

Pursuit of Happiness: - Resilience & Positive Psychology –

Instructor: Michael E. Howard, Ph.D.

Participants completing this course will be able to:

1. explain three major causes of stress.
2. explain how effective stress management contributes to happiness.
3. list three reasons why stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at record highs.
4. list two common myths about happiness and the evidence-based approaches that promote sustained happiness.
5. describe three key principles of positive psychology, cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness, and spiritual practice in reducing stress and pursuing happiness.
6. describe how the information in this course can improve patient care and patient outcomes for nursing, dental, pharmacy, mental health, dietetic, occupational and physical therapy, and other health professionals.

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The Pursuit of Happiness: Resilience and Positive Psychology

Welcome

Michael E. Howard, Ph.D.

Institute for Natural Resources, 2025

Procedures

- To obtain the 6 hours of credit (6.0 CEU) for this webinar, attend the course from 8:30 AM until 3:40 PM and complete a 20-question multiple choice test and program evaluation
- To document attendance at the seminar, sign in with first and last name in the pop-up window in 3 roll calls: during 10:00-10:10 morning break, during 11:30-12:30 PM lunch break, and during 2:00-2:10 afternoon break
- At end of the program, I will go over the test and you will complete and submit test and evaluation form online to get credit – certificate will arrive in email in next 5 working days
- Any questions, comments, criticisms, or concerns for me are welcome in the Q & A

Learning Objectives

- Explain three major causes of stress.
- Explain how effective stress management contributes to happiness.
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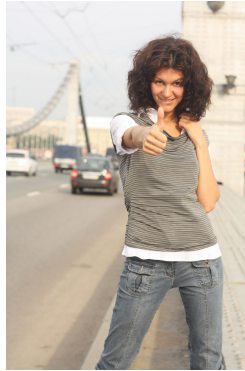
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

-- Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

You Can Choose To Be Happy

“The constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself.”

-- Ben Franklin



“Attaining long-term happiness should be a major process in our lives. Hundreds of evidence-based studies verify the benefits of happiness on almost all aspects of life. When compared to their less happy peers, happy people are more sociable, are more charitable and cooperative, are more likely to get married and stay married, have a richer network of friends and social support, are better leaders, earn higher incomes, are longer-lived, have stronger immune systems, and are more resilient in the face of hardship.” – Mary Yoke, *101 Nice-To-Know Facts about Happiness*, 2015, p. 20.

“Recent research reveals that people who have experienced some adversity (for example, several negative events or life-changing moments) are ultimately happier (and less traumatized, stressed, or impaired) than those who have experienced no adversity at all. Not that we wish cancer on anyone, but it’s often negative experiences that help us grow and learn, which is vital for being happy.” -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., author of *The How of Happiness*

“There are two sides to the coin of happiness: You have to cope well with the bad stuff in life in order to fully achieve the good stuff.”
– Michael Howard, PhD

A Short Test of Happiness

- ☐ I cope with most challenges of life well enough
- ☐ I get overly stressed only occasionally
- ☐ I feel angry or sad only occasionally
- ☐ I frequently feel happy and contented
- ☐ I fully engage in many activities that bring me joy
- ☐ I am satisfied with my life and would not change much
- ☐ I accomplished most things that I wanted to in my life
- ☐ I believe my life is meaningful and has a purpose
- ☐ I often feel grateful and generally trust people
- ☐ I am happy with my social relationships
- ☐ I have friends and family members on whom I can depend on
- ☐ I am an optimistic person

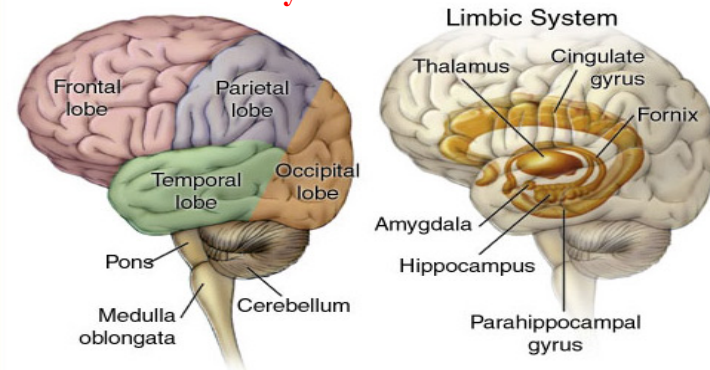
Source: Howard, 2024

Part I: Brain Emotions, & Behavior

Where Does the
Emotion of Happiness
Come From?

PATEM = B (B = Behavior)

Perception, Attention, Thinking, Emotions
& Memory = Survival Behavior



PATEM = B: Thinking

"You feel the way you think." -- Albert Ellis, PhD

• P + A + T = Cognitive Appraisals

- **Perceptions** (biased by factual memories) combine with **Patterns of Thinking** (biased by procedural memories—95% of daily thoughts are the same) to create **cognitive appraisals** → **cognitive appraisals create brief emotions**
- Each person will have a **unique cognitive appraisal** of an event that happens because no two people have the same sets of factual and procedural memories
- Due to distorted memories, cognitive appraisals can be biased and inaccurate, making events appear more dangerous than they are and producing exaggerated negative motions like **FEAR** → can cause **STRESS!**
- **Emotions can be attached to memories**

Happiness = Positive Emotion from Positive Thoughts

Cognitive Appraisals and Happiness

"How people interpret the world has as much, or more, to do with their happiness than what is actually going on in their world. The processes of thinking about some events and not others, of interpreting ambiguous events in positive rather than negative ways, and of tending to recall the good times instead of the bad times from the past are about the internal processes of being happy. Without these processes, it's hard to stay happy for long. This is why some people are happy and some are not when living in the very same circumstances. Our daily cognitive appraisals of things determines our emotional well-being and learning to cognitively appraise events in a positive manner is a critical skill to establish and maintain happiness."

-- Ed Diener, PhD, and Robert Biswas-Diener, 2008, *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth*, pp 18-19.

I Think, Therefore, I Feel

Consciousness and Emotions

- *“Conscious experiences, regardless of their content, arise from one system in the brain.”* – Joseph LeDoux
- Higher-order cognitive processing of subjective consciousness occurs in cerebral cortex of the brain
- Neuroimaging → shows emotions are processed both in the limbic areas and in parts of the cerebral cortex, especially the **prefrontal cerebral cortex** – the same areas thoughts are simultaneously processed
- Some perceptions like seeing a snake cause automatic fear survival circuit activation but most emotions must be consciously experienced to have their effects on our physiology and behavior
- Thoughts and emotions experienced in the same place!

Sources: LeDoux and Brown, 2017; Gaillard et al, 2009; Craig, 2010.

Three Processes Involved

- **Top → Down:** *cognitive appraisals* in the cerebral cortex create emotions in the limbic system which affect behavioral outcomes
- **Bottom → Up:** emotions reciprocally affect *cognitive appraisals* by being processed in the cerebral cortex, which affects thinking and may change behavioral outcomes
- **Top → Down:** *cognitive reappraisals* can manage the emotions by changing, decreasing, or increasing them for better behavioral outcomes → the basis of stress management, cognitive therapies, resilience training, and *positive psychology*

Type 1 Vs. Type 2 Thinking

- Kahneman and Tversky developed Dual System Theory to try to explain why human judgments and decisions are so often irrational → there are two parallel processing systems in the brain: **System One** and **System Two**
- **System One decisions:** are rapid, intuitive, focused, and mostly unconscious judgments that are automatic and often powered by strong negative emotions that shut down prefrontal cortex → **System One** narrows thinking and decision-making, producing “tunnel vision” fast snap judgments and gut feelings that can be illogical and often irrational → *Type 1 Emotional Thinking*
- **System Two decisions:** on the other hand, are slower, deliberate, analytical, flexible, and controlled decision-making influenced by less intense negative and more positive emotions → *Type 2 Rational Thinking*

Type 1 Vs. Type 2 Thinking

- **Type 1 Emotional Thinking** → Fast, automatic, and narrowly-focused responses **driven by negative emotions** that are vital for **quick survival** in dangerous situations but, in situations that are not life-threatening, narrow thinking with limited options often does not serve us well – shuts down frontal lobe behavior control in the **Stress Response**
- **Type 2 Rational Thinking** → less emotional, slower, more creative, and flexible problem solving – **typically shut down in stress: Type 1 Emotional Thinking**
- By controlling and reducing powerful negative emotions and increasing positive emotions, we can create **Type 2 Rational Thinking**: an individual can have more flexible and logical thinking, more creative problem-solving, and more effective decision-making → **the major focus of psychotherapies for stress and anxiety disorders and positive psychotherapy for depression and happiness**

PATEM = B: Memories

- **KNOW:** We may be nothing but our Memories: they are everything we are, know, and do
 - **KNOW:** *Declarative Memories* for facts in posterior cortex → influence, bias, and prejudice our perceptions
 - **KNOW:** *Powerful Procedural Memories* in frontal lobe, basal ganglia, and cerebellum → influence, bias, and prejudice our often-repetitive thoughts and actions
 - Many memories are linked to emotions
 - Positive happy or joyful emotional memories → are a major foundation of Positive Psychology: building resilience & optimism and attaining long-term happiness
 - Change memories to change cognitive appraisals
- KNOW** → Repeated cognitive appraisals & attached memories create integrated super-memories: Core Beliefs

The Power of Core Beliefs

“Some people believe what they see; most people see what they believe.” -- Michael Howard, PhD

- **Repeated similar cognitive appraisals create Core Beliefs**
- Core Beliefs, or Ideas, are integrated super-memories that impact our behavior by strongly influencing ongoing cognitive appraisals → we see what we believe!
- Core beliefs form concepts of our reality of the world → can be based on distorted CA's and not based in facts
- Plato said 2,400 years ago, *“An idea is more real to us than a material object seen by the eye.”*
- Core beliefs are our reality → don't want to give them up
- We cherry-pick data that agree with, support, and maintain core beliefs and ignore opposing information
- **KNOW** → Core beliefs create moods: long-term, chronic emotions like Long-Term Happiness or *Life Satisfaction*

The Power of Core Beliefs

“We have the illusion that we see the world as it really is, rather than as we have subjectively construed or interpreted it according to our unique memories and core beliefs.” -- Lee Ross, PhD

“One of the most powerful impacts on our daily lives is belief perseverance: people tenaciously cling to core beliefs even in the face of overwhelming evidence that they are invalid.”

-- Lee Ross, PhD

“Our core beliefs cause us to interpret events to agree with core beliefs through our confirmation bias. Positive core beliefs are a major foundation of long-term happiness.” -- Michael Howard, PhD

Cognitive Dissonance

Stress From The Tie That Binds

- The brain does not want to believe two opposing core beliefs, ideas, or values about the same thing
- **COGNITIVE DISSONANCE** → stress and internal disharmony occur when conflicting core beliefs and cognitive appraisals are present about the same thing
- **RESULT:** the need to reduce dissonance is a powerful drive → people have a need to seek consistency in core beliefs and strongly hold onto similar core beliefs, ignoring opposing information that would conflict with them and cause stress: we do not want to believe that vaccines cause autism and, at the same time, that vaccines do not cause autism; we don't want to believe that masking prevents COVID-19 and also that masking makes no difference against it—we stick to one belief

Cognitive Reappraisals:

Changing the Anti-Happiness Core Belief

"If you change your mind, you can change your life." -- WJ

- **KNOW** → New information can result in new memories
→ If memories change, then cognitive appraisals change—a *cognitive reappraisal*
- Cognitive reappraisals underlie most psychotherapy treatments like cognitive-behavioral therapy → Change *Type 1 Emotional Thinking* rigid "tunnel vision" focus to *Type 2 Rational Thinking* for more effective emotional control and more flexible problem solving
- Practice cognitive reappraisals → to change core beliefs for (1) improved stress management and resilience to cope with crises and (2) *higher levels of happiness*
- **EXP** → New memories can change the anti-happiness core belief of *"Nothing in life gives me any pleasure!"*

Changing Core Beliefs

"Everybody does the best they can with the information they have." – Stanley Seaton, MD

"When my information changes, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?" – John Maynard Keynes

- How do you help someone change core beliefs?
 - (1) Give a person new information that is counter to her or his negative core beliefs
 - (2) New information can form new memories
 - (3) New memories can change perception and thinking, i.e., cognitive reappraisals
 - (4) Cognitive reappraisals can be practiced until they begin to change core beliefs
 - (5) New core beliefs will influence and change cognitive appraisals

New Memories = New Cognitive Reappraisals = New Core Beliefs

- **KNOW** → Depression and resulting low levels of happiness can be created and maintained by powerful anti-happiness negative core belief of depression: *"Nothing in life gives me any pleasure!"*
- How can you change this anti-happiness core belief?
- Example → Depressed patient/client is given a homework assignment of writing down three things he or she liked to do and in each therapy session, says all the 21 things done that week that were liked
 - Now the person says 21 things that were done that were pleasurable → cognitive dissonance
 - Create new positive memories of doing things that are liked → new cognitive appraisals → new core beliefs that some things in life are rewarding

Positive Psychology

Four Main Concepts to Know

- **Happiness:** is a brief, positive state defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy
- **Life Satisfaction:** is the longer mood state of happiness created and held in place by core beliefs
- **Well-Being:** is an overall set of comprehensive core beliefs and mood states consisting of core beliefs of how people rate themselves on several measurable elements like levels of positive emotions (happiness) and negative emotions (painful feelings), prevailing mood, social relationships, engagement in activities of life, optimism, purpose of life, how worthwhile life is, how one achieves aspirations and goals, gratitude, self-acceptance, and the meaning that one assigns to life.
- **Flourishing:** is having high positive levels of the core belief elements of well-being or subjective well-being

Part II: Positive and Negative Emotions and Moods

What Are Emotions?

"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion." -- Dale Carnegie

- Emotions help us survive by ensuring our physical and social safety and well-being → **about our survival!**
- **Short, specific, & can be intense; show importance, motivate, & change the body (action tendency)**
- **Emotional memories → affect perception & thinking**
- As many as **130 different emotions** have been shown in literature → Paul Ekman's **6 basic emotions** = same facial expression in all people, called **affect**
- **Our thoughts create emotions BUT emotions from memories can have a reciprocal effect on thinking → both are experienced in prefrontal cortex** Ekman, 2016

Positive & Negative Emotions

"We have negative emotions like fear, anger, disgust, and sadness to help us survive and we have positive emotions like joy, pleasure, contentment, and happiness to help us thrive. Both are important in attaining happiness. In general, you must take care of the bad stuff in life to be able to fully achieve and appreciate the good stuff, i.e., effectively manage your negative emotions to fully embrace your positive emotions."

