The Pursuit of Happyness

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The Pursuit of Happyness

"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." That is a famous quote about happiness, by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Happiness is a goal to be reached by everyone. Everything that we work for or do is for the ultimate goal of being happy. It’s written into the United States Declaration of Independence, “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” is a well-known and used phrase today.  We have one goal in common, the pursuit of happiness, and though we may all experience it in different ways, in the end happiness is the feeling we all strive to obtain. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, proposed that motivation is a function of five basic needs—physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. (THESIS)

*The Pursuit of Happyness* is primarily based and inspired by a true story of a stockbroker Chris Gardner which has been done by Will Smith in the film who has an exceedingly amount of remarkable attributes such as intelligence, persistence, and optimism. The core plot of the movie revolves around the struggle, troubles and toils that this person encounters during the multitude phases of life in order to achieve the status and position that he desired. The story focuses on a man, a husband and a father and the triple responsibilities that he has to fulfill, and the problems that he faces in order to satisfy all his relationships. Despite the fact that his wife leaves him because of the deteriorating economic conditions of his family, he remains loyal to his son Christopher and tries to fulfill all his needs in whatever way possible.

           Chris is initially shown as a salesman of a new bone scanner machine, which are far more expensive than the X-ray machines that are used in hospitals; therefore, none of the hospitals have any kind of interest in investing money in this product. Due to financial issues, his wife, Linda, decides to leave him and his son. Following her departure, Chris is confronted with greater problems. He was coerced to leave his residence due to non-payment of his rent and the remaining money in his bank account are being deducted in the form of government taxes. Homeless and penniless, he is left to take refuge in a bathroom of a railway station with his son. From there he has to shift places every day, and he must reach there on time in order to find a place to sleep with his son. These places have been made by the government for shelter-less people. He practices this routine every day for six continuous months; whereas, he was also involved in an internship program at Dean Witter. This internship offered no salary. At the end of the training period, he is told that he has been selected for the post of a stock broker for the company due to this good performance. From there, his journey towards success and a prosperous life goes on.

           Perseverance, determination and loyalty are some of the characteristics that can be included in the moral of the story that was told. The story of the film highlights the examination of the will power and determination to resist the toils and troubles in the most troublesome circumstances. It further accentuates that to achieve something commendable and remarkable in life, it is important that the disappointments and despondencies are marginalized from life. Every trouble that life brings at disposal must be taken and accepted as a challenge that serves to pave way for a better and successful future.

Needs are an essential to one’s life, and without satisfying needs, people may not ever be completely gratified with oneself.  According to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory, a person cannot proceed to the next level of needs until the previous level is satisfied.  The five needs from the bottom of the pyramid to the top, includes physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. To explain each one of these needs better, physiological needs include the physical needs to survive. These can include, but are not limited to breathing, food, water, sex, and sleep. Without these needs, it is impossible to move to the next stage that are the safety needs. Safety needs are the things that make an individual feel secure. These things include physical, financial security and healthiness of the individual. After this need has been satisfied, an individual would be looking to satisfy their love and belonging needs. This is when a person feels like they belong and interpersonal relationships. Examples of this stage in the hierarchy are friendships, family and intimate relationships. The fourth stage of the hierarchy is the esteem needs. This is the need where the individual feels respected. The areas in a person’s life that this includes are their self-respect and self-esteem. To reach this stage, people often obtain a job or a new activity to gain recognition for their hard work. The final stage, and most difficult to reach, of the hierarchy of needs is the self-actualization stage. This is when a person reaches and realized their maximum potential. This is when a person has did everything a person could ever possibly accomplish. To get here, a person must master all of the previous needs.

