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modern life is so wonderful , why do we feel so unhappy ? In the following article , the author suggests that though living standards have improved , we , rather than feeling content , never become completely satisfied with what we have achieved. This is because we always find ourselves with new and higher expectations. To meet these expectations and solve the new problems that arise , new strategies should be adopted. HOW COULD ANYTHING THAT FEELS SO BAD BE SO GOOD ? Richard E. Farson Maybe it is time to adopt a new strategy in trying to figure out why life today is so difficult , and what can be done about it. Assume that not only are things often not what they seem , they may be just the opposite of what they seem. When it comes to human affairs , everything is paradoxical. People are discontented these days , for example , not because things are worse than ever , but because things are better than ever. Take marriage. In California there are about six divorces for every ten marriages even higher in some of the better communities. One must admit that a good deal of discontent is reflected in those statistics. But the explanation so frequently offered that the institution of marriage is in a state of collapse simply does not hold. Marriage has never been more popular and desirable than is it now ; so appealing in fact , that even those who are in the process of divorce can scarcely wait for the law to allow them to

marry again. The problem is that people have never before entered marriage with the high expectations they now hold. Throughout history , the family has been a vital unit for survival , starting as a defense system for physical survival , and gradually becoming a unit for economic survival. Now , of course , the family has become a physical and economic liability rather than an asset. Having met , as a society , the basic survival and security needs , people simply dont need each other anymore to fight Indians or spin yarn or wash dishes or repair electrical plugs for that matter. The bonds of marriage and family life are no longer functional , but affectional. People used to come to love each other because they needed each other. Now its just the other way around. They need each other because they love each other. Listening to the complaints of those recently divorced , one seldom hears of brutality and desertion , but usually something like , "We just dont communicate very well" , "The educational differences between us were simply too great to overcome" , "I felt trapped in the relationship" , "He wont let me be me" , "We dont have much in common anymore". These complaints are interesting , because they reflect high-order discontent resulting from the failure of marriage to meet the great expectations held for it. Couples now expect and demand communication and understanding , shared values and goals , intellectual companionship , great moments of intimacy. By and large , marriage today actually does deliver such moments , but as a result couples have gone on to burden the relationship with even greater demands. To some extent it has been the success of marriage

that has created the discontent. The same appears to be true in the civil rights movement. The gains that have been made have led not to satisfaction but to increased tension and dissatisfaction , particularly among those benefiting from such gains. The discontent is higher in the North than in the South , higher in cities than in rural areas. The disturbing paradox of social change is that improvement brings the need for more improvement in constantly accelerating demands. So , compared to what used to be , society is way ahead ; compared to what might be , it is way behind. Society is enabled to feel that conditions are rotten , because they are actually so good. 100Test
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