– Michael Howard, PhD

Positive & Negative Emotions

"Our entire psychical activity is bent upon producing pleasure and avoiding pain—not just in the short term but the long term as well." -- Sigmund Freud

- Emotions can be labeled **positive** or **negative**: in where they are produced in the brain, how they activate brain and body functions, what functions they serve, and toward what goals they are directed toward or away from
- Emotions are not necessarily good or bad or true or false
- **Positive and negative emotions are produced and experienced in some similar but also different areas of the brain → reducing negative emotions may not increase positive emotions** Source: Kragel & LaBar, 2016.
- Emotions → either positive or negative and helpful or unhelpful: the amygdala is the source of fear in the brain and fear can be helpful for survival

S. M. → Urbach-Wiethe Disease, Amygdala Destruction, and No Fear

- S. M. diagnosed with Urbach-Wiethe disease in 1994 with bilateral arterial calcification and non-function of her amygdala → has been married with 3 children
- **Unable to produce the emotion of FEAR** of things most people are afraid of: snakes, spiders, scary movies, surprising startles, and dangerous personal threats
- **But without fear, is dangerous to herself** → does not recognize danger and threats, does not recognize fear in other people's faces, and lives in a dangerous high-crime area and has been victim of numerous crimes and violence by walking into obviously threatening situations
- **Abnormal positive attitude** → approaches strangers and invades personal space of even dangerous people

Sources: Barrett, 2018; Feinstein, Adolphs, & Tranel, 2016.

Are We Wired toward the Negative?

- The National Science Foundation found that the average person has about 12,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day (recent studies more like about 6,000 thoughts per day)
- **KNOW** → Most were neutral: of the emotional thoughts, 80% were negative thoughts which could produce negative emotions – a generally pessimistic style of thinking
- **KNOW** → 95% of the thoughts were exactly the same repetitive thoughts as the day before: *Procedural Memory*
- **Mostly negative thinking** → may be a Survival Mechanism
- **This may be a residual pattern from our Stone Age forebears:** where negative thoughts might be a survival benefit while the “devil-may-care” more positive thinkers may not have been as fearfully vigilant and fell prey to predators and had more accidental deaths
- **AND YET** → most people report being *slightly positive!*

Did We Evolve to be Unhappy?

- **KNOW** → Some tendencies that saved our lives back in the Stone Age may conspire to make us unhappy today
- The constant suspicion and anxiety that danger lurked around the next corner → this would have shaped early human behavior to maintain negative emotions to survive by avoiding attacks from animals
- Overreacting to possible threats by recoiling from a bitter taste or quickly fleeing from a rustle in the bushes could have kept our ancestors from death by poison or being eaten by a saber-toothed tiger → so on a “hair trigger” for negative emotions: *“Better safe than sorry!”*
- What was good for survival then → does not transfer well to the environment of today that most humans live in
- For many people today → constant suspicion and anxiety is more likely to lead to stress and unhappiness

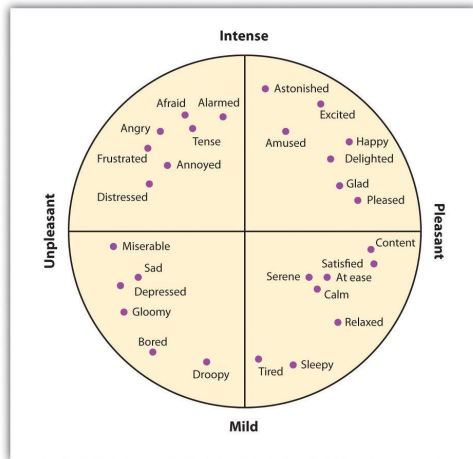
Positive Emotions

“Most folks are usually about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” -- Abraham Lincoln

“Happiness comes from positive thoughts.” – Michael Howard

- **Happiness** → is a major positive emotion created by positive cognitive appraisals
- **Positive Emotions** → like *pleasure, joy, comfort, contentment, and happiness* arise in the limbic system of the brain from the interaction of several interconnected areas of the brain called the **Pleasure-Reward Circuit**
- **Positive Emotions:** signal safety and allow broader and more flexible and creative thinking and response options → *Type 2 Rational Thinking*
- **Positive Emotions:** produce action tendencies toward a goal of achieving rewarding opportunities → resulting in *increasing, not decreasing, our complex mental functions*

Happiness Is a Positive Emotion



Evolutionary Benefit of Positive Emotions

“Negative emotions help us survive but positive emotions help us thrive.” – Michael Howard, PhD

- **Brain on Negative Emotions** → shuts down prefrontal lobe complex thinking and produces fast and narrow thinking to hyperfocus and survive threatening situations (**Type 1**)
- **Brain on Positive Emotions** → increased prefrontal lobe cortex activity that expands complex thinking to broaden awareness and increase positive opportunities (**Type 2**)
- **Barbara Fredrickson’s “Broaden-and-Build” Model:** **Type 2 Rational Thinking produces positive emotions** → that increase the scope of attention, expand awareness and cognitive capacity, enable acquire knowledge, promote creative thinking, form social alliances, make better decisions, and acquire coping skills

Sources: Fredrickson, 2001, 2013; Fredrickson et al, 2021; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018; Garland & Fredrickson, 2019

The Brain on Positive Emotions

- **KNOW** → Positive and negative emotions are produced by somewhat different areas of the brain – *making someone less sad may not make them happier!*
- In the 1950s, researchers identified the “pleasure center” of the brain as the **nucleus accumbens**
 - Studies showed that laboratory animals would press a lever to deliver an electrical stimulus to their brain’s pleasure center repeatedly until they were exhausted—undeterred by hunger, thirst, and pain—and even died
- When researches stimulate the **nucleus accumbens** in people → they smile, laugh, and report feeling pleasure, happiness, and, also extreme euphoria
- **Happy people** → more activity in left prefrontal cortex
- **Anxious and depressed** → overactive right prefrontal cortex (*after mindfulness: left prefrontal cortex active*)

Brain Pleasure/Reward Circuit

- Research shows activated “**Pleasure/Reward Circuit**” of the brain involves the (1) prefrontal cortex, (2) nucleus accumbens, (3) ventral tegmental area, and (4) amygdala
- The neurons in these interconnected pleasure areas of the brain largely utilize the neurotransmitter **dopamine** → the recognized pleasure/reward chemical associated with pleasurable positive emotions, ecstasy, and desire
 - **NOTE:** On the downside, the dopamine reward system can *over-activate* in producing huge “high” euphoria and strong, uncontrollable cravings to repeatedly get extreme pleasure from taking drugs, gambling excessively, and viewing pornographic images → the basis of addiction
- **Endorphin opioid neurotransmitters** → also produce pleasure (eating chocolate and “runner’s high”) and also increase the release of dopamine

Positive Emotions and Happiness

3 Kinds of Positive Emotions/Moods Combine to Help Create Happiness and Long-Term Life Satisfaction

- **Past-Oriented Positive Emotions and Mood States:** satisfaction, contentment, pride, serenity
- **Present-Oriented Positive Emotions:** (1) **Bodily Pleasures:** delicious smells, tastes, sounds, touch, and sights through senses, (2) **Higher Pleasures:** momentary pleasures like ecstasy, rapture, thrill, bliss, mirth, glee, fun, comfort, and (3) **Gratifications:** activities we like and become engrossed in without self-consciousness or emotion at the time like reading, sports, dancing, and playing games like bridge and finding accomplishment in our achievements
- **Future-Oriented Positive Emotions and Mood States:** optimism, hope, trust, faith, and confidence

Positive & Negative Emotions

- Despite higher levels of positive emotions in happy people with optimal mental health, *negative emotions are necessary, too* → we need both in the “Goldilocks Zone”
- Negative emotions are lifesaving and give us a touchstone for comparison in order to fully realize the nature of positive emotions → *Ohio State University study showed people self-rate their happiness higher a half hour after watching a sad movie than after watching a comedy*
- **KNOW:** Happy people aren't happy ALL the time – just most of the time → some periods of negative emotions
- **BUT:** Higher levels of positive emotions are linked to → better health, longer lives, higher incomes, greater productivity, higher quality of work, longer and more successful marriages, larger and more effective social networks, lower stress levels, less pain, and *happiness*

Emotions and Affect

What We Do Becomes Who We Are
and
Who We Are Becomes What We Do

What Is Affect?

*“Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile.
Sometimes your smile is the source of your joy.”*

-- Thich Nhat Hanh (Facial Feedback Hypothesis)

- **Affect** → the expression or communication of an emotion from one person to another by such physiological behaviors as *body posture, tone of voice, choice of words*, and, of course, *facial expressions*
- **KNOW** → Many emotions produce specific affective presentations that signal that emotion to others
- Some facial expressions of emotions are innate, but most are learned
- Does intensity of an emotion correspond to intensity of the affective response? → irritation vs. rage
- Is the opposite true? Does the intensity of the affect play back upon the intensity of the emotion?

What Is Affect?

"We don't laugh because we are happy; we are happy because we laugh." -- William James

- **James-Lange Theory of Emotion:** physical expression of the emotion preceded and affected the emotion itself
- **Smiling and Happiness:** Researchers looked at 50 years of studies – can facial expressions lead people to feel emotions related to those expressions → **smiling makes people feel happier (but do just 12% of the time)** Coles, *Psych Bull*, 2019
- **Genuine "Duchenne" Smile:** lips curled up at the ends (zygomatic major muscles) and the skin outside the eye crinkled in crow's feet (orbicularis oculi muscles), is exhibiting a genuine "Duchenne" smile → study of 114 pictures of women in college yearbook showed **Duchenne smiles had higher happiness and marital satisfaction decades later**
- **Fenzy & Rosenthal Depression Study** → Botoxed forehead

What Are Moods?

- Moods are also "feelings" but they are the opposite of emotions → **not tied to a particular stimulus, do not dominate consciousness, and exist for longer time**
- **Moods** → are usually produced by longstanding, habitual patterns of cognitive appraisals that evolve into close-held **core beliefs** about oneself, others, and the world
- **Moods** → can be positive, negative, or neutral and can experience more than one at once, and vary in the range and the intensity – can range from stable to mood swings
- **KNOW** → **Happiness** is an **emotion** produced by brief cognitive appraisals (**not** a mood produced & sustained by core beliefs **BUT** some use the term happiness as a long-term mood) → **Happy Mood = Life Satisfaction**
- **KNOW** → Clusters of core beliefs and resulting overall positive or negative mood state are part of **personality**

3 Levels of Happiness: Happiness, Life Satisfaction, & Well-Being

1. **Level One: Happiness (Emotion).** Most immediate and direct state of happiness—involves a **brief emotion** or feeling like joy or pleasure. The feeling comes about because a desired state is attained; there is not much cognition involved beyond the recognition that the desired thing has happened. Such happiness feelings are transient.
2. **Level Two: Life Satisfaction (Mood).** When people say they are happy with their lives they usually don't mean that they are experiencing pleasure in their lives all the time or at the moment. Rather, they mean that on reflection on the balance sheet of pleasures and pains, the balance is reasonably positive over the long-term. Level two happiness is not so much concerned with immediate pleasure and feelings. **A long-term core belief creates a general mood** of overall contentment and satisfaction with life. Source: Nettle, 2005.
3. **Level Three: Well-Being.** Multiple core beliefs/moods of how people evaluate their lives as a whole and what is important to them in their health, work, and relationships—like Aristotle's ideal of the good life termed *eudaimonia*: a life in which the person *flourishes* and fulfills their overall true potential. **Flourishing** = the measure of well-being.

Do We Have A General Mood?

PATEM is 40% of overall happiness and well-being

- **KNOW** → Clusters of core beliefs are a lot of **personality** and our general mood state: **More Positive or Negative**
- **KNOW** → People tend to have a baseline level of core belief-produced mood that determines their basic level of personality and general happiness, i.e., **Life Satisfaction**
- **Through the ups and downs of life, people usually return to this baseline level of general happiness** → a fairly consistent indicator of their position on the continuum from happiness to unhappiness (**Hedonic Adaptation**)
- **People who rate themselves with higher happy mood are more likely to** → (1) **have better and more satisfying relationships**, (2) **be more successful in life**, and (3) **have longer and healthier lives than less-happy people**

Sources: Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Dorotic-Nana, 2023; Haidt, 2024.

Emotion/Mood Balance & Happiness

- **KNOW:** Does being happy mean eliminating negative emotions and moods? **NO**
- **KNOW:** Happy people have occasional bouts of fear, anger, and sadness and these episodes serve important functions in managing the challenges we face in life
- **KNOW:** It is the balance between positive and negative emotions and moods that is the key factor in happiness
- **The Emotion/Mood Balance Formula** → subtract the sum total of negative emotions and moods from the sum total of positive emotions and moods
- **KNOW** → **Generally Happy People:** (1) tend to experience more overall positive emotions/moods than negative emotions/moods AND (2) **EFFECTIVELY MANAGE** the negative emotions and moods
- **Overall: most people rate themselves slightly positive!**

Part III:

Personality: Effects on Stress, Resilience, and Happiness

“Who you are—your personality—is a major factor in long-term happiness.”

-- Michael Howard, PhD

Find Happiness Through Your PATEM and Developing Personality Core Beliefs

thoughts
BECOME
words
WHICH
BECOME YOUR
actions WHICH
BECOME YOUR habits
WHICH
BECOME YOUR character
WHICH
BECOMES YOUR destiny

PTEM = B = Personality

“Who we are becomes what we do—and how happy we are.” – Michael Howard, PhD

- No two people have the same sets of factual and procedural memories and no two people have their perception and thinking influenced in the same way → influenced by unique core beliefs and moods
- The brain likes to use what works again and again so patterns of unique ways of behaving in certain situations begin to emerge → strong behavioral habits
- Procedural memory habits → *often set in teen years*
- Each person's unique and predictable clusters of core beliefs and behavioral habits is their *personality*
- Personality core beliefs → have a powerful effect on happiness emotions and the mood of life satisfaction

Big Five “OCEAN” Personality

- Modern concepts of personality largely came into practice use in society in World War I where the **Army Alpha personality test** was used for the first time to screen and evaluate potential recruits
- In 1961, two U. S. Air Force researchers, Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal, analyzed data from a large sample and found that five major factors accounted for most of the differences between people and this has been further evaluated and replicated by many researchers since that time → Now this is the **“Big Five” OCEAN Personality Model** described below
- If you look it up in a dictionary, the current definition of personality is *“the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual’s distinctive behavior”*

Big Five “OCEAN” Personality

- **KNOW:** Personality patterns or traits are often thought to stabilize in late adolescence and early adulthood and be fairly stable over a lifetime → but can be some subtle adaptive changes over time (Duchenne smile)
- **Personality Traits** → enduring personal characteristics that tend to be expressed in a particular pattern of behavior **shown consistently across a variety of situations → due to core beliefs and behavior habits that produce consistent patterns of moods and emotions**
- The **“Big Five” Five-Factor Model** of personality structure was originally proposed in the early 1960s and has gained widespread acceptance since the 1980s with many independent research studies that have performed factor analysis on personality traits **Sources:** Tupes and Christal, 1961; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; Shrout and Fiske, 1995; Poropat, 2009; Oltmanns & Widiger, 2021; Baranczuk, 2021.

