

EPISODE 209

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02.9] PF: Welcome to episode 209 of Live Happy Now. I'm your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us today. Each year, Gallup releases its Global Emotions Report and you probably won't be too shocked to learn that America slipped a little in the positive experience index.

After reading this report, which looks at the feelings and emotions of more than a 140 countries, I did what I always do when I read a report like this. I called in Live Happy editor Chris Libby to talk about what it all means.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:29.7] PF: Chris, it's always a pleasure to be able to sit down and talk with you about happiness and things.

[0:00:36.0] CL: Yes.

[0:00:36.2] PF: Related to it. We wanted to talk today, you and I had this conversation about this new report from Gallup about stress, worry and anger, which is not normally what we think about with happiness, but it's definitely affecting our happiness. Can you talk about, tell us what the Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report is all about before we –

[0:01:00.1] CL: Sure. I mean, the Global Emotions Report, it's different from the World Happiness Report, because it really focuses on how you're feeling day-to-day. They ask questions on have you felt pain today? Have you felt angry today? On the flipside, they say, have you smiled today? Have you done anything interesting today?

They compiled all that data and they figure out where in the world people are having the most positive emotions and the most negative emotions as well. For example, Latin America always does really well with this report, because they focus on the present moment, they focus on the relationships. Even though they may not be flourishing economically, they are – as far as their

positive emotions are concerned, I think culturally, they feel differently about things when it comes to that nature.

[0:01:46.4] PF: I think that's one thing that's really interesting that we see where their culture insulates them from the economic stress and things like that. They use a lot of music. Like you said, they have relationships. It's a very family-oriented.

[0:02:00.4] CL: Yeah, they focus on the positives in life. They laugh, they smile. If for some reason that region of the world, it seems – we're talking about countries like Paraguay, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico, Costa Rica. Yeah, they really enjoy themselves down there.

[0:02:17.1] PF: Yeah. Maybe we should be moving to Costa Rica.

[0:02:19.7] CL: We should. People live longer in Costa Rica.

[0:02:23.2] PF: I know how. Yeah, and there's monkeys. There's that. Yeah, this was an interesting report this year, because it wasn't – there was some good news, because I know – across the globe. Globally, 71% of the people said that they had had enjoyment the day before. That was good. There was a lot of not great news for America in this one.

[0:02:49.7] CL: Yes. Like we just talked about money not really being a factor in Latin America, as far as positive emotions and happiness is concerned. On the flip side, money seems to be a direct response to the anger and stress here in America, along with just politically I think as we've talked about before, we seem to be moving further and further apart and more polarized. I think that's adding to the stress and the anger.

[0:03:14.1] PF: Yeah. It was alarming to see that even though our economy is doing really well, which in America usually that's a sign of – prosperity is our thing. When the economy is doing well, we're happy. I mean, look at the 80s. The fact is right now, even we're doing well in a lot of areas economically, people are more stressed, they're mad and they're more worried, and they were a decade ago.

[0:03:40.4] CL: Yes. If your basic needs aren't being met, then that adds really a lot of stress and anger. What's happening is there's a divide economically between the haves and have-

nots. The poorest in the country are becoming – they're getting further and further away from that middle ground, and so that's adding a lot of stress and anger.

[0:04:00.4] PF: Yeah. One thing that I was just shocked by is it said that I think it was 55% of Americans experience stress. That was one of the highest rates in all 143 countries that they looked. From the outside looking in America has it pretty darn good. We're still in my opinion, the greatest country in the world. When I travel, I always see how grateful I am to have been born and be able to live in America. Yup, we're more stressed out than most other people. We tied with Greece, which usually in the past has led us in stress. Now we're right on par with them.

[0:04:38.3] CL: Yeah. What you talked about the gratitude, I think if we do a lot more of that being grateful and realize that all the good we do have in our lives, I think that can start to change, turn the tide, if you will.

[0:04:52.2] PF: Yeah. I guess it starts with recognizing it.

[0:04:55.2] CL: Yes. Awareness and anger, just like happiness is fleeting and you just have to work on it. I mean, if you wait a few moments, anger will go away. If you persist, then that will continue to bring you down in negative ways. Just and the flipside, if you work on your positive emotion, you work on your resilience and you work on these things, that can make you a lot happier.

[0:05:18.8] PF: Yeah. Experience I think has something to do with it, because when you look at how this is broken down by age, people who are 50 and older were the least likely to be stressed, worried, or angry.

[0:05:30.9] CL: Yeah. That was surprising in this report. They said a lot of younger people are more stressed now more than ever.

[0:05:37.3] PF: Yeah. I don't know if it's student loan debt. I don't know if it's – I don't know what it is.

[0:05:43.5] CL: It's probably just a combination of a lot of different things and it's probably something we should look at, honestly. I mean, personal reflection and say why? I mean, are these things worth getting this upset about?

