

19th October 2021

Happiness

**“We have no more right
to consume happiness without producing it
than to consume wealth without producing it.”**

George Bernard Shaw, Candida

I found this insight on *Facebook* and I couldn't resist sharing it here.

A professor is faced with a large class of students. It's their first gathering in a new semester, with a new subject and new colleagues. Before he does anything else, the professor gives every student a balloon, invites them to inflate it, write their name clearly on it, leave the balloon at the front of the lecture hall and exit into the corridor. When all of that's been done, the professor mixes up all the balloons, calls the students back in and gives them five minutes to find their own balloon. Despite the chaos of their frantic search, no one is able to find their personalised balloon.

When the five-minutes are up, the professor invites the students to take *any* balloon, the nearest one to them, find the person whose name is on the balloon and hand it over. Within minutes, everyone has their own balloon. And the moral? The professor will tell us that ...

*These balloons are like happiness.
We will never find it if everyone is looking for their own.
But if we care about other people's happiness,
we'll find ours too.*

A bit twee? Of course. But an important lesson? You bet it is. And it doesn't need much more elaboration from me, other than to emphasise George Bernard Shaw's quote above. If happiness is a selfish pursuit, only for personal consumption, *we* might benefit, but others may not. But if happiness is both produced *and* shared, everyone benefits.

When William Cecil, First Baron Burghley and chef advisor to the Queen Elizabeth I, was dying, the queen is reported to have said to him: "My comfort hath been in my people's happiness." Will we not find our comfort, and a comfort for all, in the happiness of others? For, after all, if we care about other people's happiness, we're more likely to find ours too.

A prayer for today

“Love is something if you give it away; you'll end up having more.”

From "The Magic Penny" by Malvina Reynolds