

Happiness

Lead in

1 Work in pairs. Discuss these questions.

- What does *happiness* mean to you?
- Should we actively search for happiness or does it come on its own?
- Has the idea of happiness changed over the generations?
- Do you think people in general are happier today than they were in the past?



Word work

1 a Work in pairs. Take a piece of paper and write down as many words as you can to do with being happy or sad.

b Look at the words in the box. Did you write any of these?

happy contented blissful overjoyed ecstatic delirious
elated sad depressed miserable fed up down suicidal

2 Which adjectives in Exercise 1 do you think describe normal feelings? Which do you think are extreme?

Read about it

1 a Work in pairs. Read the question and compare your ideas.

What do you think contributes to people's unhappiness today?

b On a website people mentioned the topics in the box. How do you think they are connected to unhappiness? Discuss your ideas with the class.

the media materialism
close communities families
poverty television
advertising selfishness
unfairness in society

2 a Work in pairs. Think of suggestions to address the problems in Exercise 1.

b Scan the comments A–E posted on a website and match them with the topics in Exercise 1. There are more topics than comments.

A I see news programmes as a contributor to unhappiness in the UK. They only report sensationalist bad news and make people feel angry and depressed. We never hear about the really good things that are going on in the world.

B I believe that materialism and consumerism serve to make people unhappy. The media is to blame for this. Through advertising we are constantly being told that we need more of this and should have more of that and they hold up models of perfect families which we compare ourselves against and feel inferior. This just breeds discontent. And having money and all the possessions we can buy doesn't bring us happiness. That comes from inside.

C The days of close family and community spirit seem to be fast vanishing. Even in the 1990s there was more social cohesion. This is not just in cities but in towns and even villages. In my village some people don't even know their neighbours properly. Therefore the slightest thing can cause arguments, like loud music and rowdy behaviour. If people knew each other things would be resolved much more peacefully.

D Promote and ensure fairness in all things in society. When people witness vast gaps in wages, wealth, health and opportunity then this breeds discontentment. With the explosion of television media coverage, people can now see first hand the clear divide between the haves and the have nots.

E Severe restrictions, if not an outright ban, on television should definitely be the first and most important step. Families sit gormlessly in front of the television failing to communicate at all. Instead of going out to parties, making friends, or having people round for dinner, people just sit and gawp at that little black box in the corner of the room. Children watch soaps and dramas where some amazing life changing events happen every day. They grow up thinking that's how life should be. And it isn't.



3 Read the comments again. Which ones include references to these things?

- 1 television _____
- 2 advertising _____
- 3 the news _____
- 4 neighbours _____
- 5 socialising _____
- 6 wages _____

4 Find words or phrases in the comments with these meanings.

- 1 attention grabbing _____
- 2 disappearing _____
- 3 causes unhappiness _____
- 4 encourage _____
- 5 complete _____
- 6 stare _____
- 7 for themselves _____

Talk about it

Work in pairs and discuss these questions.

- Which of website comments, if any, do you agree with? Why?
- Which of them do you disagree with? Why?
- Do you think the survey findings reflect the majority view or not?

Write about it

Write your own comment to post on the website.