**Comments on parenting blog**

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I was happy before I had kids and am happy now. However, the first year of motherhood was rough. I was only 25 and becoming a mom forced me to grow up. All of a sudden I had to become a lot less selfish and a lot more responsible, which is not easy in a culture that glorifies self-centeredness and irresponsibility.

I’m a better person for becoming a mom, even if I’m not any happier.

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If anything, I think what this maybe shows is that happiness isn’t everything. I have a 4-year-old daughter, and having a child has probably made me less “happy” — there are more opportunities for conflict with my wife, more financial stress, more activities that would fun but have to deferred to the future. On the other hand, I love my daughter and wouldn’t change things for anything, even if having her sometimes means less day to day “fun” or “enjoyment.” Sometimes, things worth doing and having involve a lot of difficulty and effort. They don’t make us “happy” necessarily, but that doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t undertake them.

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I recently read Stephanie Coontz’s “Till Children Do Us Part” (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/05/opinion/05coontz.html). She writes, “[D]oes the arrival of children doom couples to a less satisfying marriage? Not necessarily. Two researchers at the University of California at Berkeley, Philip and Carolyn Cowan, report in a forthcoming briefing paper for the Council on Contemporary Families that most studies finding a large drop in marital quality after childbirth do not consider the very different routes that couples travel toward parenthood. … The Cowans found that the average drop in marital satisfaction was almost entirely accounted for by the couples who slid into being parents, disagreed over it or were ambivalent about it. Couples who planned or equally welcomed the conception were likely to maintain or even increase their marital satisfaction after the child was born.” So, parenting when you desperately or very much wanted that child is probably a qualitatively different experience from parenting a child whom you never wanted, and perhaps feel some resentment toward (a sad situation for that child). People who didn’t want their child, or were ambivalent/unsure about parenting, should not be clumped in with people who were very eager to parent, when studies on satisfaction amongst parents are conducted. Thanks for the interesting post; I really enjoy your blog!

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I had a long, long list of reasons why I didn’t want a child. The epiphany arrived when I finally realized that the main (perhaps only) reason why I didn’t want to try was because I was scared. I was not deluded at all, I was very conscious of how easy it is for things to go wrong, during and after the pregnancy. I knew it is very difficult to care for a baby, to raise a child, to deal with a teenager. But I found that I wanted, that I needed that experience. Even though things could go wrong, and it was going to be difficult, and sometimes you end up looking at a stranger with your eyes whom you can’t even like but whom you deeply love, nonetheless.

We’ve been outrageously lucky. Our daughter is 2 years old. She is a precious and bright child, has brought a lot of work and stress to my life, and has also made my life richer and filled with laughter. It is just like they say: parenthood is not for the faint of heart, but it is totally worth it.

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I only clicked on the first two s, the JBPA paper and the Alesina at al paper, so it may be that other papers answer my question.

Were the papers about happiness in parenting conducted only with married or divorced couples? The Alesina et al seems to not include never married people in their survey (see, for example, Table 1-US — no “single” category in the marital status variable).

Just wondering.

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Of course children do not bring happiness. That comes from inside parents themselves. It is a form of emotional cruelty to children to even have that expectation. Who could live up to such a burden?

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I think Pierce Moffett #2 hit the nail on the head. While having children certainly hasn’t made me happier in the skipping-down-the-street sense, it has enriched my life, forced me to understand things about myself and really made me appreciate my own parents in a new way.

I am not always happier than before I had children, but my life is richer for having had them.

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Singer-songwriter Jonathan Colton nails the double-edge sword of parenthood with this line from a song he wrote his young daughter: “You ruined everything in the nicest way.”

For those interested, here’s the song in its entirety:

I was fine,  I pulled myself together  Just in time,  To throw my self away  Once my perfect world was gone I knew, You ruined everything in the nicest way

You should know,  How great things were before you  Even so,  They’re better still today  Now I can’t think who I was before  You ruined everything in the nicest way

Bumps in the road remind us  The worst of the best behind us  Only good things will find us, me and you

Days will be clear and sunny  We’re gonna need more money  Baby you know it’s funny  All those stories coming,  True

Despite my better efforts,  It’s all for you  the worst kind of cliché

I’ll be with you till the day you leave  You ruined everything in the nicest way

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Define “happy”. It’s a feeling. Most of us have feelings ranging from excitement, pride, happy, angry, and frustrated within the hour as we parent our children.

How about measuring a sense of purpose and fulfillment? Maybe the results would be different. Parenting is the most challenging and rewarding job there is.

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Comment on the title of this blog post..

These studies have NOT shown that having children makes you unhappy. Rather, these studies have failed to show that there is a difference in happiness (in either direction) between having children or not.

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Arrgh – strike my previous comment. Yes, some of the studies do show a significant negative finding. I misread the article. Sorry.

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What exactly is happy? I agree, I don’t have the trivial or lighthearted happiness I used to have, or satisfaction form as many things, because I do so many fewer things. But I am so deeply fulfilled and committed and curious and challenged, and I love my partner in two beautiful ways – not only as my husband, but as a father.

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I think it’s the biological imperative to reproduce.

I know a baby would be an astounding amount of work/stress/sleep deprivation, yet when I see one (well, one being cute and not screaming) I want one. It’s not a ‘rational’ desire–it just is. It’s the same reason so many people go through all the pain/expense/stress of IVF instead of going straight to the adoption idea….you want a baby of your own.

I think fulfilling that basic biological function is probably gratifying, if not happiness-producing per se.

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I’m happy with my two boys. They’re definitely the light of my life.

Especially now that they’re: -sleeping through the night -potty trained -able to brush their own teeth -able to discuss issues like people -able to read

It’s really hard parenting toddlers. 5 years old is much better. Even including the toddler years, though, I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

And I became a mom at 26, only to go back to medical school at 29. I think I do better in school because I have two little motivators cheering for me.

Not everyone is this way, however, so I don’t recommend that all my classmates go out and have babies. But my kids do bring me immeasurable joy.

We decided to have kids because it was the next logical step and we always envisioned our family as being one with kids. I look back on my non-kid days and wonder, as you ask, why on earth anyone has kids. On the other hand, if we were unable to have kids for whatever reason I’m sure I would be obsessed with having kids and be unhappy because we couldn’t. So I really think the grass is always greener on the other side.

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I am not having my own children because 1) there is a population/resource problem and 2) I can adopt and 3) I’m not convinced this is the kind of world into which I want to bring a child.

