

Lenorë Lambert Challenges the Pursuit of Constant Happiness in TEDx Talk on What It Really Means to Flourish



Sydney, New South Wales Jul 26, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - In a world where success is often measured by wealth, possessions, appearance, and achievement, Lenorë Lambert is challenging audiences to reconsider what it truly means to live a good life.

Watch the full TEDx Talk here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5cAzOcn-c4>

The Question Behind the Pursuit of Happiness

How much money would someone need to be truly happy?

For some, the answer is a specific financial goal. Perhaps it is \$50,000, \$500,000, or even \$1 million. But according to Lenorë Lambert, reaching that number will not create permanent happiness.

In her TEDx Talk, Lambert challenges the belief that people can eventually arrive at a point where life is permanently happy, comfortable, and free from difficulty.

Instead, she introduces audiences to a different way of thinking about personal fulfillment: flourishing.

When Success Did Not Feel Like Enough

Lambert's message is deeply rooted in her own experience.

At 24, she began her first professional career outside university and started earning more money than she had ever experienced. Like many people, she looked to society for guidance on how to build a good life.

The messages seemed clear: look good, make money, and buy things.

She followed those signposts. She purchased a red sports car, experienced corporate success, enjoyed luxury hotels, restaurants, holidays, and eventually pursued sporting achievement.

At 41, Lambert took up Masters athletics and began training six days a week. Her dedication led to eight World Championship medals and brought her within 0.79 seconds of the world record in the 400-meter hurdles.

Yet after achieving many of the ambitious goals she had set for herself, she discovered something unexpected.

The achievements were exciting, but the feeling did not last.

The Moment She Began to Question Everything

After returning from the World Championships, Lambert found herself sitting in her gym and looking at her collection of medals.

Despite the years of effort, discipline, dedication, and success, her life had not fundamentally changed.

She began asking herself: Is this it? Is this as good as it gets?

Her experience led her to question the assumption that money, possessions, achievement, and winning would ultimately create lasting fulfillment.

Why Happiness Should Not Be the Ultimate Goal

Lambert argues that happiness is not a permanent destination.

Rather, happiness is a feeling that arises from particular internal experiences and external events coming together in a moment. It can be deeply meaningful, but it is not something we can permanently achieve and maintain.

Life will always include setbacks, frustrations, losses, disappointments, and difficult experiences.

These challenges are not signs that we have failed at life. They are part of being human.

Lambert believes that the goal should therefore shift from trying to create an all-good, all-happy life to creating a flourishing life.

From Happiness to Human Flourishing

For Lambert, flourishing means embracing the whole of human experience.

It includes the enjoyable moments, but also the uncomfortable, messy, and difficult parts of life.

A flourishing life is not about avoiding difficulty as many visions of happiness do.. Instead, it is about fully experiencing the pleasant moments while learning to work skillfully with the difficult ones.

Lambert describes this process as becoming skilled artisans of our own character, developing the ability to remain grounded rather than being thrown around by life's circumstances.

Missing a World Record by 0.79 seconds (as she did) can be part of a flourishing life.

So can learning from a difficult period of depression.

The goal is not to exclude difficult experiences from life, or see them as failings, but to use them as food for growth.

The Nine Elements of a Flourishing Life

At the center of Lambert's framework is a model consisting of nine elements of human flourishing.

She compares these elements to the nine planks of a wooden raft. Each plank represents an experience that nourishes human life. Together, they help create both safety and fulfillment.

The more nourished these elements are, the more we flourish. We need to attend to all of them sufficiently, not overdo some and neglect others - a recipe for a sinking raft.

The Four Elements That Create Safety

Material Security

Feeling safe and having enough financial resources to not worry about getting by.

Autonomy

Having the freedom to make choices about how to live our own lives.

Certainty

Understanding enough about the world to avoid feeling overwhelmed by uncertainty, which is an intrinsic part of life.

Belonging

Being a regular part of a group where we're known and people notice if we don't show up.

This could include family, friends, a neighborhood, a workplace, a sports team, a local community, or a place of worship - any group that meets regularly.

Lambert highlights Belonging as an Element that's often under-nourished in modern societies.

The Five Elements That Create Fulfillment

Pleasure

Experiencing the pleasures of the senses and actively savoring pleasant experiences. In this definition of the senses, we include the mind - entertainment, learning, mental stimulation, fun.

Engagement

Becoming deeply absorbed in challenging and meaningful activities that require all of your attention.

Achievement

Setting specific challenging goals and applying our energy, skills and attention to accomplish them.

Connection

Being known, understood, and genuinely cared about by others.

Lambert emphasizes that deep social connection is not a luxury. It is a vital part of a healthy and fulfilling life. It is another element that's often under-nourished in modern times.

Contribution

Using one's talents, time, care and resources to help others.

A New Definition of a Good Life

Lambert ultimately encourages audiences to stop allowing advertising, social expectations, and conventional definitions of success to determine what a good life should look like.

Money, possessions, appearance, and achievement can all have a place in life. However, none of them alone are the answer.

Lambert encourages people to set their true north on flourishing rather than permanent happiness, nourishing all nine elements and neglecting none.

A flourishing life actively savours the pleasant experiences, and uses difficulty to develop our characters.

It is not a life without challenges, difficulties or failures - such a life is pure fantasy.

It is a life that includes and values the whole human experience.

About Lenorë Lambert

Lenorë Lambert is a psychologist by training, a secular Buddhist teacher, author, athlete, and the founder of Flourish Personal Growth. Through her work, she helps people live fulfilling lives.

Her approach challenges conventional ideas about success and happiness, encouraging individuals to direct their efforts to live a good life towards the experiences that actually deliver it, and growing their characters along the way..

Her vision of a flourishing life embraces all aspects of the human experience, the pleasant, the unpleasant, and everything in between.

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