

Gratitude, not 'gimme,' makes for more satisfaction, study finds

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People who are materialistic are more likely to be depressed and unsatisfied, in part because they find it harder to be grateful for what they have, according to a study by Baylor researchers.

The study—"Why are materialists less happy? The role of gratitude and need satisfaction in the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction"—appears in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*.

"Gratitude is a [positive mood](#). It's about other people," said study lead author Jo-Ann Tsang, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology and neuroscience in Baylor's College of Arts and Sciences. "Previous research that we and others have done finds that people are motivated to help people that help them—and to help others as well. We're social creatures, and so focusing on others in a positive way is good for our health."

But materialism tends to be "me-centered."

"Our ability to adapt to new situations may help explain why 'more stuff' doesn't make us any happier," said study co-author James Roberts, Ph.D., holder of The Ben H. Williams Professorship in Marketing in Baylor's Hankamer School of Business.

"As we amass more and more possessions, we don't get any happier; we simply raise our reference point," he said. "That new 2,500-square-foot

house becomes the baseline for your desires for an even bigger house. It's called the Treadmill of Consumption. We continue to purchase more and more stuff but we don't get any closer to happiness, we simply speed up the treadmill."

Study results were based on an analysis of 246 members of the department of marketing in a mid-sized private university in the southwestern United States, with an average age of 21. They took part in a 15-minute survey using a 15-item scale of [materialism](#).

Previous research suggests that materialists, despite the fact they are more likely to achieve material goals, are less satisfied overall with their lives.

They are more likely to be unhappy and have lower self-esteem. They also are more likely to be less satisfied with relationships and less involved in community events.

Meanwhile, those who are grateful are likely to find more meaning in life, previous research shows.

The study notes that ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus advised, "Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

Provided by Baylor University

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