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Maybe as a mother who has spent most of her life depressed (and depressive) I see happiness differently. My daughter (now 3 and a half) has brought me, or allowed me to see, more moments of pure joy than I remember knowing ever before. Yes it’s hard, esp as my husband works nights, I work days, and we don’t have family in the area. But when I get to see how much joy she gets out of roller skating for the first time, or flying a kite, or any of a huge number of other new things she is experiencing, it’s as though I get to experience those joys just as purely as she does, with no thought or worry about the past or future.

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If you want to have children because you expect them to make you happy, you shouldn’t have children. If you are unhappy before children, you will be unhappy after children. You will be miserable, and your children will be miserable. Happiness comes from within.

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I believe it. I believe people who have kids are significantly less happy with life in general versus those who don’t. All my friends and family members who have kids are constantly complaining about something or other. They look exhausted and frustrated most of the time, and are most willing to get away from their kids any chance they get. That doesn’t sound like happiness to me. I know for sure my parents definitely weren’t happy in our household and I have a sneaking suspicion that us kids were a huge huge part of that.

Of course any time you bring it up directly, kids are an absolute joy, and they couldn’t imagine life without them. I’m almost thinking it’s related to the throwing good money after bad principle. They don’t want to admit that they made a mistake in having kids, and that their lives would be much much better without them.

In contrast, the people I know who don’t have kids seem much more relaxed and truly enjoying life. They get to travel with their spouses, come and go as they please, and have a lot less stress to deal with.

I’ve made my choice. I’m not having kids. If you parents could only look in the mirror and see how frazzled and unhappy you look as you’re telling us how little Jimmy painted the neighbor’s dog green AGAIN and little Suzie wouldn’t stop screaming from colic all night, you might understand how the child-free have come to the conclusion that you’re all miserable.

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Of course there is the point that very few people who have children would ever be able to admit that they made a mistake.

My wife and I have been together for almost 20 years and have never wanted children. We are extremely happy with our decision.

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Though I adore my son, since his arrival, my marital satisfaction has declined dramatically. And the career has been rough too. I think the problem, though, is not put properly in these studies. Rather than asking if having children raises happiness, we should be looking at the work-family tensions that make having children more likely to reduce happiness. If employers were far more accommodating, it would be an entirely different ballgame.

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One answer, I think, is that “happiness” is either poorly defined or, alternatively, it is not what parents seek. I am a relatively new parent myself. I understand–and knew going in–that parenting takes away freedom, adds stress, and has all sorts of other negative qualities. But there is a deep sense of fulfillment in life in having children. I do not begrudge anyone who chooses not to have children. There are plenty of human beings on the planet. Nonetheless, I think there is something deeply fulfilling about being a parent, in that it’s one important part of the human experience. Leading a meaningful life is not about “happiness”–particularly as that term is commonly understood by Americans.

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The reported studies seem to be assuming causation in the different happiness levels of parents and their childless peers. But couldn’t this finding be a correlation instead? Maybe people who have a generally happier and more satisfied outlook on life are more likely to choose not to have children, thinking, “Why mess things up? I’m perfectly happy as I am!,” whereas somewhat less happy people may think, “I want to have children because the reason I feel somewhat dissatisfied is that I am childless.” But perhaps these different initial levels of happiness stem either from essential personality traits or are determined by other factors, and thus simply persist after the decision to have children or not to have children has been made and acted upon. Maybe what you need for a truly sound study is to track a group of people who all have very similar happiness levels before making the decision to have children. If the group that became parents ended up significantly less happy than their childless peers, you could be more certain of a causal relationship between parenting and reduced happiness.

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Having children is like becoming a lawyer, it is long, tedious, difficult, and arguably not worth it. However; a life of happiness is not completely desirable for all. I for one love to struggle, and through struggle, generate my own form of happiness. The term happiness is very subjective, and I feel most Americans would rather make their mark on this world rather than placating through life with general ease and satisfaction.

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I am currently at home with my lovely 3 month old daughter, and I would say that I am as happy as I have ever been. We are lucky in that we have a daughter who has been relatively easy, and yet even an easy baby is a lot of work. Everything is more difficult. Subway rides are a project, and I’ve spent more time cleaning poopy clothes than I’d care to mention. And yet it doesn’t really matter. Perhaps “happiness” is hard to measure (sorry to any utilitarians out there), but I would say that our lives are much fuller and richer than they have ever been. This is why we wanted children — we did not want to spend the rest of our lives with a quiet apartment, no matter how much we would have to give up (travel, going out, career opportunities, etc.).

I am lucky in that for the moment I am not balancing work and motherhood, and we have yet to experience the challenge that multiple children will bring. But we will certainly do it again (if we’re lucky enough to have another one). If this isn’t happiness, I’m not sure what is.

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• Actually, my first baby was a shock: lack of sleep etc. My second baby was mostly pleasure, and the two children as they grew up became almost pure joy. I used to look at them go off to school or at play and think, I must hang on to this image, because they will grow up one day, this is not going to last. Of course there were moments of frustration, but far, FAR, fewer than i have experienced in a marital situation. I think it might actually be true that many people do not really enjoy their children but from what I have seen, many people don’t know how to relate to their children, and unfortunately, they don’t know how to bring the best out of them or out of themselves.

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Happiness is far to relative to be quantified via such means. The struggles of love, of any sort, are always going to be the most difficult, but the love that results will always be the greatest happiness. Seldom have I heard anyone refer to their life as worse for having children.

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It is critically important to distinguish between the sense of “fulfillment” in having accomplished something with our lives and self-proclaimed “happiness”. Any amount of the latter is dependent upon some measure of the former. For many people children provide a sense of purpose and meaning.

As for the question of “why does have children in the first place?”, well that’s easy. Beyond the choice to have them, as per the statement above, people are VERY motivated by sex, and children are very often a by-product. In humanity’s distant past and for most other species, there is little to no thought about whether to have children… it just happens, and we’re wired to care for them, thankfully.

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While it is true these studies show fairly well that children do not make people more happy, none of them show parents are significantly less happy either. Therefore asking parents why they had kids even though it won’t make them happier makes no more sense than asking them why they didn’t have kids when staying childless won’t make them any happier.