 In the movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness,* main actor, Chris Gardner struggled greatly with meeting Maslow’s five needs.  However, after meeting an essential goal, Chris was on the guided path to eventually meeting these five needs. In the beginning of the movie, Chris wasn’t meeting the physiological needs in life. Chris was in the business of selling bone density machines, which did not take off in sales like it was predicted.  Meanwhile, Chris’s wife, Linda was not completely happy making a life with Chris, working double shifts just barely making ends meet.  After living unhappily for quite some time, Linda left Chris and their son, because Chris wasn’t able to financially support Linda.  After Linda left Chris, the only income that was being made for the Gardner family was the few bone density machines that Chris was striving to sell.  Chris and his son lived day to day not knowing where they were going to sleep each night.  After being evicted from the home, Chris and his son became homeless, living in motels, homeless shelters, on subways, public restrooms, and buses.

At Chris’s lowest point in life, the five levels of needs were being satisfied.  Chris was at a stage in his life where nothing was going right, and everything was going downhill, from his job to his relationship with Linda.  Chris could barely provide the physiological needs for his family, including food, water, sleep, and warmth.  During some points, Chris could only afford to feed his child, which meant he would rather go hungry rather than allow his child to starve.    While physiological needs were not being fulfilled, Chris also failed at containing safety needs.

After being evicted from his home and not receiving enough income to live the least bit comfortably, Chris could not meet safety needs, such as security of employment, family, and property.  Chris could not find supportive work, and the Gardner family was not in a stable home environment after losing the home.  Living day to day without knowing where to sleep was a major insecurity for Chris and Christopher.  Chris struggled to give Christopher a comfortable life, buying him a toy when able to, or giving him a fulfilling dinner at a restaurant.  However, no matter what, Chris always made certain Christopher didn’t go without food.

Not only did Chris struggle with meeting physiological needs, but he also fought with containing safety needs.  Safety needs are vital in order to successfully support oneself and a family.  Not being able to hold down a job or a home showed that Chris was in one of the lowest points of life.  Living off of the few hundred dollars that Chris seldom received from the bone density machines was not enough for Chris to have a sense of job security.  For instance, it is quite difficult to picture what it would be like to be in Chris’s shoes of losing a home and not having a secure and reliable job.  The inability to provide security and safety made Chris feel as if he failed at being a father and husband.

   Until the physiological needs are met, all of the other four needs are considered inferior.  Therefore, since Chris was unable to fully meet the physiological and safety needs, social needs was next to impossible for Chris.  At this point in Chris’s life, steady unemployment and safe shelter was not being provided to Chris.  Living in homeless shelters degraded Chris’s self-confidence of being a reliable father to Christopher.  When someone is dependent, such as a father or husband, they cannot provide for family, and self-esteem is lost.

In the middle of Maslow’s pyramid is the need for love and belonging, which is something that did take place in Chris’s life to a certain extent.  Chris loved Linda, but after realizing she was unhappy and wanted to leave the marriage, Chris knew that it wouldn’t be fair to make Linda stay with him.  Chris was rather close with his son, which was the only family he had.  However, Chris didn’t have many friends to rely on for support.  For instance, Chris loaned his friend, Wayne, fifteen dollars, but the man refused to give it back to Chris. This was in the time of financial need, living on the streets.  At this point in life, Chris was trying to fit into the world, struggling to find a sense of belonging.  The only part that was getting Chris through life was the love for his son and knowing that he needed to earn a higher paying job in order to provide for the family.

A life-time partner relationship and true friendship were missing from Chris’s life.  After Linda walked out on Chris, it was realized that at tough times, true love is tested.  Chris recognized that the relationship between him and Linda was not strong enough to withstand the struggles that Chris was going through.  However, in a sense, Chris was relieved about Linda’s leaving because he knew that he could not provide for her, and make her truly happy.  Throughout the movie, Chris did not have any true friends or life-time partner relationship.  Chris’s son was the only person that kept Chris on track, and it gave him motivation to get through the downfalls of life.  Going through life without any love or true friends can make it rather difficult to make it through life’s troubles.  If Linda would have stuck with Chris through his greatest time of trouble, Chris may have been able to pull through easier, having somebody by his side.  However, with the motivation and love from Christopher, Chris was better able to strive through the struggles he was dealing with.  The love for his son is what helped pull Chris through the crisis that he was facing in life.