[0:05:54.3] PF: Right. If we were to do that, then what we want to do differently? Because we're more enlightened. We're more about talk about your feelings, seek happiness, find what makes you happy. We've talked about this. Our parents' generation, they didn't say, "Well, I don't feel fulfilled at work, so I don't want to do that." Nobody did that. Now, we have that freedom. We have that freedom to really find our passion and pursue it. In a lot of ways, we have more freedom that way as well.

[0:06:23.4] CL: Sure. I think what's really gaining steam now is self-care and paying attention to that. It's not selfish to be kind to yourself. I think culturally in America, that gets lost a lot. We have this mentality of the bootstrap mentality and stuff like that, but self-care is really important, because it helps you in relationships, it reduces your anxiety and depression, it helps you respond better to stressful situations and that prevents you from becoming overwhelmed.

I think when you do things like, when you're more kind to yourself and self-care, and also things like mindfulness, being more aware of your situation, that can definitely change how you're feeling inside. It just takes one person, because once you start to flip yourself, then you're kinder to others. Then as we always say, you create the ripple effect.

[0:07:13.4] PF: We do have to look at that scientifically, the contagion effect, when we are around people who are in a bad mood, we are more likely to become in a bad mood. Moods are just as catching as a cold. When we are listening to the news and being bombarded with bad news, that can't help us.

[0:07:31.8] CL: No. Of course, there's always going to be a bad news. You need to be informed. You can reduce the intake. I mean, sometimes news is just negativity ad nauseam and that's just the nature of it. If you limit your exposure to that and just get what you need, instead of submerging yourself and then feeding this frenzy of anger inside for you. I mean, because that will happen. If you're aware of that and then maybe hey, go to livehappy.com or read some happy stuff for a while.

[0:08:01.1] PF: There you go, we had happy. Because I remember a couple weeks ago, we were talking with Mark Nepo. He mentioned with the news, it used to be we just have the evening weather. Now it's severe weather alert. It used to be tonight's news. Now it's breaking news at this hour.

Even though the news itself hasn't changed that much, if you look at what was going on in the 60s, there was a lot of unrest. People were very uncertain. I think a lot of it is the way that we're approaching it, the way that we're presenting it. That is designed to get public attention and it does. It's got our attention. Now it also has us freaked out or stress, worried and angry.

[0:08:42.6] CL: Well and yeah. As a consumer of that news, you can't change how they give it to you, but you can change how you receive it. I think that's the important part there.

[0:08:50.8] PF: How do you walk that line between insulating yourself from the effect of it, but still being informed? Because I think that's something I struggle with, because I want to know what's going on, but I don't want – I want it fed to me straight. I don't want the bias. I want to know that I'm getting the full story. I also don't want to get freaked out by it. I want to be able to remain calm and rational when I learn things.

[0:09:18.3] CL: Yeah. It's just awareness, I guess. There's always going to be some bias. I mean, it's almost impossible to get rid of bias altogether. You try to look for balance, but – and sometimes there are situations where there is no reason for balance, because it's just bad. Bad is bad and they're reporting on the stuff being bad.

I think it's just awareness, and you being mindful of how you feel about when you receive that information I think can do wonders. You can say, "Wow, this is really getting intense right now. I'm going to switch over and do something else, or just not do anything for the moment and just relax." I think that's something we can do.

[0:09:54.9] PF: I think it's important that we start realizing as a whole that this isn't just upsetting us mentally, but that really has an effect on how we feel physically. It affects heart disease, it affects blood pressure, it affects a lot of things physically. Over time, stress and worry can really undermine your well-being. It attacks your entire immune system.

[0:10:19.0] CL: Yeah. Stress is awful. I mean, there's good stress and bad stress, but constant stress on your system is just not great. There's all kinds of studies that just show that it's just bad for you. It's bad for your health physically and mentally. I mean, anger can be used in good ways sometimes. When you get angry about not hitting a goal and you're more resilient, but you're constantly angry, there needs to be balanced there. If you constantly overload your system with these negative feelings, it's going to have negative outcomes.

[0:10:48.5] PF: We do see that more and more with increased social media, increased availability to bad information. It is. We have that negative bias that we're going to look for the negative. We're going to find the negative. That's going to reinforce our negativity bias.

[0:11:04.0] CL: Sure. I mean, it takes twice as much positivity to overcome your negativity bias. It takes work, but you have to be mindful of it and you have to be aware and realize that be persistent in your positivity.

[0:11:15.9] PF: One thing that you and I talked about and something that Live Happy tries to find the balance on, we don't want to sound Pollyanna-ish, and for Millennials, Pollyanna was – No. We don't want to sound too simplistic, but there are a lot of things about creating these practices that are simple, not necessarily easy. They are effective for myself. One of the best things that I can do is go outside and be in nature, breathe the air that's not being circulated by an air conditioner and breathe. It sounds so simple, but that really can shift your entire mood and put some of these things back in perspective.

