

## THE NEW & NOTEWORTHY

# The History Of Happiness

## How We Lost Sight Of What It Means To Live Well

Our view of happiness has shrunk dramatically.

Throughout history, humans have continuously reimagined what it means to flourish. Ancient Greeks sought *eudaimonia*, a life of virtue and excellence. Medieval societies found it through spiritual devotion. Enlightenment philosophers declared the pursuit of happiness a natural right. Today, our idea of happiness is shaped by psychology, neuroscience, and cultural shifts, landing somewhere between brain chemistry, morning routines, and the hope of becoming our best selves.

### BEHIND THE EVOLUTION:

We now inhabit a culture where happiness has become something to study, pursue, and market. While scientific advances offer valuable insights, they've also commercialized wellbeing and created unrealistic expectations.

### THE IMPACT:

Our modern pursuit of happiness often manifests as an endless stream of lifestyle

tweaks, product upgrades, and curated experiences. What was once a communal project has been compressed and siloed, into wellness routines, consumption patterns, and dopamine-driven social media posts. We've traded depth for immediacy, collective purpose for personal fulfillment.

And yet, beneath the algorithms and aesthetics, we still know what real flourishing feels like. We recognize it in everyday heroes who show up for their communities, in people who choose purpose over convenience, and in our own moments of meaningful connection.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LONGEVITY:

Adding years to life means little without clarity about what makes that life worthwhile. True wellbeing isn't found in optimization tactics alone but in creating a life aligned with deeper values – connection, purpose, contribution to something beyond ourselves.

Discover the complete history of happiness and our evolving definition of it in [New York Times Magazine here.](#)