Rabbi Hyman Schachtel (1954) proposed that “happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have” (p. 37). In two studies, we tested Schachtel's maxim by asking participants whether or not they had and the extent to which they wanted each of 52 material items. To quantify how much people wanted what they had, we identified what they had and the extent to which they wanted those things. To quantify how much people had what they wanted, we identified how much they wanted and whether or not they had each item. Both variables accounted for unique variance in happiness. Moreover, the extent to which people wanted what they had partially mediated effects of gratitude and maximization on happiness, and the extent to which they had what they wanted partially mediated the effect of maximization. Results indicate that happiness is both wanting what you have and having what you want.

Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

—Rabbi Hyman [Schachtel (1954](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02095.x%22%20%5Cl%20%22bibr17-j-1467-9280-2008-02095-x), p. 37)

Newswise — Some argue that happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have. This maxim sounds reasonable enough, but can it be tested, and if so, is it true?

It turns out it can be tested. Texas Tech University psychologist Jeff Larsen and Amie McKibban of Wichita State University asked undergraduates to indicate whether they possessed 52 different material items, such as a car, a stereo or a bed.

Their results, which appear in the April issue of the Association for Psychological Science's journal, *Psychological Science*, suggest people can grow accustomed to their possessions and thereby derive less happiness from them.

They also suggest, however, that people can continue to want the things they have and that those who do so can achieve greater happiness.

"Simply having a bunch of things is not the key to happiness," Larsen said. "Our data show that you also need to appreciate those things you have. It's also important to keep your desire for things you don't own in check."

If the students owned a car, the researchers asked them to rate how much they wanted the car they had. If they didn't have a car, they were asked to rate how much they wanted one.

Larsen and McKibban then calculated the extent to which people want what they have and have what they want. Their findings show that wanting what you have is not the same as having what you want. While people who have what they want tend to desire those items, the correlation between the two was far from perfect.

The researchers found that people who want more of what they have tend to be happier than those who want less of what they have. However, people who have more of what they want tend to be happier than those who have less of what they want.

Happiness does not lie in getting all that you want to but it lies in enjoying all that you have! Too often, we become sad because we do not get something that we aspire for! It is important to understand that life is all about overcoming all the hurdles that come along your way and you may not get something that you want all the time. That’s how life goes like! You need to understand that in life, you may not always get something that you have always wanted. It is rather about enjoying all that you have! Life is full of ups and downs, and you might have to face disappointments at certain times. However, you ought to understand that even when you do not get all that you want, you should not feel down. You must be happy with whatever you have and try to be contented with that! A lot of people are there who have got everything in their lives yet they are not happy. This is because these people are never satisfied. You will never see these people happy only because their thirst goes on extending all the time. One can feel the happiness only when he or she is happy with what they have! A person who is never satisfied will never be happy even if he gets all that he craves for! These kinds of people have increasing demands and that goes on and on. These individuals have unlimited cravings and they would never be gratified with something that they have! It is important to understand that you should be satisfied with all that you own. You need to be happy and satisfied with something that you own, and there’s no other way out! It is only when you are satisfied with your possessions that you actually get to know how things actually look like! A lot of times, we go on complaining about things that we are not able to achieve instead of focusing about things that we already have and thus, look for ways of trying to make them better instead. You must enjoy all that you have instead of complaining and nagging about things that do make no sense. It is only when you are positive that you actually get to see more options ahead of you. Know that complaining about things and nagging around them all the time will never help you to achieve them all of a sudden. All that matters is how you try to build your own empire and thus, the amount of efforts that you put into it will ultimately help you reap the harvest at the end of the day. As you are happy with whatever you own, you become satisfied and thus, get the willpower to achieve even more.

**Do you agree with the quote “happiness is wanting what you have”?**