Big Five “OCEAN” Personality

- Five Factors are **Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism**; hence, the acronym **OCEAN**
- Studies have shown that these factors are relatively stable over time and about **50% of the variance is genetics (heritability)**, **40% is PATEM learned behavior**, and **10% is the environment**
- **KNOW** → The pattern of being high to low on a 5-point normal “bell curve” continuum on each of the five factors has shown to be a strong predictor of **behavior patterns, resilience, happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being** in many studies
- **Research:** the order of importance to happiness is (1) Extraversion, (2) Neuroticism, (3) Agreeableness, (4) Conscientiousness, and (5) Openness to Experience

Extraversion

- **The most important factor in happiness** → engagement in external world; how much someone is into being sociable and seeking out the company of others and environmental stimulation; and being assertive, energetic, and talkative **Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990; Diener & Seligman, 2002, 2016**
- **Harvard Study of Adult Development** → followed Harvard graduates for 80 years and found **social relationships were the biggest factor in health and happiness**
- **High:** mostly social, talkative, assertive, dominant, energetic, attention-seeking, appreciative of rewards, **happier**, and outwardly-oriented (Alameda study: relationships = live longer)
- **Low (Introversion):** reserved, reflective, self-oriented, isolated, does not seek out social relationships, like being alone, not talkative, deliberate, sometimes aloof and self-absorbed, and more negative emotions

Neuroticism

- Second-most important factor → tendency to experience emotional instability, more negative emotions such as fear and sadness, poor impulse and emotional control, and intolerance to stress – strong genetic component
- **High:** unstable and highly reactive emotionally, fearful, angry, sad, stressed, worried, insecure, negative overall mood with low life satisfaction, low marital satisfaction, expect failures and rejections, chronically stressed, high risk for anxiety, depression, and poor health → **In general, these are very unhappy people dominated by negative emotions**
- **Low:** stable moods and emotions, relaxed, calm, **more positive overall mood with high life satisfaction, cope with stress well**, not overly worried, seldom feels anxious or depressed → **and have higher levels of happiness**

Agreeableness

- Third-most important factor → tendency to be oriented positively or negatively toward social harmony and getting along with other people, be compassionate and cooperative, and be trusting and helpful toward others
- Major component of emotional and social intelligence
- **High:** generally nice, considerate, friendly, generous, helpful, interested in other people's needs, honest, decent, willing to compromise and get along with others, **positive relationships, do random acts of kindness for others**, likeable, possibly submissive at high levels → **all linked to higher levels of happiness**
- **Low:** strict, disagreeable, unpleasant, callous, lack of concern for others' needs, suspicious, antagonistic toward others, irritable and angry, challenging, problems in relationships, makes others angry, cardiovascular risk

Conscientiousness

- Fourth most important factor → level of responsibility and dependability, and making prudent decisions; the level of organization and planning in life; amount of self-discipline and dutifulness; and the level of attainment of social, academic, and vocational expectations → **prudent people with self-control—highly related to overall happiness**
- **KNOW:** An important factor in happiness and longevity
- **High:** high level of planning and preparation, orderly, careful, high impulse control and self-discipline, persistent, does things on time, follows rules, lives in a regulated and structured manner, high school and work performance, safe driving habits, follows doctor's advice, **and happier**
- **Low:** spontaneous, erratic, disorganized, make messes, impulsive, leaves things lying around, shirks duties, does not complete chores and assignments

Openness to Experience

- Tendency to try new experiences, be receptive to new ideas, and level of intellectual curiosity, imagination, independence of thought, creativity, and novelty
- People usually have relationships with similar levels
- Most gravitate toward the middle; some novelty & rigidity
- **High:** lots of ideas, vivid imagination, intellectually curious, less dogmatic, quick to understand, big vocabulary, thinks in abstract symbols, and may seek out living in different places and taking chances, open to new ideas, less likely to be prejudiced, **flexible core beliefs → and happier people (have less + and more – Hedonic Adaptation)**
- **Low:** dogmatic with **hard-to-change core beliefs**, closed-minded, not interested in abstractions and more concrete in thinking, not imaginative or curious, small vocabulary, lives plain, simple, and straightforward life

Overall Personality Style

- **Complex pattern** → if rated High, Somewhat High, Average, Somewhat Low, or Low on each of the five factors = $5 \times 5 \times 5 \times 5 \times 5 = 3,125$ **unique patterns**
- Personality characteristics have strong genetic underpinnings and tend to be fairly stable over time from childhood through adulthood
- Some personality characteristics do change a bit:
 - Extraversion tends to *decrease* somewhat over time
 - Conscientiousness and Agreeableness *increase* as time passes in adulthood into older age, usually more diligent, careful, and cautious—and happier!
- **Long-Term Happiness (Life Satisfaction) = High Extraversion, High Conscientiousness, High Agreeableness, High Openness to Experience, and Low Neuroticism**

Personality Styles: Resilient Stress Management and Happiness

- “Self-Healing” (**Healthy Conscientious**)
 - Personality style promoted by Howard Friedman, Ph.D. of the *The Longevity Project* (2011) as **the biggest predictor of long, happy, and healthy lives**
 - Healthy and long-lived people tend to be dependable, secure, constructive, **resilient**, and conscientious
 - **Have positive emotions and moods** → that buffer hormonal responses to stress and have healthier lifestyle behavior patterns with **more physical activity, good diet, and less smoking and substance abuse**
 - **KNOW** → Conscientious people make prudent lifestyle choices and **worry about things they can CONTROL**, do something about it, and move on → **resilient behavioral lifestyle habits that manage stress well**

Don't Worry, Be Happy

Positive Personality Core Beliefs Create High Levels of Long-Term Happiness (Life Satisfaction)

- **People who rate themselves with higher general level of positive long-term happiness** → are more likely to have better and more satisfying relationships, savor their pleasurable experiences, be more successful in life, be more satisfied with their lives overall, like more things than they dislike, be more likely to engage in different activities, have better general health and immune responses, have lower levels of infectious diseases and coronary heart disease, and longer life -- **and be good resilient stress managers!**
- **KNOW** → Created and maintained by personality-related core beliefs, **Life Satisfaction is relatively stable over long periods of time** Leary, 2018; Kubzansky, Huffman, Boehm et al, 2018; Lyubomirsky, 2007; 2013; Lyubomirsky, Diener, and King, 2005.

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **Personality Core Beliefs** = Big Happiness Impact
- At the VIA Institute on Character, Seligman, Peterson, and others have found → **6 Key Personality Core Beliefs called Virtues** and their component procedural memory-based Behavioral Habit Strengths are linked to: **High Long-Term Happiness or Life Satisfaction**
- Everyone possesses all strengths to a greater or lesser degree but only one-third of people have a useful understanding of them → can be assessed with 15-minute *Inventory of Signature Strengths* at www.viacharacter.org
- Signature strengths most closely linked to happiness: **Gratitude, Hope, Vitality, Curiosity, and Love**
- Published in two books: *Character Strengths and Virtues* (2004) & *The Power of Character Strengths* (2019)

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **WISDOM:** Core belief that intellectual strengths will help you gain and use information
 - **Creativity:** using imagination and inventive solutions
 - **Curiosity:** fascinated; eager to learn; new things
 - **Open-Mindedness:** fairly examining issues from all sides without influence from preconceptions and willing to change your mind in light of new evidence
 - **Love of Learning:** adding systematically to knowledge and mastering new skills and subjects
 - **Perspective:** being able to provide wise counsel to others and possessing ways of looking at the world that makes sense to yourself and others

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **COURAGE:** Core belief that strengths of will can help you accomplish goals in the face of fear and external or internal obstacles
 - **Integrity:** speaking the truth, acting sincerely, being authentic without pretense, and taking responsibility for your feelings and actions
 - **Bravery:** speaking and acting for what you believe despite opposition; not shrinking from challenges
 - **Persistence:** finishing what you start even with resistance, showing perseverance & industriousness
 - **Vitality:** entering life fully, wholeheartedly, and with enthusiasm and energy

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **HUMANITY:** Core belief that interpersonal strengths will help you befriend others and tend to relationships
 - **Emotional and Social Intelligence:** being aware of, understanding, and managing your motives and emotions and those of others; knowing how to fit into various social situations; and recognizing what makes other people tick
 - **Love:** having the capacity to give and receive love and valuing and maintaining close relationships with people
 - **Kindness:** nurturing and caring for others and showing generosity, compassion, altruism, and simple niceness

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **JUSTICE:** Core belief that social or civic strengths will help bolster a healthy community
 - **Teamwork:** working well in a group, doing your share, and displaying loyalty and responsibility to support the group
 - **Fairness:** treating everyone fairly and justly without letting personal feelings bias your decisions
 - **Leadership:** encouraging a group to get things done, organizing and following through, and fostering good relations among members

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **TEMPERANCE:** Core belief that protective traits will help you avoid excess and stay on track when faced with the temptations of life
 - **Mercy:** forgiving those who have wronged or acted against you, giving second chances, not being vengeful and tempering hatred and anger
 - **Humility and Modesty:** letting accomplishments speak for themselves, not seeking spotlight, truthfully acknowledging what you've done, not being arrogant
 - **Self-Control:** regulating what you feel and do, being disciplined and controlled, & tempering impulsiveness
 - **Prudence:** careful what you say & do, not taking undue risks, & tempering possibly regretful actions

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

6 Key Virtues and Their Major Strengths

- **TRANSCENDENCE:** Core belief that things bigger than yourself will connect you with the larger world and provide meaning and purpose to your life
 - **Appreciation of Beauty:** Noticing & valuing beauty
 - **Humor:** laughing or seeing the light side of life, being playful, and bringing smiles to other people
 - **Spirituality:** Holding beliefs about the meaning of life and its higher purpose, knowing where you fit within larger scheme of life, with comfort and direction taken
 - **Gratitude:** thankful for good things & expressing it
 - **Hope:** believing that the future will be good and working to bring it about with happiness and core belief of *resilient optimism*

Six Personality Core Beliefs of Happiness

“What we do becomes who we are—and how happy we are.” – Michael Howard, PhD

A study published in the *American Psychologist* found knowing your strengths is helpful ONLY if you USE them:

- **Bravery** → plunge into a new activity that makes you nervous, like public speaking
- **Curiosity** → read an article or watch a documentary on something you know little or nothing about
- **Open-Mindedness** → read an editorial or listen to a talk radio show that you disagree with and consider the legitimate points it may make
- **Love** → write a note to someone you love and tuck it where the person will find it – under a pillow, in the car, in a briefcase, or in a lunchbox
- **Creativity** → find an alternative use for a common object

Part IV: Fear, Stress, and Coping

“There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will and focus on things that can be controlled.”

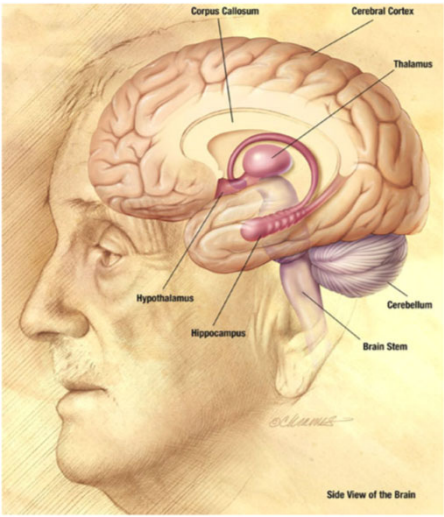
-- Epictetus, Greek Stoic Philosopher, 120 AD

“If we are going to achieve the good things in life and be happy, we must learn to handle the bad things.”

-- Michael Howard, PhD

“We have negative emotions like fear, anger, disgust, and sadness to help us survive and we have positive emotions like joy, pleasure, contentment, and happiness to help us thrive. Both are important in attaining happiness. In general, you must take care of the bad stuff in life so you can then fully achieve and appreciate the good stuff.” — Michael Howard, PhD

“Challenges look easier when you are happy. People in a good mood see the world as an easier place than those in a negative mood, who see it as scarier and more difficult.”
-- Ed Diener PhD and Robert Biswas-Diener



Inside the Human Brain

- To understand **resilience** and **happiness** it's important to know a bit about the human brain and **stress**

The Brain's Vital Statistics

Adult weight:
about 3 pounds
Adult size:
a medium cauliflower
Number of neurons:
100,000,000,000 (100 billion)
Number of synapses
(the gap between neurons):
100,000,000,000,000
(100 trillion)

Stress: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

The stakes were a lot simpler thousands of years ago when we were living on the savanna—so was the stress. You hunted and gathered and either ate or sometimes you got eaten. In a world full of viruses and bacteria but no knowledge of sanitation, wound dressing, or medical care, things like a broken leg, the flu, and even a mild infection from a simple cut could easily progress to kill you. The chances that children would live until age five were slim. If anything made this life-or-death environment survivable, it was that we came well-equipped to handle a lot of the dangers. When a lion suddenly attacked, our brains and bodies kicked in a metabolic cascade that tensed muscles, quickened breathing, accelerated hearts, shut down digestion (why waste calories processing your last meal when you may become one) and girded the system to flee or attack. When it was over, you went back to baseline.

Stress: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

Did we spend time worrying about the next time a lion might attack or an injury might disable us? No. The real needs of surviving the moment trumped the prospective perils of the future. Then, times changed. We got smarter, more complex, began to create more technology, and we left the dangers of the savanna for safer villages, towns, cities, and nations. So, now, we eat more, live longer, and have more children survive. But, now, our bigger, smarter brains are constantly aware of the many existing and future threats in the modern world that come with high levels of uncertainty and low levels of direct control such as traffic, taxes, bosses, and health concerns; and we expect them, dread them, and try to make plans to deal with them. Our bodies react to these multiple imaginary threats the same way we did to an ancient lion attack, only we never get the “all clear” that the danger has past. Stress goes on and on.

