



THE KEY TO UNHAPPINESS

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How many times have you heard someone say they want to make a better world? It is a noble sentiment, but very hard to achieve, right?

Well, actually, it's quite easy. All we have to do is increase just one human trait. This trait is so powerful that it alone can make people happier without working on their happiness, and make them better – and by “better,” I mean more generous, more honest, more kind, more everything good – without a single lesson in morality.

So, then, what is this one almost magical thing? Drumroll, please.

It's gratitude.

You can't be a happy person if you aren't grateful, and you can't be a good person if you aren't grateful. Almost everything good flows from gratitude, and almost everything bad flows from ingratitude.

Let's begin with ingratitude. Here's a rule of life: ingratitude guarantees unhappiness. It is as simple as that. There isn't an ungrateful happy person on Earth. And there isn't an ungrateful good person on Earth. There are two reasons.

Reason one is victimhood. Ingratitude always leads to or comes from victimhood. Ungrateful people—by definition—think of themselves as victims. And perceiving oneself as a victim or perceiving oneself as a member of a victim group may be the single biggest reason people hurt other people—from hurtful comments to mass murder. People who think of themselves as victims tend to believe that because they've been hurt by others, they can hurt others.

And the second reason ungrateful people aren't good people is that ingratitude is always accompanied by anger. The ungrateful are angry, and angry people lash out at others. If ingratitude makes people unhappy and mean, then gratitude must make people happy and kind.

And so it does. Think of the times you have felt most grateful—were they not always accompanied by a feeling of happiness? Weren't they also accompanied by a desire to be kinder to other people? The answer, of course, is yes. Grateful people aren't angry and they also don't see themselves as victims.

The problem, however—and it's a big one, is that in America and much of the rest of the world, people are becoming less grateful. Why? Because people are constantly told that they are

entitled to things they haven't earned—what are known as “benefits” or “entitlements.” And the more things that people think they should get, the less grateful they will be for whatever they do get. And the more angry—and therefore unhappy—they will be when they don't get them.

Here are two rules of life. Rule number one: The less you feel entitled to, the more gratitude you will feel for whatever you get and the happier you will be. Rule number two: The more you feel entitled to, the less happy you will be. That's why, for example, children who get whatever they want are usually less happy children. We have a word for such children: spoiled. And no one thinks of a spoiled child as a happy child, and certainly not a kind one.

The more that you feel that life or society owes you, the angrier you will get, the less happy you will be. As a result, we are increasing the number of angry, unhappy, and selfish people. The other way we are making people unhappy, and even meaner, is by cultivating a sense of victimhood. People are constantly told that they are victims because of their upbringing, because of past prejudice against their group, because of material inequality, because they are female, and for many other reasons.

Next time you want to assess any social policy, ask this question first: Will this policy increase or decrease gratitude among people? You will then know whether it is something that will bring more goodness and happiness to the world—or less.

If I were granted one wish, it would be that all people be grateful. Gratitude is the source of happiness, and the source of goodness; and the more good people, and the more happy people there are walking around, the happier and better our world will be. If you have a way of achieving such a world without increasing gratitude, let me know what it is.

I'm Dennis Prager.