

1. What does happiness mean to you?

To me, happiness is the little things.
A hot cappuccino after a big Italian dinner
the fresh smell of my Grandmother's homemade bread
my mother's embrace after a hard day, firm yet soft
when my dog gets so excited to see me that he nearly knocks me over
the innocence of a child, the wisdom of the elderly
falling asleep right after my head hits the pillow
the heartbreak I felt when my boyfriend left for the Marines
the strength I discovered that was in me all along
the first embrace after bootcamp, like coming home after a long car ride
and crashing on the couch, finally feeling safe
or like that moment of weightlessness after jumping into a pool
or even like no longer being afraid of the future,
but rather embracing change.
However, I know my happiness is different from your happiness
which is different from his happiness and her happiness
But who is to say what is right and wrong?
Aristotle once said, "For the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-
born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy."
But who is to say he will never be happy?
Who is to say he will never meet someone who connects with his soul,
rather his appearance?
Who is to say he will not achieve his goals and rise to the top?
At the end of the day, I believe while we all may share the same needs;
the need to be loved, to be understood, to be accepted,
the little, often overlooked moments of happiness that make life worth it
often differ from person to person.
Happiness is a dynamic, constantly changing process,
that solely depends on the individual.
But all people deserve happiness and can achieve happiness
if they truly want it.

2. A truly fulfilling, beautiful life must include...

Anything you want! The meaning of beauty and fulfillment is always evolving. What I find beautiful and fulfilling is different from what my friends, family, peers, coworkers, and even my future self might feel. However, for me right now, what makes life worth living is human interaction. Friends, role models, inspiring professors, wise grandparents, my family, my Marine... I am happiest when surrounded by people I love. Don't get me wrong, I want to be financially stable one day and go out to expensive restaurants and have a high-paying job that I am passionate about and live the cliché "American Dream." But I wouldn't fully enjoy it if I couldn't share it with my

loved ones. The people that challenge me to think outside of the box and be the best version of myself, the ones who make me feel emotions I never knew I could experience. Who aren't afraid to hurt my feelings because they know they are only helping me out in the long run. People who are unapologetically themselves. To me, experiencing all that life has to offer with a shoulder to cry on, hand to hold, or just somebody to tell it to... That's what makes life worth living. As Epicurus once said, "We must remember that the future is neither wholly ours nor wholly not ours, so that neither must we count upon it as quite certain to come nor despair of it as quite certain not to come." People take the loved ones in their lives for granted, assuming they will always be there. Because their love is so strong, they figure that nothing can ever tear it apart. However, the universe is not sensitive. One morning you could wake up and lose the love of your life, or your mother, or your best friend, with no rhyme or reason. Things just happen, so it's up to you to not just tell, but also show everyone in your life how much they mean to you, with no fear or embarrassment. You never know when it will be their time to go, so make sure while you have them in your grasp, you hold on tight and don't let go.

3. Do you agree with the idea that people are fully responsible for where they end up in life? Why or why not?

In the words of Marcus Aurelius, "The world is change; this life, opinion." Things happen in life with no explanation. Life is not fair, no matter how optimistic one might be. Mothers bury their children, passionate love turns to mundane companionship, people cannot afford the cost of everyday necessities. But these unfortunate happenings don't excuse one from living a happy, satisfying, successful life. The universe doesn't owe you anything. Millions of years from now, when scientists discover the center of the universe, people will be shocked that it is not them. You can spend your whole life trying to understand why things happen, or you can accept life for the crazy mess that it is and slowly adjust. You have the power to control your emotions and choose happiness; even when it is hard to find, it will always be there. Things will keep happening that are beyond your control, so you can either let your emotions get the best of you or train your brain to see the positive side of things. It's never easy, but it's always worth it. The more you try to make sense of the chaos, the more you'll find yourself enabling you from achieving your own happiness. Happiness is a mindset; it's an active choice. It can be one of the hardest choices you ever make, but it will always be there, if you have the strength to feel it.

4. Where would you like to see yourself in about 10 years?

In 10 years time, I hope to be...
still as close with my family as I am now
married to Ben, as foolish as that may sound since I am so young
the mother of my children that my mother has been to me
still learning new things everyday

not just living, but thriving
spending my Sunday nights with a cappuccino and a good book
healthy, as I hope all of my loved ones will be
yoga Tuesdays, trivia Thursdays, date night Fridays
working as a professor, inspiring students each and every day
best friends with my sister
wiser than I am now, but still just as curious
a motivational mother, a convivial coworker, a surprising spouse
living in not just a house or apartment or loft, but a home
content with what I have, yet always striving for more
not obsessing over money or my weight
owner of two huskies, Simon and Garfunkel
still as passionately in love with my husband since day 1
following Marcus Aurelius' words: "We live only in the present, in this
fleet-footed moment. The rest is lost and behind us, or ahead of us and
may never be found" by cherishing each and every moment,
whether it be a simple kiss on the cheek or a
stranger holding the door open for me or
witnessing a beautiful sunset.
All in all, I just want to be
happy.

5. What do you want to be remembered by?

Marcus Aurelius once said, "No matter what anyone may do or say, I must be an emerald and keep my color." After I have lived a fulfilling life and my time has come to pass away, I hope people remember me as an emerald. Someone who always was shining, no matter the circumstances. Someone who always made others feel beautiful, and someone who always felt beautiful too. A person who was rare, a treasure, a symbol of love, beauty, and class. In the darkness, an emerald still shines; it is just harder to see. I want people to remember me as a resilient, strong, and powerful young woman. A girl who was not simply thrown around and not cared about, but someone who made a statement, someone who people wanted to take care of. Over the years, I hope to never lose my shine or my vibrancy. I hope to always make people feel valuable. I hope to always feel valuable myself.

6. What is one of your favorite memories?

After bootcamp, Ben was allowed to spend 10 days home. He chose to spend his time with me in Boston. My aunt lives in Cambridge, so we were able to stay in her guest suite. My favorite moment was not the fancy dinner we went to or the Red Sox game or the MFA. Instead, my favorite moments were when we were free, spontaneous, in love. When we went out for pizza at 1 AM because neither of us could sleep. When we bought \$30 worth of ice cream from JP Licks and ate in all in one sitting.

When we were waiting for the T and he grabbed my hand and started slow dancing with me to the sound of the street performers guitar.
When we pretended to be a rich married couple in Anthropologie and shopped for our imaginary kitchen.
When he dropped his cannoli before even taking the first bite after waiting in line for nearly a half hour at Mike's.
Walking the Boston streets, arm in arm, hoping our love never experiences harm.
Stealing glances, stealing kisses.
Never worrying about our troubles or the time or the future, just appreciating the present and fully immersing ourselves in the now.
Feeling his feet next to mine as I sleep,
hearing his breathing slow down into a steady snore,
waking up to his lips on my forehead and my heart in his hands.
Those little, often overlooked moments of love, fun, and life mean the world to me
and are my favorite parts
of living.