As for the case for having kids. There are no choices a typical person makes that influence the world as much as this one. This is why environmentalists, who see the primary influence of the human race as being negative, go through so much trouble trying to argue people shouldn’t have many children. It is also the reason groups in society who see themselves as improving the world have so many children. On average kids are more like their parents than anyone else in things like religion and education. So if you are a doctor who thinks the world needs to get more educated or a Fundamentalist Christian who thinks the world needs to get more religious, than one of the most efficient ways to make the world more like you want it is to simply have more children.

Although I doubt that the average American who has two children thinks this way, I have met several people who admit to having had large numbers of children for reasons like this. It is less a matter of happiness, and more political/religious.

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….er ………… we have kids because we are driven to reproduce .. apparently..

Anyway happiness is much over rated …. there are more and more complex experiences in life … like .. getting drunk … locking yourself in the bathroom to read the last few pages of a book etc.

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I guess it depends in part on the kids you’re dealt. And on the sort of relationship you build with your children’s other parent.

My daughters’ mother and I divorced when they were five and two. But we maintained from the start a congenial and supportive relationship. That in itself is rare enough I suspect, even among parents who remain married.

My children are now young adults. And my raising of them has been pure, unalloyed joy. Yes, there were difficult periods occasionally. But I would not give up one moment of that time, for anything.

Perhaps I was luckier than the parents questioned in these surveys. My kids were kind and thoughtful children, and they are kind and thoughtful adults.

I simply don’t understand those who view parenthood as some sort of chore or imposition. Being a father defines my life, gives it depth and meaning that would otherwise be quite lacking. I wish I could do it all over again, with my same wonderful kids.

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Just as children cannot bring happiness as Couvade points out, I’m not sure they can solely bring unhappiness as well. I’m an older, first time mother to a five month old in a stable relationship with no financial worries and feel that I can take the difficulties that arise from parenting in stride without there being a significant impact on my happiness or unhappiness. Perhaps this is because I have been looking forward to having a baby for several years and did a lot of lifestyle changes as well as research into child rearing before becoming a parent? Of course not having the stress from financial or relationship problems helps tremendously. I suppose an appropriate definition of happiness is in order. Having a child has certainly brought a lot more meaning and wonderment to my life.

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Motherhood is the most intense and rewarding experience of my life.

Yes, we have much more stress and much less freedom than we did before. So life is less carefree and spontaneous.

But that doesn’t mean it is unhappy.

I think the research is too focused on some amorphous concept of “happiness” without providing any real insight into people’s lives.

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I have a son and three daughters who are all in their forties. They continue to bring me great joy. The happiness does not stop.

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We’ve been trying to have a child for years and the infertility issues have nearly broken up our marriage. I can’t understand and don’t want to hear the parental complaints. Parents have no idea how lucky they are. Infertility is the darkest black hole of a woman’s life. Parents – please count your blessings.

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I was depressed before I had kids, and am still depressed. However my kids have nothing to do with it, it was/is a clinical depression. I try not to let my depression rub off on the kids, and medications help me manage it. Am I happier now with kids than I was before?? Probably not.

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My toddler son is far and away the greatest joy in my life. And easily one of the biggest pains. But just seeing him smile — or, better yet, hearing his happy giggle — even once day, far outweighs the many times each day I hear him cry or scream or whine (not to mention all the difficulties and frustration of raising a toddler, aptly summarized by CSchroeder, above).

Is this a biological response bred in me by evolution? Perhaps. But I am glad for it. Too many pleasures in life are self-indulgent and self-serving. Childrearing is different — an arguably altruistic pleasure. The key joy of childrearing is not my joy, but my son’s. I am glad just to share it with him.

Is this “altruism,” in itself, a self-serving emotional response, bred by evolution? Are people who rear happy children more likely to have grandchildren, and pass their genes on for another generation? Maybe — I have no idea. But I do know one thing: that’s not what I am thinking when I hear my son giggle. I’m just thinking “what can I do to make him happy — so that I can hear that giggle again?”

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I have two perfect boys. They have always gotten good grades, excelled at sports, behaved politely and obediently. They are tall and handsome and pleasant and respectful. They are at Ivy League colleges where they are thriving.

However, I have never felt that the time and money and effort I exerted to keep them healthy and happy and occupied offset all the sacrifices I have made in my own personal life, despite the pride I feel when consider their achievements. My overriding sentiment is resentment.

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Interesting. But in my case not having children definitely brought unhappiness. Mind-bending, devastating, unrelenting misery, which, incidentally, only lifted when I managed to eventually have children (through a great deal of effort and with the help of an incredibly generous person). And yes, being a parent is hard at times, the hardest thing I’ve ever done, in fact. But I wouldn’t trade a minute–not even the worst minute–for anything. ………………………………….

What if there is an inherent logical flaw in how all of these studies were set up? Where is your control group, the “wanted to have children but were prevented by their participation in our study” control group?

What if people who have children are unhappy before they have kids? What if people who are happy never feel the need, ‘for something more’ and so they don’t have children?

It would really skew the data if people who are depressed, have worse impulse control, poorer planning skills, less self-determination, and less meaning in their lives other than parenthood, and even less money for birth control…… were the ones who actually have children.

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I believe my decision to have kids was based on my satisfaction with being a child, myself and my desire to validate that experience. I always wanted children, even as a child, of course not knowing what it would mean experientially.

I made my decision young and worked to find a way to have children. My marriage was driven mostly by my desire to have children and when it fell apart I accepted the full responsibility for them.

Has it be hard, yes, and yet it widens your world view so much, it has brought me in closer contact with people, other parents and their children and made me part of a community.

My children now are expressing their interests, which differ from mine, and that is wonderful. Do I look forward to their independence? Yes and yet every moment with them is a moment of heightened existence and random discovery. I cannot focus just on me, and my interests, which might register an increased level of happiness on a test, but by focusing on them I know so much more about myself and the world.

Their existence and mine are irrevocably ed. This is deeper than a measure of happiness. For me having children is the stuff that makes life worth living.

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Why do people believe that children bring happiness despite the research to the contrary? Because it’s not socially acceptable to say otherwise.

My husband and I had some insight as to the misery that children bring when we inherited my 16 and 18 year old sisters upon the death of my mother. My husband and I were 29 and newly married at the time. At that point we decided against having children since raising teenagers is the most effective form of birth control in the universe. Friends told us that our “own” children wouldn’t be like my teenaged sisters. I guess they thought that somehow all the trials and tribulations of raising teenagers would disappear if the teenagers were own children vs. our siblings. Did they think that our children would never lie to us? They would never exhibit risky behavior that would make us lie awake at night with worry? They would never say rude and offensive things? They would never do things of which we wouldn’t approve? Ridiculous.

