

# This is the No. 1 thing that influences Gen Z's happiness, a new survey shows

Gen Z can be hard to decipher, but a recent survey may provide some insight about what drives their happiness.

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As a Gen Zer myself, I know that the generation can be pretty hard to decipher. But a [recent survey](#) may provide some insight about what drives Gen Z's happiness.

[Leading happiness expert Arthur C. Brooks](#) partnered with Gallup and [Walton Family Foundation](#) to survey over 2,000 Gen Zers from ages 12 to 26 years old, and get a closer look at what makes them happy.

Seventy-three percent of Gen Zers consider themselves to be very happy or somewhat happy, the survey found.

But “when Gen Z reaches adulthood, 18 and older, we see these pretty big differences in happiness,” says Zach Hrynowski, the author of the survey’s report and a senior researcher at Gallup.

There are also declines for members of Gen Z over the age of 18, compared to those younger than 18, for things like “feeling like your life matters, and like your life has direction,” he adds.

## **The No. 1 thing that influences Gen Z’s happiness is having a purpose**

One of the most significant findings of the survey is that what influences the happiness of Gen Zers the most is “their sense of purpose at work or school.”

Yet, “between 43% and 49% of Gen Zers do not feel what they do each day is interesting, important or motivating,” the report states.

In Brooks’ happiness course at Harvard University, he suggests [treating your happiness like an investment portfolio](#)

and investing in four areas; one of those areas is meaningful work.

Brooks encourages people to prioritize work that makes them feel fulfilled, even if it isn't the highest-paying role.

David Spicer, 23, a middle school teacher who teaches English, says working in the same school system where he was once a student fuels his purpose.

Spicer enjoys being “in a position where you can maybe address some situations that could have made for a better experience for you as a kid, whether it's how you teach, or whether it's your relationships with students,” he tells CNBC Make It.

Despite being 10 years older than his students, Spicer learned that he has a lot in common with them, which boosts their happiness and his own, he says.

“I'm a Swiftie. I have some kids who are also Swifties. So, for example, right before spring break, I did a music mash-up where we looked at Taylor Swift songs and analyzed it for different like poetic devices,” Spicer says.

## 4 major influences on the happiness of Gen Zers

These are the top four drivers that influence the happiness of Gen Zers, the survey found:

1. Purpose and meaning
2. Basic needs and security
3. Negative emotions and social pressure
4. Positive social connections

Basic needs like sleep and relaxation stand out as having a great influence on whether or not Gen Zers are happy.

They also feel less positively when they compare themselves to others.

### **In-person interactions are good for Gen Z's well-being**

An important takeaway from the survey is that Gen Zers who were the happiest “are at least twice as likely to say they often feel loved by, supported by and connected to those around them.”

Yet just around one in three Gen Zers say they don't frequently feel supported by others or loved.

“There's this perception that Gen Z is really connected, but are those

connections of a high quality in there?

Are they giving you the love and the support that you really need?" Hrynowski says.

Social media may be contributing to this, the report indicates. Gen Zers can have a lot of connections with their peers online, but many of them can lack depth.

"Those connections, especially on social media, [Brooks] called them sort of the junk food of social connections," he says.

"Just like junk food, you can eat it, you'll feel fulfilled for 10 [to] 15 minutes, but it's empty calories, and you find yourself not being fulfilled in the way that you need in terms of your genuine social connections."

It's important for Gen Zers to not rely solely on social media to interact with their friends. "Those folks who are spending more time in person with their friends and their loved ones" are more likely to feel fulfilled long-term, Hrynowski says.

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