Understanding Stress:

Central & Peripheral Nervous Systems

- **Central Nervous System**

- ⇒ Spinal Cord
 - Motor (downward) and sensory (upward) nerves
 - Lateral spinal reflexes
- ⇒ Brain

- **Peripheral Nervous System**

- ⇒ 12 pairs Cranial Nerves and 31 pairs Spinal Nerves
 - Somatic System: skeletal muscles, some organs
 - **Autonomic System: involuntary responses**
 - Sympathetic (stress) and Parasympathetic (relaxation) Divisions

Autonomic Nervous System

Parasympathetic Relaxed & Sympathetic Stress

- **Parasympathetic Division**

- ⇒ Lies beside sympathetic fibers
- ⇒ Activated when sympathetic is NOT activated with slower and more flexible **Type 2 Rational Thinking**
- ⇒ “**Relaxation Response**” → “rest and digest” with digestion, growth, sleep, and energy storage

- **Sympathetic Division → “Stress” Response**

- ⇒ “**Stress**” → **Type 1 “tunnel vision” Emotional Thinking** response to real or imaginary threats
- ⇒ Fast, automatic response for immediate survival
- ⇒ Flight (fear) or Fight (anger) responses
- ⇒ **FEAR**-driven escape or **ANGER**-driven attack → Powered by Negative Emotions!

Parasympathetic Division

Relaxation Response: “Rest & Digest”

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Relaxation | • Decreased respiration |
| • Body repair and restoration | • Blood directed to digestion with increased intestinal peristalsis |
| • Decreased heart rate and pulse (vagus nerve activation) | • Increased salivary gland secretion |
| • Constriction of pupils | • Increased bone formation |
| • Constriction of bronchioles in lungs | • Decreased pain |
| • Lower blood pressure | • Bowel & bladder control |
| • Lower blood glucose | • Increased sexual arousal and genital erection |
| • Higher insulin secretion | • <u>Type 2 Rational Thinking</u> |

Sympathetic Stress: Survival

“Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

-- The American Institute of Stress

- **Stone Age Stress Response:** survive next few seconds when **threatened by stressor** like a lion attack
- Designed to **SAVE YOUR LIFE** by very quick response
- The body prepares itself for **flight (fear) or fight (anger)** by activating physical responses, i.e., preparatory **changes in affect behavior** called action tendencies
- **Robert Sapolsky, noted Stanford stress physiologist** → **the brain activates energy systems designed to help survive the next 10 seconds and puts systems for long-term survival on hold – because if you don’t survive the next 10 seconds, you won’t need them!**

Stress: Energy to Immediate Life Saving Organs → Shut Down the Rest

- If you are being attacked by someone with a knife → the stress response (1) activates energy to short-term body systems that can respond to the immediate threat and (2) shuts down body systems for long-term survival like digestion, growth, energy storage, and tissue repair
 - Higher blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration
 - Pours energy (glucose and fatty acids) into the blood
 - Directs blood to heart, brain, lungs, and big muscles and reduces blood flow to stomach, intestines, and peripheral distal muscles
 - Increases sticky platelets to increase clotting
 - Reduces pain sensation
 - Makes powerful memories of the response (survival)

Sympathetic Division: Stress

“Flight or Fight” & “Tend and Befriend”

- Cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine release
- Heart beats faster and stronger
- Blood pressure rises with peripheral vascular constriction
- Coronary and cerebral arteries dilate → coronary may constrict
- Blood directed to muscles
- Blood clotting factors rise
- Respiratory functions increase
- Salivary glands → less saliva
- Digestion decreases (less blood)
- Energy storage decreases
- Bone formation decreases
- Sodium and water retained
- Bowel and bladder control is decreased (past any usage)
- Pain threshold rises (less pain)
- Pupils dilate
- Decreased sexual arousal and erection of genitals
- Overall brain alertness and attention increases
- Long-term memory storage increases (future survival)
- Immune response increases
- [Type 1 Emotional Thinking](#)

Source: Contrada & Baum, 2011.

Sympathetic Division: Stress

“Flight or Fight” & “Tend and Befriend”

- 100 Years Ago → “4 F’s of Survival” of Walter Cannon: FEAR, FREEZE, FLIGHT, OR FIGHT
- Amygdala **FEAR** (“flight”) drives stress response, but can quickly develop into **ANGER** (“fight”)
- Fear → creates states of vigilance, activation, arousal, and mobilization to cope with the cognitive appraisal of threat
- Creates fast and powerful “*Tunnel Vision*” focused *Type 1 Emotional Thinking* with limited distractions
- **3 Pathways:** (1) Neuroendocrine Response, (2) H-P-A Stress Axis and (3) Immune System Response
- **3 Causes:** (1) physical, (2) perceptual, or (3) imaginary stimuli in the brain → the stress response doesn’t know difference and responds the same!

Stress and Stressors

- **Stress** → body’s response to the **cognitive appraisal** of an external or internal threat, called a **stressor** (metallurgy → probably should have been called **strain**)
- **Stressor** → a chemical or biological agent, internal event, or environmental condition or external stimulus considered demanding, challenging, or threatening to a person’s well-being or position in life that then causes the stress response in an organism when the challenge exceeds the person’s available coping resources
- **Example Stressors** → COVID-19, someone attacking with a knife, loud noises, seeing a snake, making a public speech, scary moments in movies, a new marriage, marital conflict, going out on a first date, divorce, sleep deprivation, a child’s illness, or death of a loved one – **and Imaginary Stressors that Don’t Exist!**

Where Does Stress Come From?

“What really frightens and dismays us is not external events themselves, but the way in which we think about them. It is not things that disturb us, but our interpretation of their significance.” --

Epictetus, Greek Stoic Philosopher, AD 50-135

“Cognitive appraisals create stress, from either a real stressor or an imaginary one.”

-- Michael Howard, PhD

“Your brain and body don’t know the difference between having an actual experience in your life and just thinking about the experience—neurochemically, it’s the same.” – Joe Dispenza

Cognitive Appraisals Create Stress

“There can be a big difference between what you perceive and what threat actually exists, but the difference is arbitrary when it comes to the body’s response. Your body reacts to your perception of a threat—not to the reality.” -- Christopher Fagundes, PhD

- **KNOW** → Cognitive appraisal of the threat initiates and sustains the stress response, NOT the reality of the threat
- Two people are locked into a room with a spider → one of them has a terrible core belief phobia of spiders and the other does not – affects cognitive appraisals:
 - The presence of the spider is the same for both of them → the spider itself does not cause fear
 - The cognitive appraisals of the spider in the two people are dramatically different → causing extreme fear and stress in one, but not the other

Three General Types of Stress

The stress response happens in three general patterns: **the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**

- **Occasional “Good” Acute Stress** → brief activation of stress response to a fearful or angry cognitive appraisal to temporarily manage a controllable stressor and then return to relaxation parasympathetic state—**building resilience**
- **Episodic “Bad” Chronic Stress** → frequent activation of the stress response from sporadic uncontrollable stressors results in chaotic and crisis lifestyle with sensitized “on guard” imagined future expectations of upcoming crises (**the most common kind of chronic stress in the modern world**)
- **Pervasive Chronic “Ugly” Stress** → ongoing and habitual activation of the stress response to long-lasting, continuous, and overwhelming extreme stressors like whole body burns and torture (**rare, but can exhaust physiological systems**)

Fear, Type 1 Emotional Thinking, and the Stress Response

“Under conditions of high stress, the critical thinking prefrontal cortex shuts down and raw emotion drives stress—which may not result in rational responses” --

Darlene Kertes, University of Florida Stress Researcher

“Under normal non-stressful conditions, moderate levels of norepinephrine enhance functioning of the prefrontal cortex and thinking can control emotions, i.e., Type 2 Rational Thinking. However, when norepinephrine spikes up high in the amygdala and produces extreme fear, the extreme fear projects to the prefrontal cortex and shuts down inhibitory thinking functions—producing Type 1 Emotional Thinking. Then, the stress response initiates and produces fast, impulsive, focused, and even panicky life-saving behavior.” – Michael Howard, PhD

Acute Stress: Type 1 Emotional Thinking Blocks Type 2 Rational Thinking

- Stress → *Increased* “Tunnel Vision” Type 1 Emotional Thinking with extreme focus on the stressor and NOT other frontal lobe functions → Immediate Survival!
- Stress → *Decreased* Type 2 Rational Thinking with less flexible Frontal Lobe Executive/Control Functions (Positive emotions increase Type 2 Rational Thinking)
 - ⇒ Switching Attention and Concentration
 - ⇒ Flexible and Creative Thinking
 - ⇒ Long-Term Multi-Step Planning, Insight and Analysis
 - ⇒ Judgment and Decision-Making
 - ⇒ Working (Short-Term) Memory Problem Solving
 - ⇒ Retrieval of Long-Term Memories
 - ⇒ Impulse and Emotional Control

Acute Stress, Fear, and Memories

Fearful Memories = Barriers to Happiness

During a stressful experience, increased levels of the neurotransmitter norepinephrine in the amygdala enhance *powerful encoding and consolidation of fearful memories*, making them more difficult to forget than memories not linked to fear → “One Trial” Learning for Survival!

- Brain links the fear to contextual aspects of the memory such as sights, sounds, odors, time of day, weather conditions and so on → these contextual stimuli become fear-conditioned cues that trigger fear by themselves
- KNOW → This is a powerful survival mechanism so that when someone encounters aspects of the fearful event, a powerful fear-based memory is encoded so that the threat can be avoided in the future Southwick & Charney, 2018
- Forgetting them is HARD → takes multiple trials (PET)

Acute Stress → Chronic Stress

Stone Age Response in the Modern World

“For the vast majority of beasts on this planet, stress is about a short-term crisis, after which it’s either over with or you’re over with. When we sit around and worry about stressful things, we turn on the same physiological responses—but they are potentially a disaster when provoked chronically. A large body of evidence suggests that stress-related disease emerges, predominately, out of the fact that we so often activate a physiological system that has evolved for responding to acute physical emergencies, but we turn it on for months on end, worrying about mortgages, relationships, and promotions.”

— Robert Sapolsky, PhD, Stress Physiologist, Stanford University, and author of *Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers*

Imaginary Stress

“I’ve dealt with many problems in my life, most of which never existed.” -- Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

- Humans can think themselves into a stress response even when no threat is present → cognitive appraisal
- We just have to imagine a threat, and it’s real to us
- The stress system brain doesn’t know the difference between a charging lion and worrying about what your teenager is going to do on a date tonight or how bad traffic is going to be → **the response is the same!**
- Constant imaginative worrying = most common chronic stress → the biggest current threat to our mental health, physical health, and development of anxiety disorders
- We worry about things that have not happened and probably never will—yet we still worry about them
- 90+% of today’s thoughts are the same as yesterday’s!

Imaginary Stress About the Future

"It turns out the body starts to mount an immune response not just in response to an injury but in anticipation of an injury—and humans have the ability to manifest danger in their minds even when it's not present." – George Slavich, Director, UCLA Stress Lab

- Results in **anxiety** → an internal alarm or concern that arises even when an external threat is not physically present—from **core belief of anticipation it may happen**
- **Forecasting future danger is a survival mechanism** → **"Better safe than sorry"** and prepare for the worst
- **Example** → if you know you have to meet with a threatening boss at the end of the week, the stress response is activated days ahead and maintained by the anxiety caused by the anticipated danger associated with the future meeting and what may or may not happen

The Future Uncertainty Principle

"Better the devil you know than the devil you don't!"

"Zebras and lions may see trouble coming in the next minute and mobilize a stress response in anticipation. But they can't get stressed about events far in the future. We can." -- Robert Sapolsky, PhD, Stanford Univ.

- Human brains have the capacity to imagine future events before they happen—which may or may not ever happen
- **Imagined future threats** → are, as a rule, **uncertain** in their effects as they have not happened and we have **no current control** over their occurrence or management
- **The Future Uncertainty Principle** → we worry about delayed-return future events that are **not under our direct control** and the imaginary anticipation of potentially threatening future events creates ongoing fear and anxiety about uncertain and uncontrolled dangers to us

Chronic Stress Symptoms

- **Cognitive Appraisal and Core Belief Symptoms** → constant worrying and ruminating, racing thoughts, disorganized thinking, forgetfulness, inability to focus attention, poor judgement, pessimistic and negative thoughts, alone and isolated, belief of being out of control and overwhelmed, helplessness, beliefs of low self-confidence and self-esteem, and worthlessness
 - **Emotional and Mood Symptoms** → fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, irritability, tension, sadness, depression
 - **Physical Symptoms**** → low energy, headaches, upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, nausea, muscle aches, insomnia, frequent colds and infections, loss of sexual desire/ability, tinnitus, trembling, dry mouth, problems swallowing, grinding teeth, clenched jaw, cold hands
- **Chronic stress: changes the body and the brain in many ways—all bad and some really bad!**

Acute Vs. "Bad" Chronic Stress

"The acute stress response, occurring every once in a while, is built into all our brains and bodies to help us save our lives from a direct threat. Chronic stress from worry over imaginary future threats, on the other hand, may be the single greatest cause of (1) lower levels of resilience and resilient optimism, (2) unhappiness, (3) disabling mental disorders like anxiety, depression, and trauma disorders, and (4) the top ten causes of death which kill four out of five Americans every year."

-- Michael Howard, PhD

Chronic Stress: Health Issues

- As liver continually boosts glucose levels to provide needed energy needed for the anticipated flight or fight, **insulin resistance** and **type 2 diabetes** can result
- As high levels of the stress hormone cortisol create a craving for sugary and fatty foods, **obesity** happens
- As the immune system is degraded over time, viruses and other **infectious diseases** cannot be coped with
- Since they are not needed for immediate survival, **libido and fertility plunge** in chronic stress
- High-alert **insomnia**, stress-driven **depression**, and **heartburn** from poor digestion all can escalate
- As the heart and circulatory system spend too much time in overdrive, **high blood pressure**, **high blood lipids**, and **cardiovascular disease** develops → **certain stress management and personality styles can accelerate this**

Does Stress Kill Salmon? And People?

- **Salmon die from a massive stress response**
- After spawning, adrenal glands secrete huge amounts of glucocorticoid stress hormones
- Result → large peptic ulcers, kidney lesions, devastated immune systems, infestations of parasites and infections, beta-amyloid in brain
- Salmon die quickly of these multiple traumas
- If adrenal glands are removed and stress response is suppressed, salmon will live for one year longer after spawning
- **Stress kills people, too – it just takes longer**

Sources: Wexler, 1976; Maldonado et al, 2000.

Aging, Stress, and Fatal Diseases

"In lots of ways, the central question in Westernized disease these days is why do some of us live to 50 and some of us to 85? Westernized humans are unlike other animals because we are spared the classic infectious diseases, undernutrition, and poor hygiene. Instead, we live well enough and long enough that our serious diseases are ones of slow accumulation of damage, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Some of that has to do with biology, but a lot of it has to do with issues like social status and psychological makeup. And it is critical to note that most of these diseases of slow degeneration and Westernized lifestyle can be caused or worsened by stress. Most of us will have the luxury of dying of a stress-related disease. Nonetheless, we can try to delay that from happening."

