

# Five lies you cannot afford to believe

How many people do you know you'd describe as *truly* happy? Now have a think about one of them and try and pinpoint what it is that makes them happy.

I'm willing to bet it's not because he or she is wealthy (though they may be), has a great job (though they may have), or be admired by their friends or work colleagues (though they may be).

The 100% certainty is they're happy because they're personally fulfilled. They are simply enjoying being themselves. And without realising it, they've probably avoided the five lies which modern society preaches – lies which imply they'll make you happy, but in fact usually do the complete opposite.

Here they are:

## Lie No.1: **MORE IS BETTER:**

More money, more gigabytes in your iPod, more clothes – just more, more, more.

The 'more is better' message is central to most advertising and feeds on the one of the less attractive sides of human nature: greed.

And because we're human, we fall for it all the time. But it's a lie and here's why:

Because if more is better, it follows that it's never possible to have enough – so you end up in an endless quest for the unreachable. And that means a life of frustration and dissatisfaction. Who needs that?

The only beneficiaries from this 'more' culture are the companies trying to sell you products and services – and they in turn are driven by their shareholders to make bigger – and more – profits.



The truth is reflected by the adage 'the best things in life are free' – love and friendship, self-expression, being at one with nature and the environment – simply being truly 'you'.

## Lie no.2: **SOONER IS BETTER:**

'I want it – and I want it *now!*'

Sadly, western society increasingly operates on this basis, but again, it just creates a vicious circle of unjustified expectation, stress and disappointment. And as the medical profession will testify, this is having a highly detrimental affect on our health and capacity to be happy.

The truth is anything worth having is worth working and waiting for.

I'm sure you can think of examples of something you know you've done thoroughly (say a piece of homework) and the satisfaction that gives you – irrespective of the marks you get. Although the chances are if you've given it your best shot, your grade will reflect this.

It's no different to going on a long journey. Getting to your destination instantly would take away the pleasure of the things you'll see and experience en route. Even if that route takes you down different twists and turns and involves some hassle – imagine the stories you can tell when you arrive.

Enjoy the journey! No experiences are wasted.

**Lie no.3: WINNING IS BETTER:**

No-one's saying winning is wrong – of course it's not. But is winning collecting trophies, or finishing top of the class – or is it reaching your own potential, even if that means being 'second best'?

Take the example of Harel Levy, the former no.1 Israeli professional tennis player. With his career on the rise and his international ranking climbing quickly, he suffered a potentially career-ending injury which sidelined him for nearly 18 months – and almost left him unable to play again.

Through extraordinary determination, discipline and painful rehabilitation, he did play again. Not only did he return to form, but his game – especially his strength and agility – increased dramatically from his rehab efforts. In 2001, two years after he'd been told he might never play again, he beat Pete Sampras (then ranked no.1 in the world).

Was Harel a winner? You bet he was!

Of course, Harel isn't the only person to come back from adversity – history is filled with stories of people who have suffered great setbacks, disappointments and defeats, and only then were able to achieve the success, happiness and fulfillment they'd sought all along.

In fact, these stories tell us that it is **imperative** to experience defeats and setbacks. How else can you know what success looks like?

**Lie no.5: SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE IS BETTER:**

It's easy to lose yourself in a crowd – and so many people of all ages do just that.

They wear the same type of clothes as their friends, listen to the same type of music – and go out to the same sort of places. They cease to become individuals.

But one of life's great pleasures is discovering something you personally really love doing, watching or wearing – simply because it just makes you feel 'you'. Even better when you discover it all on your own – it's 'yours', and even better, you don't need others' approval.

The icing on the cake is when people are attracted to you – and vice-versa – *because* of your self-generated interests and qualities. That's when great friendships are born, which can last a lifetime. Priceless.

Sounds easy doesn't it? But not when your parents or teachers are trying to mould you into their version of 'acceptability', whilst your peers are often pulling you in a different direction.

**Lie no. 4: EASIER IS BETTER:**

Do you know anyone who has cheated in an exam or copied something from the internet and then claimed it was their own work?

Even worse, how about someone who has ended a relationship by email or text?

Very easy to do – but let's be honest, it's cowardly.

And the truth is, even if it feels easy, it's storing up trouble – because word gets around and you'll get a reputation for not being trustworthy. Then the consequences of cheating at school, or not treating others with respect can really come home to roost:

All your exam results wiped out, losing a relationship that really matters – things which can really affect your life.

Then who's the loser?

The fact is there is no substitute for hard work. Almost every 'overnight success story' will tell you it took them years of hard work to get to the point of becoming successful – whatever their goals were. As one teacher of mine put it: "I consider myself a 15-year overnight success story".



The answer lies in the person in the middle of all this – **you**. The excitement of teenage years is pushing back boundaries and finding the things you feel are really important to you.

And you know what? When you find something you really enjoy, the chances are you'll excel at it– and if you're determined and make your own luck enough to be able to make a living out of it, you might just solve your career options at the same time!

Of course, this isn't suggesting you flout authority and commit the socially-unacceptable. It's about challenging the norm, exceeding others' expectations and coming up with answers that are right for you. Without lapsing into selfishness, you are your own priority.



This 'navigation process' is called living autonomously.

Accessing the power to function autonomously, partly by learning to reject society's five big lies, is one of the key benefits of the **EMPOWERED** Life Workshop.

In fact most who attend these programs come in asking for confidence to do things like approach strangers, speak in front of audiences, try out for something they've always wanted to do... Things that to them seem unimaginably big.

Most of them will have this by the end of the first evening!

The real adventure of their lives begins just beyond where they thought they'd ever get to in one weekend, and we'll be there by Saturday morning.

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- Becky, 17, Dorking

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