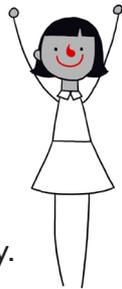


FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS

“The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to make others so.”

ROBERT INGERSOLL,
(1833-1899)

Many humanists believe that finding **happiness** is one of the most important things in life. They believe we only have **one life** so we should make the most of it in the here and now. We should also support other people to find what makes them happy.



‘I believe in celebrating life. I believe in happiness. I want to explore the beauty that exists in this world, and I believe every person has this right... This is our life and we should enjoy it!’

GULALAI ISMAIL,
Humanists International



Humanists don't believe there is only one single way to be happy. We all have different talents, tastes, and ambitions. What makes us happy can also change as we grow. Humanists believe we should all have the **freedom** to find what makes us happy. We should be free to choose what we believe and how we live. We should not let other people decide for us. We should be the **authors** of our own lives. This places a **responsibility** on us to think carefully about our choices.

‘We shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.’



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT,
political activist

Many humanists believe we should also be **tolerant** of those who make choices that are different from our own. Many believe it is a good thing that we all have different tastes and talents as it can lead to a diverse and interesting society. **Diversity** can be celebrated.

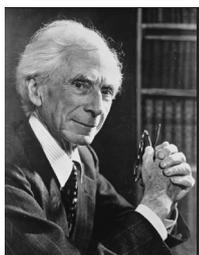
A happy life doesn't have to mean feeling happy all the time. Eating a cake or watching a good film can make us feel happy, and these can be important ingredients of a happy life. But a happy life can include things that might not make us happy in the moment, such as tidying the house, trying to learn a difficult new skill, being told the truth even if it is painful, or having the freedom to make mistakes. Some humanists talk about a sense of **fulfillment** – feeling happy with our life overall.

Some possible ingredients of a happy life

- Relationships with family and friends
- Being creative
- Curiosity and exploration
- Experiencing nature or the arts
- Achieving our goals
- Making other people happy
- Helping make the world a better place

What makes you happy?

Some people say that we should focus not on being happy but on **being good**. For humanists, both can be important, and one can often support the other. It can be difficult to be good to other people if we are not happy ourselves. There is also evidence that making other people happy can make us happy. We are social animals who live together in communities. Our happiness and the happiness of other people are often closely linked.



‘The happy life is to an extraordinary extent the same as the good life.’

BERTRAND RUSSELL,
humanist philosopher
(1872-1970)

Many humanists believe that we should be free to do whatever makes us happy as long as we **don't cause harm** to other people. We should think about the **consequences** of our actions. If other people's choices lead to harm, we should be able to argue against those choices and encourage them to act differently.

‘I would like to live to the full, right now, and I hope that I live in such a way that the world is a little bit better after I leave it than it was when I arrived.’

PHILIP PULLMAN,
author



‘Imagine a room filled with your friends and family and even people you know but aren't friends with – the bus driver, the newsagent, for example. You're in the room, but you have to leave early. Would they be sad that you'd gone? Would someone tell a story about how funny it was when you said or did something? Would someone else remember a time when you'd helped them out? Would people think of you as kind or unkind? I try to live as though this room exists, and I'd like my friends and family to be proud of how I behave.’

NATALIE HAYNES,
author



**THINK FOR YOURSELF,
ACT FOR EVERYONE**

Not everyone is happy. Many people around the world do not have the freedom or opportunity to find happiness. Many humanists believe that we should try to create a world in which everyone has the opportunity to find happiness in the here and now.

‘It's not enough to be a happy individual; we should also try to think of ways in which others – perhaps everyone – can be happy.’

**MICHAEL ROSEN AND
ANNEMARIE YOUNG,**
authors



QUESTIONS

- Why is happiness important to humanists?
- What might a humanist believe can make us happy?
- Do humanists believe it is more important to be happy than to be good?
- Do humanists believe we should be free to do whatever we want?