



Happiness: Lessons from a New Science

By Richard Layard

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Happiness: Lessons from a New Science By Richard Layard

There is a paradox at the heart of our lives. We all want more money, but as societies become richer, they do not become happier. This is not speculation: It's the story told by countless pieces of scientific research. We now have sophisticated ways of measuring how happy people are, and all the evidence shows that on average people have grown no happier in the last fifty years, even as average incomes have more than doubled.

The central question the great economist Richard Layard asks in **Happiness** is this: If we really wanted to be happier, what would we do differently? First we'd have to see clearly what conditions generate happiness and then bend all our efforts toward producing them. That is what this book is about—the causes of happiness and the means we have to effect it.

Until recently there was too little evidence to give a good answer to this essential question, but, Layard shows us, thanks to the integrated insights of psychology, sociology, applied economics, and other fields, we can now reach some firm conclusions, conclusions that will surprise you. **Happiness** is an illuminating road map, grounded in hard research, to a better, happier life for us all.

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Happiness: Lessons from a New Science By Richard Layard Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #803943 in Books
- Brand: Unknown
- Published on: 2006-06-27
- Released on: 2006-06-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.80" h x .67" w x 5.00" l, .48 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

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Reviewers agree that Layard, a leading British economist and well-known government advisor, raises fundamentally important questions that we all tend to ignore in our strivings to achieve on a daily basis. The author supplies ample data to show that capitalism's emphasis on individualism and competition has helped to diminish the feeling of a common good among people of different classes and societies. The critics disagree, however, on Layard's recommendation of state- and church-oriented intervention to reverse the patterns of behavior that are not, in so many eyes, contributing to happiness. Since "happiness studies" is a new science (see Gregg Easterbrook's *The Progress Paradox* *** Mar/Apr 2004), it stands to reason that the early tomes of this philosophy would stir controversy. Just don't let it dampen your day.

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Review

Unorthodox, devastatingly straightforward and more provocative of actual thought than 90% of books said to be "thought-provoking". If happiness isn't a political issue, what's the point of politics? -- Andrew Marr A remarkable book ... which effectively trashes the claim of economics to guide policy for a good society ... read it, and take heart -- Simon Caulkin Observer Fascinating ... argues that we should make happiness, not growth, the object of our economic policies -- John Kay Financial Times

From the Back Cover

"Impressive . . . An excellent job of recounting the collective findings of much of this new science."
—*The Wall Street Journal*

"His lively new book . . . will not make conventional economists happy, but it should cause all of us to reflect more deeply on what really makes life worth living."

—Robert D. Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*

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