

My Manifesto For A Happier World by Mark Williamson

□ We all want to lead a happy life. But in our quest for 'progress'; we've been pursuing priorities that put our happiness at risk - not just for us as individuals, but for society as a whole.

□ Our collective aim should be a society with the greatest possible human happiness and wellbeing - with policies, institutions and social attitudes that help people to lead flourishing lives. This is the spirit behind a resolution which was adopted last year by all 193 United Nations member states, calling for "a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth", and one which promotes "happiness and the well-being of all peoples".

□ To support this emerging shift in priorities, the very first United Nations International Day of Happiness is being held on 20th March this year. In the UK and all around the world people will be taking action to encourage a greater focus on happiness and also to celebrate Happy Heroes - the unsung people and organisations who do so much to bring happiness to others.

□ But what does a happier society look like and how can we make it happen? As Director of UK-based Action for Happiness, a growing global movement of people who care deeply about this topic, I've had the privilege to meet with many of the world's leading experts as well as engaging with many of our 80,000 supporters and followers to hear their views.

□ My conclusion is that a happier society is possible - and rather than being some nebulous or idealistic dream, there are some clear actions needed to make this happen. It will of course require a shift in priorities for our governments and institutions. But it will also only happen if we as individual citizens play our part, particularly by choosing to live in a way that contributes to the happiness of others.

□ So below is my 12-step manifesto for a happier world, which calls for change not just from our leaders but from all of us. I'm not pretending these are simple changes or can happen overnight. But if we were to put these ideas into practice I'm certain we could create a society which is not only happier, but also more productive, caring, fair, responsible and sustainable.

□ For our political leaders:

□ Ensure a Stable Economy. A healthy economy is the foundation for happiness and wellbeing. We need an equitable economic system which puts long-term stability and high levels of employment ahead of "growth at all costs".

□Focus on Wellbeing. What we measure is what we get. In addition to conventional financial indicators, we need our governments to measure people's wellbeing and consider the impact on wellbeing - for both current and future generations - in all policy decisions.

□Support the Disadvantaged. Priority should be given to improving the wellbeing of those who are most in need, not just through financial support but also by empowering people and helping them to help themselves.

□Prioritise Human Relationships. Relationships are central to our wellbeing. We need to prioritise healthy relationships in all policy areas, especially through support for troubled families and children in their early years.

□For our institutions:

□Healthcare for Mind And Body. Mental health is just as vital as physical health. We need a healthcare system that prioritises both mental and physical health and provides high quality support for all those struggling with anxiety, depression or other mental illness.

□Education For Life. Education is about learning for life, not just gaining academic qualifications. We need schools that help children develop character and learn essential life skills, like emotional intelligence, mindfulness and resilience.

□Responsible Business. Truly successful businesses have happy employees and a purpose beyond profit. We need workplaces where people feel valued and trusted and where sustainable and ethical behaviour is at the heart of all decision making.

□Balanced Media. The way we perceive the world affects what we do and how we treat each other. We need a media that portrays a balanced view of what's good as well as bad in our world, not a constant diet of cynicism and negativity.

□For each of us as individuals:

□Family Values. Happy homes are the bedrock of a happy society and, above all, we need to cultivate warm and loving family relationships. For our children, our priority should be their emotional health and helping them to develop positive values and attitudes.

□Contributing In The Community. When we connect with and help others around us, everyone benefits. We need to get involved in our local communities, be good neighbours and support those in need. Our actions can help to build trust and reduce isolation.

□Making A Difference. Our working lives should be about more than just earning a living. Whatever job we do, we should aim to make a meaningful contribution - and help create a workplace culture which is trusting, friendly and responsible.

□Taking Care of Ourselves. We can't contribute to a happier society unless we take care of our own well-being too. We all need to look after our health, both physical and mental, and develop within us the life skills and attitudes needed for a happy and fulfilling life.

□ Together our actions make a profound difference. We can call for change from our leaders but we can also "be the change" in the way we approach our lives and the way we treat others. So if you share this vision for a happier and more caring world, please take the pledge to create more happiness and do whatever you can to support the Day of Happiness on 20 March.