

 Daily Doga *Inspirations for you and your dog*
Happiness, all in Perception
Maureen Ross, MA



The smiley face is a well-known symbol of happiness. However, it could also be someone who has invisible duct tape holding their mouth in place (forced smile), while being tortured by an abductor. Who knows?

Happiness is a fuzzy concept and can mean many things to many people. Part of the challenge of defining happiness is to identify what makes “us” feel happy as individuals, not what “others” or the “media” says should make us happy. Some people are happy all the time, while others are happy, but appear to be living life with spiked shackles on their ankles. Who is to judge?

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. A variety of biological, psychological and philosophical approaches have striven to define happiness and identify its sources. Various research groups even scan our brains to determine what lightens up in the happiness section. The endeavor is to apply a scientific method to answer the question of “what is happiness?” Sounding like Siri, on an iPhone, “Okay, if that works for you.”

Philosophers and religious thinkers often define happiness in terms of living a good life or flourishing. Happiness is not an emotion but a way of being. Happiness ranges from euphoric to a slight smile every couple of months, depending on the individual and their chosen lifestyle. For some, having a good bathroom experience is happiness. The prune juice is working.

Does a new pair of Skechers, on sale, make you happy or watching your dog enjoy a romp in the yard, or both?

What is the point you might be asking? Good point! An unhappy person and a happy one will have different perceptions of the same circumstances. The difference lies not in the circumstances but in the two states of life, living and the perception of happiness.

A wise Chinese proverb shares, “Guessing is cheap, guessing wrong is expensive.” Maybe we guess too much about what joy or happiness is for ourselves and others. I don’t have the answer. All I know is, as I age, get wiser, and care less about what “others” say will make me happy, I feel, well, happier!

What makes you happy? That’s all that matters.

Enjoy the Journey!