-- Robert Sapolsky, PhD, Stanford Univ.
"Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers", pp. 1-4

Chronic Stress Connected to Mortality

2019 Top 10 Causes of Death for Americans

1. ***Heart disease (647,457 deaths – 23.5%)**
2. ***Cancer (599,108 deaths – 21.3%)**
3. Accidents (169,936 – 6%) (Spike in opioid overdoses)
4. Chronic lower respiratory disease (160,201 – 5.7%)
5. ***Stroke (146,383 – 5.2%)**
6. Alzheimer's disease (121,404 – 4.3%)
7. Diabetes (83,564 – 3%)
8. Influenza and pneumonia (55,672 – 2%)
9. Kidney disease (50,633 – 1.8%)
10. Suicide (47,173 – 1.5%)

***The 2 "Big Cs" kill 50% of Americans**

#3 in 2020/2021: COVID-19 (350,000 deaths in 2020 & 21 and 1.3+ million overall – 11% -- Twice that died in WWII)

Chronic Stress and Aging

- **KNOW** → New evidence links chronic stress to an increased rate of body aging and early death – directly affecting the aging, replication, and replacement of body cells Lopez-Otin, 2023
- Chronic stress seems to impair the body's capacity to replace aging senescent cells Esch, Kream, & Stefano, 2018
- **Telomeres** are repeating sequences of DNA at the end of chromosomes that shorten with each cell replication → the shorter the telomere, the more replications have happened and the older the cell is Lin & Epel, 2022
 - In the English Twins Study, female fraternal twins who had a more stressful life and more stressful jobs compared to their sisters → *had telomeres that were seven years older in shortened length*

What Are the Most Stressful Jobs?

The Top 10 most stressful jobs by the website CareerCast.com (done annually since 1999 & rated on deadlines, hazards, physical demands etc.) are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Enlisted military personnel | (What in 2020?) |
| 2) Firefighter | |
| 3) Airline pilot | Least stressful: |
| 4) Police officer | medical sonographer, |
| 5) Broadcaster | hairstylist, jeweler, |
| 6) Event coordinator | college professor, |
| 7) News reporter | massage therapist |
| 8) Public-relations executive | |
| 9) Senior corporate executive | |
| 10) Taxi driver | |

What Are the Biggest Stressors?

“Unmanaged chronic stress resulting from worrying about things NOT under our control is one of the biggest threats to long-term happiness.” – Michael Howard, PhD

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” – Serenity Prayer

The Top 10 most damaging stressors according to the American Institute of Stress are things we do have at least some level of **CONTROL** over: (1) Childhood trauma, (2) Death of a loved one, (3) Divorce, (4) Finances, (5) Job, (6) Health, (7) Personal relationships, (8) Caregiver for critically ill child or spouse, (9) Pregnancy, and (10) Immediate physical danger

KNOW → The things Americans worry about most are often NOT under any direct control – a recipe for unhappiness!

2019 APA Stress in America Survey

- 71% → Mass Shootings (Really the biggest threat?)
- 69% → Health Care
- 64% → Violence and Crime
- 62% → Current Political Climate & Future of the Nation
- 60% → Acts of Terrorism
- 56% → Upcoming Presidential Election
- 56% → Climate Change/Global Warming
- 55% → Unable to Pay for Future Healthcare
- 54% → Following Media News
- 48% → Immigration
- 45% → Widespread Sexual Harassment
- 44% → Changing Abortion Laws
- 25% → Discrimination **NOTE:** How much control?

Anhedonia: Creating Joylessness

Stress Creates the Polar Opposite of Happiness

- **KNOW:** More than 70% of people with severe depression experience **Anhedonia** → inability to experience pleasure
 - **KNOW:** This may be the polar opposite of happiness, creating a profound and pervasive mood of joylessness
 - This results in an inability to use information about rewards to guide behavior toward positive goals
 - Anhedonia is notoriously difficult to treat
 - Human and animal studies show that anhedonia is strongly related to brain changes caused by chronic stress and trauma → fragmented connections between the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus
- NOTE:** Resilient People Have Strong Connections

Xia, F., et al. (2024). Understanding the neural code of stress to control anhedonia. *Nature*, doi.org/10.138/s41686-024-08241-y.

Stress: Always a Happiness Killer?

Searching for the “Goldilocks Zone”

- **KNOW** → It makes sense that high levels of chronic stress with pervasive negative emotions like fear and anger would be the antithesis of positive emotions like happiness **BUT** can moderate levels of managed stress enhance happiness and high life satisfaction?
- Research like The Longevity Project shows there is a “**Goldilocks Zone**” → where moderate stress that is well-managed with *resilient coping skills* is correlated with high levels of happiness and life satisfaction
- High Resilient Coping Skills = High Levels of Happiness
- **KNOW** → Research shows that **RESILIENT** people with a Conscientious Personality Style who cope well with stressors of life are among the happiest individuals in the U. S. population Friedman & Martin, 2011; Lyubomirsky, 2014

Stress, Resilience, and Happiness

Happy People Are Better Stress Managers

- **KNOW** → Results from numerous studies and analyses reveal that happy people are better stress managers and recover more quickly from extremely stressful events by using resilient coping skills Bajaj et al, 2022
- **EXP:** After September 11, 2001 terror attacks, Barbara Fredrickson PhD found American college students with the highest level of pre-event positive emotions had (1) lower levels of depression, (2) more resilient coping skills and faster “bouncing back” from initial negative emotions, and (3) more personal growth than the students who were unhappiest prior to the attacks Diener & Diener, 2008; Fredrickson, 2013; Leoni & Owen, 2023; Paquette, 2023

“People who become resilient stress managers usually rate themselves as being very happy.” – Michael Howard, PhD

Part V:

Resilience

Learning to be an Effective Stress Manager

“When compared to their less happy peers, happy people are more resilient in the face of hardship.”

– Mary Yoke, 101 Nice-To-Know Facts about Happiness, 2015

“Don’t Worry; Be Happy.”

– Bobby McFerrin hit song, 1988

Happiness and Well-Being

The 8 Things Very Happy People Do

- ***Show resilience in coping in the face of challenges***
- Devote a great deal of time to their family and friends, nurturing and enjoying their **relationships**.
- Are often the first to offer helping hands to coworkers and passersby in **random acts of kindness**.
- **Savor** life's pleasures and **engage mindfully** in the moment.
- Are comfortable expressing **gratitude** for all they have.
- **Forgive others and yourself, accepting yourself as OK.**
- Are **committed** to lifelong **goals** and **accomplishments** and have strong core beliefs about **meaning** and **purpose** of life.
- **Exercise** regularly and practice **healthy lifestyle** habits.
- Practice **optimism** when imagining future outcomes.

Sources: Haidt, 2024; Paulson et al, 2016; Jackson, 2021; Diener, 1984, 1994; Diener and Diener, 1996 2008; Lyubomirsky 2007, 2014

To Manage Stress and Promote Happiness: **LEARN Resilience and Optimism**

*"Recent research reveals that people who have experienced **some** adversity (for example, several negative events or life-changing moments) are ultimately **happier** (and less traumatized, stressed, or impaired) than those who have experienced no adversity at all."*

-- Sonja Lyubomirsky, *Myths of Happiness*, 2014

Resilient People in Crisis

Neil Armstrong Lands on the Moon -- Barely

"We had 15 seconds of fuel left when the Eagle landed on the moon." – Buzz Aldrin, Apollo 11 Astronaut

- Apollo 11 → astronauts are highly resilient individuals
- On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong was piloting the lunar lander "Eagle" still 100 feet over an unexpected crater where they could not land when a fuel warning light went on and Houston advised, *"You have 60 seconds of fuel left."*
- Armstrong calmly guided the lander to a smoother place and landed with only 15 seconds of fuel left – a very close call
- Had they run out of fuel they would have been stranded on the moon and died there since there was no rescue possible
- Armstrong then calmly radioed, *"The Eagle has landed."*
- That wasn't Armstrong's only example of resilience

Resilient People in Crisis

Neil Armstrong Survives a Crash -- Barely

"He was just sitting there doing paperwork a short time after he was nearly killed." – Alan Bean, Apollo Astronaut

- To practice for the landing on the moon, Neil Armstrong and other lunar lander pilots practiced on a similar Lunar Landing Research Vehicle #1 (LLRV-1), which was hard to handle
- On May 6, 1968, Armstrong took off in the lander at Ellington Air Force Base near Houston to practice simulated moon landings but lost control 200 feet over the ground due to a thruster malfunction and ejected just two seconds before the LLRV hit the ground in a large explosion
- Armstrong parachuted to safety and afterward was still in his flight suit doing paperwork when another astronaut, Alan Bean, came by and they exchanged pleasantries for a few minutes—the crash not mentioned
- Later, Bean learned that Armstrong had nearly been killed, he went back and asked him if had, indeed, crashed the lander. Armstrong answered, *"Yeah, I did."* When asked for details, Armstrong said, *"I lost control and had to bail out of the darned thing."* And, went back to his paperwork.

Resilient People in Crisis

Alison Botha Is Raped and Stabbed – But Thrives

"We cannot always control what happens in our life, but we can always control what we do with what happens." – Alison Botha

- In his book *The Stoic Challenge*, William B. Irvine tells the story of 27-year-old Alison Botha, who was living in South Africa when on the night of December 18, 1994 she was attacked at knifepoint by two men as she was parking her car and then driven to a deserted spot in the countryside where she was raped and then savagely attacked
- She was stabbed 37 times in the abdomen, her throat was slashed 17 times, and she was left for dead in a ditch by the road as they escaped
- She managed to drag herself to the road and was assisted by a driver who came to her aid, Tiaan Eilerd, who called for an ambulance
- Her recovery was long and painful and she became depressed during the process, but developed resilience to take control of her life and gain from the experience, becoming a motivational speaker
- She subsequently married and nine years after the attack, to her surprise, became pregnant → in the delivery room with her was Tiaan Eilerd, who had become inspired to become a doctor by her experience

Managing and Preventing Stress and Anxiety: RESILIENCE

"More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That's true in the cancer ward, it's true in the Olympics, and it's true in the boardroom." -- Diane Coutu, *Harvard Business Review*

"Traumatic events make people stumble and fall, but resilience is about not staying down." -- Nancy Zarse, *Survival Mentality: The Psychology of Staying Alive*

"Most of us are resilient and will bounce back from the emotional distress over functional impairment that we experienced during a traumatic event." -- Matthew Friedman, *Posttraumatic and Acute Stress Disorders*

Developing Resilience

Managing Stress & "Bouncing Back" from Adversity

- **Resilience** in the dictionary is *"the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness"* and the APA as *"the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and even significant sources of stress such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors."*
- **Resilience** → *cognitive ability to effectively handle controllable stressors* – and, by doing so, lower the chance of being overwhelmed by events both now and in the future (reducing the chance of stress and anxiety and increasing happiness and optimism)
- They not only get through hard times, but benefit from them and **learn** to be even more resilient over time → **resilience is a learned skill developed with practice**

Positive Emotions and Resilience

"Broaden and Build" Model of Positive Emotions

"In stress, resilient people cognitively reappraise to reduce fear and increase positive emotions" – Michael Howard, PhD

- **Barbara Frederickson's "Broaden and Build"** model of positive emotions helps understand the building of resilience → **people with positive mood see the world as an easier place; with negative emotions, the world is scarier**
- **Type 1 Emotional Thinking** is powered by **negative emotions in stress**: produce lower frontal lobe activation and narrow focus "tunnel vision" with fast-acting intuitive behavior done without a lot of thinking and analysis
- **Type 2 Rational Thinking** is powered by **positive emotions**: involves more frontal lobe activation and less amygdala complex activation and is a slower process enhancing reason, rational analysis, and **more happiness**

Stress, Resilience, and Hormesis

The “Goldilocks Zone” of GOOD Stress

“Hormesis refers to adaptive responses of biological systems to moderate environmental or self-imposed challenges through which the system improves its functionality and/or tolerance to more severe challenges.” -- Edward Calabrese PhD and Mark Mattson PhD, *Aging & Mechanisms of Disease*, 3, 2017

- **You are not a car! Entropy does not apply**
- **Hormesis**, also called **eustress** → how low to moderate levels of stress experienced by a cell or organism can build resilience and have a beneficial effect on health
- **KNOW** → hormetic mild to moderate repetitive stressors have been shown in studies to increase physical and mental health → sources of mild stress like exercise, fasting, and resilient coping with controllable environmental stressors have all been shown to have health & mental health benefits
Sources: Calabrese & Mattson, 2017; Rattan & Kyriazi, 2019.

“Eustress” = “Good Stress”

Hormesis: The “Goldilocks Zone” of Good Stress

- Brief, minor bouts of moderate acute stress are called **“eustress”** because → **is motivating and, if coped with well, can build learned resilience in stress management**
- **EXP** → This kind of stress can help motivate us to get ready for a presentation before the boss or take a test
- Occasional moderate stress that is managed well can create effective problem-solving skills that can be used in handling future stressors and **build core beliefs of resilience = Optimism**: *“Since I managed past problems, I expect that future problems will be managed, too”*
- Well-managed occasional low to moderate acute stress to a threat builds resilience and is beneficial to physical and mental health → **we do better with moderately stressed cells, bodies, & brains** – **Cellular Hormesis**

Stress, Control, and Resilience

“What does not kill me makes me stronger.” -- Nietzsche

“Resilience means no longer focusing negative energy on things beyond our control.” – Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger

- **The Longevity Project** → who had the best mental and physical health and the longest and happiest lives?
- **KNOW** → It was people who stressed themselves out at a moderate level about things they had **CONTROL** over
- These people **managed and controlled their emotions and stressed themselves at a moderate level** in response to stressors that initially upset them by cognitively reappraising stressors and focusing on things that they could **control** and do something about → **Type 1 to Type 2 Thinking**
- They have an adaptive pattern of cognitive reappraisals and emotional control about things they can **control** that prevents stress and mental disorders → **resilience**

“Eustress” = Control + Resilience

“I felt a little bit like the way I had felt going into combat. There you are, ready to go; you know all the procedures, and there’s nothing left to do but just do it. People have always asked if I was afraid. I wasn’t. Constructive apprehension is more like it. I was keyed up and alert to everything that was going on, and I had full knowledge of the situation—the best antidote to fear.” -- John Glenn, Astronaut, on February 20, 1962, before becoming the first American to orbit the earth in Friendship 7 (but only 3 orbits)

- In delayed-return environments → unpredictable and uncontrollable future events are major causes of stress
- When there is more awareness about what parts of future circumstances can be controlled **AND** there is a **CORE BELIEF: YOU CAN CONTROL THOSE PARTS** → there is a higher level of good “eustress” to cope well and the learning of a skill set called **RESILIENCE**

Focus On What You Can Control



Focus on What You Can Control

"Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: some things are within your control and some things are not. There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will and focus on things that can be controlled." – Epictetus, *Discourses*

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to changes the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."
– Reinhold Niebuhr's "Serenity Prayer"

Managing Stress and Promoting Happiness: Resilience and Optimism

A Question about Resilience: If a child is born into and raised in a family with significant psychological and physical abuse, family violence, drug/ alcohol addiction and psychiatric disorders in the parents, grinding poverty, early divorce, and other traumatic events, what percentage of these children will be having disruptive psychological, vocational, social, and physical problems in adulthood by the time they reach 40 years of age?

