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## Random Thoughts on Happiness

by Lesley Dawson

“Am I happy?” she thought as she drank her early morning coffee. Sitting in the kitchen looking out at the sun peeping between the clouds, it looked as if it might be another bright day.

“Is it the weather that makes me happy? Am I unhappy if it rains, when the clouds hide the sun?”

Wasn't there a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD? Memories began to surface of grey skies twenty-four hours a day with only a slight lightening between noon and 2pm when visiting the north of Norway in November.

She shuddered at the prospect of living like that, but then smiled as she thought of her visitors arriving later today. It had been tiring to get the bedrooms ready and drag out the folding bed, but now the house looked ready and waiting. Maybe this was what happiness was, enjoying the little things in life. Would she be unhappy or relieved when she had the house to herself again?

Could one be happy in lock down? Didn't happiness depend on other people? Being in the age group that was considered vulnerable to COVID 19 it had not been possible to leave the house, except to shop for food and go for a walk along the sea front. Thank God for Zoom and Googlemeet and for younger friends who helped manipulate the technology.

This was not what her life was supposed to look like. She was used to travelling and enjoying different cultures. Maybe happiness was letting go of what you thought your life was supposed to be?

Refilling her cup, she looked back to the times in Bethlehem when life had been fraught with curfews, road blocks and strikes. Had she been happy then? Certainly, she and her colleagues had felt fulfilled and at peace despite the unrest. Was that better than happiness? What had that man said, the one who had been kidnapped by Hezbollah in Lebanon?

“Happiness comes in waves, it will find you again. Was this true? He ought to know, if anyone did.

“Pull yourself together, stop being so negative,” she told herself, “you’re supposed to be able to cope with these things. Other people are relying on you for support.”

That was often the problem, other people’s expectations.

“Maybe it is time to be happy with be happy with who you are,” she mused, “and not who people think you are”

“But am I happy with who I am? Haven’t I always wanted to be thinner, shorter, better looking? Don’t I wish I were younger, more talented?”

The drafters of the American Constitution saw, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” as inalienable rights for its citizens.

Has the pursuit of happiness made Americans happier than anyone else? Or is that right just out of reach and not reaching that Become a source of unhappiness? Hasn’t some singer in the past had a hit with ‘Happiness, the greatest gift that we possess’? If happiness was a gift, wasn’t it better to accept the gift rather than pursue this illusive butterfly and face the possibility of unhappiness?

She sighed and decided that, as these thoughts were not making her happy, she would go for a walk. This might not make her happy but the endorphins released would improve her well-being.