



What's best?

Comparative adjectives

Reading: Happiness

1 How happy are you? Discuss these questions with a partner.

- 1 Are you generally happy and satisfied with life? Are you happier than most people?
- 2 What makes you happy: a sunny day, a pay rise? Think of five things.

2 What things affect how happy people feel? Tick (✓) the things that make a difference.

- 1 education level
- 2 gender (male/female)
- 3 age
- 4 having an interesting job or hobby
- 5 having close friendships or a satisfying marriage
- 6 having children (or not)
- 7 genes*
- 8 having lots of money
- 9 having more money than other people
- 10 something else (what?)

genes: parts of a cell that controls what living things are like. Parents pass their genes on to their children

3 Read the research results of some scientists and psychologists below and find out if you are right.

4 How many answers did you get right? Which answers were most surprising?

What makes us happy?

PERHAPS IT'S SURPRISING, but research shows that most people are happy most of the time. Ninety per cent of Americans say they are 'very happy' or 'fairly happy' and nearly all of them think that they are happier than average.

Education level has no effect on happiness. Women are a little happier than men, and old and young people are a little happier than middle-aged people. But the differences are very small (less than two per cent). It's much more important to have work and leisure activities that interest you. Having a happy marriage and close friendships is very significant, too, but having children isn't.

People usually have the same level of happiness throughout their lives. Big events like winning the lottery or the death of a husband or wife have an effect. But after six months or a year, people usually return to the same level of happiness and feel no better or worse than before. Happiness is genetic. So if your mother and father were happier than average, you're probably more satisfied with your life, too.

Money makes a difference, but only if you're very poor. If you feel safe and have food and a roof over your head, money isn't important. But interestingly, a person's position in the pay scale is significant. People are happier if they think their salary is higher than their colleagues'. But they're less happy if they think their colleagues are earning larger salaries than they are. Happiness is comparative.