*"For many years, mental health professionals tended to focus almost exclusively on the negative effects of biological and psychosocial risk factors by reconstructing the life histories of individuals with persistent behavior disorders or serious emotional problems. This retrospective approach created the impression that a poor developmental outcome is inevitable if a child is exposed to trauma, parental mental illness, alcoholism, or chronic family discord, since it examined only the lives of the "casualties," not the lives of the successful "survivors." During the last two decades of the 20th century, our perspective has begun to change. Longitudinal studies that have followed individuals from infancy to adulthood have consistently shown that even among children exposed to multiple stressors, only a minority develop serious emotional disturbances or persistent behavior problems. Their findings challenge us to consider the phenomenon of **resilience**, a dynamic process that leads to positive adaptation, even with a context of adversity."*

-- Emmy Werner, PhD, University of California, Davis, 2005

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

"Typically, the most common outcome following potentially traumatic events is a stable trajectory of healthy functioning or resilience." -- George Bonanno, 2011 *Ann Rev of Psych*

- A remarkable 40-year study by Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith on 698 children born in 1955 on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai has provided seminal information on the long-term effects of early life trauma and stress
- Evaluated at ages 1, 2, 10, 18, 32, and 40 years → represented life cycle stages critical for the development of identity, trust, industry, autonomy, and intimacy
- 210 (30%) of the children had prenatal or perinatal complications and/or were raised in homes with homes with grinding poverty, alcoholism, divorce, disruption, psychopathology, and sometimes significant abuse

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

- **One-third of these children did not seem affected in a negative way and were very resilient from birth onward** with no significant childhood or adolescent problems and, by the time they reached 40 years of age, were highly well-adjusted and successful adults
- Did well in school, managed home and social life well, and achieved school and work goals → **found mentors**
- By the time they reached age 40, all of them were employed with good family situations and had no social service, psychiatric, or criminal histories
- Not only that, their divorce rates, mortality rates, and health problems were actually lower at midlife than those of same-sex peers raised in stable homes and they had higher levels of educational and job achievement

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

- The researchers found 3 clusters of protective factors that impacted the children's resilience:
 - **Within the individual:** had good temperaments as infants; **agreeable, friendly, and sociable at age 2**; doing well in school with talents, pride, and helping others at 10; resilient, optimistic problem solver teens
 - **In the family:** formed close bond with at least one fairly **stable, happy, and competent person** sensitive to their needs like grandparent, sibling, aunt, or uncle
 - **In the community:** relied on **happy and resilient elders and peers** for emotional support and help in crises such as parents of friends, friends, teachers, neighbors, ministers

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

- **Of the two-thirds of the kids with early life stress who did have initial trouble as children, teens and young adults, 5 out of 6 of them had pulled themselves together and were functioning well by the time they reached age 40**
- **By age 40** → these initially troubled kids had no serious coping problems in midlife, were in stable marriages and jobs, were satisfied with their current relationships, and were basically responsible citizens in their community
- The positive changes took place mostly after high school and without interventions by mental health professionals
- In particular, **the opening up of opportunities** for these people in their 20s and 30s played a big role

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

- Resilience in these formerly troubled children with early behavioral and mental health problems was fostered by (a) continuing education, (b) training from service in the armed forces, (c) marriage to a stable partner (often a second marriage after a troubled early marriage), (d) conversion to a religion that demanded active community participation, (e) recovery from a life-threatening illness or accident, and, (f) to lesser extent, mental health svcs
- By 20s and 30s, they had taken a positive turn and were more active and sociable, **happier**, had better problem-solving and reading skills, sought interactions with others, and were exposed to positive interactions with caregivers → BUT: Those who were isolated, Antisocial PD, & were from families with Psychiatric/Substance Abuse did worse

People are Generally Resilient

Kauai Longitudinal Study

“Their very existence challenges the myth that a child who is a member of a so-called “high-risk” group is fated to become one of life’s losers.”

-- Emmy Werner, PhD, Co-author, Kauai Longitudinal Study, University of California, Davis, 2005

Managing Stress: Control & Resilience

“When an event is cognitively appraised as comprehensible (predictable), manageable (controllable), and somehow meaningful (explainable), a resilient response is more likely.” -- Aaron Antonovsky (**John Glenn**)

- The amounts of stress that can be effectively controlled and coped with will vary from individual to individual depending upon the resilient coping skills developed throughout the lifespan, especially in childhood and adolescence
- Aaron Antonovsky in the 1970s and 1980s developed **salutogenesis** → how learned coping skills help people survive, adapt, and overcome significant environmental stressors (studies found 30% of women survivors of Nazi concentration camps had positive emotional health and very long life expectancies—they were resilient)

More Resilience = Longer Lives

Even Surviving Traumatic Events like the Holocaust

- A study of 55,000 Polish males who immigrated to Israel found that experiencing the Holocaust of Nazi oppression resulted in longer life expectancies compared to those who had not gone through the Holocaust
- Polish men who experienced the Holocaust at ages 10 to 15 before immigrating to Israel lived, on average, 10 months longer than Polish men who were already living in Israel during the Holocaust – **they were more resilient**
- Polish men who experienced the Holocaust when they were 16 to 20 years of age before immigrating to Israel lived an extra 18 months compared to same-aged peers who were already in Israel at the time – **they were significantly more resilient**
- First cohort of New England Centenarian Study → Some were holocaust survivors who made it to 100 years old!

Resilient People in Crisis

Resilience = Learned Flexible Coping Strategies

“For resilience, there’s not one prescription that works; you have to find what works for you.” – Dennis Charney, MD

With **Type 2**, resilient people are *flexible* in the way they think about challenges and react emotionally to stress → not welded to a specific way of coping but shift from one strategy to another depending on the circumstances

- **Resilient People:** accept what they cannot change, learn from failure, use emotions like fear and anger to fuel compassion and courage, and search for opportunity and meaning when exposed to adverse situations
- Resilience is a learned skill that tends to get better over time as more and more events are coped with effectively
- Procedural memories of successful resilient coping → become stronger and stronger with continued usage

Sully and “Miracle on the Hudson”

Resilient “Bouncing Back” from Trauma

- U. S. Airways pilot Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger is widely regarded as a modern hero for saving a commercial airliner full of 155 people when he and his first officer Jeffrey Skiles had both engines disabled by a flock of geese at low altitude of 2,800 feet over New York City while climbing out after takeoff from LaGuardia Airport → over 6 miles from any airport and no power, just gliding
- Both pilots were highly experienced (Skiles 20,000 hours and Sullenberger 19,500 hours as commercial pilots)
- Flight 1549: On Jan 15, 2009, Skiles was flying the A320 plane for the first time on a regular flight (he had completed 37 training hours) but Sullenberger had over 4,000 hours in the A320 and after 30 seconds, said, “*My aircraft*” and took over → goes against the usual protocol

Sully and “Miracle on the Hudson”

Resilient “Bouncing Back” from Trauma

“We couldn’t be calm. The stress was too intense, but we had that focus...to be able to do the job in spite of how stressful it was...The moments before ditching were the most sickening I’ve ever had.” – Chesley Sullenberger, Captain, Flight 1549

- Although struck by extreme fear at the circumstances of engine loss, the pilots managed to control and dampen down overwhelming fear from **Type 1 Emotional Thinking** and initiate **Type 2 Rational Thinking**
- Sullenberger and Skiles were able to quickly weigh alternatives, turn the aircraft, try engine re-start, problem-solve, flexibly adapt in a very short period of time, and follow training procedures → deciding to do an emergency landing on the Hudson River in a remarkable maneuver, saving all 155 lives aboard – **in 208 seconds!**

Sully and “Miracle on the Hudson”

Resilient “Bouncing Back” from Trauma

“For 42 years, I’ve been making small, regular deposits in this bank of experience, education and training; and on January 15, the balance was sufficient so that I could make a very large withdrawal.” – Chesley Sullenberger

- Although remaining outwardly calm during the traumatic 208 seconds, Sully then suffered from the near-death experience and the investigation in the weeks afterward
- Like many trauma survivors, after coping with this frightening event, Sully struggled with PTSD insomnia, distracted thinking, loss of appetite, flashbacks, and “second-guessing” and “what-iffing” **Sullenberger, 2009**
- With *high resilience*, soon he *cognitive reappraised* his situation, focusing on the good outcomes that came from his trauma experience like influencing aviation policy

Developing Resilience

Linda Graham's "5 C's of Resilient Coping

"The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests." – Epictetus, AD 50-135

- **Calm** → Learning to stay calm in a crisis
- **Clarity** → Learning to have clear cognitive appraisals of what is happening in the adverse event and awareness of the emotions produced; foreseeing what you need to do next to cope with the event; and being able to see the possibilities from different perspectives so you can respond flexibly
- **Connection** → Learning to reach out for help from others as needed; learning from others how to be resilient; and connecting to other resources that can expand your options in a crisis

Developing Resilience

Linda Graham's "5 C's of Resilient Coping

- **Competence** → Learning to call on the coping skills and competencies that have been learned through previous experience over time and make realistic plans to act quickly and effectively in adverse and threatening situations
- **Courage** → Learning to strengthen the confidence and faith that you can persevere in coping until coming to some kind of resolution or acceptance of the difficulty
- **NOTE:** "Learning" is the first word of each skill → Resilience is learned and developed over time to be drawn on when coping with a crisis or traumatic event
- **NOTE:** Sully, Skiles, and the flight attendants used all 5 C's on Flight 1549 to save everyone aboard

The Decline of U. S. Resilience

Do We Recover Well from Stress and Traumas Now?

"Most trauma survivors are highly resilient and develop appropriate coping strategies, including the use of social supports, to deal with the aftermath and effects of trauma. Most recover with time, show minimal distress, and function effectively across major life areas and developmental stages." -- Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, U. S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014

- Multiple longitudinal studies show most people exposed to single or multiple traumatic events began to, over time, demonstrate significant levels of eventual recovery, developed resilient coping skills, and did not have long-lasting physical or psychological dysfunction → BUT: resilience in U. S. youth is declining in recent years

A Recent Big Drop in Resilience

More Stress and Anxiety in Young People

"Pre-2020, there was already evidence that mental health problems in young people were on the rise...now we can reasonably anticipate increases in anxiety, depression, and trauma." – *Monitor on Psychology*, September, 2020

- Since 2010 → studies have documented significantly increasing levels of reported stress, anxiety, and depression in children, adolescents, and young adults – and a major decline in resilient coping skills!
- A study in the 2016 *Pediatrics* found the 12-month prevalence of depression in U. S. adolescents increased from 8.7% in 2005 to 11.3% in 2014
- According to the CDC, suicide rates have also increased among people ages 10 to 24 → from 6.8 per 100,000 in 2007 to 10.6 per 100,000 in 2017

Sources: Motjabai et al, 2016; APA, 2022; CDC, 2020.

A Recent Big Drop in Resilience

More Stress and Anxiety in Young People

"Levels of psychological adjustment problems and demand for mental health services among college students have risen for years." – Monitor on Psychology, Sept, 2020

- **2019 Annual Report of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State University collected data from 200,000 college students at 163 institutions:**
 - There has been a steady increase over the last 20 years in symptoms of stress, anxiety, social anxiety, depression and trauma disorders in college students
 - There has also been a steady uptick over the last 20 years in threats to self in students → suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and non-suicidal self-injury
 - **AND → there has been a steady decline in resilience**

A Recent Big Drop in Resilience

More Stress and Anxiety in Young People. Why?

"Our children are reflecting and amplifying the anxiety and pain they see in their parents every day. Intense cultural and political polarization has eroded the sense of community Americans once felt, and our kids frequently witness adults demonstrating raw animosity against their fellow citizens. At the same time, suffocating modern parenting in which helicopter moms and dads constantly hover over their kids prevents teens from learning independence and resilience—critical skills for mental health. Add to that the corrosive effects of constant immersion in the cruel judgments on social media—often from too little parental controls—and it's understandable that kids do not feel safe." – David French, The Dispatch

Current Low Resilience in Children

Why Are Young People Now Less Resilient?

"So many teens have lost the ability to tolerate distress and uncertainty, and a big reason for that is the way we parent them." – Kevin Ashworth, Anxiety Institute, Portland OR

- **To raise a child with resilience as a goal, it is necessary to do a hard thing → find the right balance between protecting the child and pushing the child to achieve beyond their present capabilities or level of maturity**
- **Are today's children being protected too much and developing high levels of entitlement & low resilience?**
- **Studies by psychologist Jean Twenge → found current 8 to 15 year-olds, compared to earlier generations, to have markedly higher levels of (1) belief that they were "special," (2) feeling that their lives were out of control, and (3) chronic anxiety & depression AND lower learned resilient coping skills**

Current Low Resilience in Children

Helicopter and Bulldozer Parenting

- **Research → Post 2010: teens/young adults have lower capacity to accept criticism, to work toward a goal, and empathize with others than seen in previous generations**
- These changes have been related to a significant increase in **helicopter/bulldozer parenting beginning in the 1990s** an overly involved style of interactions where the parents hover over the child, **strive to avoid any failures in the child**, and swoop in whenever the child encounters adversity
- **These changes accelerated in the 1990s** – kids walking or biking to middle school in one midwestern city dropped from 41% in 1969 to just 10% in 2010 and 8% in 2018
- **Since 2010 → Introduction of smart phones and huge increases in unsupervised social media use have been associated with higher anxiety and lower resilience**

Sources: Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012.

Lower Resilience in College Students

Helicopter Parenting and “Safetyism”

- A 2020 study by Wieland and Kucirka in the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* shows that **(1) hovering over-parenting plus (2) lack of ongoing smart phone surveillance** is linked to the emergence of a “culture of safetyism and victimhood” in current college students → with a focus on micro-aggressions and the need for “safe spaces” along with **(1) lower independence, resilience, and happiness and (2) increased anxiety, depression, trauma, and eating disorders** Turner et al, 2020
- A 2018 study by McGinley in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* found → **helicopter parenting was connected to an increase in narcissistic self-centeredness and a decrease in empathy and happiness in undergraduate college students** Sources: Haidt, 2024; Wieland & Kucirka, 2020; McGinley, 2018; Padilla-Walker, 2012; Luebbe et al, 2018.

