



*Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.*

**– Mark Twain**



# Happiness Psychology

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# Lyubomirsky's Approaches to Becoming Happier

- **Count your blessings.** Express gratitude for what you have privately and also by conveying appreciation to others.
- **Cultivate optimism.** Keep a journal in which you write your best possible future. Practice seeing the bright side of every situation.
- **Avoid over-thinking and social comparison.** When you start to dwell on problems or compare yourself to others, distract yourself with positive thoughts or activities.
- **Practice kindness.** Do good things for others.
- **Nurture relationships.** Pick a relationship that needs strengthening, and invest time and energy in it.

- **Do more activities that truly engage you.** Increase the experiences at home or work in which you lose yourself in total absorption.
- **Replay and savor life's joys.** Pay attention, delight in and review life's momentary pleasures.
- **Commit to your goals.** Pick one or more significant goals and devote time and effort to pursuing them.
- **Develop coping strategies.** Find and practice healthy ways to manage stress, hardship or trauma.
- **Forgive.** Keep a journal or write a letter in which you let go of anger and resentment toward those who have hurt you.
- **Practice spirituality.** Get more involved in your church, temple or mosque. Read spiritual books.
- **Take care of your body.** Exercise, meditate and laugh.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 1: Self-Interest and Benevolence

- All of our actions should be guided by self-interest, which should be focused on happiness. This makes people uneasy.
- Most religions and philosophies advocate self-sacrifice as the basis of morality. This is fallacious because it fails to recognize that self-interest and benevolence are not mutually exclusive.
- The more we help others, the happier we become (because it provides us meaning and pleasure), and the happier we become, the more we want to help others. Helping others out of a duty feel compelled to sacrifice for others, which is not sustainable and leads to unhappiness.
- *Conclusion:* Help others in ways that give you meaning and that you enjoy, not because you feel duty bound to do so.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 2: Happiness Boosters

- Most people experience “happiness droughts” where it is difficult to stay engaged and happy (e.g. exam periods, annual reporting). Happiness boosters can help during these tough times. These are one or two happy experiences that may only last a few minutes or hours, but provide us with both meaning and pleasure, reinvigorating us when we need it more. This may be as simple as a date with your spouse, or reading a good book.
- *Conclusion:* Build happiness boosters into your life, even if you aren't experiencing a happiness drought. These will help sustain you and are best implemented as long-term habits.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 3: Beyond the Temporary High

- Happiness exists in two dimensions: height and depth. “Height refers to the fluctuations in our levels of well-being, the highs and lows we experience... depth refers to that part... that is stable, to our base level of happiness.” Evidence shows that a person’s base level of happiness (the depth) can change over time. Pursuing meaningful and pleasurable activities can significantly raise our depth!
- *Conclusion:* Don’t assume that your predisposition to happiness is the end of the conversation. You **can** become happier. It is just a matter of how. The key is to pursue meaningful and pleasurable activities.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 4: Letting Our Light Shine

- The greatest barrier to happiness is in ourselves. Many of us feel unworthy of happiness, and then create these barriers and otherwise limit our happiness. We take jobs we don't like in order to make more money or stay in relationships that are going nowhere, all because we feel unworthy of happiness.
- *Conclusion:* Recognize that you have a right to be happy, and that happiness is an end unto itself. Work to rid yourself of the guilt associated with doing things that make you happy.



# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 5: Imagine

- Imagine yourself as 110 years old, traveling back in time to today. What wisdom would you impart on your younger self? This added perspective will allow you to recognize and eliminate the trivial and negative things from your life. This thought experiment is designed to help us become aware of what we *already* know that can help us change our life.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 6: Take Your Time

- We all know that when we have too many things demanding our attention and time, our happiness is reduced. However, this is true even if all of the things that are demanding our time are things that would, individually, make us happy. In other words, too much of a good thing can hurt! If you feel overwhelmed throughout your day, then you need to step back and figure out ways to reduce your overall workload.
- *Conclusion:* Quantity affects quality. Simplify your life by reducing the number of things you try to accomplish at any given time. By taking on too much, you will experience time poverty, and inhibit your ability to derive happiness from any of the things you do. Take time to savor the things that make you happy.

