

Key Takeaways From “The Happiness Curve” by Jonathan Rauch

- The best is the enemy of the good
- Expecting less and appreciating more
- Life begins and ends with happiness, but with happiness of two different kinds, the first joyful and excitable, the latter calm and resigned
- Happiness isn't rational, predictable, or reliably tethered to our objective circumstances
- Large increases in material well-being have neither increased the number of self-described “very happy” people nor substantially decreased the number who are “not very happy”
- How you feel about your life does not necessarily reflect how one might suppose you should feel
- Look at what people do, not at what they say; at how they behave, not how they feel
- Our subjective well-being depends not on our absolute material well-being, not even on where we stand relative to others, but on where we think we stand
- The factors that most determine our happiness are social, not material
- People are happier when they do generous things and live among generous people
- One secret of happiness is to ignore comparisons with people who are more successful than you are: always compare downwards, not upwards
- In middle age, we are forced to resign ourselves to all that we cannot be or do
- The five basic personality traits are: neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness
- Human personality development is characterized by individuals' becoming more introverted, less competitive, and less emotional, and having greater behavioral controls
- Life just seems to get better as you get older
- There is no single, standard trajectory for human happiness
- Happiness and mental health rise in an approximately dose-response way with the number of daily portions of fruit and vegetables
- People get happier over time, with an upward bump around retirement age
- Young people consistently overestimate their future life satisfaction
- Optimism is not only related to success, but it also leads to success
- The mental reward for success comes mainly not when we meet some big life goal that we've set for ourselves intellectually, but when we take some short-term positive step

ALCHANATI CAMPBELL & ASSOCIATES LLC

Taken directly out of the book

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- Pleasure comes more from making progress toward goals than from achieving them
- People who interacted the least were the people who were doing the best, psychologically
- Enjoy every day as it comes
- People do seem aware that they learn something as they age, and it seems to calm down their emotions
- Healthy aging helps people accept what they can't control, a positive change which depression negates