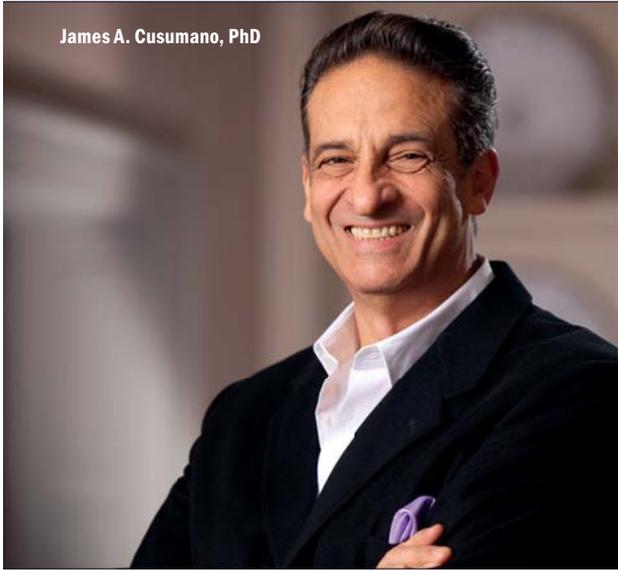


personal enlightenment

# COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS –

## A JOURNEY TO WELL-BEING, HAPPINESS, AND SUCCESS PART V: HAPPINESS<sup>A,B</sup>

James A. Cusumano, PhD



*"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."*

*Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) – American Author*

### KEY CONCEPTS:

- Lasting happiness is always a byproduct, and is never achieved as a direct goal.
- Although genetic predisposition passed on by your parents has much to do with your innate happiness "set point," the larger contribution comes from a combination of your environment and what you do with your life, both of which are well within your control.
- Happiness results by following your true sense of Purpose in all that you do.
- Your sense of Purpose must draw on your personal Essence – that special attribute that distinguishes you from others.
- Purpose leads to Passion which ignites high levels of physical and emotional Energy and unfolds Creativity, enabling you to solve challenging problems, which generates Innovation. The result is a Return which may be financial, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or some combination. The final outcome is deep personal Gratitude, the source of lasting Happiness. This "Fulfillment Formula" expresses one of the most effective means to lasting happiness.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Of all the mail I receive each month, the subjects that grab most attention are **Happiness, Purpose** and **Passion**. Of course, the three are closely interlinked. While your happiness is always an end product, it depends intimately on your purpose and passion. I have addressed these subjects in two prior articles<sup>1,2</sup>, however because of continued interest and commentary, I thought it worthwhile to revisit these important subjects and expand on our understanding of them. They are arguably the most critical elements to a life of fulfillment, and certainly a necessary requirement for "**Cosmic Consciousness and our Journey to Well-being, Happiness and Success**." The good news is that no matter where you are in your life, you can capture the key elements necessary for long-term happiness (**Figure 1**).

### HAPPINESS BASICS

Most of us would define happiness as a state of mind or consciousness characterized by feelings of contentment, love, satisfaction, pleasure or joy, i.e., personal fulfillment. As I pointed out previously, over the millennia, people have consistently sought happiness as a destination, but that approach never works. Happiness is always an end product, the result of something we do, and nearly always for someone else or some good cause. Long term happiness never results from a prime focus on money, beauty, or power. Success along these lines may feel good for a brief while, but there is no possibility for long-term happiness, and more often than not, this approach has the opposite effect – long-term discontent and unhappiness.

As mentioned in prior discussions, I think we must recognize that there is no such thing as constant happiness. Our lives are generally lived somewhere between the poles of joy and sorrow, laughter and sighs, achievement and disappointment. The key is how to live a happy life on average. At the end of the day, a week, a month, a year – when you look back, do you feel that deep sense of fulfillment sought by the spirit inside you?

So, what leads to happiness? Certainly, we must live by our basic values, those personal rules and guidelines ingrained in our consciousness that set the arrow of the compass by which we journey through life; they set a clear view of our "true north." Those values may vary from person to person. However, whatever they are, when we violate any them, we feel stressed, unsatisfied, and **unhappy**. But following your basic values is not enough to achieve lasting happiness and contentment. Let's take a look at the results of recent research on happiness<sup>3</sup>.

### THE HAPPINESS FORMULA

The pioneers of the "Positive Psychology" movement founded in the early 1990s struggled with the importance of genetics and environmental factors for our state of happiness. Are we born with a certain level of happiness or unhappiness? Is there anything we can control to lead to a happier life? As biologists uncovered the details of the human genome, a more complete understanding of the contributions of nurture versus nature began to unfold.

It appears that genes have a significant impact on the range of our natural "set point" for happiness (**Figure 2**). If you have happy parents, it's quite possible that you too will have a predisposition for a high happiness set point; and of course the opposite is

true, as well. However, modern science has shown that genes are often sensitive to environmental conditions. Furthermore, you can have a significant impact on your state of happiness by addressing the conditions of your life and by what you do with it.