# Ben-Shahar's (2007) Seven Meditations

## Meditation 7: The Happiness Revolution

- The happiness revolution is about creating a society-wide paradigm shift to a higher level of consciousness, a higher plane of existence - to happiness perception. If most people in our society understand and internalize the ideas that happiness is not a zero-sum game and that pursuing it does not put us in competition with others, a quiet revolution will unfold where the pursuit of happiness and helping others attain higher levels of happiness will be two complimentary ends. When this revolution comes about, we will witness a society-wide abundance of not only happiness but also goodness.

# Ben –Shahar's (2007) Conclusions

## Here and Now

- Happiness comes from inside, not outside. External things can make it much more difficult to be happy, but these things cannot make us happy. Don't fool yourself into thinking happiness is just around the corner, as soon as you achieve that next goal. Happiness is the journey toward a meaningful goal. Happiness is achieved incrementally, and should be viewed as a journey in itself - a journey to becoming Happier.

# Gross National Happiness (GNH)

- **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** is an attempt to define quality of life in more holistic and psychological terms than Gross National Product (GNP) or the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- The term was coined by Bhutan's former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1972 in response to criticism that his economy was growing poorly. It signaled his commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's unique culture based on Buddhist spiritual values. Like many moral goals, it is somewhat easier to state than to define. Nonetheless, it serves as a unifying vision for the Five Year planning process and all the derived planning documents that guide the economic and development plans of the country.

# Where Is Bhutan?



# Gross National Happiness

A faint, light blue world map is visible in the background of the slide, centered behind the text.

<http://www.booserver.com/store?p=3115>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLTNgOgK--Q>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXJwNSkdTH0>

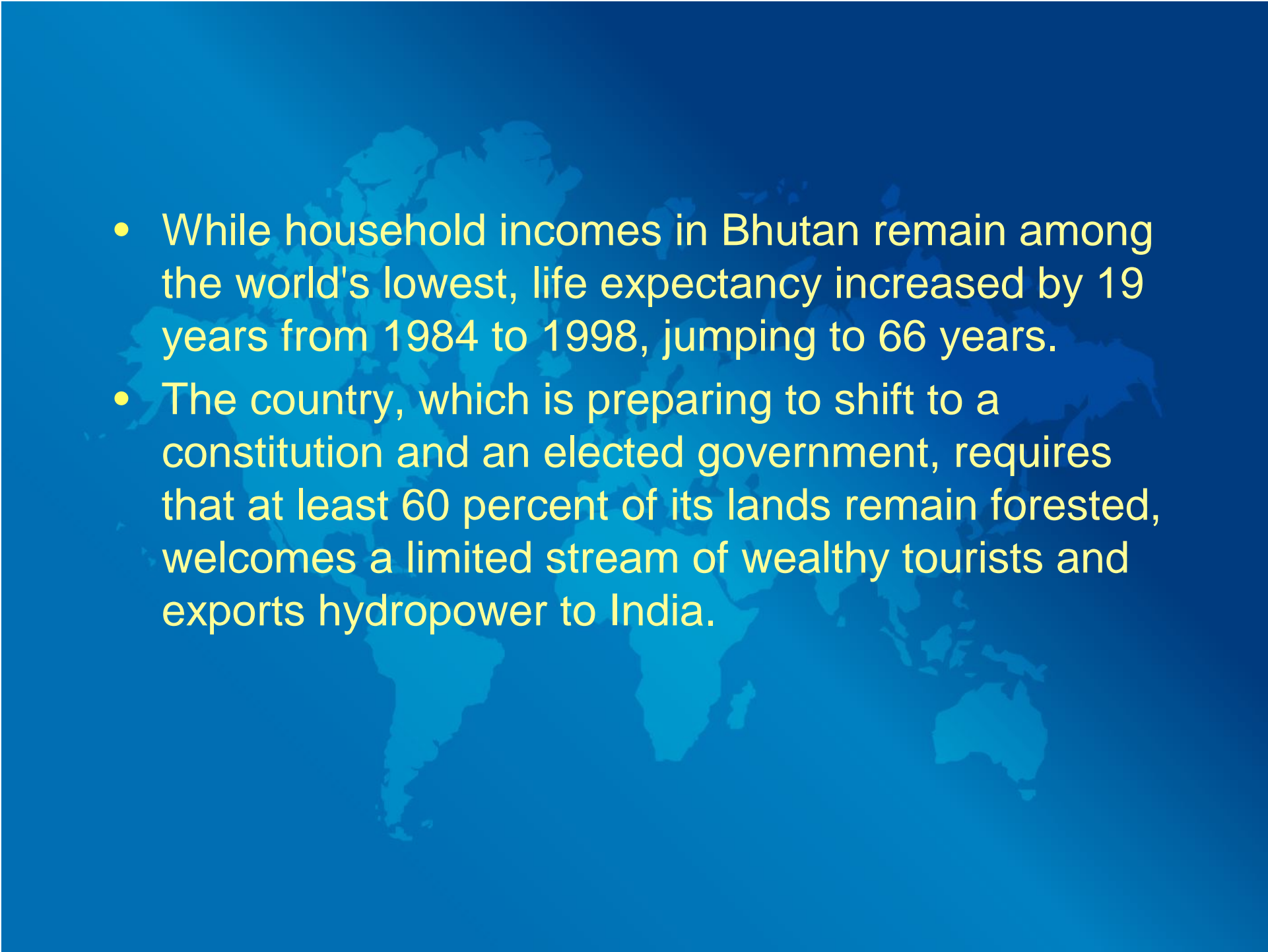
## Gross National Happiness (GNH)

