

We really are happier when busy

Research conducted by psychologists at the Booth School of Business, University of Chicago, suggests that we are happier when we are busy but our instinct is for idleness!

The group conducted an experiment where students at the university were given a choice of delivering a questionnaire to a location that was a 15-minute round-trip walk away, or delivering it just outside the room and waiting for 15 minutes. 68% of the students took the lazy option, but when questioned, those who had done the walk said they felt significantly happier.

It seems our instinct is for idleness (seen as an evolutionary throwback to enable us to conserve energy) but we are happier when busy and engaged. The authors suggest that we should involve ourselves in 'futile busyness' i.e. an activity that serves no other purpose than to prevent idleness.

Apparently, airports have already cottoned on to this philosophy. Many have increased the walk to the luggage carousel after a flight, to reduce the amount of time spent waiting for the baggage to arrive – an activity that many of us will know leaves us feeling miserable and irritated. So, the next time you fly, thank the planners for your long walk to baggage reclaim!