The Expert Says

Everybody wants to be happy, says Manhattan-based psychotherapist Mary Pender Greene, LCSW-R, but people must learn what happiness really means.

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What are some of the major misconceptions people have about happiness?
Many people think making money will make them happy. But getting happy is an inside job. It comes from working on yourself so that you feel good [about undertaking that day-to-day process] rather than acquiring things.

How can people get more realistic about happiness?
Realize that you can feel happier and less happy at certain points. Agonizing about not being happy all the time makes people lose the opportunity to enjoy what they do have.

Can seeking happiness become problematic?
When being happy becomes a destination, it's problematic. Happiness is a journey—and even when you arrive, you don't stay there. People should start by doing things that lead them toward the happiness they seek. Then enjoy your travels along the route. Never wait until you reach your destination to be happy.

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