So reversing our initial decision to not procreate we, at least, entered parenthood with more insight than most who have never been responsible for children. Why did we change our minds? Partly because we believed the hype about how rewarding it is to have children. Partly because we have a wonderful and loving relationship that we wanted to share. Partly because we wanted someone to care for us in our old age.

Now that we are parents to two wonderful, happy, intelligent, funny, and frustrating boys, ages 6 and 2, we see firsthand that the misery of parenthood is tempered by moments of absolute joy and delight. I am my eldest’s hero and can do no wrong in his eyes. There’s no one else on earth (since my mother is dead) who thinks that of me. I delight in their discoveries. I laugh hysterically along with their silliness. I am told and shown every day that I am loved and adored. Granted my boys are still little. I’m sending them to boarding school when they become teenagers (just kidding – maybe).

I don’t regret becoming a parent despite its relentlessness as there’s never a day off until you die. However, I can’t say whether I was happier before or after kids. I can’t even comprehend the comparison because the two states are so vastly different.

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Ha! My mother told me that having kids would make me poor and miserable. So I didn’t have any.

You really don’t want to hear this from your mother, but there is some truth to it.

Frankly, I would resent the demands of time and money that a child rightfully makes. Kids deserve better than I’m willing to give, and I accept that. I wish more folks would ‘fess up to this if it’s true for them. Am I selfish? Yes. Is this bad? I don’t think so.

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I am not less happy than I was before I had my daughter, but I was never scared of losing her before.

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Indeed, it seems tricky to define “happiness” in this sort of a study or survey.

While being “happy” is certainly a good thing, there are always ways to be happy or unhappy in every one of life’s experiences. My kids — like my spouse, my job, my parents, my house, my whole life — make me unbelievably happy sometimes, and other times not so much. It’s about the experience itself, the highs and lows that make up life. No experience is 100 percent happy or unhappy. Life would be completely meaningless without its ups and downs. Happiness is enjoying the ride — a bigger picture than the daily worries and challenges.

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Having children prepares us for death. It’s the selflessness of parenting, putting all of our eggs into the evolutionary basket of the next generation, and the everyday reminder that our kids are rising and we’re declining that helps usher us into that final goodnight.

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I wonder if there would be a big gender gap around the question of happiness with children? Women seem to bear the brunt of the life changes and struggle with their identity long after.

I personally have two children and struggle constantly with the balance between work and motherhood. My career took a huge hit. I’ll encourage my daughter to have children, but also to never stop working.

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We were happy before and are less happy now.

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Maybe I’m deluding myself, but I truly feel happier since having kids. Before children, I traveled and had many of the experiences I’d dreamed of having. But the list was getting short and, were it not for kids, I think I would be getting pretty bored about now. As it is, my husband and I just watch in constant amazement at the hilarious and touching things that our two boys do. Those by far outweigh the hard parts.

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• I was less burdened before we had our child, but I don’t know about happier. I reached adulthood in the Reagan years and disagreed with just about everything the Gipper, Cap the Knife, Ed Meese, Sam Pierce, Poindexter and North, and the rest of that evil cabal set into motion. Was I happy during the invasion of Grenada, Iran-Contra, and so much more? No, not really. More degrees of freedom without the young ‘un, but not more happiness.

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For me having children was something I had fiercely avoided, as if it would ruin all my future plans for success. In my late 20’s, as many people in my family were passing away and it always seemed to be another battle to “let go,” I fell in love with the right man and asked him if we could have a child. I knew it was not totally “sensible” as we hadn’t reached all of our goals yet, and were not even married yet… the death of my grandmother had driven my family apart so they wouldn’t even speak, much less celebrate. So we did it! I had realized this is what we needed! I needed life… and it was the best thing we ever did. The next year we had a wonderful wedding, and every member of our family came. Even my husband’s biological father whom he had only met once before. Children bring light into our lives, and make us appreciate what’s important. My son amazes me every day. Sometimes it is hard, but all things really worthwhile are, like a successful marriage. I think it makes all the difference in the world when you have a child because you want to. Sometimes it is the know what being “ready” really means. For me it was having a mature relationship with my husband, who really wanted to have a child with me, and is a devoted father. That makes me really happy!

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I hope this research gets all the attention it deserves. Other studies show that the more children a couple has, the less happiness they report. I’ve spent a lot of time around couples with children and frankly I just don’t get why people have more than one child. Contrary to belief single children are more adjusted, more social and more likely to be successful in the broad sense of the term. We are as a people rather anti-social which I believe comes from our obsession on creating our own mini-world with our family rather than learning how to reach out to non-family members and creating close relationships. I am very happily married, intentionally have no children and have strong, loving relationships with friends and have helped raised 2 children who lacked caring homes. I so wish women took their decision to have children much more seriously, fully realized all that is involved and limited the number they have for all kinds of prudent reasons. More young women should be encouraged to think seriously about being child-free – it a viable, enjoyable and, yes, rewarding option.

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This is really interesting. I think a lot of times (feeling the pressure now from my fellow 30something friends) people have children because they are scared they will not be happy if they don’t have children. I’m glad to see some research suggesting the opposite may in fact be true. I guess as a 30-something who has chosen not to have children, I’m tired of hearing people tell me that if you if you have children you’re doing something good and unselfish. How about thinking that having children wastes the earth’s resources and we might do better to just adopt kids? Having children is slightly narcissistic–if one has the urge to parent so strongly, why does it have to be your flesh and blood? Why not adopt and give a child the home it needs? I don’t begrudge people for wanting to have children but there’s nothing noble about reproducing either. Having children with the idea that they can bring future happiness is absurd, but many people do it and judge people who don’t have children as selfish. Lets also not forget that people also think that they will be UNHAPPY later in life if they don’t have children NOW. I also think there’s nothing wrong with choosing not to have children and to say, “I chose happiness instead.” My husband and I have decided to not have children and to do things that will make us happier than parenting. We like children but not enough to believe they are essential to happiness. I’d like to see more research like this.

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“having children does not bring joy to our lives.”

There is a big, big difference between happiness and joy. Happiness may be able to be measured through statistical studies, but joy is an altogether different experience. I don’t think you can say that there is no joy simply because there is no happiness.

These studies also beg the question: Why are adults who can’t have children so remarkably UN-happy?

