**Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of experience vs. memory**

[Everybody talks about happiness these days.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#0) [I had somebody count the number of books](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#3000) [with "happiness" in the title published in the last five years](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#6000) [and they gave up after about 40, and there were many more.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#9000) [There is a huge wave of interest in happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#14000) [among researchers.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#17000) [There is a lot of happiness coaching.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#19000) [Everybody would like to make people happier.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#21000) [But in spite of all this flood of work,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#23000) [there are several cognitive traps](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#27000) [that sort of make it almost impossible to think straight](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#29000) [about happiness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#32000)

[And my talk today will be mostly about these cognitive traps.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#34000) [This applies to laypeople thinking about their own happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#37000) [and it applies to scholars thinking about happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#40000) [because it turns out we're just as messed up as anybody else is.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#43000) [The first of these traps](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#47000) [is a reluctance to admit complexity.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#49000) [It turns out that the word "happiness"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#52000) [is just not a useful word anymore,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#55000) [because we apply it to too many different things.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#58000) [I think there is one particular meaning to which we might restrict it,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#61000) [but by and large,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#64000) [this is something that we'll have to give up](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#66000) [and we'll have to adopt the more complicated view](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#68000) [of what well-being is.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#72000) [The second trap is a confusion between experience and memory;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#74000) [basically, it's between being happy in your life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#78000) [and being happy about your life](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#81000) [or happy with your life.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#83000) [And those are two very different concepts,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#85000) [and they're both lumped in the notion of happiness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#87000) [And the third is the focusing illusion,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#90000) [and it's the unfortunate fact that we can't think about any circumstance](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#93000) [that affects well-being](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#96000) [without distorting its importance.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#98000) [I mean, this is a real cognitive trap.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#100000) [There's just no way of getting it right.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#103000)

[Now, I'd like to start with an example](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#106000) [of somebody who had a question-and-answer session](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#108000) [after one of my lectures reported a story,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#113000) [and that was a story --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#117000) [He said he'd been listening to a symphony,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#118000) [and it was absolutely glorious music](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#121000) [and at the very end of the recording,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#124000) [there was a dreadful screeching sound.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#127000) [And then he added, really quite emotionally,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#129000) [it ruined the whole experience.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#131000) [But it hadn't.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#135000) [What it had ruined were the memories of the experience.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#137000) [He had had the experience.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#140000) [He had had 20 minutes of glorious music.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#142000) [They counted for nothing](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#144000) [because he was left with a memory;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#146000) [the memory was ruined,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#149000) [and the memory was all that he had gotten to keep.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#151000)

[What this is telling us, really,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#154000) [is that we might be thinking of ourselves and of other people](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#157000) [in terms of two selves.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#159000) [There is an experiencing self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#161000) [who lives in the present](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#164000) [and knows the present,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#166000) [is capable of re-living the past,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#168000) [but basically it has only the present.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#170000) [It's the experiencing self that the doctor approaches --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#173000) [you know, when the doctor asks,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#176000) ["Does it hurt now when I touch you here?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#177000) [And then there is a remembering self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#181000) [and the remembering self is the one that keeps score,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#184000) [and maintains the story of our life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#188000) [and it's the one that the doctor approaches](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#190000) [in asking the question,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#193000) ["How have you been feeling lately?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#195000) [or "How was your trip to Albania?" or something like that.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#198000) [Those are two very different entities,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#201000) [the experiencing self and the remembering self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#204000) [and getting confused between them is part of the mess](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#207000) [about the notion of happiness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#211000)

[Now, the remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#214000) [is a storyteller.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#217000) [And that really starts with a basic response of our memories --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#220000) [it starts immediately.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#224000) [We don't only tell stories when we set out to tell stories.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#226000) [Our memory tells us stories,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#229000) [that is, what we get to keep from our experiences](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#232000) [is a story.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#234000) [And let me begin with one example.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#236000) [This is an old study.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#241000) [Those are actual patients undergoing a painful procedure.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#243000) [I won't go into detail. It's no longer painful these days,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#246000) [but it was painful when this study was run in the 1990s.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#249000) [They were asked to report on their pain every 60 seconds.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#253000) [Here are two patients,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#256000) [those are their recordings.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#259000) [And you are asked, "Who of them suffered more?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#261000) [And it's a very easy question.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#264000) [Clearly, Patient B suffered more --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#266000) [his colonoscopy was longer,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#268000) [and every minute of pain that Patient A had,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#270000) [Patient B had, and more.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#273000)