[0:12:03.0] CL: It does. One great thing about – I mean, there are tons of studies out there that that say exactly what you're saying is nature is good for us. Nature breaks will help with the stress anxiety, lower those stress anxiety levels. I think one of the main reasons is because when you are out in nature, you tend to be focused on the present moment. Of course when you do that, you're not worrying about what's going on in the background.

[0:12:28.4] PF: Yeah. Even in terms of say, if I want to take a run, which doesn't happen often, because you generally run if someone's chasing me. You have those odd moments. I was like, "Hey, I could go for a run." There's such a difference of doing it inside on a treadmill, because then you can – well one, you're going to end up watching the television screen, or something.

When you go outside and you're doing that, you really have to be aware of your surroundings. Not only are you getting that walk in nature, you are getting the mindfulness, because you have to be in that moment, you have to watch where you're going, you have to be aware of what is around you.

[0:13:02.5] CL: Just that massive intake of oxygen just goes throughout your body and just calms everything down.

[0:13:08.8] PF: Absolutely. Now did Gallup give any recommendations? I know they're normally known for just saying, "Hey, here's what's going on." Did they have any insight into where we're headed, what's happening, or what can be done to curtail some of this stress, anger and worry that's mounting?

[0:13:26.9] CL: Well, they always – I remember last year when we talked to John Clifton about this report last year, he said that it's there. Do what Latin America is doing. Realize that there are things in in life that are more important than money, and that is your relationship, that is your positive emotion, that is enjoying the moment, that is laughing, singing, smiling, all kinds of things like that. That can definitely take away some of that stress and anger.

[0:13:53.6] PF: There's a lot to be said for just turning on some music and busting a move. Just get a mariachi to show up. Those are good ways to do it. You're a parent. You have kids who are – they're not quite in that youngest age group that is listed in this poll, but as a parent, what do you look at doing to prevent this from being their future?

[0:14:17.0] CL: Oh, limit the amount of intake from the outside world. You can't take it all away, but you can limit it. I mean, multimedia is just paying from everywhere. I think to keep them from becoming overwhelmed at an early age is important, because that'll carry over into when they get older, that they won't be quite as stressed. Different techniques, breathing techniques, mindfulness techniques, I try to teach my kids that. I mean, one of them is a little too young to really partake in that.

[0:14:47.7] PF: They get in that too?

[0:14:49.6] CL: Yeah. I have an eight-year-old who – and I've noticed this in her life, she seems to be a lot more stressed out than I feel I was at her age. It just shouldn't be that way. At that age, you should be a little bit more carefree. Just being aware of those things in our kids that might stress them out and help them manage it better. If you understand what's going on with them, then it's easier to deal with.

[0:15:12.9] PF: That's terrific. I think that as adults, we do have to start getting better at realizing just how much our moods are affecting our children and just the other people around us in general.

[0:15:24.7] CL: For sure. Yeah, they're always watching. Kids are always watching. If you model the –

[0:15:29.0] PF: They're like a sponge to this.

[0:15:31.3] CL: Whether you realize it or not, if you model that good behavior, they're going to – if you're constantly stressed out, but you're telling them not to be stressed out, it's not going to be as effective as if you are not as stressed out and they see that you're not stressed out.

[0:15:43.8] PF: Basically do it for your kids. If you can't get relaxed for yourself, do it for your children and for the sake of those coming. That'll work. Chris, what else do you have to say? I know we're coming up on our time, but you really went through this report. What was your main takeaway?

[0:16:04.7] CL: I mean, while there's some negative things that are steadily increasing just slightly and that's not good, but there are some positive things as well, so that's good.

[0:16:13.8] PF: That's really what we have to look at. I mean, we can't be just turn a blind eye, but we really do have to recognize the fact that there are a lot of great things happening in our world every day. My favorite part of the news is always that last little segment, where after they completely gutted you with stories of bombs and car crashes and children being kidnapped, then they have that one little one-minute heartwarming story.

[0:16:38.3] CL: Waterskiing squirrel.

[0:16:40.2] PF: Yeah, something like that. The dog that made its way home and whatever. We need more of that, because those stories are out there and the world's not as bad and scary as we might think.

[0:16:52.8] CL: Yeah, just keep living happy.

[0:16:54.2] PF: There we go. Where can we do that?

[0:16:56.8] CL: At livehappy.com and Live Happy Now Podcast.

[0:16:59.9] PF: There you go. That's all I needed to hear. All right, well Chris, thank you. Thanks for talking about this. I think it's an important topic. It's something that people need to be aware of. Thanks for taking the time to sit down and talk with us about it.

[0:17:13.2] CL: For sure. Thank you.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:17:19.0] PF: That was Live Happy editor, Chris Libby, talking about Gallup's 2019 Global Emotions Report. If you'd like to read the full report for yourself, visit us at livehappynow.com, where you'll find a link to download your very own copy. If you just want to increase your positive emotions, spend some time there listening to one of our other podcasts, or go to livehappy.com to get your daily dose of happy news.

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That is all we have time for this week. We'll meet you back here again next week for an all-new episode. Until then, this is Paula Felps, reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]