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This is a hilarious entry. I agree with Nancy, though, that one has to define happiness. Is it the same as abiding contentment? Is it elation? I have two daughters and frequently marvel at my own contentment (smug person that I am). There’s nothing like having one’s very own clan, esp. when life can be so tough.

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Having children is the best thing I have EVER done in my life or ever expect to.

It is amazing to take part in the first miracle and then watch as their personalities unfold. It is a ton of work. But is it always worth it. I’ve never looked back. And I rarely got enough sleep.

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“Happiness” may or may not be the right emotion to try to quantify. My two kids give me immeasurable feelings of love, competence, commitment, responsibility, and the occasional philosophical-musings moment. They also bring me great joy and aggravation. So it is and always has been, i think.

Am i “happier” than before kids? perhaps, because my life now has a focus outside of myself, and i am never bored. as my husband says, “what did we do before we had them?!” (Usually followed by “we waster our chances!” :-)

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I experience moments of sheer joy every day, those moments when I’m getting a bear hug from my 7-year old daughter or a snuggle from my 11-year old son. Those moments are of course bittersweet as well, tinged with the awareness that all this is fleeting and I won’t be able to hold my kids in my arms forever. I never feel more alive than in those moments of pure connection to these little folks. Tired? Sure. Wouldn’t trade one second of it, not for anything.

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I have always considered psychology one of the “soft” sciences. Here we see what happens when you try to apply quantitative analysis to questions of subjective, qualitative value. When your data is based solely upon what people have said about how they feel, you are basically just taking a poll. We all know how unreliable polls are!. The thing that bothers me the most about this is that this “researcher” actually expects to be taken as seriously as someone working with a particle accelerator!

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Do these studies correlate perceived outcome of parenting with happiness. If your child (whether through your fault or something outside of your control) ends up a being a high school dropout with a criminal record you might have different feelings than if that same child graduated from college and is gainfully employed doing something they love to do. Also, if you have children because you think they will make you happy you are bound to be disappointed and unhappy. My mother expects that my brothers and I are responsible for her happiness and can’t accept the fact that she alone is responsible for her happiness.

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The study is seriously flawed by the fact that happiness cannot be measured, and in fact can only be inferred by what is reported by the parents themselves. Example: if you ask the average westerner whether he feels to be rich, he is likely to answer that he does not feel rich at all; but in fact most of us access levels of nutrition, education, health care, security which only very few could afford just two hundred years ago, and which have been unthinkable for most of the history of Man. Incidentally then, it is utterly ridiculous to draw evolutionary conclusions from this study, considering that our present state is an exception in the history of the species. What we are witnessing is that people perceive that, had they never had children, they might have lived a better life; but there is no way for them to make the experiment, so what is the value of this perception? They compare a memory with the present state; well, I can certainly compare myself changing diapers with that other self who could lie on the beach and read novels all the time, but what is the sense of this comparison? It is not the same self!

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I will never know if I would have been happier without children, and there are certainly some very unhappy moments in my life now, especially with teenagers, but I know I am much, much more fulfilled as a person than I would have been without my two sons and a daughter (ages 10, 13, and 16). I have also given and received infinitely more love than I would have without them. Happier? I don’t know. Loved and fulfilled? Most definitely.

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I think a lot of parental unhappiness has to do with parental expectations. So many people have children thinking they are going to get the ‘perfect’ baby or child, who will have a sweet, even-keeled temperament; who will be attractive and smart but not too needy; who will provide them with boundless unconditional love; who will not disappoint them in their choice of education, mate, profession, etc.; and who will spend unlimited time caring for them in the parents’ old age. The reality is that no one knows what kind of child they will get. Kids can be difficult, contrary, stubborn, defiant, lazy, mean and disappointing. If you get them to age 18 and they still want to have periodic contact with you that is not entirely about money or about what a crappy parent you were, count yourself lucky. But I would not trade the experience of being a parent for anything. My life is rich and meaningful in a way that it never was when I was childless. It is hard, every single day. The same way that maintaining a close, fulfilling marriage is hard, every single day. But the experience is worth it, regardless of what kind of adult our child turns out to be. We have had a lot to learn about accepting him for the child he is and not the child we thought we were getting, but the journey of raising him is not something we would trade for any other experience in the world.

Somewhere along the way we got the idea that being a parent is supposed to be fulfilling for the adult, instead of for the child. I think it was in the “me generation” of the sixties. You still see it now, only it’s grandparents who don’t understand why their children’s’ and grandchildren’s’ lives don’t revolve around them. My husband and I became parents because we wanted to take part in the magical experience of shaping another human life, not because we thought it would be nonstop fun and laughs and we would end up with a Nobel-prize-winner who models for GQ in his spare time. People get disappointed with parenthood for the same reason they get disillusioned with marriage – it’s not as fun as it looks in the movies, 24/7/365, and that’s not “fulfilling” or “self-actualizing.” Too bad more people don’t see that there are good reasons to do things that have nothing to do with how fun or entertaining they are in the short term.

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I think women’s ticking biological clock is underrated here too, as well as societal pressures. Women feel like they have an expiration date and it’s “now or never”. So “now” often sounds much better than the “never” which is so…final. They want to make sure they don’t have regrets later in life.

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Boy !!! I’ve never read an audience that had difficulty saying they are happy. I’m happy. I’m happy I have some great kids who add humor and joy to my daily humdrum existence. I don’t see how married people could be happy without children. I don’t see how single people could be happy without being married and without children.

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My husband and I agree that our son is the greatest invention ever and joy personified. We also think that he is the mother of all inconvenience, a monumental hassle in cute little shoes.

I agree with people who have said that the authors of this study didn’t think too hard about the concept of happiness, and how it might be related to such concepts as accomplishment, connection, joy, struggle, and so forth.

In his song Graceland, Paul Simon tells his son

You are the burden of my generation I sure do love you–let’s get that straight.

I think that sums it up.

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I went into parenthood willingly and with eyes wide open, but at the same time I’ve been amazed at how difficult it’s been. I’ve frequently wrestled with unhappiness over the loss of freedom (including living in one place for 20 years so he didn’t have to change schools), the nights spent lying awake wondering if I was doing the right thing for him, the agonizing worries when he was sick, his unique ability to break my heart with an angry remark. Yet every time I look at him, even now that he’s a snarky, sarcastic teenager who thinks I do everything wrong, I can’t believe the huge upwelling of love I feel for him.

