Wealth and Well-Being

- there is a correlation between income and happiness
- economic growth has not boosted morale or social well-being
- those who strive for intimacy, personal growth, and contribution to community experience higher quality of life

Two Psychological Phenomena: Adaptation and Comparison

- adaptation-level phenomenon: our tendency to form judgements (of sounds, of lights, of income) relative to a neutral level defined by our prior experience
  - when our wealth or social prestige increases we feel a surge of pleasure but then it becomes normal
- relative deprivation: the perception that we are worse off relative to those whom we compare ourselves
  - we tend to compare ourselves with people at our above our level
  - learning about people in worse situations than us makes us feel better

Predictors of Happiness

- estimated that 50% of differences between happiness levels is attributed to genes
- there is no “happiness set point” - it can rise and fall based on factors within our control

Stress and Health

- behavioral medicine: an interdisciplinary that integrates behavioral and medicinal knowledge and applies that knowledge to health and disease
- health psychology: a subfield of psychology that provides psychology’s contribution to behavioral medicine

Stress and Illness

- stress: the process by which we perceive and respond to certain events, called stressors, that we appraise as threatening or challenging
- when short-lived, stressors can be good: they arouse/motivate us, strengthen our immune system to fight infections, allow us to face challenges
- prolonged stress (childhood abuse, PTSD, etc) can also put us at risk for chronic disease

The Stress Response System

- fight or flight -
  - body produces epinephrine and norepinephrine