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CLEAR THINKING

from Uncommon Knowledge

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Psychology for success, health and happiness
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In this month's Clear Thinking...

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- 2: Myth Buster: Deep down, everyone's bad
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Hi

To stick with the theme of Positive Psychology from last issue, this time we've got a wee rant on cynicism about human nature, amongst other things!

We draw heavily on Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman in this issue, and you'll be hearing about it again. This is the public face of Positive Psychology - nothing less than a revolution that should lead to better living for all of us. (Check TIME magazine this week if you want to know more).

Enjoy Clear Thinking!

Roger Elliott & Mark Tyrrell
Uncommon Knowledge Ltd

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1: Startling Statistic: Genuine Smile's Better

Your smile could say a lot about you. Researchers studying senior-class photos from Mills College, California found a difference between 'genuine' and 'forced' smiles. The genuine smile was distinguished by crinkling around the eyes, something that is extremely difficult to do deliberately.

When these women were followed up over 30 years later, the genuine smilers were, on average, more likely to be married, to stay married and to experience more personal well-being. On cross-checking, good looks were factored out - it was the smile that did it!

*Adapted from 'Authentic Happiness' by Martin Seligman

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2: Myth Buster: Deep down, everyone's bad

THE idea that the good things people do stem from bad impulses is one that is bred into the bone of Western culture. Thanks to Freud and his followers, the human potential for simply wanting to live well has been dragged deep into the mire of dodgy ideas about unconscious urges.

The Freudster believed that all human motivation and endeavour is basically a defence mechanism against basic conflicts over infantile sexuality and aggression. Unfortunately, he managed to convince others that this was true as well.

So, for example, Princess Diana's opposition to landmines was nothing more than her sublimating her hate for Prince Charles and the Royal family, or Richard's Branson's drive is simply because he *has* to outdo his father. On a wider scale, there's the cynical idea that you are only nice to someone because you want something in return - consciously or subconsciously.

This is however, no more than idea, backed by some good marketing and fuelled by fervent followers; it was supported by no research, and nothing since has proven it to be true. As Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association, states in his new

book 'Authentic Happiness', "there is not a shred of evidence that strength and virtue are derived from negative motivation".

Phew, so we're all free to go out and be good without worrying it means we're bad.

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3: Article: The Therapeutic Nature of Loving Touch

When was the last time something 'touched' you? Do you know someone who has 'the common touch'? And isn't it nice when you experience 'the personal touch'?

Physical contact is so important to human beings that it is hardwired into our language, but these days we may be 'out of touch' with just how central a need this is. Here Mark Tyrrell takes a look at what the research says about touch – including one startling finding that lack of human touch can actually kill!

Read full article...

<http://www.uncommon-knowledge.co.uk/touch/touch-1.html>

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That's all for this month -
we hope you enjoyed it and we'll see you next month!

Roger Elliott & Mark Tyrrell
Uncommon Knowledge

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