[But now there is another question:](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#276000) ["How much did these patients think they suffered?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#279000) [And here is a surprise.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#282000) [The surprise is that Patient A](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#284000) [had a much worse memory of the colonoscopy](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#286000) [than Patient B.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#289000) [The stories of the colonoscopies were different,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#291000) [and because a very critical part of the story is how it ends.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#294000) [And neither of these stories is very inspiring or great --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#300000) [but one of them is this distinct ... (Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#303000) [but one of them is distinctly worse than the other.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#307000) [And the one that is worse](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#310000) [is the one where pain was at its peak at the very end;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#312000) [it's a bad story.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#315000) [How do we know that?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#317000) [Because we asked these people after their colonoscopy,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#319000) [and much later, too,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#322000) ["How bad was the whole thing, in total?"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#323000) [And it was much worse for A than for B, in memory.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#325000)

[Now this is a direct conflict](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#329000) [between the experiencing self and the remembering self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#331000) [From the point of view of the experiencing self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#334000) [clearly, B had a worse time.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#337000) [Now, what you could do with Patient A,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#339000) [and we actually ran clinical experiments,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#342000) [and it has been done, and it does work --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#345000) [you could actually extend the colonoscopy of Patient A](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#347000) [by just keeping the tube in without jiggling it too much.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#352000) [That will cause the patient](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#355000) [to suffer, but just a little](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#358000) [and much less than before.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#361000) [And if you do that for a couple of minutes,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#363000) [you have made the experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#365000) [of Patient A worse off,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#367000) [and you have the remembering self of Patient A](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#369000) [a lot better off,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#372000) [because now you have endowed Patient A](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#374000) [with a better story](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#376000) [about his experience.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#378000) [What defines a story?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#381000) [And that is true of the stories](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#384000) [that memory delivers for us,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#386000) [and it's also true of the stories that we make up.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#388000) [What defines a story are changes,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#391000) [significant moments and endings.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#395000) [Endings are very, very important](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#398000) [and, in this case, the ending dominated.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#400000)

[Now, the experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#404000) [lives its life continuously.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#406000) [It has moments of experience, one after the other.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#409000) [And you can ask: What happens to these moments?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#412000) [And the answer is really straightforward:](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#415000) [They are lost forever.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#417000) [I mean, most of the moments of our life --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#419000) [and I calculated, you know, the psychological present](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#421000) [is said to be about three seconds long;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#424000) [that means that, you know,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#426000) [in a life there are about 600 million of them;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#428000) [in a month, there are about 600,000 --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#430000) [most of them don't leave a trace.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#433000) [Most of them are completely ignored](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#437000) [by the remembering self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#439000) [And yet, somehow you get the sense](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#441000) [that they should count,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#443000) [that what happens during these moments of experience](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#445000) [is our life.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#448000) [It's the finite resource that we're spending](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#450000) [while we're on this earth.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#452000) [And how to spend it](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#454000) [would seem to be relevant,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#456000) [but that is not the story](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#458000) [that the remembering self keeps for us.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#460000)

[So we have the remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#462000) [and the experiencing self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#464000) [and they're really quite distinct.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#466000) [The biggest difference between them](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#468000) [is in the handling of time.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#470000) [From the point of view of the experiencing self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#473000) [if you have a vacation,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#476000) [and the second week is just as good as the first,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#478000) [then the two-week vacation](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#481000) [is twice as good as the one-week vacation.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#484000) [That's not the way it works at all for the remembering self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#487000) [For the remembering self, a two-week vacation](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#490000) [is barely better than the one-week vacation](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#492000) [because there are no new memories added.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#495000) [You have not changed the story.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#497000) [And in this way,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#500000) [time is actually the critical variable](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#502000) [that distinguishes a remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#505000) [from an experiencing self;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#508000) [time has very little impact on the story.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#510000)

[Now, the remembering self does more](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#514000) [than remember and tell stories.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#517000) [It is actually the one that makes decisions](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#519000) [because, if you have a patient who has had, say,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#523000) [two colonoscopies with two different surgeons](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#525000) [and is deciding which of them to choose,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#528000) [then the one that chooses](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#531000) [is the one that has the memory that is less bad,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#534000) [and that's the surgeon that will be chosen.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#538000) [The experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#540000) [has no voice in this choice.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#542000) [We actually don't choose between experiences,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#545000) [we choose between memories of experiences.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#548000) [And even when we think about the future,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#551000) [we don't think of our future normally as experiences.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#554000) [We think of our future](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#557000) [as anticipated memories.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#559000) [And basically you can look at this,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#562000) [you know, as a tyranny of the remembering self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#564000) [and you can think of the remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#567000) [sort of dragging the experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#569000) [through experiences that](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#571000) [the experiencing self doesn't need.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#573000)

