances and personalities I have ever worked with.

A Master's Course in Happiness is designed to give you all that I can offer in a course. I haven't held anything back on this. It will give you the tools and the knowledge so that you can apply yourself fully to the mission of mastering yourself.

For the Christmas season, I am offering a special one time, discounted payment for the entire course, for TTPers or a loved one you think might benefit from it. Just enter the promo code MH1PROMO and you'll receive $100 off the regular price.

A happy life is not just a matter of luck. Today we are blessed to be able to play a conscious role in our own happiness through our thoughts, choices, and habits. You can start today by making a conscious decision to do so.

Merry Christmas to all TTPers!

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