

# A sensible, balanced amount of free time is key to happiness in our consumer society

October 19 2011

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What is more desirable: too little or too much spare time on your hands? To be happy, somewhere in the middle, according to Chris Manolis and James Roberts from Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH and Baylor University in Waco, TX. Their work shows that materialistic young people with compulsive buying issues need just the right amount of spare time to feel happier. The study is published online in Springer's journal *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.

We now live in a society where time is of the essence. The perception of a shortage of time, or [time pressure](#), is linked to lower levels of happiness. At the same time, our consumer culture, characterized by [materialism](#) and compulsive buying, also has an effect on people's happiness: the desire for materialistic possessions leads to lower [life satisfaction](#).

Given the importance of time in contemporary life, Manolis and Roberts investigate, for the first time, the effect of perceived time affluence (the amount of spare time one perceives he or she has) on the consequences of materialistic values and compulsive buying for adolescent well-being.

A total of 1,329 adolescents from a public high school in a large metropolitan area of the Midwestern United States took part in the study. The researchers measured how much spare time the young people thought they had; the extent to which they held materialistic values and had compulsive buying tendencies; and their subjective well-being, or self-rated happiness.

Manolis and Roberts' findings confirm that both materialism and compulsive buying have a [negative impact](#) on teenagers' happiness. The more materialistic they are and the more they engage in compulsive buying, the lower their happiness levels.

In addition, time affluence moderates the [negative consequences](#) of both materialism and compulsive buying in this group. Specifically, moderate time affluence i.e. being neither too busy, nor having too much spare time, is linked to higher levels of happiness in materialistic teenagers and those who are compulsive buyers.

Those who suffer from time pressures and think materialistically and/or purchase compulsively feel less happy compared with their adolescent counterparts. Equally, having too much free time on their hands exacerbates the negative effects of material values and compulsive buying on adolescent [happiness](#).

The authors conclude: "Living with a sensible, balanced amount of free [time](#) promotes well-being not only directly, but also by helping to alleviate some of the negative side effects associated with living in our consumer-orientated society."

**More information:** Manolis C & Roberts JA (2011). Subjective well-being among adolescent consumers: the effects of materialism, compulsive buying, and time affluence. Applied Research in Quality of Life. [DOI 10.1007/s11482-011-9155-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-011-9155-5)

Provided by Springer

Citation: A sensible, balanced amount of free time is key to happiness in our consumer society (2011, October 19) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-amount-free->

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