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Chris was struggling through his life financially and the bone density scanners he had invested so much money in were not selling like he planned. Money was tight and Chris knew he had to get out of the bone density scanning business and into something else. The idea of working at Dean Witter as a stockbroker was presented to Chris in a very random way. Chris wasn’t looking through ads in the newspaper for firms that were hiring stock brokers, in fact, he didn’t even really know what a stockbroker was until he complemented a man on his car that was parked in front of the building. He asked the man, “What do you do, and how do I do it?!” The man told Chris that he was a stock broker and all he had to do to be good at the job was to be good with numbers and good with people. That was when Chris looked around and saw all the smiling faces of the employees as they walked out of the building. Chris was good with numbers and good with people. At that moment he knew that he could be a successful stock broker, and he knew that is the career path he wanted to pursue.

The first part of getting a job is filling out the application, so the next day Chris went in to Dean Witter and got an application to fill out.  When he looked at the application he saw that there were three lines to fill out more education past high school. Chris had none. He knew that on paper his application did not make him seem very qualified for the job so Chris decided to personally hand in his application to Mr. Jay Twistle, who was in charge of accepting applicants and hiring for the internship. Chris arrived at Dean Witter in a suit and tie, he looked very professional, and when Mr. Twistle walked in Chris was very polite, friendly, and professional. Chris used his charm, personality, and charisma to help him stand out from other applicants and try to make up for certain weaknesses on his application. Chris used referent power on Mr. Twistle to make a good impression. His charm and personality were the only things he could use a leverage on the other candidates and his persistent and personable attitude resulted in compliance from Mr. Twistle. Chris got a job interview for Dean Witter.

Chris was in good standings with Mr. Twistle and he was confident in Chris’ abilities. Chris needed this job and was ready for his interview. He was painting his apartment the evening before the interview when two police officers knocked on his door and demanded that he come to the police satiation to pay off some parking tickets. What Chris didn’t know is that he would be held at the station until the next morning. A night in jail left Chris no choice but to show up to his interview at Dean Witter covered in paint and wearing old, torn up clothes. Chris walked into the interview and shook hands with everyone. The faces of the department members were confused and dismayed, and Mr. Twistle could not believe what he was seeing. Twistle was the person who referred Chris to get an interview and when Chris showed up looking the way he did Twistle was completely humiliated. Chris felt extremely uneasy. Not only did he have to compensate for his lack of job experience and education, he also had to figure out a way to compensate being dressed inappropriately. To get through the interview successfully, Chris used a number of power and influence tactics. He was able to get the members of the interviewing team to forgive him for being dressed so badly using the ingratiation influence tactic. He used humor to explain why he was dressed so badly and made all the team members laugh. By being friendly, polite, and making everyone laugh, Chris once again let his charismatic personality shine through, and ultimately, that is what got him the internship position. Chris had no real power over the men that were interviewing him. He could not promise them anything if he got the job, he couldn’t bribe them, or threaten them; all he had to rely on was his personality. He had to win them over using referent power, and that is exactly what he did.

Chris’ interview went surprisingly well. Dean Witter wanted to hire Chris Gardener, but when Chris found out that the internship was not paid his feelings changed. Chris wasn’t sure that he wanted the position anymore and when he told that to Mr. Twistle he became very upset. He threatened Chis and put pressure on him that if he didn’t accept the job offer by the end of the night that his position would be filled. Mr. Twistle used coercive power and the pressure influence tactic on Chris, and the outcome was commitment. That night Chris called Mr. Twistle and accepted the job offer. The opportunity was too great for Chris to pass up and he didn’t want to lose his position at Dean Witter.

When Chris finally started his internship at Dean Witter, Alan Frakesh became his boss. He was in charge of the internship program and had legitimate power over all the interns. Sometimes Frakesh would make Chris feel small and worthless when he would ask him to get him a coffee or a donut. Of course, Chris didn’t want to do those frivolous tasks because they felt demeaning to him, but he did them every time, without question because of the legitimate power that Frakesh had over him. Frakesh used his higher position at Dean Witter to get the interns to comply with his requests and used legitimating influences to get what he wanted.

\*CONCLUSION\*

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