

What Makes you Happier: Experiences or Luxury Goods



Most of us think we will be happier for a longer time after we buy an expensive luxury item rather than having some sort of experience. After all, luxury items such as a Gucci wallet, a Louis Vuitton bag, designer clothes, expensive accessories, state-of-the-art stereo equipment, gold jewelry, the latest iPhone, a large TV, a flashy car or remodeling your home certainly lasts longer than a trip, say, which eventually gives way to only memories, with perhaps a few photographs and souvenirs to remind us of it. However, research on what makes people happier has found the opposite to be true; we get far greater pleasure from having an experience than from buying “stuff.” After our basic needs are met, many of us think that buying fancy items or filling our house with lots of expensive items will make us extremely happy. It is true that when we buy something new, we become happy - for a short time. Unfortunately, after a few months, that expensive, “cool” new item will no longer make us happy. Its pleasures will soon fade, get “old” and we will want something else that is newer, larger, nicer.

Experience can be something as simple as going to a coffee shop or taking in movies, plays, concerts, ball games or art shows. Experiences also include activities such as hiking, exercising, singing, dancing, and playing sports. Learning to paint or speak another language, practicing yoga, cooking or playing a musical instrument also offer great experiences and usually allow us to socialize - to meet and talk with other people.

As time goes on, our happiness with a new item decreases but with time, our happiness with experiences increases. Even difficult, bad experiences will often change into happy memories or funny stories. For example, if you had a hard time in school. in a few years, you will remember it in a way that will seem better than it actually was, and you may look back on it with warmth and humor.

Two people are more likely to create a friendship during experiences such as climbing Mt. Fuji or visiting a park together than by owning a similar car, clothes or other items. They are more likely to enjoy each other’s company when they are discussing experiences than when comparing “stuff” they own, which can even leave them frustrated. For example, you can’t really compare a walk in the park with a yoga class, but you can compare things we have bought, which can lead to envy and resentment.

Thus, if you want to be happier, accumulate experiences instead of fancy items. Experiences create a bigger “us” than do the items we own. Experiences not only make us happier, but they also last forever. Experiences bring us closer to others, eventually giving us a stronger sense of self and becoming a part of our identity.

1. Share a great experience in your life.
2. What luxury item would you like to have? BMW, Benz, Gucci, Fendi, Clothes, Rolex...etc.