

Which of the Things You Love Make You Happiest?

When we think about the emotion of love, we usually think of people. We love our friends, our families, our neighbors, and our communities.

But what about other “loves” in our lives? For example, I love chocolate, hiking, and dining with friends. Does feeling that love for things and experiences make any difference to our well-being, just like our love of other people does?

According to a new study, it may—depending on what you love.

When the researchers analyzed the data, they found that two categories of “loves” mattered: social activities and physical activity. Specifically, people who loved social activities had higher happiness and meaning in life, and people who loved physical activity had higher happiness, meaning, *and* satisfaction.

Loving material things didn’t seem to matter to well-being, except in one case: 18 to 19 year olds who loved material objects were more likely to be searching for meaning. Perhaps this makes sense, since younger people who are forming a sense of who they are tend to be more interested in getting access to things they don’t have yet—like a car to get to work or a computer to use in school.

Still, it’s important research to pursue. For one, it may help us to know that learning to love physical exercise and social activities could be beneficial to our well-being. For another, many experts talk about relationships as key to well-being but don’t consider those people who have trouble meeting or connecting with others—perhaps because they live in sparsely populated areas or just have difficulties with social skills.