



# Film tackles the real pursuit of happiness

ELIZABETH HELLSTERN Special to the Sun Oct 14, 2011 0



Ronald, a surfer, is one of the many people interviewed for "Happy," a film examining how to be happy. It will be shown Sunday during the Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival. (Courtesy photo)



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**I**t seems like everywhere you turn, people are asking themselves if they are happy, and what they can do to make themselves feel better. The feature-length social documentary "Happy" focuses on the message that happiness is controllable, and not necessarily dependent on circumstances such as income.

"Happy" screens at the Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival on Sunday at the Orpheum Theater during the 7 p.m. session. For more information, visit [www.flagstaffmountainfilms.org](http://www.flagstaffmountainfilms.org). Session tickets are \$10 for the general public.

Director Roko Belic interviews a number of influential experts from the new Positive Psychology field -- including Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the author of "Flow" -- and introduces ideas that can help us mindfully create a happier life.

"Happy" takes us around the world, looking at different people in various economic situations, and, with the help of happiness science, gauging their level of happiness.

By studying identical twins, happiness scientists such as Sonja Lyubormirsky from University of California Riverside have found that 50 percent of our happiness level is genetic. They call this our set point.

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Our circumstances, our job, income, social status, age and health accounts for another 10 percent of our happiness. But the really good news is that there is a great deal you can do to make yourself happier, as 40 percent of our overall happiness is determined by intentional behavior. These are things people can do on a regular basis to become happier.

The film points out that you can gain more happiness with exercise, being in nature and adding variety to your life.

But most importantly, it seems that balancing our work and personal life is the most influential factor in a happy life. In essence, happiness may be directly related to your job.

In the film, we hear how surfer Ronaldo Fadul, from Brazil, has found high levels of happiness, even though he doesn't have much money. He's been surfing for 40 years, and said that any kind of physical activity is very important for a human being.

"Surfing for me is a religion," Fadul said. As he talks, we can just see the happiness radiating off him. The film shows him after catching a wave -- Fadul shows gratitude as he bows to the wave and the ocean.

Fadul has good advice for all of us. "Try to work so that you can live your life in tranquility," he said.

In contrast, people of Japan are working so hard and have so much stress that their happiness levels consistently rate as some of the lowest of the industrialized nations.

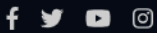
"Work is more important," said one worker, who found that work was more important than being with his girlfriend on his birthday.

People of Japan are working themselves to death, a phenomenon called "Karoshi." In one of the most poignant stories within the film, we hear about Hiroko and her workaholic husband, Kenichi Uchino.

I was practically in tears when a home movie showed their young daughter excited, but unable to recognize him after a business trip. "She almost recognizes me," Kenichi said.

Kenichi worked as a quality control supervisor at Toyota. Toyota always promotes efficiency, but there is no room for play, Uchino said. Years of all work and no play had a fatal result for Kenichi. He died at work when his heart stopped beating during a plant crisis.

If you've been reading all the books on happiness such as "The Happiness Project," "The Art of Happiness" and "Flow," then some of the ideas this film presents may seem elementary. But if you are just starting to think about how our decisions affect our levels of happiness, then you may have a lot to think about.



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