[I have that sense that](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#575000) [when we go on vacations](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#577000) [this is very frequently the case;](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#579000) [that is, we go on vacations,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#581000) [to a very large extent,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#583000) [in the service of our remembering self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#585000) [And this is a bit hard to justify I think.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#588000) [I mean, how much do we consume our memories?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#591000) [That is one of the explanations](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#594000) [that is given for the dominance](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#596000) [of the remembering self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#598000) [And when I think about that, I think about a vacation](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#600000) [we had in Antarctica a few years ago,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#602000) [which was clearly the best vacation I've ever had,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#605000) [and I think of it relatively often,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#608000) [relative to how much I think of other vacations.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#610000) [And I probably have consumed](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#612000) [my memories of that three-week trip, I would say,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#616000) [for about 25 minutes in the last four years.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#618000) [Now, if I had ever opened the folder](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#621000) [with the 600 pictures in it,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#624000) [I would have spent another hour.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#627000) [Now, that is three weeks,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#629000) [and that is at most an hour and a half.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#631000) [There seems to be a discrepancy.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#633000) [Now, I may be a bit extreme, you know,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#635000) [in how little appetite I have for consuming memories,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#637000) [but even if you do more of this,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#640000) [there is a genuine question:](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#643000) [Why do we put so much weight on memory](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#646000) [relative to the weight that we put on experiences?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#650000)

[So I want you to think](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#653000) [about a thought experiment.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#655000) [Imagine that for your next vacation,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#658000) [you know that at the end of the vacation](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#660000) [all your pictures will be destroyed,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#663000) [and you'll get an amnesic drug](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#666000) [so that you won't remember anything.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#668000) [Now, would you choose the same vacation? (Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#670000) [And if you would choose a different vacation,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#674000) [there is a conflict between your two selves,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#679000) [and you need to think about how to adjudicate that conflict,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#681000) [and it's actually not at all obvious, because](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#684000) [if you think in terms of time,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#687000) [then you get one answer,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#690000) [and if you think in terms of memories,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#693000) [you might get another answer.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#696000) [Why do we pick the vacations we do](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#698000) [is a problem that confronts us](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#701000) [with a choice between the two selves.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#704000)

[Now, the two selves](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#706000) [bring up two notions of happiness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#709000) [There are really two concepts of happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#711000) [that we can apply, one per self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#713000) [So you can ask: How happy is the experiencing self?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#716000) [And then you would ask: How happy are the moments](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#721000) [in the experiencing self's life?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#723000) [And they're all -- happiness for moments](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#726000) [is a fairly complicated process.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#728000) [What are the emotions that can be measured?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#730000) [And, by the way, now we are capable](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#733000) [of getting a pretty good idea](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#735000) [of the happiness of the experiencing self over time.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#737000) [If you ask for the happiness of the remembering self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#743000) [it's a completely different thing.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#746000) [This is not about how happily a person lives.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#748000) [It is about how satisfied or pleased the person is](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#751000) [when that person thinks about her life.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#754000) [Very different notion.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#758000) [Anyone who doesn't distinguish those notions](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#760000) [is going to mess up the study of happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#763000) [and I belong to a crowd of students of well-being,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#765000) [who've been messing up the study of happiness for a long time](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#768000) [in precisely this way.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#772000)

[The distinction between the](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#774000) [happiness of the experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#776000) [and the satisfaction of the remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#778000) [has been recognized in recent years,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#781000) [and there are now efforts to measure the two separately.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#783000) [The Gallup Organization has a world poll](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#786000) [where more than half a million people](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#789000) [have been asked questions](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#791000) [about what they think of their life](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#793000) [and about their experiences,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#795000) [and there have been other efforts along those lines.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#797000) [So in recent years, we have begun to learn](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#800000) [about the happiness of the two selves.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#803000) [And the main lesson I think that we have learned](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#806000) [is they are really different.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#809000) [You can know how satisfied somebody is with their life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#811000) [and that really doesn't teach you much](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#816000) [about how happily they're living their life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#818000) [and vice versa.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#821000) [Just to give you a sense of the correlation,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#823000) [the correlation is about .5.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#825000) [What that means is if you met somebody,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#827000) [and you were told, "Oh his father is six feet tall,"](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#830000) [how much would you know about his height?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#834000) [Well, you would know something about his height,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#836000) [but there's a lot of uncertainty.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#838000) [You have that much uncertainty.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#840000) [If I tell you that somebody ranked their life eight on a scale of ten,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#842000) [you have a lot of uncertainty](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#846000) [about how happy they are](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#848000) [with their experiencing self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#850000) [So the correlation is low.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#852000)

[We know something about what controls](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#854000) [satisfaction of the happiness self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#857000) [We know that money is very important,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#859000) [goals are very important.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#861000) [We know that happiness is mainly](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#863000) [being satisfied with people that we like,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#867000) [spending time with people that we like.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#870000) [There are other pleasures, but this is dominant.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#873000) [So if you want to maximize the happiness of the two selves,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#875000) [you are going to end up](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#878000) [doing very different things.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#880000) [The bottom line of what I've said here](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#882000) [is that we really should not think of happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#884000) [as a substitute for well-being.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#888000) [It is a completely different notion.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#890000)