Once when a childless friend asked me how having children changes things, I answered, “They make you involuntarily noble.” I still feel this way. Being a parent (and now caring for my own aging parents) has brought out the best in me and made me part of something bigger, something for the ages. That is not the happiness of day-to-day fun, but it is something profound and valuable.

Because of my son I know what it is to feel unconditional love, an experience I never would’ve had any other way. The very term “unconditional” implies that it’s difficult, that it endures despite the many negatives. I may not be happier (I don’t know how I would feel if childless), but I’m certainly “more” than I was before.

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I think a lot of people have children because they are driven biologically to do so, to create an unconditional (hopefully) safety net against loneliness, to cement a relationship, or just because they happened. I (a woman) knew when I was 10 years old that I would never have kids. For no reason other than I just knew it. I have never felt the pull, and always made it very clear to any men I was involved with that I was not anybody’s mommy and that was non-negotiable. Now, at 57, I look back and realize what a blessing of freedom this was for me as my life as I have had it would never have been possibly had I not been unencumbered. Is my way for everyone? Of course not. Do I have any regrets, nagging doubts, sighing moments of wondering “what if?” Not a one. It’s been great. My point is that there is no one-size-fits-all in this thing and to make it appear so is to devalue the choice making right we all have. A lot of people have had kids whose kids would have been better off with different parents. Perhaps more conscious choices would produce healthier families and perhaps, just maybe, more happiness.

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I recently found out that I will be a father for the first time. Currently, I have a mix of fear and anticipation about my impending fatherhood.

While the mother and I are not in a relationship, it is my hope that we work together for the best interests of our child. I’ve heard and seen horror stories about bad parenting and I do not wish to repeat those mistakes.

I do not believe that children can/will bring one happiness or sadness. They are a product of either willful or ignorant bliss. Regardless of the cause, it is our job as parents to make ourselves see both the good and bad that comes along with raising children.

In many ways, I think Mother Nature played a cruel joke on us making sex so pleasurable yet so dangerous. I often wonder why we as human don’t have sex like other animals for procreation and no other reason.

While I enjoy my last few months of freedom I will continue to take note of my joys and and fears and see how they compare to fatherhood.

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Look, I’m a psychologist, and this one is quite easy. If you read Dawkins, it’s all explained.

Children are an extension of our selves, they are our genes, they are our immortality, or at least the next chunk of it.

I hate to break the magic, but we can never deny fulfillment with our children as that would be a denial of ourselves and our qualification to go on to the next round.

The truth of the matter is that you are happier without children; there is nothing about raising children that improves your status or immediate life, or self-actualization.

However, you miss the opportunity to pass on anything, the good or the bad. This is only possible through children.

Children are our hope for the lacking in our own lives. They provide a component to the psyche that cannot be satisfied in other ways without them. They are our immortality, our legacy, and our hope. They are our mortal life after our death.

That is why we sheepishly smile and say that they are worth it with baggy eyes, empty wallets, and ruined relationships with our spouses. The pile of poop is…..worth it.

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You can”t expect someone else to “make you happy.” I agree with others in that you have to find/make your own happiness.

Having a child has filled and brought joy to my heart more than any other event/thing/accomplishment in my life. I never knew I could love one person so much and unconditionally until I had a child.

Children don’t come with a manual. It is very hard and depends on the temperament of the baby/child and parents. We also don’t have any help-Parent’s or relatives that can help balance work/home/school closings. Not having family or people you can trust with your child makes instances or circumstances difficult from time to time. I would not say it makes you less happier. From my experience, it has filled my heart with more joy and happiness, even with the day to day struggles and juggles.

Raising a child, having a family, managing a home or at least trying to…whether or not you work outside the home-is not easy and you’re not “happy” every minute of it. It is not exciting and joyous to change poopey diapers or projectile vomit. You should definitely wait till you think you are ready.

I would have to say it is not the child that makes you unhappy but maybe when your partner/spouse is not “pulling” their weight and you start adding up the lack of assistance/help they provide (dishes, laundry, meals etc…) I am happy to do those things for my child (and do not keep a running tally) but if I start comparing how much I do and how much my life has changed in comparision to my spouse (when we both work)-that makes me unhappy. Ha ha ha.

I love my spouse but it just seems like the least he can get away with…the least he will do.

As Anna Quindlen said in 2003, “In the decades since I graduated from college, women have earned the right to do as much as men do. They just haven’t won the right to do as little as men do.”

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My first wife and I adopted a child from South Korea, as we were not able to have children on our own. I remember around that time, Bill Cosby’s book about parenting, in which he said,” Anyone who wants to have children has got to be crazy!” And he went on to explain why, which had to make you really laugh, because… it was really true.

But we went ahead and adopted our son, who it turned out had serious psychological problems that challenge him (now 23 years old) to this day, and made parenting the most challenging experience of my life.

Having our son did not make me happier then or now. My personal summation is that parenting brought out “the worst & best in me”, both aspects, important information in my becoming a more mature adult, the latter coming to the aide of the former, necessity being the mother, or in this case the parent of invention.

What parenting did do, was to help me be a wiser, understanding & more compassionate person. It’s hard to measure that kind of happiness, but I have never said I regretted our decision, and I’ve never denied that it was hell at times, & rarely heaven.

Would I do it again with my son? Yes, absolutely! Would I do it differently? Hell yeah, being the wiser more compassionate guy it help me be (though some of my wisdom came a little too late this time around).

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Since when is happiness the only goal in life? What about pride, duty, accomplishment, satisfaction, or contentment?

The “happiness is everything” school of thought might fly in a Hollywood movie, but it’s been my experience that adults who have worked hard for many years develop a more mature value set.

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• Ambition / Rank / Success / Immortality / Rising

I think these are one of the big motivators that make people choose parenthood.

People start out with big dreams of what they’ll achieve, and as time goes by and their dreams become compromised, they transfer that hope to their children. Think of Willy Lohman from Death Of A Salesman, who is so determined that his son Biff be a huge success. All his hopes for himself are drying up but he still holds on to the hope that his son can be what he wasn’t.

Being a ‘proud parent,’ works for many years, but parenthood has a big disappointment built in: Kids grow up and leave. You discover they don’t belong to you and their successes aren’t yours. You’re left wondering, ‘Why did I do it? What did it get me?’ as Mama Rose says in Gypsy. ‘One quick look as each of them leaves me.’

