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“Reading Response: Life Gets Better After 50”

In May 2018, Jonathan Rauch, published a book, “The Happiness Curve”, where he talks about how the happiness in an individual’s life is “U-Shaped”, and with this U shape he signifies that during middle ages happiness is at its lowest. Academics have also given evinced how happiness hit its lowest during 40s and eventually it skyrockets until an individual reached his 80s.[[1]](#footnote-1) To support his ideas presented in the book Rauch has shared his personal experiences and not just this but the main argument of book about highs and lows of happiness in an individual’s life is also supported by various psychological researches, views of economists. Rauch believes that the decline in middle life is for no significant reason, and this is what he termed as “natural transition”.

The depression an individual is faced during his midlife is not because his marriage is failing, or a person has mental health problems, rather it relates to feeling of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, author adds that not everyone will have similar experiences during their 50s, because there are other determinants such as bad health, a failing marriage, or being workless can affect the happiness. The U curve despite this assumption holds if rest of the elements are kept equal. On this issue of happiness coming after a certain age, Rauch argues that only those people will be able to apprehend change who didn’t encounter substantial developments in their lives or those who haven’t faced adversities or dilemmas.

To back his claim, Rauch has given reference to a study of 2008, carried out by economists which shows that the lowest point of U-Curve hit at age 46, this study was carried held true for 55 countries out of 80, although this was shown in developed countries, where people live longer due to better living conditions. But there are economists and psychologists who have different perception of happiness and they believe that people who were a part of this study can be happier since they started out, which in order encourages them to have a successful career, marriage and all this leads to happiness. And in such a scenario the U curve holds void. Rauch has also given example of his own life, where he states that he had achieved his dreams, won prizes, had a happy married life, yet he had a feeling of agitation in his 40s, but the gloominess, though his parents had died started to disappear in his 50s.

The reason Rauch presented in his book for being happier at older age is that people are barely afflicted by mental pressure, they have better hold of their sentiments, and when a person is young he desires to have utmost from this world, dream job, a perfect marriage, and of course being wealthy. Some even dream of achieving greatness, like once he dreamt. Younger people are overly confident about their future, but the same younger person who achieves everything by his midlife, becomes hungry for more rather than sitting back and enjoying what he has. The older people on other hand have different values, they carry less burden as their wishes are as simple as spending time with their grandkids or giving the most to their new hobby.

Rauch gives advice to his readers to fight midlife crisis, but his assumptions seems a little idealistic, he hasn’t talked about how the U curve works for people who live in less developed countries. Moreoever, it is very idealistic to say that only those people will experience “the arrow of time” and its affect on happiness, who haven’t faced hardships in life. Every person in one way or another is under mental pressure, no human’s life is without tribulations. The extent of happiness is not confined to age boundaries, and if observed in society, older people are sadder because by that age they have lost their youth, energy and stamina to do more. There are many people, who are happy and content with what little they have, and they can be in their 40s, happiness comes within, and it doesn’t wait for a certain age to come. Happiness comes from what a person chooses to make him happy, it can be a good career, or merely a cheesecake slice, or anything.

# Bibliography

Rock, Lucy. "Life gets better after 50: why age tends to work in favour of happiness." 5 May 2018. *The Guardian .* Article . 19 February 2019.

1. (Rock) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)