- GNH, like the Genuine Progress Indicator, refers to the concept of a quantitative measurement of well-being and happiness. The two measures are both motivated by the notion that subjective measures like well-being are more relevant and important than more objective measures like consumption. It is not measured directly, but only the factors which are believed to lead to it.



- Motivated to preserve its pristine nature and unique culture, Bhutan has thus far succeeded in limiting exposure to global trade, foreign capital investment, modern mass media and tourism.
- Bhutan believes that its indigenous culture is generally self-sufficient and has little to gain from conventional Western development.
- The country has for centuries followed a traditional model of development which is based on improving the quality of life, while respecting natural and cultural constraints, rather than the quantity of material production and consumption.
- As such it forms a reminder for conventional Western development planners that development can also be based on non-material values, such as cultural, social and environmental values.

- At the same time, it is becoming increasingly evident that Bhutan cannot ignore modern-day **global economic realities**, which increasingly have powerful cross-border and cross-cultural impact.
- The **free exchange of information**, driven by the world's mass media and advanced communication technology, will continue to erode traditional borders.
- Thus, Bhutan has no choice but to take up the challenge of **the global economy**, and to help shaping and steering these economic realities into improvements in the quality of life, rather than merely in terms of quantity.

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- While household incomes in Bhutan remain among the world's lowest, life expectancy increased by 19 years from 1984 to 1998, jumping to 66 years.
  - The country, which is preparing to shift to a constitution and an elected government, requires that at least 60 percent of its lands remain forested, welcomes a limited stream of wealthy tourists and exports hydropower to India.

# Gross National Happiness (GNH)

A second-generation GNH concept, treating happiness as a socioeconomic development metric, was proposed in 2006 by Med Yones, the President of International Institute of Management. The metric measures socioeconomic development by tracking 7 development areas including the nation's mental and emotional health. GNH value is proposed to be an index function of the total average per capita of the following measures:

- **Economic Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of economic metrics such as consumer debt, average income to consumer price index ratio and income distribution
- **Environmental Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of environmental metrics such as pollution, noise and traffic

# Gross National Happiness (GNH)

- **Physical Wellness**: Indicated via statistical measurement of physical health metrics such as severe illnesses
- **Mental Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of mental health metrics such as usage of antidepressants and rise or decline of psychotherapy patients
- **Workplace Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of labor metrics such as jobless claims, job change, workplace complaints and lawsuits
- **Social Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of social metrics such as discrimination, safety, divorce rates, complaints of domestic conflicts and family lawsuits, public lawsuits, crime rates
- **Political Wellness**: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of political metrics such as the quality of local democracy, individual freedom, and foreign conflicts

# Gross International Happiness (GIH)

The GIH Project draws on the best practices of the growing number of countries and companies that have started to implement sustainability and corporate social responsibility, while collecting international research and practices around sustainable development indicators, which account for environmental and social values. The concept of GIH is meant to incorporate these values, yet it also transcends them by including values reflecting general well-being over a longer time horizon.