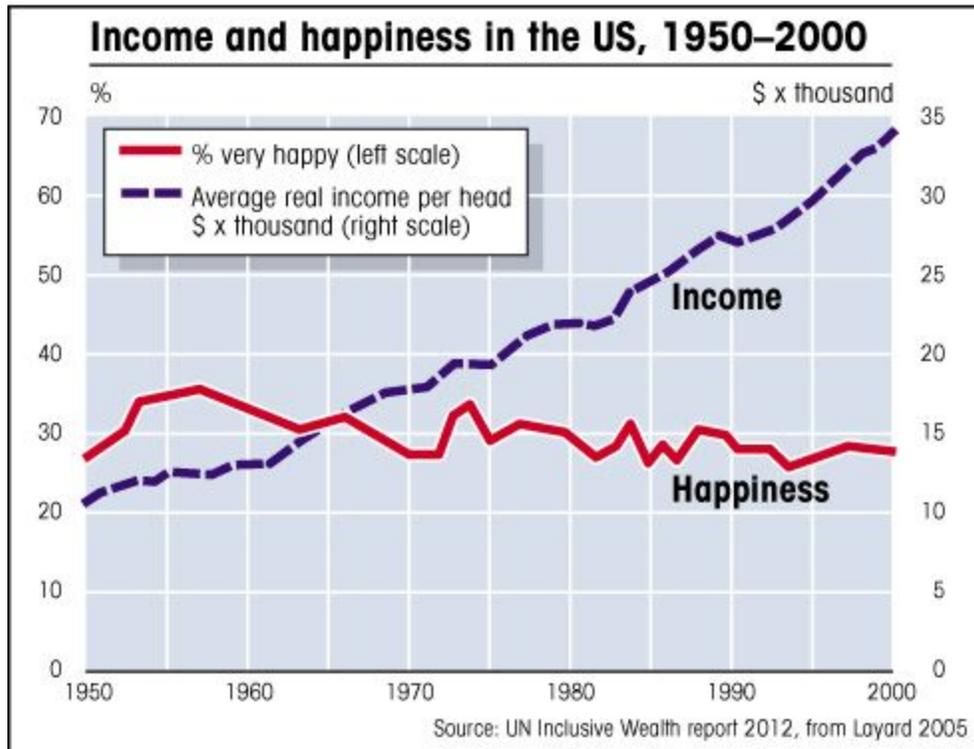


It Don't Make Much Cents

By Montana McIntyre



"Wealth is the ability to truly experience life." -- Henry David Thoreau. Many people believe that your happiness is directly correlated to the amount of income you make or the level of success you accumulate in your field. The more material goods you possess, the more likely you are to be a more well-rounded and amiable human being. Without the crippling threats of student debt, mortgages or credit card statements, these blissful individuals, are left to lead more productive and happier lives. This speculation has been conceptualized for decades, since the times of Rockefeller and Buffet. But does wealth really relate to happiness? The answer to that, astonishingly enough, is no.

"Money is the currency of transactions happiness is the currency of interactions!"- Dr. Kumar. The most significant disease that Americans are at high risk for in our nation says U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, is social deprivation. Our lack of interaction and communication with other people is what is believed to be the biggest threat to our generation. Having money does not make you exempt from this staggering statistic. The wealth that we so desperately pray for and cling to is not nearly as essential has our development as a social world. A study done by Layard in 2005, drew a startling conclusion about the relation of income and happiness. Since 1950, the income in the US has nearly tripled, as you can see in the graph below. However, what is most surprising is that the levels of happiness have barely fluctuated; in fact, they have remained practically the same.

We are currently living in the Age of Disconnection, which has created a significant drop in our day to day socialization. As a result, many are being swallowed up by the consumable doom of isolation. Our inability to validate ourselves and our attributes, lead to us relying on wealth as our primary source of happiness. This ultimately results in our justification that money = happiness. Wealth is not measured by the quality of social alliances and relationships formed, but rather by financial means.

Money, much like water is a resource that we need to remain secure and safe in our lives. Without either, we would succumb the dehydration or homelessness. The way I choose to look at it is, the more water we have does not make us appear happier. A surplus of water does not make us superior to those around us. Having an adequate amount of water, enough to relieve us of the stress of searching for a source for each sip we drink is, keeps us fulfilled. Why does the same not apply to money? Why would money, which in comparison is as invaluable as water, be more applicable to happiness in surplus? The same can be said for chocolate. Chocolate has become a necessity in people's lives. Not having access to it in the future, causing anxiety and stress for those who have become dependent on this delicious treat. Buy chocolate, like water and wealth does not dictate one's happiness. Once we have reached our physiological and security needs, as pointed out in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the next step is to seek to belong. The first two steps do not encompass all that we need to be happy. The following steps of love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization are what makes for a truly "happy" person.