

**Gaining a sense of Happiness.**

**Overview:** Individuals can gain a greater sense of “happiness” if they are raised in a nurturing family and community; a community that has a societal structure to support the person’s basic needs and that strives to give individuals the best attempt to achieve their full potential.

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While to be alive is to at times experience “distress”, learning how to cope and adapt develops tools that support the person’s quest for “the pursuit of happiness”.

- A. **First, a definition of “Happiness”:** a sense of “*inner equilibrium stemming from one’s self-esteem coming from resources both learned and received by the person over a lifetime*”<sup>1</sup>. The seeking of happiness is, seemingly, a fundamental striving for humans. Some achieve greater levels of “inner equilibrium” than others.
- B. **How the person attains those resources is a complex** mixture of:
- 1) Developmental nurturance provided by the family structure to the child<sup>1</sup>,
  - 2) A community-based societal structure that anticipates those basic needs of the child and provides them sufficiently; i.e., healthcare, education, housing, nutrition, and public safety.
  - 3) A society that provides opportunities for inclusion, recognition, and future career training to advance the young person’s capacity to its fullest potential.

**To live is to experience distress from which *learning and coping* can be engendered.**

- C. To be alive is to experience at times unexpected traumatic events that shape our perceptions, attitudes, physical, emotional and cognitive status. “*Social stressors*” are events that happen to us. They descend upon us.<sup>2</sup> They may include any level or intensity of trauma, from physical or emotional illness, loss of a loved one (death), or a relationship (divorce), work status (demotion, loss of a job), etc.

All persons experience distress. But, how well a person develops mechanisms to cope with this distress determines their ability to adapt and learn from this experience. At times, heightened, continued levels of distress can diminish a person’s capacity; distress within the individual can become chronic, further diminishing the resilience of a person’s ability to cope<sup>3</sup>. Yet, for the most part, people learn from and gain resilience in adapting to the experience of distress in their life.

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<sup>1</sup> My quick and personal definition. Damien

<sup>2</sup> Those with Major Mental Illness also experience *social stressors* yet due to internal psychic disturbance may not gain insight and not adapt as well.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hans Selye, Austrian born psychiatric who taught at McGill University, Montreal, developed the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), that described how the human body responds to “distress” and learned adaptation.

D. As one gains those skills, *adaptation* and *adjustment* become learned coping mechanisms in dealing with future social stressors. Optimally, for this to happen, a person needs both internally-acquired strengths as well as resources from outside themselves (societal derived) to support this process.

Having said that, this is where The World Happiness Report (WHR) of 2024 comes to the fore. I will quote the WHR summary to illustrate how the happiest ten countries in the globe.

### **The World Happiness Report of 2024.**

As of **March 2024**, **Finland** maintains its position as the **happiest country in the world**. Recognized for its *top-tier education, healthcare, and comprehensive well-being programs*, *Finland's success lies in fostering strong social support, individual freedom, and minimal corruption perceptions*. The nation's dedication to work-life equilibrium and robust social unity solidifies its reputation as a beacon of happiness on the world stage.

## **Top-10 Happiest Countries in the World by March 2024<sup>4</sup>**

**Finland** with the **happiness score of 7.804**, holds the title of the **happiest country in the world 2024**, followed by Denmark, Iceland, Israel, and Netherlands.

Here is the list of top-10 happiest countries in the world 2024:

<b>Happiest Countries in the World 2024</b>		
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Happiness Score</b>
1.	Finland	7.804
2.	Denmark	7.586
3.	Iceland	7.534
4.	Israel	7.473
5.	Netherlands	7.403
6.	Sweden	7.395
7.	Norway	7.315
8.	Switzerland	7.240
9.	Luxembourg	7.228
10.	New Zealand	7.128

## **Secrets of the Happiest Countries**

The secret to the happiest country often lies in a combination of factors that foster overall well-being and contentment among its citizens. While each nation's recipe for happiness may vary based on its unique cultural, social, and economic context, several common elements contribute to a country's high levels of happiness.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted directly from the World Happiness Report of 2024

- **Social Support:** Happy countries tend to prioritize strong social networks and support systems. Close-knit communities, family ties, and a sense of belonging play crucial roles in fostering emotional well-being.
- **Quality of Life:** Access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, housing, and a clean environment significantly contributes to happiness levels. Countries that prioritize these factors tend to have happier populations.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Cultures that value leisure time, vacation days, and flexible work schedules often report higher levels of happiness. Balancing career demands with personal time for relaxation, hobbies, and social activities is essential for overall well-being.
- **Income and Economic Stability:** While money alone doesn't guarantee happiness, financial stability and equitable distribution of wealth contribute to a sense of security and contentment among citizens. Countries with low levels of income inequality often report higher happiness scores.
- **Good Governance:** Transparent, accountable, and responsive governance fosters trust in institutions and promotes a sense of fairness and justice among citizens. Democratic principles, freedom of expression, and effective public policies play vital roles in promoting happiness.
- **Cultural Values:** Cultural attitudes toward life, relationships, and success shape individual and collective perceptions of happiness. Countries that prioritize values such as kindness, gratitude, and empathy tend to have happier populations.
- **Connection with Nature:** Access to green spaces, clean air, and opportunities for outdoor recreation contributes to overall well-being. Countries that prioritize environmental conservation and sustainable development often report higher happiness levels.
- **Health and Well-being:** Access to quality healthcare, mental health services, and opportunities for physical activity and mindfulness practices is essential for promoting happiness and resilience in the face of challenges.

**In conclusion:** “The pursuit of happiness...” a phrase Jefferson wrote into our **Declaration of Independence** in 1776, is relevant to all of us today. While we all undergo distress as a part of living and breathing on is earth, we also can learn how to adapt and adjust to that trauma through both internal and externally-derived resources. The top ten countries in the WHR assert strongly that a robust societal support system that values its citizenry does much to engender a coping mechanism to support an individual’s “pursuit of happiness”.

Damien Wilson, Chaos Group, April 16, 2024

<sup>i</sup> Jean Piaget's psychology of Human Development covers this in his writings as do numerous others.