Hope is the opiate of the masses. It gets people to reproduce and work and pray so hard!!

No hope is no kind of philosophy to live by, but Hope? Hope is a cruel trick.

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If parenting was so miserable, then the only explanation would be that we are doomed by the biological imperative (the need of a species to reproduce). If not, then the definition of happiness seems to be poor at best. The first case begs the question of whether the biological imperative can override psychological needs, such as the pursuit of happiness. Well, it wouldn’t be much of an imperative if it couldn’t… The second case begs the question of what exactly is happiness. While being happy is a momentary state of mind, happiness is normally associated with a longer lasting condition. We may be tempted to define happiness as continuous joy, but that would be more like bliss – some sort of no strings attached all-time high. Happiness in my mind is more akin to self-realization, feeling whole – this is not the same as having no regrets or facing no challenges. I consider myself to be live in happiness even though the majority of the moments are not particularly happy right now. But I do have two beautiful, smart and healthy kids and a beautiful, smart and healthy wife. Great friends and family. I myself am healthy and perhaps smart – maybe even somewhat beautiful… but I digress. I cannot imagine a life without them – the vacuum would be too great. Sure, life was good before, even more fun, but far less richer. Then again, this is as much a philosophical issue as a moral and biological issue. People don’t necessarily think this deep most of the time – no judgment here, just a fact. But in the end, it may not be possible to grab a sample big enough to draw generalities. It seems to me that we all experience life in a very unique way – not two humans are 100% alike. In any case, I’m sure happy to be around. Are you?

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If you are going to have kids, then you have to get your dreams planted first because once you have kids, then the children must come first. They are depending on you.

If you don’t understand that, then you shouldn’t have kids and you shouldn’t complain about the unhappiness.

You can’t be responsible for the lives of young ones and still have a swinging life of your own.

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This type of finding might emerge if people who are unhappy before having children become happier after having, them, but those who are happy before having children become less happy.

The more interesting question may be, who becomes happier and less happy after having children.

A related question is whether the mean differences involve a reduction for very high levels of happiness over time, or is the reduction similar for people who start off at every level of happiness. I suspect the former, and I suspect that this might have something to do with a shift from inaccurate to more accurate self-perception that comes with the increasing ability to be grounded in reality after one has children.

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Having a child made my own happiness irrelevant. I am happy if she is happy, and not if she is not. As she is a teenager, it’s often “not.” Maybe non-parents generally become happier as they get older, but parents have to vicariously relive the suffering of youth.

As others have said, personal happiness is not all there is to life, or even in the top three.

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Since when does our individual happiness depend on others? Those poor children and spouses who carry the burden of making another person happy!

You have to be happy as individual, from within, on your own- period.

If your happiness depends on a spouse, children, possessions, or external factors – you will forever be vulnerable to circumstances beyond your control.

I have a daughter – who is amazing and I love her to pieces and am thrilled to be a mom. All that being said, my happiness cannot hinge on her, that’s not her job. Nor is it my my job to make her happy. I can show her the ways of the world, but the best thing that I can do for her as a parent is to instill in her that she must make herself happy (and contribute to the happiness of others, and everyone and everything else is a glorious bonus!

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I’m a 26 y/o female, I don’t intend to bear any children but fully intend to live a rich and satisfying life.

To ‘reproductively challenged’ couples who want kids: Please adopt. There is a huge surplus of children on this planet born to women with no control over their own fertility, let alone their sexuality (in today’s news, Afghanistan has legalized marital rape — good work, Karzai).

Are parents who adopt less happy than those with biological children? Doubt it. If anything, I’d expect them to be happier, having actively chosen to bring children into their lives, instead of having unplanned children arrive as a mere by-product of sex. Enough with the genetic narcissism.

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Count no one happy until they have reached the end of their lives and can say that they had more good luck than bad. No one is happy while they live. They are only lucky. This applies to those with and without children.

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Doesn’t this mean that humanity becomes more and more unhappy?

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The question of having children is less an issue of “happiness” than it is of “fulfillment.” Certainly working in a refugee camp, for instance, doesn’t involve “happiness”, nor does volunteering in a hospice. But living a “happy” life in which you’ve adequately addressed your own self-interest and personal needs doesn’t necessarily lead to “fulfillment.”

Not that I’m equating the challenges of refugees or the dying with raising a child; but the common denominator is the attending to a life, or lives, other than your own, and hoping, even if it is a delusional hope, that you can have a positive impact on those lives.

Refine the study to include relative states of “fulfillment” and take “happiness” out of the equation, and I think we’ll have a clearer glimpse of why it is we humans reproduce.

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Have any of these studies asked elderly people (in their 80s) who do and/or do not have children how happy they are with the decision they made with respect to raising a child or not? Or, did these studies take into account (control for) the ages of the parents asked? What percentage of elderly folks in the industrialized world are thrilled that they never had children (or adopted, etc.)? What percentage of people are “happy” to be grandparents? Those may be the more relevant questions. Temporary measures of subjective well-being during a particular time-period in one’s adult life may favor not having children. But, I wonder when one reflects upon a “life well-lived” how many will truly be happy he/she never raised a child.

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How could this question be properly studied? People who choose not to have children and those who choose to have children could easily be different in important ways even if they appear demographically the same. It seems like it is impossible to have adequately comparable groups, It also makes me wonder if these studies control for those who chose to have children versus those who wound up having kids. I wonder if that’s an important difference. Also, isn’t the population of coupled people who don’t have children quite small compared to those who do? If so, are these studies comparing very young populations with non-parents who are happy to not be parents yet, but might be less happy with this choice later?

A wise friend once described the difference between parenting and not parenting as: “less fun, more joy” which makes me wonder whether the right things are being measured. While the article above notes several different things that are measured (happiness, well-being, life satisfaction) I wonder whether the right thing is being measured. How do you get at things that may cause suffering and stress but that you believe in them greatly?

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I have struggled with this concept over the years. In my early 20s I knew I wanted to have children, I have always been so maternal. My boyfriend at the time was catholic and from Spain. There was little doubt that he would be a great father and partner. In the long run we changed and not together. After seeing my sisters raise their children, I have come to the conclusion that I don’t want them and feel pretty comfortable with the idea. To me there are many other ways to take care of my need of caring for others like, teaching, doing volunteer work, or maybe in the distant future be a foster parent. While I feel comfortable with this decision, there is a certain level of fear that at 40 I will regret having children, that my life won’t be meaningful…etc. But I’ve never been the type of person to let fear dictate my decisions. Plus I’m an Aunt, so I get most of the perks from a distance. I have seen how hard it has been for my sisters. I admire them greatly and all else who chose to have children and raise them with love and responsibly.