All of this has been somewhat "quantified" in the following qualitative equation developed by Martin Seligman and others who founded the Positive Psychology movement<sup>4</sup>.

$$H = S + C + V$$

Here, **H** is the level of happiness that you actually experience; **S** is your genetic set point, what your parents coded in your DNA; **C** is the environmental conditions of your life, how you are raised as a child and the environment you choose as an adult; and **V** is voluntary activities, i.e., what you do with your life. So, the challenge then, since **S** is fixed, is to see what you can do to increase **C** and **V**. Although the relative contributions of **S**, **C** and **V** to happiness can be argued, most psychologists would say that for a normal healthy person the relative contributing weights are approximately: **S** = 40%; **C** = 20%; and **V** = 40%. Therefore, beyond choosing the "right" parents, your primary impact potential is on **C** and **V**, and it can be quite significant, about 60 percent.

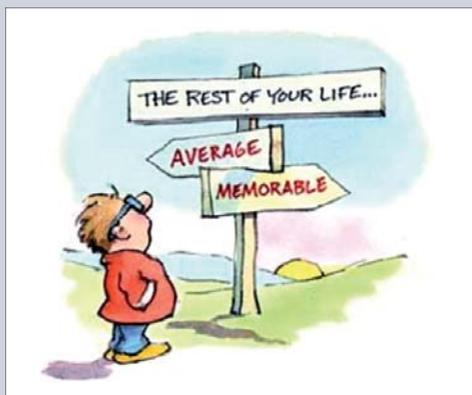
As for **C**, your environment, there are several interesting factors that have been found to contribute and which, if addressed can have quite a positive impact<sup>5</sup>. The first is *noise level*. Research has shown that people who have to adapt continuously to high levels of noise, find it difficult to do so and this has a diminishing effect on their level of happiness. The old adage that people living close to an airport or a train station adapt to the noise level is not correct. They basically learn to tolerate the noise, at the expense of lower levels of happiness. It's difficult to be happy when you're stressed and annoyed, even when it is unconsciously so<sup>6</sup>.

In this modern connected world, *long-distance commuting* also has a negative impact on happiness.

<sup>4)</sup> **EDITOR'S COMMENT** – This is the fifth article in a series based on the author's recent book, "**Cosmic Consciousness – A Journey To Well-being, Happiness and Success**." In this little book, published in both the Czech and English languages within one volume, and with an introduction by internationally-acclaimed author, Dr. Deepak Chopra, Dr. Cusumano explains in simple terms, the connection between Eastern Philosophical Wisdom, consciousness and quantum physics. He develops specific practices for living a successful and fulfilled life, regardless of your passion of pursuit.

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**Figure 1: NEVER TOO LATE.** No matter what your age, you can discover your purpose, and live with passion making this a better world and bringing you unparalleled success.



I recall when living in the New York City area, it was not uncommon for some people who lived on Long Island to travel to work two hours each way in heavy traffic. Research shows that those who do travel extended distances to work exhibit significant stress levels on the job and a diminished state of happiness<sup>7</sup>.

A lack of control decreases the level of happiness to a surprising amount. Haidt and Rodin have demonstrated that *changing an institution's environment to increase a sense of personal control among its occupants, e.g., patients in a hospital, students in school, or workers on the assembly line, etc., was one of the most effective means to increase their sense of engagement, energy and happiness*<sup>8</sup>. For example, in a classic study by Langer and Rodin, two floors of patients in a nursing home were studied. On one floor, patients were allowed to choose flowers and plants for their room, care for the plants, and to choose a specific movie night each week as well as the movie to view. On a separate floor, the nurses chose the plants, watered them, and chose the movie night and the movie.

This seemingly minor manipulation had significant effects. On the floor with increased control, patients were happier, more active, and more alert, as rated by both the doctors and nurses, and these benefits were still observed even after 18 months. Furthermore, during the subsequent 18 months, the floor patients with greater control amazingly had statistically significantly better health and half as many deaths – 15% versus 30%<sup>9</sup>. Isn't it amazing what a small increase in the level of personal autonomy can do to increase self-esteem, engagement, happiness and health? Think what this can do for employees. What an opportunity!

Shame is another controllable factor that impacts your level of happiness. People who remove any physical or emotional trait that is responsible for their feeling self-conscious, always increase their level of happiness. A large percentage of plastic surgery is directed at these kinds of "patients"<sup>10</sup>, often with quite positive outcomes.

And finally, and surely not unexpected, one of the major factors that is controllable in the **C** or environmental component of the happiness equation is *relationships*. This factor is sometimes thought to trump all other components of **C** in the happiness equation. As may be expected, good relationships make people happy, and happy people enjoy more and better

relationships than unhappy people<sup>11</sup>. The message here is to immediately do something about any negative relationships in your life. Best is to try to work on them in a mutually constructive manner, but if found to be essentially hopeless in any reasonable time scale, complete physical and emotional separation is the indicated solution.