[Now, very quickly,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#893000) [another reason we cannot think straight about happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#896000) [is that we do not attend to the same things](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#900000) [when we think about life, and we actually live.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#907000) [So, if you ask the simple question of how happy people are in California,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#910000) [you are not going to get to the correct answer.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#915000) [When you ask that question,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#918000) [you think people must be happier in California](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#920000) [if, say, you live in Ohio.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#922000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#924000) [And what happens is](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#926000) [when you think about living in California,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#929000) [you are thinking of the contrast](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#933000) [between California and other places,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#935000) [and that contrast, say, is in climate.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#938000) [Well, it turns out that climate](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#940000) [is not very important to the experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#942000) [and it's not even very important to the reflective self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#945000) [that decides how happy people are.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#948000) [But now, because the reflective self is in charge,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#951000) [you may end up -- some people may end up](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#955000) [moving to California.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#957000) [And it's sort of interesting to trace what is going to happen](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#959000) [to people who move to California in the hope of getting happier.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#962000) [Well, their experiencing self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#965000) [is not going to get happier.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#967000) [We know that.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#969000) [But one thing will happen: They will think they are happier,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#972000) [because, when they think about it,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#975000) [they'll be reminded of how horrible the weather was in Ohio,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#979000) [and they will feel they made the right decision.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#983000)

[It is very difficult](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#986000) [to think straight about well-being,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#988000) [and I hope I have given you a sense](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#990000) [of how difficult it is.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#993000)

[Thank you.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#995000)

[(Applause)](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#997000)

[Chris Anderson: Thank you. I've got a question for you.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1000000) [Thank you so much.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1004000) [Now, when we were on the phone a few weeks ago,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1006000) [you mentioned to me that there was quite an interesting result](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1010000) [came out of that Gallup survey.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1013000) [Is that something you can share](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1015000) [since you do have a few moments left now?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1017000)

[Daniel Kahneman: Sure.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1019000) [I think the most interesting result that we found in the Gallup survey](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1021000) [is a number, which we absolutely did not expect to find.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1024000) [We found that with respect to the happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1027000) [of the experiencing self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1029000) [When we looked at how feelings,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1032000) [vary with income.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1037000) [And it turns out that, below an income](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1039000) [of 60,000 dollars a year, for Americans --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1042000) [and that's a very large sample of Americans, like 600,000,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1045000) [so it's a large representative sample --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1048000) [below an income of 600,000 dollars a year...](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1050000)

[CA: 60,000.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1052000)

[DK: 60,000.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1054000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1056000) [60,000 dollars a year, people are unhappy,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1058000) [and they get progressively unhappier the poorer they get.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1062000) [Above that, we get an absolutely flat line.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1065000) [I mean I've rarely seen lines so flat.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1068000) [Clearly, what is happening is](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1071000) [money does not buy you experiential happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1073000) [but lack of money certainly buys you misery,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1076000) [and we can measure that misery](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1079000) [very, very clearly.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1081000) [In terms of the other self, the remembering self,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1083000) [you get a different story.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1086000) [The more money you earn, the more satisfied you are.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1088000) [That does not hold for emotions.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1091000)

[CA: But Danny, the whole American endeavor is about](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1093000) [life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1096000) [If people took seriously that finding,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1099000) [I mean, it seems to turn upside down](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1103000) [everything we believe about, like for example,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1106000) [taxation policy and so forth.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1108000) [Is there any chance that politicians, that the country generally,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1110000) [would take a finding like that seriously](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1113000) [and run public policy based on it?](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1116000)

[DK: You know I think that there is recognition](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1118000) [of the role of happiness research in public policy.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1120000) [The recognition is going to be slow in the United States,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1123000) [no question about that,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1125000) [but in the U.K., it is happening,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1127000) [and in other countries it is happening.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1129000) [People are recognizing that they ought](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1131000) [to be thinking of happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1134000) [when they think of public policy.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1136000) [It's going to take a while,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1138000) [and people are going to debate](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1140000) [whether they want to study experience happiness,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1143000) [or whether they want to study life evaluation,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1145000) [so we need to have that debate fairly soon.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1147000) [How to enhance happiness](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1150000) [goes very different ways depending on how you think,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1152000) [and whether you think of the remembering self](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1155000) [or you think of the experiencing self.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1157000) [This is going to influence policy, I think, in years to come.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1159000) [In the United States, efforts are being made](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1162000) [to measure the experience happiness of the population.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1165000) [This is going to be, I think, within the next decade or two,](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1168000) [part of national statistics.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1171000)

[CA: Well, it seems to me that this issue will -- or at least should be --](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1173000) [the most interesting policy discussion to track](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1177000) [over the next few years.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1179000) [Thank you so much for inventing behavioral economics.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1181000) [Thank you, Danny Kahneman.](http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html#1183000)