

Measuring happiness

From our guest contributor, McKenna Haase



They say money can't buy happiness. As a finance major and a racecar driver, that was always hard for me to believe at first. After all, money could buy me lots of shares of stock and lots of racecar parts. However, as I gradually crept closer to the higher ranks of auto racing, I also gained a better view of the drivers at the top: their personalities and their lives, both at and away from the track.

Ever since my days as a young fan, I always thought these heroes of mine had it all- fast cars, trophies, fame...money. What I found though was that happiness wasn't always on that list, and that even if money was, it couldn't buy happiness. I learned that happiness is something easily taken for granted, and that even if someone looks like they have the world, they might not be happy, and even if someone looks like they have nothing, they might be full of happiness. As cliché as that sounds to most people, I still look around at a world filled with people trying to find all the ways in which they can quantify happiness and compare that to others.

Whether it's the number of steps on a Fitbit, the number of clothes in one's closet, the square footage of one's house, or

the number of wins one's had, we seem to take these numeric figures and associate them with happiness. When I look at my career, some of my happiest moments have indeed been in these "quantifiable moments," because some of the best days of my life have been the days of my biggest wins. However, it hasn't been the numbers that have made them special, it's all the ways in which I received happiness on those days that can't be quantified. Getting to be outdoors on a beautiful day, getting to see my closest friends I wait to see every week, getting to meet new people, getting to fly behind the wheel of a race car, getting to climb on top of that race car in victory lane while hearing the crowd of thousands erupt...this list could go on forever, because these are the moments from winning that make me the happiest.

Each week I get to greet a line of fans, big and small, old and young, and everything in between, each of which is facing a battle in their life I know nothing about, yet they choose to wait to see me. To kneel down and look into the eyes of a little fan, eyes overflowing with joy and sometimes even tears from excitement, are the moments that time seems to slow down, even in the midst of chaos. That time is filled with utter and complete happiness. Money is great, fast cars are great, and winning is great, but if I were to win in front of no one, to never meet new people, to never greet the fans, or to never see old friends, the happiness that accompanies winning would be obsolete.

When it comes to life in general, it's the little moments, the people I love, and new adventures where I often find the most happiness. The happiness I feel when time seems to stand still, even in a world full of chaos. Whether someone feels like they have the world or feels like they have nothing, when they find themselves quantifying their happiness, I hope they seek to find the happiness that can't be quantified. I hope they seek to find the happiness that can bring them a little bit of peace even in all the chaos.

McKenna Haase is an up and coming female sprint car driver from Des Moines, IA. McKenna says her mission has been clear since she was 12 years old: "to work in unison with partners, fans, and teams to create not only a winning race team, but a race team focused on honesty, excellence, and integrity both off and on the racetrack."

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