Once **S** is fixed by the genetic code and the environmental factors in **C** are addressed, this leaves only **V**, the most significant factor after **S** to control your level of happiness. If you are in balance with respect to your basic values, I think the fundamental remaining requirement for optimal happiness is that you continuously pursue your life **Purpose**, your *raison d'être*, as the French would say (Figure 3). And this means applying your personal **Essence** to create value for **both** the world and for you. As proposed previously<sup>12</sup>, each of us is born with a personal **Essence**, that fundamental capability or skill that differentiates us from others in our social and professional circles. And when we find that special piece of us and apply it in whatever we do, it generates **Passion** – an incredible force that evaporates fear, unleashes creativity, and has been known to change the world.

**Figure 2: THANK YOUR PARENTS.** About 40 % of your happiness is due to your genetic set point. But you have total control over the other 60%.

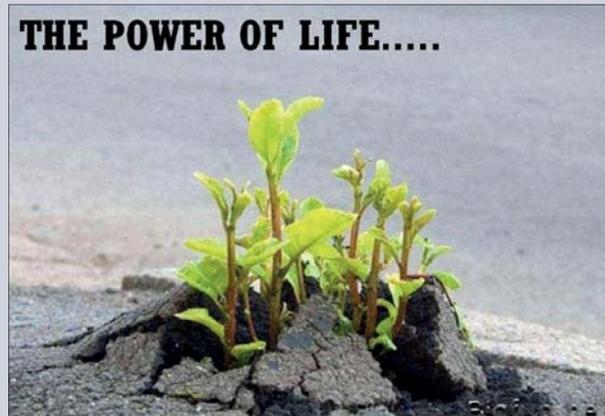


I have seen this kind of passion-based journey played out by essentially all successful people who are content and experience long-term happiness. I like to express this process in what I call my "**Fulfillment Formula**." Following your life **Purpose**, based on your innate **Essence**, and connected to a **Need** in the world, leads to **Passion** which ignites high levels of physical and emotional **Energy** and unleashes intense **Creativity**. This generates **Innovation** providing you with a **Return** – financial, emotional, psychological, perhaps, spiritual, or some combination of these **five** elements. This endows a deep sense of **Gratitude**, which is ALWAYS the source of all lasting **Happiness**.

**Essence → Need → Purpose → Passion → Energy  
→ Creativity → Innovation → Return → Gratitude  
→ HAPPINESS**

This formula has been shown to work numerous times over the millennia. The outcome is more than worth the effort. The key then is, "How do I know what my **Essence** is and how do I connect it with a real **Need** in the world that makes a positive difference?" After all

**Figure 3: IMMENSE POTENTIAL.** When you discover your life purpose, you connect with the "Fulfillment Formula" which provides great power and the ability to achieve success and long-term happiness.



that's what starts the ball rolling through **Purpose**, **Passion**, etc., to the desirable effect of **HAPPINESS**. To be continued...

James A. Cusumano, PhD ■

<sup>1</sup> James A. Cusumano, *Business May Be Your Life – But – Life Is YOUR Business, Part III: Finding Your Passion And Purpose*, LEADERS Magazine II, 2010. 142-143.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Cusumano, *Business May Be Your Life – But – Life Is YOUR Business, Part VIII: Lasting Happiness*, LEADERS Magazine I, 2011. 90-91.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Haidt, "The Happiness Hypothesis – Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom," Basic Books, 2006, p. 90ff.

<sup>4</sup> M. E. P. Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," New York: Free Press, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., Jonathan Haidt, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> S. Frederick and G. Loewenstein (1999), *Hedonic Adaptation*. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener and N. Schwartz (Eds.) "Well-being. The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology," Russell Sage Press, New York.

<sup>7</sup> M. Koslowsky and A. N. Kluger, "Commuting Stress," Plenum Press, New York, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Haidt and J. Rodin, "Control and efficacy of Interdisciplinary Bridges," *Review of General Psychology* Vol. 3, 317-337, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> J. Rodin and E. Langer, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35, 897-902 (1977).

<sup>10</sup> Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener, "The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?" *Psychological Bulletin* 131, No. 6, (2005), pp. 803-855.

<sup>11</sup> H. T. Reis and S. L. Gable, "Toward a Positive Psychology of Relationships," in C. L. M. Keyes and J. Haidt (Eds.), "Flourishing," *Positive Psychology and The Life Well-lived*, American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., pp. 129-159.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., Reference 2.

**About the Author:** James A. Cusumano is Chairman and Owner of Chateau Mcely ([www.ChateauMcely.Com](http://www.ChateauMcely.Com)), chosen in 2007 by the European Union as the only "Green" 5-star luxury hotel in Central and Eastern Europe and in 2008 by the World Travel Awards as the Leading Green Hotel in the World. He is a former Research Director for Exxon, and subsequently founded two public companies in Silicon Valley, one in clean power generation, the other in pharmaceuticals manufacture via environmentally-benign, low-cost, catalytic technologies. While he was Chairman and CEO, the latter – Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. – grew in less than 5 years, to a \$1 billion enterprise with 2,000 employees. He is co-author of "Freedom from Mid-East Oil," recently released by World Business Academy Press ([www.WorldBusiness.Org](http://www.WorldBusiness.Org)) and the author of "Cosmic Consciousness – A Journey to Well-being, Happiness and Success," published in English and Czech by Fortuna Libri, 2011.

TO BE CONTINUED...