Is chocolate the answer?

Have you ever wondered what makes people happy? Why are some people on cloud nine while others are always down in the dumps? What’s the secret? Is it pots of money, good health, loving relationships, owning the latest gadget or simply chocolate?

A

The latest World Happiness Report says that prosperity is not the main reason for happiness. If you suffer real hardship, you are unlikely to be happy, but once your basic needs are met, money and material things become less of a necessity. Happiness depends more on recognizing the things you have and appreciating them, rather than getting more things. Yes, money can buy you the latest smartphone, tablet or fashion item, and you might get a kick out of the ownership of these material objects, but this enjoyment is usually short-lived. Remember all those presents you got for Christmas when you were little? You were over the moon when you opened them, but not for long. A month later, they were lying abandoned at the bottom of a drawer. And have you forgotten those delicious chocolates that made you feel really happy when you were eating them, but ill after you’d finished them all?
B

It seems that deep, long-lasting happiness comes from intangible things rather than things like chocolates and smartphones. One essential factor is human relationships. People who have the support of family members and also have strong friendships are more likely to be happy. Feeling protected and respected and knowing you can trust in the people around you is vital. But happiness means you have to give and take. Performing acts of kindness and generosity on a regular basis, for example, listening to a friend in need or carrying a neighbour’s shopping, will make you feel on top of the world. Even a simple smile can work wonders. In fact, they say that one smile makes a person feel as good as eating 2,000 bars of chocolate (not all at once, of course!).

C

It’s not surprising that health is another key contributor to happiness. Poor health will certainly make you feel down in the mouth. But being healthy and staying healthy requires some effort. A healthy diet is crucial and so is regular exercise. Laziness will not make you happy. Exercising for twenty to thirty minutes a day helps to reduce stress and anxiety and makes you feel more positive and optimistic because it releases endorphins (feel-good chemicals). So, if you’ve been feeling blue and worrying too much about your exams, get exercising. You’ll also find that you sleep better.

D

Talking of sleep, do you often wake up feeling miserable? If so, it’s probably because you haven’t had enough of it. Teenagers tend to go to bed too late and have to get up early, so many suffer from a lack of sleep. Tiredness will certainly affect your happiness levels and put you in a bad mood. It also affects your ability to concentrate and may slow your growth. So if you want to be happy and do well at school, try to get at least eight hours a night.

Now you know the theory, it’s time to put it all into practice. Smile, everyone!