

Unlocking the key to happiness

New film explores what fulfils us as human beings and comes up with some interesting conclusions, says David Maida

MOST people toil away for 40 hours a week, or more, in the hope of earning money and gaining a sense of personal achievement. For most people, all this effort is with the ultimate aim of being happy.

But a new film suggests our happiness comes from within.

The film is called *Your Guide to True Happiness* and features a range of New Zealand experts giving their advice on how to achieve personal contentment and happiness.

It is by former *Herald* employment editor Steve Hart, who says he was inspired by all the correspondence he received from people unhappy with their lives and careers.

"I saw so many unhappy people and many of them had money, big houses and flash cars — but they were still miserable," Hart says.

He is now a freelance journalist, editor and video-maker. His happiness video is out on DVD and features some of New Zealand's leading doctors, authors, coaches and psychologists.

Leadership coach Clive Littin says he wanted to do the video because there is not much information in the media about what you need to do in your life to be happy.

"If people watch it and take it to heart, it will have a huge impact on their lives," Littin says.

In the video, Littin gives practical coaching on everyday issues such as how to deal with bad drivers on the road and maintain a sense of inner peace.

Much of his advice comes from working with his clients on a day-to-day basis.

"I've been in counselling for a lot of my life and realise how many unhappy people live in the community who are

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JANICE DAVIES
ATTITUDE SPECIALIST

really trying to do their best but not quite sure how to get the level of happiness that they really want," Littin says.

Attitude specialist Janice Davies says she wanted to take part to show people that the key to happiness is in their own hands.

"What I share on the video, I totally believe in — that self esteem is the key to success. If people have got high self esteem then they have the ability to be able to overcome all the obstacles in their life," Davies says.

In the video, Davies outlines six aspects of life where people need to focus in order to achieve happiness. One of those areas is your career.

"Life is full of hiccups and each of us has the opportunity to overcome those hiccups. If you're unhappy with your work then find another job," Davies says. She says that far too often people just get stuck in a rut and can stay in that rut for decades or even a



lifetime. She says there are some things which you cannot change, so it is important to take advantage of the things you can and make a change.

The film also deals with the serious problem of depression in New Zealand. Dr Tom Mulholland describes how depression is an actual physical problem with our brains.

"Is your unhappiness coming from a software problem like what you're telling yourself or is your unhappiness coming from a hardware problem? You might be low in neurotransmitters. It's just like a computer. You can't run great software if your hardware is shot."

Your Guide to True Happiness explores the effects of success, wealth and ambition on our happiness. It devotes an entire segment to the concept of buying happiness. Sometimes

the pursuit of wealth can make us unhappy the same way poverty can. Once a certain amount of financial security is reached, additional wealth makes little difference to a person's happiness.

Leadership coach Jon Winder works with business leaders and also features in the video. He says corporate high-fliers are not necessarily happier than the average worker.

"I think happiness is really an individual thing. I think stress is a factor that gets in the way of happiness."

With our faster-paced lifestyles in the 21st century, Winder says there is a tendency to lose sight of the fundamentals of what makes us happy.

We should be able to be happy at work.

"Even at a business level, I think people want to not only do business

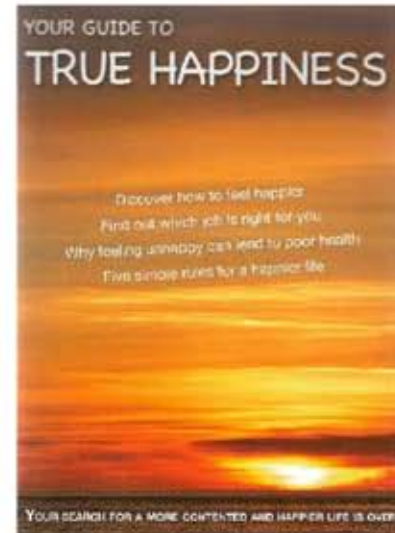
but to actually enjoy it so that it is a pleasant human experience."

Winder refers to the Dalai Lama who said: "I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear. Whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we all are seeking something better in life. So, I think, the very motion of our life is towards happiness."

Winder counsels young men in New Zealand who have come from quite distressed situations and says he often sees the opposite of happiness.

"Instinctively, happiness is something that every human being wants if you really got down to it. Every parent I've ever talked to about their child has always said, 'I just want my kid to be happy.'"

Leadership coach Talia Mana says



EXPLORER: Steve Hart set out to find what makes us truly happy. The documentary (above) is out now.

there are much easier ways to become happy than to accumulate wealth. In the video, Mana describes how working hard now to achieve happiness in the future is not an effective strategy.

"Some people think that they have to plan to be happy. They'll be happy tomorrow or next week or next year," Mana says.

She says happiness is not conditional.

"I'll be happy when this problem is over. I'll be happy when I'm married. I'll be happy when I'm rich, when I've built my business. It doesn't work like that," Mana says.

Your Guide to True Happiness can be purchased online at www.truehappiness.tv

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