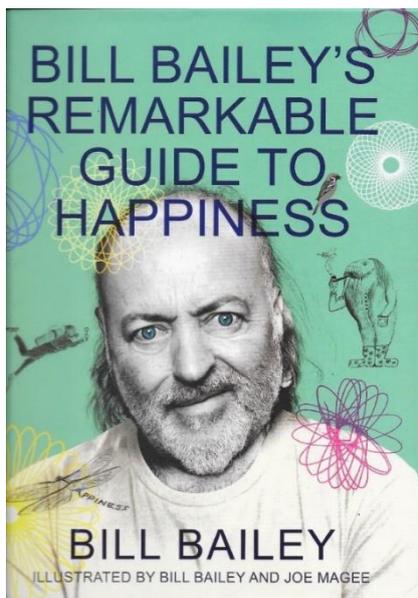




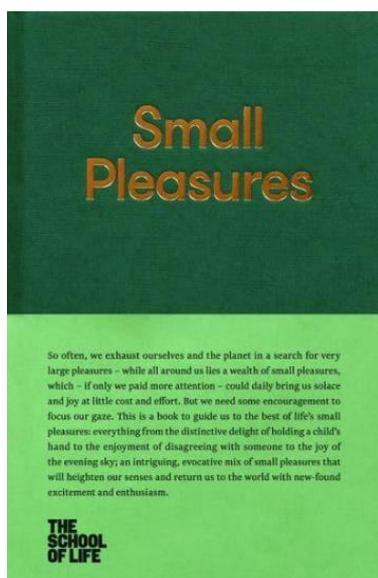
Mental Health Matters: How can we find happiness?

The desire for happiness may be an almost universal human aspiration. It's a topic on which we probably all have an opinion and there are a great many guides. Currently, this includes the unlikely



winner of Strictly Come Dancing, Bill Bailey ... As a stand-up comedian he's spent his life studying happiness and seeking to bring a little joy to people's lives. In lockdown he's been reflecting on that and produced his, 'Remarkable Guide to Happiness', which is an entertaining read ... but also a friendly support to take action in our own lives. His 'guide' is a series of three dozen short chapters recollecting *things he's done* that brought him happiness, often small things such as crazy golf, caring for plants,

birdsong, having a clear out and ... swearing. The broad message is we may find happiness by carefully reflecting on what works for us, what leads us to be (genuinely) happy and then *doing more of*



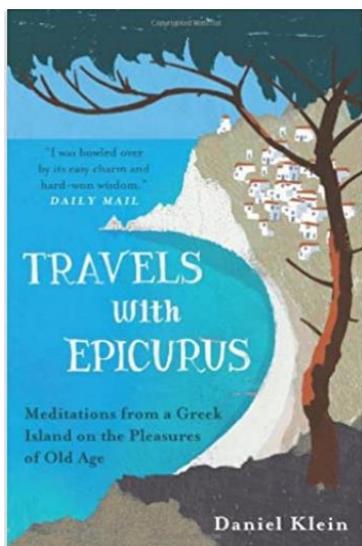
that. Intriguingly this approach is remarkably similar, and with overlapping content, to the School of Life's philosophical review of 'Small Pleasures' ... which is another companionable and friendly anthology of short chapters of small acts and actions that may prompt us to also consider *what we can do*.

Historically, this is also what got philosophy, the love of wisdom, going in the first place.

The early Greeks were primarily interested in seeking to understand what made for a good life and how to live well ... and there's a growing popular interest in reconsidering what they taught and particularly what they had to

say about seeking to understand our lives, this difficult thing of being human, and what principles can be put into practice so as to have more opportunity to live well and be happy.

Understandably, we often come at this question, how can I be happy through its opposite, 'How can I stop being unhappy?'. Bill Bailey and The School of Life suggest that although it may be helpful to seek to stop unpleasant emotions it can be as or more productive to consider how to promote positive ones. Happiness is natural, something that is in our nature to experience as a response to the right conditions and through our reflections on what those



conditions are for us, we may be able to influence them and enabled ourselves to be happier.

One of many further guides is the philosopher / comedian Daniel Klein whose charming book 'Travels with Epicurus' became an unexpected best seller. He tells the story of his return, as an aging philosopher, to the Greek Islands of his youth to reflect upon what the ancient Greeks have to say about living well in old age.

It's a tender and personal review, but after considering many alternatives he concludes by emphasising the importance of play, friendship and learning to regard ordinary things with mindful appreciation. He again speaks of the value of meeting, noticing, valuing, small pleasures with gratitude and suggests that this may be accompanied by a quality of life available to us all but so easily displaced and forgotten in the busyness and preoccupation of what we take to be 'normal' in our modern world.

We hope these reflections carry a positive message to you.

All good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

Ps. Do let us know if you have responses to this or suggestions or offers to make for future postings