

The Key to Happiness is Going Vegan, Affirms World Happiness Expert

Matthieu Ricard is a former French genetic scientist, Tibetan monk, and author of *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*. His designation as the world's happiest man is the result of a scientific research done on him and other advanced meditation practitioners in 2012, where during a meditation on compassion, 256 sensors on his skull measured levels of gamma rays in his brain never before reported in the history of neuroscience. Even though Matthieu is widely known and respected, the wise monk shows no sign of ego, as he kindly shares with the world the secret to finding true happiness.

Why We Cannot be Happy Eating Animals

On a video Matthieu participated in for PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), he demonstrates how the act of buying and eating animals creates a domino effect of negativity in all aspects of our life.

First of all, the animals, with 60 billion land animals and a trillion sea animals killed each year. Next, the environment, since the whole chain of factory farming involved in meat production today is the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases nowadays, after homes and before transportation. Poverty in the world: 800 million tons of grains that could feed 1 billion people are sent from developing countries towards rich countries for meat production.

"So the first victims are, of course, animals, but everyone

else loses too! Even human health! The WHO (World Health Organization) published a report showing that the regular consumption of meat was bad for health."

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So let's be logical. If we ask the people of every nation whether they would like to live in a world filled with beauty, safety, prosperity, joy, kindness, love, peace, laughter, justice... most are likely to say yes. But to truly create such reality we must produce more of these acts (beauty, peace, love, justice and etc.) individually, so that this may turn into a ripple effect, creating this new collective reality. But how will we achieve such life when we are taking away innocent beings from their families and societies, forgetting that they are capable of feeling the same emotions we do, such as trust, love, joy, and fear and then serving them on our plates?

According to Matthieu,

...When you see the intensive conditions in which dairy cows are raised, for instance, it's absolutely unimaginable. They are confined to stalls during their short lives, unable to see the sky, and when they become less productive, they are eliminated. When you know that 10 to 15 percent of them, sometimes more, are cut up into pieces while they were still conscious because they were improperly stunned, they die little by little, it's unimaginable. But this is the reality of their lives, every day, all year long."

So we must urgently ask ourselves, can any kind of death bring true happiness? Is it ethical and just? Will this act bring more fulfillment into our individual lives or consequently to our collective experience?

That's right, the answer is no.

The Key to Happiness

Matthieu reveals the key to happiness and it's simpler than we thought.

He says: "True happiness can be attained when we avoid causing pain to others..."

Matthieu's wise words become even more interesting when we take a look at the results from the 2010 happiness survey done on Harvard's class of 1980. It turns out that the number one item listed as one of utmost importance to achieve happiness is doing good for others.

This strongly correlates to what Matthieu has shared with us. Happiness is to think of others (people and animals) and keep from bringing them suffering, it is to think of the world and the future generations, the environment and ourselves (our health) doing what is morally correct.

Related: *How to Be Happy*

How Meat Consumption is Hurting our Health and Planet

"The human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future—deforestation, erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities, and the spread of disease." Says the World Watch Institute.

But how much in numbers are we truly talking?

The millennium ecosystem assessment shows that meat and dairy products are responsible for:

- 70% of global freshwater consumption

It takes around 147 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of corn. A single beef steer or a heifer can eat 1,000 or more pounds of feed over a few months (since they are often fed corn and soy feed to achieve a speedier growth), consuming large amounts of water that could be preserved instead.

- 38% of total land use

In various nations of the world, you see lands being taken over, Amazonian forests cut down for soy production for cattle, banks of wild streams muddied and trampled by grazers in New Zealand, countries like Greece that were rich in woodlands are now dry and taken over by goats.

- 19% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions

Because cows chew on grass, and their digestive system works differently than ours, they end up releasing a lot of methane into the air and atmosphere. So, the more meat-eating humans, the more cows, the more methane, the more greenhouse gasses, and the worse it will be for the planet.

A scientific study that was done also indicates that the long-term consumption of red meat, and specially processed meat, is associated with an increased risk of mortality, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, colorectal cancer in both women and men.

But this isn't the only source to share such information.

Dr. Marco Springmann from the Oxford Martin School, says: "Imbalanced diets, such as diets low in fruits and vegetables, and high in red and processed meat, are responsible for the greatest health burden globally..."

All of the above data show us that this lifestyle is extremely harmful to our health and for the planet, as it's not sustainable. As the world population increases, the tendency

is for the demand of meat production to increase, which could mean that we are looking at an unavoidable worldwide point of no return.

Watch this video for a quick 3-minute summary.

How a Vegan Lifestyle can Change the World

According to the recent 2016 Oxford study, a vegan diet could bring various benefits, such as:

- Save 8 million lives by 2050 – The study concludes that almost half of the avoided deaths would be due to the reduction of the consumption of red meat as the other half would be a result of an increased fruit and vegetable intake as well as calorie reduction causing fewer people to be obese or overweight.
- Save money on healthcare – About 700 to 1.000 billion US dollars.
- Avoid climate-related damages – Which would have otherwise cost 1.5 trillion dollars.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2/3 – By adopting vegan dietary guidelines we could cut out 70% of these emissions which would bring an economic benefit of as much as 570 billion US dollars.

To summarize on the greenhouse gases matter, Nick Hewitt, Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry in the Department of Environmental Science at Lancaster University says “The biggest lifestyle choice you could make to reduce greenhouse gasses is to stop eating meat. It’s hard to think of another single lifestyle change we could make that would have the same effect.”

Bringing Happiness to the World

We have enough scientific evidence supporting the numerous problems within the animal-based product industries, as well as we are aware of how it negatively affects our health, our environment and the animals themselves. For those of you who comprehend this and are asking yourselves what you can do now, the answer is simple – Take action! Be the example, and exclude meat products from your plates, choose vegetarian and vegan options, bring awareness to your friends, family, and colleagues. Your actions will bring about a ripple effect, that will turn our collective reality into one free of suffering, full of environmental restoration, better human and animal health, which inevitably brings about greater feelings of joy, purpose, and love. Happiness takes courage and effort, so the Tibetan monk and former scientist, a true master of happiness and compassion, humbly makes a plea– he asks that we become vegan like him.

Blessings to all.

More from Aska Barros:

- *Tiny Homes – The Biggest Life Hack*
- *Minimalism – How to Change Your Life When Everything is a Mess*

Sources:

- *6 Animal Species With Strong Family Bonds – One Green Planet*
- *The secret ingredient to a happy life? Going VEGAN: Tibetan Monk dubbed ‘world’s happiest man’ says eating meat is the reason we feel unfulfilled – Mail Online*
- *Key to lasting happiness is a vegan diet, says ‘happiest man in the world’ – The Telegraph*
- *The Secret Of Happiness Revealed By Harvard Study – Forbes*

- *Veggie-based diets could save 8 million lives by 2050 and cut global warming* – University of Oxford
- *Health Risks Associated with Meat Consumption: A Review of Epidemiological Studies* – Hogrefe
- *What Would Happen If an Entire Nation Stopped Eating Meat?* – Vice
- *The Water Footprint of Food* – Grace Communications Foundation