



PUTTING HAPPINESS BACK ON THE MENU

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

Happiness is a state of mind, not an emotion. To put it simply, if you believe that you are happy, then you are. It doesn't really matter if you tend to laugh a lot or enjoy insane things; the important thing is you have a source of joy.

I have often marveled at the simplistic way most children still perceive happiness. Many children can still easily derive happiness from seeing a classmate after long periods of not being in school. They still feel happy just being with their brothers and sisters and watching cartoons all day.

Children in the old days had much simpler pleasures back then. We used to enjoy playing tag, hopscotch, hide-and-seek and catch, all under the moonlight when we were kids. Squeals of delight were then abundant as those simple games were played by simple children.

Nowadays, children have more worries, though. With the amount of schoolwork they have to do and the many distractions they have to face, our children nowadays seem to be enjoying less and worrying more. They still have simple pleasures like enjoying an ice cream cone with a friend or a parent or just lying around doing nothing. But those moments have been sources of respite rather than happiness. Our children have been so taken up with obligations of their own that they have slowly lost track of the things that truly make them happy, which have been readily replaced by things that give them peace of mind. This leaves me asking, Are we to blame, as their parents, in taking their happiness away from them?

It is definitely a challenge to be a parent, but let us ask ourselves more if we have perhaps passed on the huge challenge to our own kids. Children now are more aware of what is happening around them, in contrary to us back then who only had to contend with our studies and nothing else. Many children today find happiness in the number of gadgets they own, the recognition they get from other people, and the achievements they reap in school. They have somehow ceased to find happiness just in being themselves. Granted that achievements, accolades and material things are sometimes necessary, but those are not to be used as yardsticks of contentment and joy. They are merely physical proofs, but not spiritual food that nourishes the soul completely.

As parents who have experienced happiness in our own childhood days, let us not forget to teach our kids about what can truly make them happy. Let us help them grow holistically so they can enjoy their childhood as much as we enjoyed ours.

Let's put happiness back on the menu!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define happiness.
2. What would make you truly happy? What makes you happy now?
3. Why is happiness so elusive nowadays?
4. What are the current standards of happiness? How do they compare with the old standards?
5. Are you truly happy? Why or why not?