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Views

Who Stole The Little Happiness From Teenager's Daily Life

Aristotle the philosopher once said, be it men or women, the pursuit of happiness is the ultimate goal in life. But what is "Happiness"? A youthful heart is truthful and willful; being natural is the source of happiness and is supposed to free the youths from worldly matters. However, in recent years, various studies on teenagers' happiness index show more and more teenagers in Hong Kong feel that they are not joyful nor happy, and that includes a survey called the "Hong Kong Teenagers' Happiness Survey" we conducted recently. In the survey, it is found that nearly 40% of the responding teenagers feel unhappy (please refer to page 6 "Advocacy" for details). Who moved their happiness?

Five Elements of "Feeling Happy and Blessed"

According to the theory of wellbeing by positive psychology advocate Martin Seligman, "happiness" is formed by five elements, namely, (1) Positive Emotion: Experience joy, happiness, warmth, comfort, and other subjective feelings to get a joyful life; (2) Engagement: When one focuses on something he/she truly enjoys and values, he/she will reach the state of selflessness; (3) Positive Relationships: When warmth, trust and intimate relationships are built among people, these positive relationships enable individuals to be heard, comforted, encouraged, and reminded of their ability to face difficulties and adversity; (4) Meanings: A sense of belonging which can give one not only values that exceed his/her worth, but also a unique meaning to life for an individual; (5) Accomplishment/ Achievement: People pursue "Accomplishment" to achieve what they think important and valuable to them to feel happy and being successful. Seligman believes that expanding the connotation of these five elements can make individual life more complete and happier.

"It" Stole my Happiness

After reviewing the five elements mentioned above, we may begin to understand why the happiness index of young people is going down. Today's teenagers devote 80% of their efforts to mainstream studies almost every day. They have been overloaded with daily homework, pressure of tests and other issues. They are either rushing for assignment deadlines or busy preparing for tests. There is only little fragmented time and space left for their personal interests and life planning, let alone thoughts on overall comprehensive planning. Moreover, with the current monotonous education model in Hong Kong and limited space for



extra-curricular development, before most primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong have had time to think about the true meaning of "learning" and put it into practice, loads of examination papers and transcripts are already pouring in. The lucky "winning team" may be able to obtain excellent results. With the rule of survival of the fittest, after-school tutoring class becomes the only "lifebuoy" for survival. Eventually, survivors who grow up under this system will then join the society, play the role of "adults," and repeat the same cycle of sending the next generation to this educational machine that operates day after day and year after year.

From the moment of their birth to the process of growing up, children and youths had eagerly shared their most truthful dreams and imaginations with the world, yet they were dismissed again and again by discouraging words of reality. "What is the use of learning this?", "Can your dream make a living?", "Can you change the whole society? Stop dreaming and you should be more realistic!" In the end, young people became silent. Yet, we still hear comments like, "Young people these days are terrible!"

Once, we thought the pursuit of happiness was human nature and it was a right; Today, we just learnt that our society has already prepared us with the same set of "happiness" uniforms for everyone.