

BBC Learning English  
6 Minute English  
15 August 2013  
*The secret of happiness*



---

NB: This is not a word for word transcript

**Rob:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob and with me today is Finn.

**Finn:** *(sounding glum)* Hi Rob.

**Rob:** Finn you're sounding a bit **down in the dumps** – you know, a bit miserable.

**Finn:** Well Rob I am. It's raining again... I've got no money... and I'm feeling unfit too – just look at me!

**Rob:** Hmm. Well I've got some news today that might put a smile on your face. It's about a new study that tells us how we can make ourselves happier. And we'll be using some words about happiness too.

**Finn:** Well that's sounds good and I'm feeling a lot happier already, thank you, Rob!

**Rob:** So Finn, what other things make you feel happy?

**Finn:** The finer things in life – good food, fine wine, things like that. And you Rob?

**Rob:** For me, it's got to be... everything! Nothing worries me and I always look for the positive things even in a bad situation. You could say I'm **happy-go-lucky!** And to keep you happy, let's see if you know the answer to today's question. The World Happiness Database has ranked countries in order of how happy their people are – or to be more precise - their '**satisfaction** with life'. Do you know which country came top of the list? Was it:

- a) Finland
- b) Canada
- c) Costa Rica

**Finn:** I think Finland has a high quality of life but let's say the happiest nation is Canada.

**Rob:** Canada, ok. We'll find out if you are right at the end of the programme. So, let's talk more about happiness. There's been some good news from Holland – that's where the World Happiness Database is – at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

**Finn:** It's been collecting the results of studies about happiness from all over the world.

**Rob:** And now all that information has been put together to produce some interesting results.

**Finn:** Surely, Rob, happiness is **a state of mind** – so different things make different people **content** – or happy – depending on their mood or situation at the time?

**Rob:** Yes, but this research has found some factors that we all share when we are searching for happiness. It also found what made people unhappy.

**Finn:** So, maybe things like not having enough money or not going on holiday?

**Rob:** Nothing like that, not **materialistic** values. Unhappy people are more aware of their life **goals** – things they want to achieve because they want to change their life for the better. Does that sound like you Finn?

**Finn:** Not me Rob. I lead such a **hectic** – or busy – life that I don't always get time to think about the future!

**Rob:** That's good because the study found having an active life is most important for a happy and **rewarding** life – that means a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure. There are other reasons too as we can hear from the Director of the World Happiness Database, Professor Veenhoven. When in life does he say we are happiest?

**Professor Rudd Veenhoven, Director of World Happiness Database:**

*Research has shown that we can make ourselves happier because we see that happiness does change over time, and that these changes are not just a matter of better circumstances but also better dealing with life. Elderly people tend to be wise and for that reason, happier.*

**Finn:** OK, our happiness changes over time. It's older people – the elderly - who are happiest because, he says, they are **wiser**. They understand things more and have learnt to deal with the problems in life. So Rob, you're old so you should be happy, right?

**Rob:** Wrong, Finn! The study has also found having children – which I do - lowers your happiness level.

**Finn:** But it does say your happiness increases when they grow up, your children grow up, and leave home.

**Rob:** That's good to hear. The study also says if you think you're good looking, rather than if you actually are, makes you happier. So you might be really ugly but if you think you're handsome then you're happy. Isn't that right Finn?

**Finn:** Right yeah, I guess that makes me the happiest man on the planet, Rob!

**Rob:** Did you also know, being in a long-term relationship and going out for dinner a lot also makes you happier.

**Finn:** Oh, so are you saying I need to do these things to be happy?

**Rob:** Yes Finn. But luckily for you, the study has also found that being sad for ten per cent of the time is actually good for you. Let's face it – we can't be happy all the time!

**Finn:** That's **comforting** to know – but Rob you can cheer me up – or make me happier - by telling me that I answered today's question correctly.

**Rob:** We'll see! Earlier I asked you which country did The World Happiness Database rank as having the greatest 'satisfaction with life'?

**Finn:** I said Canada.

**Rob:** I'm sure the Canadians are very happy people, but you're wrong. All those countries are in the top ten but Costa Rica is at number one. Hopefully this programme has put you in a good mood. Join us again soon for 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

down in the dumps	feeling miserable or unhappy
happy-go-lucky	describes someone who doesn't worry about the future
satisfaction	the good feeling you get when you get something you want
a state of mind	how someone feels about their life at the present time
content	feel happy or pleased with the situation
materialistic	believing money and possessions are the most important things
goals	things you want to achieve
hectic	busy, lots of things going on
rewarding	a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure
wiser	gained the ability to make good judgements based on life experience
comforting	making you feel less sad or worried

### Read and listen to the story online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2013/08/130815\\_6min\\_happiness.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2013/08/130815_6min_happiness.shtml)

### More on this story:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23097143>