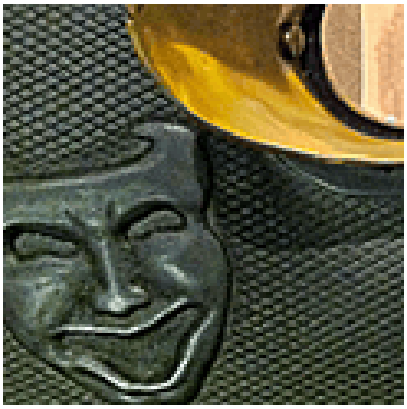


Your inner child

Description

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Older people like to watch childrenâ??s television, according to the TV licensing study that came out this week: â??Older people found the most enjoyment in childrenâ??s television, with 80% of respondents aged 65 and above agreeing childrenâ??s shows make them happy.â?•

Itâ??s surprising that older people watch childrenâ??s TV, but so is the idea of using happiness as an indicator of social benefit. Happiness does seem to carry different connotations to â??enjoyment.â?•



ut does it make you happy?

In the TV licensing study, Mark Williamson, Director of Action for Happiness, says, â??certain programming, notably comedy and entertainment, can significantly boost our mood. And the impact of this may not be as trivial as it first appears, considering research which shows that regularly experiencing positive emotions leads to significant health and other benefits. Television can of course also broaden our perceptions, for example by breaking down cultural barriers or raising awareness about important issues. And it can even enhance our connections with other people.â?•

Williamson also says that TV poses challenges to our wellbeing. It keeps us on the sofa instead of being active, can cause behavioural problems amongst children, and all the bad news we watch can make us sad.

More than television

A group of us are about to embark on a funded project about mobility, health and wellbeing amongst older people. What Williamson says about television, we say about taking outdoor exercise. Our project builds on growing evidence that **mood and emotion** influence peopleâ??s willingness to be active. They broaden peopleâ??s perceptions. Mood and emotion are in turn influenced by the experience of different environments. We argue that exercise provides protection against mental decline in old age. We think itâ??s necessary to understand the positive qualities that encourage people to go out, remain mobile, and give them pleasure into very old age.

So thatâ??s three strategies claiming to yield positive results: watch more of the right kind of television, get out and about, and become a child again. At least two out of those three make sense.

Notes

- The project will build in part on a smaller project I reported two weeks ago. See The brain in the city. More information will follow.
- Also see post: Old enough to know better.
- For some reason Iâ??m reminded of the old question: Do infants have as much fun at infantry as adults have at adultery?
- The Telehappiness survey is online. I took the survey. I answered thinking that watching the news does make me feel happy, as I feel Iâ??m learning something, which is a source of happiness, irrespective of the content, but perhaps Iâ??m wrong. Also see The happy medium.
- Itâ??s hard not to equate television-induced happiness with those sci-fi stories where citizens are lulled into an acquiescent stupor by the constancy of inane media fare, pleasure machines or drugs, while their lives are controlled by dictators, machines or the system. I think *Total Recall* starts that way. The media is the opium of the people, to misquote Karl Marx.
- The TV Licensing study didnâ??t look at radio, but with personal stereos you get the combined benefits of entertainment and exercise. On that note see the warning from the scary animation called The Passenger by Chris Jones. Head-mounted display screens might also work.
- Are the over sixty fives who say that childrenâ??s television programmes make them happy watching Scooby-Doo or nature discovery programmes (eg Naomiâ??s Nightmares of Nature)? The Romantic philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) wrote about curiosity in relation to the education of the teenage adolescent. At the age of about twelve, any child has a surplus of strength and capacity. The tutorâ??s task is to encourage the child to invest this surplus in the future by directing it to physical exploration of the world. If we include within this capacity the childâ??s optimism and propensity for positive emotion, then Rousseau was supporting an early version of what psychologists term the â??broaden and buildâ?• theory relating curiosity and mood.
- Also see post Audience disengagement, What are audiences for? and Making friends.

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Category

1. Media

Tags

1. audience
2. media
3. mood

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