

Happiness Increases after 50?

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Closely related to the topic of marital conflict is a recent study of happiness over the life-span. A survey performed by the Gallup Organization with over 340,000 randomly selected adults aged 18-85 in the U. S, asked them to rate how they currently felt their life stood on a scale of 0 (“the worst possible life for you”) to 10 (“best possible life for you”). They were also asked if they had felt various different emotions, such as happiness, enjoyment, stress, sadness, anger, and worry. As expected, worry increased dramatically when participants related injuries due to falls. Even if they had no long lasting disability, the fear of future falls caused stress and worry, sometimes withdrawal from family and friends.

Lead researchers, of a northern university, reported that stress peaked between the ages of 22-25, and decreased drastically after age 50. Worry was relatively constant from 20-40, then declined in the mid-50’s. Anger began tapering off after 18; Sadness increased for those in their 40’s, and then declined for those in their mid- to late 50’s. It increased slightly for those in their mid-70’s. The best news was that both happiness and enjoyment peaked at two points in the life-cycle, when people were 20 and again when they were 70. These findings support the frequently found differences between younger and older people. Older people are more able to regulate negative emotions, and recall fewer of them in their lives.

So, does happiness increase after 50? The study indicates that it does as long as both genders ensure their physical safety and health.