“Prepare the Child for the Road, Not the Road for the Child.” -- Tim Elmore

“It’s hard not to clear every obstacle in our children’s path so they can be happy now – getting what they want, when they want it. But when we clear the road for the child, we make their life too easy. We don’t allow them to build life-coping skills they’ll need down the road to handle life’s bad realities.” – Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis,

Author, *10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know*

“Interventions designed to increase happiness may benefit from the inclusion of activities to manage and cope with stress.” – Katherine Nelson, PhD

Building Resilience in Children

“If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn’t lead anywhere.” – Frank Clark, MD

- The resilient style of parenting is difficult but allows the child to gradually experience and master more and more challenges with their own problem solving
- The child is not exposed to stressors that cannot be managed but is encouraged to cope with difficult challenges that can be mastered with some effort
- When the child is successful → the child is praised and rewarded more for their effort and struggle as the pathway to the accomplishment of goals
- When children get good grades → the effort put in to get them is praised, not the grade itself—producing less fear of failure and gradually building good coping skills, self-reliance, self-confidence, and resilience

Immune System and Resilience

Stress Inoculation Builds Resilience in Children

“By shielding children from every possible risk, we may lead them to react with exaggerated fear to situations that aren’t risky at all and isolate them from the adult skills that they will one day have to master.” – Alison Gopnik, PhD

- **Immune system** → is a miracle of biological engineering that learns and adapts rapidly from experience to deal with threats in a changing environment
- **Immune system** → requires exposure to a range of foods, bacteria, and viruses to learn to develop an ability to mount a protective immune response to real threats like bacteria that cause strep throat while ignoring nonthreats like friendly gut bacteria – this is how vaccines work
- **Stress Inoculation** → children must be exposed to risk-controlled stressors to develop resilient coping skills

Building Resilience in Adolescents

The Value of Incremental Manageable Risks

"The idea is that adolescents exposed to moderate levels of risk are confronted with enough of the risk factor to learn how to overcome it but are not exposed to so much of it that overcoming it is impossible. A vital point is that low levels of risk exposure may be beneficial because they provide youth with a chance to practice skills or employ resources. The risk exposure, however, must be challenging enough to elicit a coping response so the adolescent can benefit from the process of overcoming the risk." – Stevenson Fergus PhD and Mark Zimmerman, PhD, *Annual Review of Public Health*, 2005

- **Stress inoculation with incremental levels of risk** → develops resilient problem skills in adolescents that can be utilized when greater stressors challenge them in the future
Sources: Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Bonanno et al, 2011.

Building Resilience in Young People

The Resilient Benefits of Failure

"Failures are catastrophic for young people and must be avoided at all costs." – Helicopter Parent Core Belief

"It turns out that, historically, while we have been relatively successful in pinpointing the benefits of success, we have failed to understand the value of failure." -- Dashun Wang, PhD, Northwestern University

- Using advanced analytics, researchers at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management showed that **failure early in the career of scientists led to greater success in the long-term for those who kept trying**
- The researchers attributed this later success effect to increased **"grit," "lessons learned," and increased resilience** in the young scientists who failed early on
Sources: Wang et al, 2019; Hofbrucker-MacKenzie et al, 2019.

Resilience and Optimism

"Not that we wish cancer on anyone, but it's often negative experiences that help us grow and learn, which is vital for being happy." -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., author of *The Myths of Happiness*

Helicopter Parenting Core Beliefs → "No Child Should Fail and No Child Should Have Negative Experiences"

- Even resilient people get emotionally overwhelmed by initial cognitive appraisals of traumatic events **BUT** → they rather quickly begin to **cognitive reappraise** and **see threats as a challenge** that either (1) cannot be controlled and (2) can be controlled and dealt with
- **Resilient people focus on what can be controlled and successfully manage it → creating optimism for being able to effectively cope with future challenges and raising levels of happiness – can be LEARNED!**

What Resilient People Do

10 Common Factors Found in Most Studies

"You aren't born resilient; it must be learned." – Michael Howard

- Maintain good relationships with close family members, friends, and others → the biggest factor in happiness in many studies: strong support group
- Avoid seeing crises or stressful events as unbearable problems → see them as challenges
- Accept circumstances that cannot be changed and focus on things that can be *controlled*
- Develop realistic goals and move toward them
- Take decisive actions in adverse situations and learn from these experiences

What Resilient People Do

10 Common Factors Found in Most Studies

"I never lose. Either I win or I learn." – Nelson Mandela

- Look for opportunities for learning and self-discovery after a struggle, a loss, or a failure
- Develop self-confidence in practiced coping skills
- Keep a long-term perspective and consider the stressful event in a broader context
- Take care of the mind and body, exercise regularly and pay attention to needs and feelings
- **Maintain a happy, hopeful, and optimistic future outlook, expecting good things to happen and visualize managing challenges of life effectively**

Stress, Resilience, and Happiness

Do Happy People Make Better Stress Managers?

- **High levels of long-term happiness are correlated with high resilience and low levels of chronic stress and stress-related diseases** Bajaj, Knoury, & Sengupta, 2022
- **Results from numerous studies and analyses reveal that happy people are better stress managers and recover more quickly from extremely stressful events**
- **After the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, Barbara Fredrickson PhD found American college students with the highest level of pre-event positive emotions had (1) lower levels of depression, (2) more resilient coping skills and faster "bouncing back" from initial negative emotions, and (3) more personal growth than the students who were unhappiest prior to the attacks** Diener & Diener, 2008; Fredrickson, 2013; Leoni & Owen, 2023; Paquette, 2023

What Does Happiness Have To Do with Being Resilient?

"Happy people manage stress better and have increased levels of enthusiasm and perseverance. People in a happy mood see the world as an easier place than those in a negative mood, who see it as scarier and more difficult. Research studies show that, after stressful and traumatic events, individuals with more positive emotions have more resilience, less depression, and more personal growth than those with more negative emotions. Happy, more positive people have an advantage over others because they can cope more effectively and bounce back more easily from the negative situations that will constantly challenge us throughout our lives."

-- Michael Howard, PhD

Part VI: Understanding Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being

Brief Happiness Test

Satisfaction With Life Scale: Core Beliefs **How Happy Are You?**

A short test of life satisfaction—more are available at
www.authentichappiness.com Diener et al, 1985

- Score 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree):
 - ___ In most ways my life is close to ideal.
 - ___ The conditions of my life are excellent.
 - ___ I am satisfied with my life.
 - ___ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
 - ___ If I could live my life over I would change almost nothing.
- **Where did you score?** (From 5-9 Extremely Dissatisfied to 20 Neutral to 31-35 Extremely Satisfied)

Brief Happiness Test

Satisfaction With Life Scale

This short test gives a general idea of level of overall Life Satisfaction coupled with current situational Happiness

- **If score is satisfied or extremely satisfied** → most area of life appear to be very rewarding
- **If score is slightly satisfied, neutral, or slightly dissatisfied** → there are probably several areas of life that are desired to be improved
- **If score is dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied** → this may be reacting to bad recent events but if this dissatisfaction is there for a long time and there are pessimistic core beliefs about the future, significant changes in life may be necessary and possibly help may be needed from mental health professionals

NOTE: Happiness cannot be objectively measured

Another Brief Happiness Test

Subjective Happiness Scale: Core Beliefs

Score each item 1-7 (higher score = happier)

- **In general, I consider myself:**
not a very happy person 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a very happy person
- **Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:**
less happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 more happy
- **Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterize you?**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a great deal
- **Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?**
not at all 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 a great deal Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999

"It is important to realize that there is no one single way to attain happiness. Each individual will create a unique pathway to their own level of happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being. For example, some people find happiness working long hours while others are happier with more leisure time. Fortunately, the various things that combine to achieve an overall happy lifestyle are well established, e.g., living in the moment, appreciating what one has, and capitalizing on one's strengths. If you want, you can pick and choose among them to gradually create your own version of a happy life: Happiness is a Daily Process, Not a Goal!" -- Michael Howard, PhD

What Is Happiness?

“There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” – Albert Einstein

- **Lots of Information** → Google lists 24,000+ happiness titles
- **Happiness:** is a term subject to many different usages and meanings that can vary from culture to culture → mostly meaning a brief emotion but sometimes is used to mean a long-term mood or “life satisfaction”
- **Happiness:** is considered to be a positive or pleasant emotion produced by cognitive appraisals that can range from contentment to extreme joy or ecstasy
- The happiness researcher **Sonja Lyubomirsky** describes happiness as: *“the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense (core belief) that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.”*

Positive Psychology & Happiness

- For thousands of years, various philosophers, poets, and others have tried to define what makes a good and happy life that is meaningful and has long-term satisfaction, e.g., the ancient Greek concept of **eudaimonia** Paulson et al, 2016
- It seems to be something that many people desire – and, yet happiness seems difficult for many to find and hold onto
- Most religions of the world—including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—have established paths toward finding happiness and rewards in this life and beyond
- After centuries of focus on the negative aspects of mental health by practitioners, **positive psychology** emerged in the 1990s to focus on the strengths of people rather than the deficits → applying psychological science to studying: **happiness, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and the positive meaning and quality of an individual’s life**

Ancient Greeks and Eudaimonia

The Greek Concept of Happiness and Well-Being

“People should so live that happiness shall depend as little as possible on external things.” – Epictetus, Greek Stoic, 120 AD

- Aristotle wrote 2,400 years ago that **happiness**, which he called **eudaimonia** (“human flourishing” or “the good life”) was believed to be the highest human good and was achieved through knowing your true self through reason and acting in accordance with your virtues
- Modern psychologists like Carol Ryff have elaborated on the **Eudaimonia Ideals** → belonging to and benefiting others, flourishing, thriving, and exercising excellence
- Those who aspire for wealth, material possessions, social recognition, fame, image, or attractiveness are fulfilling **extrinsic needs** and have increased hedonic pleasure **BUT NOT** high levels of **intrinsic happiness and eudaimonia**

Ancient Greeks and Eudaimonia

The Foundation of Modern Positive Psychology

- **Individuals who strive for a life defined by affiliation, intimacy, and contributing to one’s community are aspiring to fulfill intrinsic needs and achieve eudaimonia**
- **Carol Ryff, PhD, notes that eudaimonia, as a path to happiness and a fulfilled life, has a six-factor structure: (1) autonomy, (2) personal growth, (3) self-acceptance, (4) purpose in life, (5) environmental mastery, and (6) positive relations with others (a lot like “Well-Being”)**
- **People who score high in these six areas on tests like the Orientation to Happiness Questionnaire have been shown to have overall higher self-rated happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being than those who do not**

Source: Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Singer, 2006; Anic and Tonsic, 2013; Peterson, Park, and Seligman, 2005.

Positive Psychology and Happiness

- **KNOW** → Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* contains the basic elements of much of modern positive psychology
- The field of **positive psychology** emerged in the 1990s to try to scientifically determine what overall happiness really is
- The recent development of positive psychology has brought an increased focus on the study of (1) Happiness, (2) Life Satisfaction, and (3) Well-Being → including **positive emotions, strengths, purpose, fulfillment, focused mindful engagement in activities, virtuous personal characteristics, accomplishment, gratitude, and the pathways to achieve greater enjoyment, meaning of life, positive life satisfaction, and quality of life**

NOTE: Historically, clinical psychology and psychiatry focused largely on diagnosing and treating mental disorders and did not pay attention to development of positive life functions

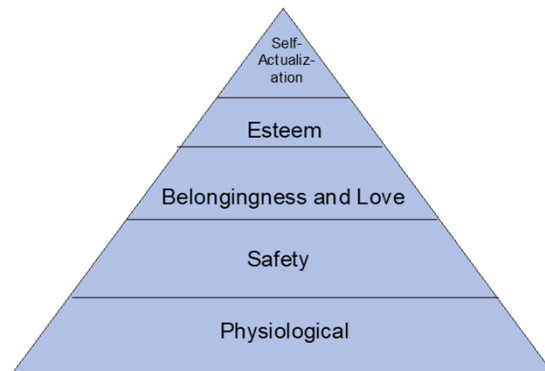
Happiness and Well-Being

Abraham Maslow: The Father of Modern Positive Psychology

"The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative side than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about the potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, the darker, meaner half."

-- Abraham Maslow, 1958

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Is Happiness Really a Long-Term Goal?



The "Process" of Happiness

"Happiness is not just a destination. Despite the fact that many people seek out lasting fulfillment—and it is natural and understandable to do so—happiness is not an emotional finish line in the race of life. Happiness should not be looked at just as a destination we try to reach, but as a beneficial way we learn to travel. The key to happiness is to understand the importance of the journey itself. Happiness often comes from doing rather than having. If we enjoy the activities needed in working for our goals, many hours and years of pleasure are provided, whereas reaching summits provides only the occasional short-term high...Life goes on and even great accomplishments do not ensure lasting happiness... Happiness is much more of a 'process' than a 'place' you end up in." -- Ed Diener, PhD and Robert Biswas-Diener

Happiness and Well-Being

The Impact of Positive Psychology

- The term “**positive psychology**” is credited to Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) in the 1950s when he introduced the term “**self-actualization**” → a yearning for growth and meaning in life that some people pursued after meeting their more basic needs like food and safety
- Since the 1990s, the field of **positive psychology** has focused a great deal on defining and studying happiness as part of a state of well-being that encompasses living a good life with sense of meaning and deep contentment
- **The main topic of positive psychology is well-being and the best way to measure well-being is called flourishing**
- **KNOW** → The Goal of Positive Psychology: increasing **flourishing** in individuals and groups
- **KNOW** → Has spurred research on **HAPPINESS!**

Positive Psychology: Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being

- **Happiness** is a brief *emotion* produced by **cognitive appraisals** → part of a greater pervasive long-term mood produced by core beliefs called **Life Satisfaction** → part of an overall inclusive **subjective well-being or well being**
- Ed Diener → **Well-Being** is an overall comprehensive mood from many core beliefs that includes Happiness and Life Satisfaction and can be empirically measured by how people rate themselves on important measurable elements of their lives like positive emotions (happiness), negative emotions (painful feelings), and aspects of life satisfaction such as engagement in activities of life, relationships, how one achieves aspirations and goals, and meaning of life
- **Well-Being** contains having core beliefs of optimism, a concept of life's purpose, and why life is worthwhile

Minnesota Well-Being Assessment

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

One Stop MyU

TAKING CHARGE of your HEALTH & WELLBEING

Manage Health Conditions Try Holistic Practices Search this site

be MINDFUL live HEALTHY create CONNECTION feel SAFE find MEANING healing ENVIRONMENTS

Wellbeing Assessment

Before you begin, you need to know where you are! This overall assessment can help you determine where you are in each aspect of wellbeing and point to areas where you might want to make changes.