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I was brought up in a dysfunctional family. I yarned for a family. I can only say that becoming a mother with very healthy girls have made me and my husband very happy. Yes, sleep deprivation, changing poop, and worrying about their future. But knowing that you love them no matter what, that just by looking into their eyes and you can tell what kind of a day they had. These are emotions that only love can give you and that makes us happy. Weir, but while giving birth to my first girl, I was already thinking of my second one. I am a much happier person because i had children.

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Maybe happiness is not the right question. Perhaps it is the moments of joy or the satisfaction of having raised a child that create the net benefit. For example, if they asked elderly people at the end of their lives how satisfied they were with their life and legacy, I wonder whether there would be a material difference. Just anecdotally, having talked to a number of older childless people, several have expressed to me profound regrets at not having children, even though they may otherwise be happy. Conversely, the older people who are unhappy but have children, have often expressed joy and satisfaction in that, even if they were otherwise dissatisfied with their lives. Some of it may also have to do with the unhappiness that comes from having children who fail at life. Do any of the studies rate the happiness factor of those parents who had children who went on to become successful contributing members of society, as opposed to those who had children who were only mediocre or failed? Perhaps having a child is like a lottery ticket in that if it works, there is a big emotional payoff.

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My grandmother had 13 children and when she was dying, (at the age of 95), she woke up one night very disoriented. My Aunt, who was sitting by her bedside, was subjected to a series of questions: “Who am I, what am I doing here?” She answered her “Your name is…….. , you are 95 years old and you have 13 children.” She looked at my aunt and responded in a wry voice: “What fool me.” I think of her often as I sit here at the age of 39, pregnant with my first, knowing all the statistics, but willing to be a fool anyway. I have lived a great life, had a great career, loved passionately, had my heart broken more than once, traveled all around the world and I think that I might finally be ready for this next step. In any case, it’s too late now. She’s due on May 15th. And I’m naming her after my grandmother. Life is a great unknown, but one of the most important lessons I ever learned came straight from the mouth of an 80’s pop icon: Be good to yourself because nobody else has the power to make you happy……………..

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I was sitting joyously happy on Tuesday because my son was in flight on his R&R from Iraq returning to his wife and son. My husband said, “You are happy knowing all your ducks are in a row”. I laughed saying ” Wrong animal all my chicks are happy. The old saying a mother is only as happy as her saddest child is true. Today our son, daughter in law and grandson are happy. Therefore I can rejoice in the moment.”

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When i gave a copy of my collection of poems to a young high school English teacher, she asked if it was my greatest achievement. My immediate response was “no, my children are.” Parenthood is hard, but who would trade those wonderful moments of discovery, those moments when our children teach us things, those moments when we watch our children grow into interesting, self-sufficient people? Parenthood isn’t for the selfish, the selfish or the superficial, but the payoff is great. Adult children, like small children are fun, interesting and a continuing source of joy.

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I think it’s a mixed bag. As a childless couple, I think there are times that we get tied up into things that would never happen if we had kids. So perhaps there is a “happiness” that comes to a childless couple, but I also think we miss out on things that could bring great joy. Just as sadness and sorrow are not the same, happiness and joy are not the same. Perhaps there is more joy in the lives of people with children and less happiness?

Just a thought.

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Why is this society all about ME ME ME? Maybe some things in life aren’t done for selfish reasons. Parenthood is hard, but I am honored to be the caretaker of three beautiful little souls. My husband and I had children because we entered a sacramental marriage where we promised God that we would be open to welcoming children into our family. This world is so screwed up.

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None of you seem to have teenagers. That is a whole different discussion. There is a level of worry that goes with the turf (unless you chain them to the bed every moment they are not in school) that impacts your happiness. I agree that having children for your own fulfillment is a bad idea and a terrible burden for the child but you do get something out of it. To have a hand in the development of another and to watch that other develop into their own person different from you is beyond words.

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I don’t think this study applies only to children. It seems to me that any intimate human relationship can decrease happiness. When my children hurt or are having a difficult time, I hurt. When my husband, siblings, or close friends hurt or are having a difficult time, I also hurt. This is what it means to be human.

I think the sacrifice of a portion of my “happiness” for such a relationship is more than a fair trade.

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My children were my joy as a young mother with a husband who always seemed to be working. I adored reading to them, taking them on adventures, supervising their homework and later being their soccer coach where I got to know well a lot of their friends.

What I did not like was having to take care of a house, plan meals, pay bills, write thank yous and deal with all the details that fall to a stay at home wife while the busy husband gets to work. I was very unhappy not being able to pursue my own career and interests but that wasn’t the fault of having children.

Having children goes much easier if you enjoy children. For me, I drew my energy from seeing the world through young eyes and teaching them about the world around them. Now as a grandmother, I find I enjoy the grands as much as I did my own children but I miss being the mother in charge. I find that I want time with each grandchild without the parents. There is something very special about one and one relationships with children or grandchildren. One on one communication really matters.

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I love my little boy with every fiber of my being. I look forward with great anticipation to our next child. I never knew true happiness until he was born.

On the other hand:

Raising kids generates a lot of stress. If you cannot handle the stress, don’t have kids.

Raising kids requires a lot of sacrifices. If you are unwilling to sacrifice, don’t have kids.

Raising kids is risky. To improve your odds you will have to fully invest 20 years or more of your life into your kids, and it might never pay off, it might end in tragedy. If you are risk-averse, don’t have kids.

Some people forgo raising kids because they are selfish, self-absorbed ego-maniacs addicted to short-term gratification. Fortunately for the human race, most people are not like that. I know a few who are. They are not necessarily bad people, they should just never have kids.

Most of us who do have kids do so because chemicals in our brains urge us to procreate. We just do it because we’re breeders, giving little or no thought to the consequences. It’s human nature in its purest and most powerful form.

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I can’t imagine my life without my children and grandchildren. were there bad days – sure. but i would have had a lot more without them.

It’s certainly more then just ‘happiness’ that having a child brings into your life. I didn’t understand many things about my mother’s decisions until I had a child of my own. Your world changes.

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[*http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/01/why-does-anyone-have-children/?apage=4#comments*](http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/01/why-does-anyone-have-children/?apage=4)