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Why you may have to wait until 70 to be truly happy



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We are the happiest when we are 16 and 70, a new study suggests.

The U.K. well-being paper published by think-tank The Resolution Foundation on Wednesday, found [people are happier \(and feel a better sense of self-worth\) in their teens and 70s](#), the Guardian reported.

The study looked at seven years worth of National Statistics data in the U.K. and concluded that as people entered their 30s and reached their 50s, there was a “drop-off” when it came to well-being. The research also found people in their mid-20s and mid-50s were more anxious.

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[Paul Krismer, happiness expert and engagement speaker](#), told Global News he isn't surprised with these results. He

added this trend in age and happiness is often called the horseshoe effect.

“In our late [teens] and earlier 20s, we are happy,” he said, adding the horseshoe of happiness dips as we progress into middle age. After our 50s, it goes up and people are in a happy state again.

Why are these age groups so happy?

When it came to the ages 16 and 70, Krismer said while there isn't scientific research to back this up, his expertise shows there are specific reasons why these two age groups are happier.

“Those ages very much are living for the moment,” he said. “Sixteen-year-olds are not worried about their careers in 10 years or saving money for their children's education.”

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He added they value experiences like hanging out with their friends and not focusing on a routine. He said the same values are present in people in their 70s and while it may be less focused on novelty things, people in their 70s are also interested in what is happening in the moment.

And, anecdotally, some people may agree when people enter their retirement age, their life somewhat becomes juvenile again.

Krismer said the value of good friendship is also important in these age groups. For 16-year-olds, friendship is deep, loving and fun and these friends take up a lot of time in a teen's life. In your 70s, people are more keen to invest time and connections with the few friends they have left.

When else are people happy?

Previous studies have found [people were the happiest between the ages 65 to 79](#), the BBC reported.

The survey of more than 300,000 adults found people in this age group believed life was the most worthwhile.

Another 2014 Princeton University study found people “[peaked](#)” in happiness at the [ages of 23 and 69](#). While another study in 2012 suggested [33 was the happiest year of life](#).

Romeo Vitelli, a psychologist based in Toronto, wrote these [trends of true happiness fall into similar age groups and there are reasons for this](#).

“These results show that happiness generally increases in young adulthood, as people become more emotionally mature,” he wrote in Psychology Today.

“Still, maturity brings new obligations that can have a profound impact on personal happiness. Marriage, new family responsibilities, career changes, and financial worries all contribute to one's overall level of happiness. Also, young adulthood tends to be the period in our lives when we are least likely to worry about health problems, which can increase later in life.

How to be happier

Krismer said we can all learn a lesson or two from 16- and 70-year-olds on how to be happier. He argued one of the reasons middle-aged people are not as happy is that they focus more on materialistic goods.

This could mean owning a nicer car, moving into a larger house or trying to accumulate things. “[This happens] mid-career, especially for men who identify their occupations with their personal identities,” he said, adding research has shown middle-aged men tend to be unhappier. “It gets pretty dull, 20 years into the same career.”

And while there are other expenses that come with middle age (children, bills, house payments etc.), life also becomes more routine. He adds it may be worth it to vary your schedule every now and then.

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Krismer also suggested people, especially those who are middle-aged, practice mindfulness. “People in this age group say, ‘who has the time to go sit at home and be mindful?’ But it is perhaps the [strongest] and most well-researched happiness intervention we know about.”

“People who can live in the [moment can literally change the neurology](#) of their brain.” [Meditation is a good places to start](#), but Krismer explained it doesn't have to be just sitting still before bed. Try a yoga class or take part in tai chi.

He even suggested being more mindful when we wash our hands — a practice all of us do, no matter the age.

Feel the water on your hands, feel the soap on your hands and try not to think. If you make this a habit, he argued, you get your reset every time you wash your hands.

Other experts suggest getting rid of [toxic people in your life to be happier](#).

Previously speaking with Global News, [life coach Christina Jay](#) of Toronto said negative people often drain our positive energy.

“Negative people who always see the glass as half empty, waste time complaining about what could or should be instead of trying to improve their situation.”

Making a commitment to live a healthier life can also help. Jay added studies have shown 10 minutes of physical activity a day can improve your mood.

“So no excuses of not having enough time to exercise. Even the smallest activities such as a brisk walk can dramatically improve your happiness in the long run.”

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