

# 'Money doesn't buy you happiness, running does'

*So writes avid runner*

**[Pip Coates](#)**

*in the Aust Financial Review - 9 April 2015*

<http://www.afr.com/lifestyle/health/fitness>

IF someone asks why you run (and chances are someone has, preceded by the comment "you're mad"), what is the first reason you give?

I say first reason, because there are usually many reasons for taking up running: it's cheap, easily accessible, time efficient; social; a physical and mental escape; it's good for weight control and bone density.

Done properly, it'll get you fit pretty quickly and that helps if you want to live a long and healthy life.

Happy?

But do you ever say that running makes you happy?

It's now accepted science that running triggers the release of endorphins, the feel-good chemicals associated with mood changes. High-intensity and endurance running in particular set off a stronger endorphin response. So there's the euphoria, or state of inner peace and calm, that running can generate, and which can last for hours.

But what about the happiness that the experience of running can bring? This is more to do with how running affects your overall satisfaction with life, rather than the 'runner's high' from endorphins.

parkrun

Two separate sources of reading prompted me to think about this. One was a survey of 875 [parkrun](#) Australia participants who said - irrespective of gender or age - that running was their favourite sporting activity and that it increased their sense of well-being.

The survey also found that parkrunners had greater personal well-being than Australians overall.

The free, weekly 5km run that's hosted in more than 110 parks around Australia has just turned four and celebrated its one millionth run. That's an impressive testament to the benefits of running. If it didn't make people feel good, they wouldn't be coming back for more so regularly.

## **Money or the run**

The other article related to a study of the correlation between money and happiness.

Thomas Gilovich, a psychology professor from New York's Cornell University, says that while money is important to meet your basic needs, after that happiness isn't greatly improved by the acquisition of more stuff.

He found that experiences, rather than purchases, rated higher among respondents for achieving happiness. Experiences such as running.

"We buy things to make us happy, and we succeed," he tells [fastcoexist.com](#). "But only for a while. New things are exciting to us at first, but then we adapt to them. One of the enemies of happiness is adaptation."

Gilovich says we adapt to new purchases pretty quickly and then their value to us diminishes.

**Are you experienced?**

He recommends spending money instead on experiences, such as travelling, learning a new skill, attending shows and outdoor exercise.

"You can really like your material stuff. You can even think that part of your identity is connected to those things, but nonetheless they remain separate from you. In contrast, your experiences really are part of you. We are the sum total of our experiences."

Gilovich says that shared experiences connect us more to other people than shared consumption; for example, you're more likely to bond with someone over the shared experience of completing the City to Surf than the fact you both own a Garmin watch.

The growth in activity-based travel supports Gilovich's findings. To be able to spend your discretionary income on an experience that incorporates both the inherent benefits of exercise with the discovery of travel can provide a fast-track to personal fulfilment.

### **Marathon adventures**

One example of this is marathon travel. Companies such as FunRun Travel are prospering because, as co-owner Fran Seton says: "The combination of exotic destination and athletic achievement is very alluring." What's not to like about the Paris and London marathons with a journey into the French Alps along the way?

Even if you can't afford to do much exotic travel, as a runner, your fitness opens up a wider range of experiential offerings.

So while a new running outfit might inspire you to get out there and clock up some miles, the memory that will stay with you longest, and that will make you feel happiest, will still be the run itself.

**What do you most value, material goods or experiences?**

(Ends////////////////////)