

From: Joe E Benun **Sent:** Monday, November 23, 2009 10:02 AM **Subject:** Happiness Project

Dear Professor Kahneman,

My name is Joseph Benun and I am a prospective student at Princeton.

I understand that you have had experience in the field of "happiness" and wanted to know if you would be able to help me with a project.

My project in a nutshell is this: Going all over the world – to all 50 U.S. states, a few dozen countries, and to the most remote places on earth. I would interview people on whether they are happy, and why.

Though studies have been done on this phenomenon known to us as "happiness", I would try to look at the whole picture, viewing happiness from an anthropological, neurobiological/psychological, sociological, economic, philosophical, and even religious perspective. I (we) would then step back and see the complete picture, analyzing what happiness really is, and how to attain it.

I am interested in all fields of knowledge (I have so far narrowed my main interests down to 10: philosophy, neuroscience, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, mathematics, psychology, architecture and religion), and if I could somehow synthesis my interests and focus them on a particular idea (this one being happiness) maybe I (we) can come up with an original theory and change the way happiness is viewed.

I am the very outgoing type, I love meeting new people; every new person met is another person to learn from. (Being an endurance triathlete, I've had the luxury to always meet a new person on the 50-100 mile bike rides I that I weekly embark on in my local park.) This project would also complement my desire to meet people.

I am deeply passionate about this issue of happiness since I myself believe that too many people in this world think money is the answer to all their problems. This includes my peers and even my parents...These are people who live an unhappy life for NO reason!

Even if I don't get accepted into Princeton, I still hope you would be interested in helping me, whether that means giving me a few tips or coauthoring a potential future book or documentary.

Though I have very few details (and even those may very well change), one must recognize that the massive sycamore tree came from a small little seed; with the proper watering, nutrition and light, a seed can grow into an empowering element of nature. (The obvious metaphor being that with the proper guidance and resources, a small idea can make a colossal difference.)

Ok, so I am bit idealistic, but the only dreams that are realized are those that are pursued.

Thank you for your time and take care,

Joseph E Benun