

Why Pleasure Doesn't Lead to Happiness and 4 Things That Do

***Summary:** Millions of people tend to mistake the meaning of happiness. Often, it is associated with greed and lust. There are too many minds that affiliate an item to their own definition of what it means to be happy. That should never be the answer.*



The idea may seem counterintuitive - pleasure doesn't lead to happiness. We're hardwired to seek out pleasure in our lives in all different forms, but pleasure is just a temporary experience and can often leave us regretting our decisions or empty after it's gone. In many cases, seeking pleasure over long-term happiness can lead to depression because many people don't realize that there's a difference. According to [The Hacking of The American Mind](#) by Robert Lustig MD, MSL, pleasure creates a rush of dopamine, which feels good in the moment but actually suppresses the hormone serotonin, known for creating calm and satisfaction.

But what is the difference between pleasure and happiness?

Pleasure is what's presented to us by corporate America: fast food, social media, shopping, and alcohol and other substances. Pleasure is a short term feeling, while happiness is a long-term feeling that comes from relationships, helping others and being a part of something bigger than yourself. Here are the four main contributors to happiness to get you started on the right path:

1. **Human connection.** Since we've become a very social media-based culture, more and more people are turning to their phones rather than connecting with others in person. If you've ever been feeling depressed but forced yourself to visit with your friends, you know that you feel better after spending that time with others. Connection allows you to feel less lonely, as well as understood, heard and satisfied in that you can do the same for others.
2. **Contributing.** One of our greatest human needs (and survival instincts) is to feel like a part of a bigger whole. When you contribute to others, you actually get a burst of serotonin, according to Dr. Lustig. Contributing, however, is not giving money or things, but actually doing good deeds to help. Many think of volunteering right away but you can contribute through getting something done for your spouse to make their day easier or seeing how your work contributes to the well being of others.
3. **Dealing with emotions.** Oh, emotions. We love the good ones but run far, far away from the bad ones. It may seem counterintuitive to face your negative emotions to gain happiness but in the long run, dealing with those emotions rather than stuffing them down will make you feel more calm and have less anxiety. To deal with difficult things, try journaling out how you feel, giving yourself grace (no one is perfect!) and then doing something relaxing or fun just for you.
4. **Eating well.** Yes, food can definitely be a source of pleasure but when it comes to long-term happiness, it's important to eat a well-balanced and healthy diet with room for treats as well to keep from feeling deprived. Cutting out processed foods, which have very little nutritional value, and eating foods with nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids or tryptophan, which is a precursor to serotonin. In addition, processed foods usually contain fructose, which increases dopamine and decreases serotonin.