Twitter Thread by Colby Kultgen

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13 lessons from the world's longest study of happiness:



85 years.

That's how long The Harvard Study of Adult Development has been running.

Directed by Dr. Robert Waldinger.

The study has helped provide priceless insights into human happiness:

#1. The key to a healthy and fulfilling life is quality relationships

Not wealth, not fame.

—Relationships.

It's not the only thing that matters, but time and time again this proved to be the biggest factor.

#2 Loneliness is deadly

Loneliness can lead to chronic stress.

Which has a similar effect on our health as smoking half a pack of cigarettes per day.

#3 Being introverted is not a disadvantage

For relationships:

Quality > Quantity

The study shows that even 1 or 2 close connections is sufficient.

Introversion can even be an ADVANTAGE—as introverts may not require as many connections to feel fulfilled.

#4. Social media can be your friend or your greatest enemy

Connection = more happiness
Comparison = less happiness

Using social media to make genuine connections with people can create fulfillment in your life.

If you're using it to doomscroll—not so much.

#5. Good relationships allow us to regulate stress

Strong connections with others can boost our happiness, reduce stress, and even improve our physical health.

In contrast.

—Toxic relationships are linked to anxiety, depression, and poor physical health.

#6. Purpose > Payment

Purpose is powerful.

People who have purpose in their work, experience greater life satisfaction and happiness.

—Whether paid or unpaid.

If your career doesn't provide these feelings—try volunteering for a cause you're passionate about.

#7. Taking care of your health is critical

"A healthy man wants a thousand things
— a sick man only wants one."

Not surprising that people in good health reported much higher levels of life-satisfaction.

#8. Work relationships matter more than we realize

People who reported having a "work best friend" were:

- Happier
- More engaged
- More productive
- Less likely to leave their job

Next time you're planning to skip that coworker lunch—reconsider.

#9. Micro-interactions are powerful

The barista at the coffee shop.
The newspaper vendor.
The bus driver.

These brief connections may seem pointless, and even annoying to some.

But over a lifetime—small positive interactions contribute massively to our happiness.

#10. The WISER Model

Knowing how to deal with difficult situations is critical for long-term happiness.

Use the WISER Model:
W - watch/assess what happened
I - interpret the scenario
S - select your options
E - engage
R - reflect on your choice

Do this as often as you can.

#11. We can be proactive with our happiness

Happiness is a muscle.

Stop waiting—and start building it.

Proven methods include:
- Mindfulness
- Talk-therapy
- Practice gratitude
- Practice self-compassion
- Perform random acts of kindness

#12. It's never too late to be happy

50s, 60s, 70s.

It doesn't matter.

Many individuals reported turning their happiness late in their life after taking action to improve it.

Think it's too late to be happy?
—Think again.

#13. We get happier as we get older

Human happiness trends upwards.

As we get older, we become more aware of the finite amount of time we have left.

Forcing us to focus on what's important, and start savoring the small things in life.

TL;DR

85 years of research show:

By focusing on relationships, purpose, physical and mental health, and community.

We can give ourselves the best chance of living a happy life.

That's a wrap!

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