



Felicitators

Introduction

This symposium is the result of our efforts to collect and present what we know about the creation and distribution of happiness. Our aim is to help shift the focus of wellbeing research from the 'I' to the 'we' by celebrating people and places, ideas and institutions, that have made and can make the world a happier place. We call them 'Felicitators' – producers of happiness. This has echoes of Bentham's felicific calculus, and reminds us that GNH, the Gross National Happiness concept, is rendered in Brazil as FIB, Felicidade Interna Bruta.

Our unusual partnership is thanks to Jean Timsit, who two years ago invited a range of happiness researchers to pool their diverse skills and interests to expand and enrich what is known and can be used to improve lives. We are enormously grateful for his initiative and continued support. In January 2010, in the course of project discussions in Tulum (Mexico), we fell upon two ideas at once. The first was to use particular stories and examples as a way of assembling and explaining important results. The second was to encourage the spread of wellbeing by celebrating felicitators, and especially those whose ideas and actions have broad or universal applicability. We think that our eight papers, created collaboratively and gathered together in this symposium, are ideally placed in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*, whose mission, like ours, is to develop and freely exchange ideas that deserve and need to cross geographic and disciplinary borders.

We will not attempt to stitch our papers too tightly together, or to claim any sort of completeness. We opted for examples, and examples are what you get. What, you might ask, following the alphabetical order of our names, could Dr Seuss, Maria Montessori, Bruder Klaus, Central Park, Singapore prisons, Moses, the Dalai Lama and music have in common? Read on and see. You may, like us, be surprised to see how many common themes there are, and how very specific examples can open up very large discussions.

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