On the following screens, we'll ask you 13 simple questions. Don't overthink your answers—just select how you feel today. Your answers are private and never shared.

I'm ready. Let's start.

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To Some: Well-Being Is “Wellness”

- **Emotional Wellness** → be positive, give and receive love, forgive and let go, handle anger and conflict, sense of humor
- **Social Wellness** → deep, fulfilled, and well-developed connections with partners, friends, family, and community
- **Intellectual Wellness** → have a curious, open, and engaged mind, always learning and adapting
- **Physical Wellness** → having a well-cared-for body that is fit, healthy, high-functioning, and has appropriate weight
- **Spiritual Wellness** → pursue meaning for a higher purpose with intention to always live and act from the highest virtues
- **Occupational Wellness** → find a career path that utilizes your unique talents and skills in a way that is self-fulfilling and, at the same time, helpful to others

Sources: Dunn, 1961; Yoke, 2015; Stoewen, 2017; Howard, 2021; University of Central Arkansas, 2021; National Wellness Institute, 2022

Achieving High Well-Being

Ed Diener's Path to "Psychological Wealth"

- In the comprehensive 2008 book *Happiness* by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, they summarize the eight ingredients necessary to achieve a high level of Subjective Well-Being or "Psychological Wealth" are:
 - Positive core beliefs and mood (high life satisfaction)
 - High level of positive emotions
 - Spirituality and core belief of the meaning of life
 - Loving social relationships
 - Engaging activities and work
 - Core values and life goals to achieve them
 - Physical and mental health
 - Material sufficiency to meet our needs

Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Achieving High Well-Being

PERMA: Five Elements of Well-Being

Seligman's Positive Psychology research = Five Major Elements of Well-Being (all among Diener's 8) Seligman, 2018

Each of the five elements must have three properties: (1) it contributes to well-being, (2) many people pursue it for its own sake, not merely to get any of the other elements, and (3) it is defined and measured independently of the other elements (exclusivity)

- Positive Emotion (Dan Buettner's *Pleasure*) → the overall level of an individual's subjective determination of his or her happiness and life satisfaction and is a major factor in achieving well-being. Positive emotion contains the hedonic or pleasurable aspects of well-being, including pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, and warmth. **NOTE: Happiness, then, is only one aspect of well-being.**

Achieving High Well-Being

PERMA: Five Elements of Well-Being

- Engagement → This is a subjective experience of being caught up in the moment and having high focus on what a person is doing—being one with the music when listening, time stopping, and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity. This will later be called a "**flow**" state in which thinking and emotions are generally not perceived as going on because of the engrossed activity focus. It is only later that a person will come back and say "**Wow, that was wonderful.**"

Achieving High Well-Being

PERMA: Five Elements of Well-Being

- Relationships → When Christopher Peterson, one the founders of positive psychology, was asked to describe positive psychology in two words, he said, "**Other people.**" Very little that is positive and fulfilling in life is individual and socially isolated. Being involved in reciprocally-supportive relationships is a major part of developing positive well-being and a happy life. Diener & Seligman, 2016;
 - Martin Seligman, PhD, states that doing things for others has been shown in research studies to cause the most reliable increase in well-being of anything so far tested
 - Ed Diener, PhD, and Martin Seligman, PhD, found the most important predictor of the highest levels of happiness in college students were strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them

Achieving High Well-Being

PERMA: Five Elements of Well-Being

- **Meaning (Buettner's Purpose)** → Meaning is generally thought of as belonging to and serving something that is believed to be bigger than oneself. The subjective belief that we are doing things as part of a bigger picture has been related to well-being and happiness throughout history: living a meaningful and purposeful life.
- **Accomplishment (Buettner's Pride)** → People pursue success, accomplishment, winning, achievement, and mastery for their own sakes, achieving personal goals. This is winning for winning's sake, not to compare to others and not just to achieve pleasure or engagement – it represents an "achieving life" part of well-being.

Sources: Martin E. P. Seligman: *Learned Optimism* (1990), *Authentic Happiness* (2002), *Flourish* (2011), *The Hope Circuit* (2018).

Happiness and Well-Being

The Impact of Positive Psychology

"The content of positive psychology itself—happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment, growth, better relationships—constitutes human flourishing. Learning that you can have more of these things is life changing."

-- Martin E. P. Seligman, PhD, *Flourish*, 2011

Well-Being and Flourishing

What Is Flourishing?

- **Flourishing** → is having high levels of the elements of well-being, as measured by various tests
- In addition to Seligman's 5 elements, Felicia Huppert and Timothy So of the University of Cambridge **measured flourishing** in 2,000 people in each of 33 European nations by how people responded on questions regarding **Seven Elements of Well-Being: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, self-esteem, optimism, resilience, and positive relationships** (basically same as Diener's and Seligman's)
- Denmark had 33% flourishers to score the highest and the next three, Switzerland, Finland, and Norway, came in at about 25%; UK half Denmark's level at 18% and Russia sat at the bottom with 6% flourishing (**NOTE:** Also see the **Harvard Flourishing Scale** www.hfh.fas.harvard.edu/)

The 3 Pathways to Happiness

Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson suggested there are **3 Pathways** that individually contribute to happiness and are critical to achieving long-term flourishing:

- **Feeling Good (Pleasurable Life)** → seeking pleasurable emotions and sensations as noted by the Greek hedonistic philosopher Epicurus, including seeking to repeat and savor pleasant experiences (**Buettner's Pleasure**)
- **Engaging Fully (Engaged Life)** → pursuing goals and activities in which you are focused on and totally immersed—also called "**flow**" (**Buettner's Purpose**)
- **Doing Good (Meaningful Life with Relationships and Accomplishments)** → experiencing meaning to life by accomplishing goals and serving someone or something outside yourself, as advised in most religious traditions (**Buettner's Pride**)

Measuring Happiness: 3 Pathways

- **3 Pathways to Happiness** are measured by the **Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI)** (developed by Christopher Peterson, University of Michigan).
- You can take the **Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI)** survey online by registering at the [University of Pennsylvania's Authentic Happiness website](http://www.authentichappiness.org).
- Here is a brief set of 18 questions on the **3 Pathways of Happiness** that can provide an overall measure of your happiness levels.



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AHI: The 3 Pathways to Happiness

1 - Not at all 2 - A little like me 3 - Somewhat like me 4 - Mostly like me
5 - Very much like me (www.authentichappiness.org)

Score Statement

- _____ Regardless of what I am doing, time passes quickly
- _____ My life serves a higher purpose
- _____ Life is too short to postpone the pleasures it can provide
- _____ I seek out situations that challenge my skills and abilities
- _____ In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether whether it will benefit other people
- _____ Whether at work or play, I am usually "in a zone" and not conscious of myself
- _____ I am always very absorbed in what I do
- _____ I go out of my way to feel euphoric
- _____ In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether I can lose myself in it

AHI: The 3 Pathways to Happiness

1 - Not at all 2 - A little like me 3 - Somewhat like me 4 - Mostly like me
5 - Very much like me (www.authentichappiness.org)

Score Statement

- _____ I am rarely distracted by what is going on around me
- _____ I have a responsibility to make the world a better place
- _____ My life has a lasting meaning
- _____ In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether it will be pleasurable
- _____ What I do matters to society
- _____ I agree with this statement: "Life is short—eat dessert first"
- _____ I love to do things that excite my senses
- _____ I have spent a lot of time thinking about what life means and how I fit into the big picture
- _____ For me, the good life is the pleasurable life

AHI: The 3 Pathways to Happiness

- **Add up these three groups of scores:**
 - Items 3, 8, 13, 15, 16, and 18 (pleasurable life) _____
 - Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 (engaged life) _____
 - Items 2, 5, 11, 12, 14, and 17 (meaningful life) _____
- **Highest score = the most prominent orientation among the different ways of seeking long-term happiness**
- **Your principal orientation toward happiness may be:**
 - Seeking pleasurable emotions or sensations (**Pleasurable Life**)
 - Pursuing activities that engage you fully (**Engaged Life**)
 - Seeking meaning in something outside of yourself (**Meaningful Life**)
- **High scores on all = already on road to satisfying life**
- **Low scores on all = action needed or be dissatisfied**

Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being: Is It the 3 P's?

- Around 2015, Dan Buettner (the author of the *Blue Zone* books) was writing a book on happiness (*The Blue Zones of Happiness*) and assembled a group of international experts on happiness “to do a metastudy of sorts to sift through all the findings and come up with something manageable, concrete, reliable, and practicable in understanding happiness.” Buettner, 2017, *The Blue Zones of Happiness*, p. 35
- Over the course of 8 months, through round after round of carefully-structured deliberations, the vast information on happiness was reduced down to (1) **Top Ten Policies** to Improve lives of citizens of countries and (2) **Top Ten Practices** that a person could use to boost the **3 P's Metafactors of Happiness: Pleasure, Purpose, and Pride**

Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being: Is It the 3 P's?

- Buettner → Various studies and tests of happiness find critical elements often fall into 3 categories: **Pleasure, Purpose, and Pride** (NOTE: Very similar to (1) Seligman and Peterson's 3 pathways of Feeling Good, Engaging Fully, and Doing Good & (2) 3 of the 5 elements of Well-Being)
- Different surveys and tests vary because they measure different aspects of overall subjective long-term happiness
- **Pleasure** → the subjective degree of *positive emotions and core beliefs* that each person has and experiences – often the major things measured in many happiness studies & tests
- **Purpose** → core belief of how worthwhile or *meaningful* an engaged person's life is
- **Pride** → core belief of the level of *accomplishment* in life

Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being: Is It the 3 P's?

- **KNOW:** Each person will have a unique path to happiness → Differences in value placed on the “3 P's” mean that each person will rate herself/himself as “happy” based on different combinations that are important to her or him (NOTE: A lot like Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson's 3 *Pathways to Happiness*)
- **Example of Different P's to Happiness** → Happiness research Ed Diener gets much of his happiness from his work accomplishments and working a lot of hours each week BUT, on the other hand, Dan Buettner gets a higher level of happiness by quitting work after 40 hours and having a lot of leisure and social activities outside work

The Blue Zones 3 P's Happiness Test

- **The Blue Zones “3 P's” Happiness Test** → is designed to measure the three metafactors of happiness in various life situations that have been scientifically connected to measured happiness in a number of studies: **Pleasure, Purpose, and Pride**
 - **First** → read through each statement and consider whether it is true: place an “X” in the boxes on the left to all statements that apply to you
 - **Next** → go back to the top of the list and, wherever you marked an “X” and circle the corresponding numbers in each of the 3 columns to the right
 - **Finally** → add up each column to find your Pleasure, Purpose, and Pride scores

Source: Buettner, 2017, *The Blue Zones of Happiness*, pp. 37-41.

X Life Factors	Pleasure	Purpose	Pride
<input type="checkbox"/> You live with a loving partner	1	3	1
<input type="checkbox"/> You have kids		3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You don't have kids	1		
<input type="checkbox"/> You spend 30 minutes of quality time with your kids at least 5 days a week	1	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> You own a dog	1	3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You volunteer at least one hour per week	1	3	1
<input type="checkbox"/> You work less than 40 hours a week	2		
<input type="checkbox"/> You spend less than one hour watching TV or playing video games per day	2		
<input type="checkbox"/> You spend at least three hours per day socializing with people who company you enjoy	2	3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You have people in your life you can confide in after a difficult day		3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You earn at least \$75,000 per year	1		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You get at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily	2		1

X Life Factors	Pleasure	Purpose	Pride
<input type="checkbox"/> You eat at least six servings of fruits and vegetables daily			1
<input type="checkbox"/> You have at least some college education		3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You practice religion at least every month	1	3	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Your commute to work is less than 15 minutes	2		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You have adequate savings/insurance and feel financially secure	1		2
<input type="checkbox"/> You regularly treat yourself to new experiences	1		2
<input type="checkbox"/> You have a lot of freedom and control in the work that you do		2	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You meditate at least once a week	2	3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You live in a place free of noise and traffic sounds	1		
<input type="checkbox"/> You regard yourself as being likeable	1		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You visit the doctor and dentist at least once a year			1
<input type="checkbox"/> Your home has good natural light	1		
<input type="checkbox"/> You spend less than one hour/day on social media	1		1

X Life Factors	Pleasure	Purpose	Pride
<input type="checkbox"/> You have house plants, a fish tank, live near a park, or have a window to view nature	1		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You have clear life goals and monitor your progress	1	3	2
<input type="checkbox"/> You get at least 7.5 hours of sleep	2		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You don't smoke	1		2
<input type="checkbox"/> You have sex 1-4 times per week	2		1
<input type="checkbox"/> You don't spend more time on housework than you want	2		
<input type="checkbox"/> You can articulate your sense of purpose or life mission		3	
<input type="checkbox"/> You care for loved ones (such as sick children or parents)		3	
<input type="checkbox"/> You laughed today—either with friends or because of something on TV or social media	2		
<input type="checkbox"/> You have time to keep up with hobbies you enjoy	2		2

The Blue Zones 3 P's Happiness Test

- These scores are derived from lifestyle factors in places around the world where happiness thrives at high levels
- Add up the scores in each of the three **Pleasure, Purpose, and Pride** columns:
 - 0 – 10 = Poor
 - 11 – 19 = Fair
 - 20 – 30 = Good
 - Above 30 = Excellent
- Research shows that all three are important to overall life satisfaction and well-being **BUT each individual will have unique balances among the three factors**
- Pay special attention to scores less than 20, which may need some work to increase that part of happiness →

The Blue Zones 3 P's Happiness Test

Ways to Raise a Low Score

- **Pleasure Score < 20**

- Look for ways to add fun, awe, and joy to daily routines, e.g., arranging living spaces to have more room to entertain guests, find a way to work closer to home, and socializing with others you like as much as possible

- **Purpose Score < 20**

- Find ways in daily life to use your gifts and talents in pursuit of a meaningful goal that is outside of yourself and for a purpose larger than yourself
- Examples: Work fewer hours with more time to fulfill interests and passions like listening to meaningful podcasts during daily commutes, walking a dog, joining clubs, playing sports, and pursuing fulfilling hobbies,

The Blue Zones 3 P's Happiness Test

Ways to Raise a Low Score

- **Pride Score < 20**

- De-clutter your too-busy life and find significant things to become involved with that give you a rewarding belief of pride in accomplishment, e.g., aligning your job with personal interests, setting up automatic savings accounts for retirement, and eating healthy foods
- One of the happiest countries is Singapore, where pride of accomplishment is a huge factor in happiness by getting a good education, getting a good job, providing for your family, and generally meeting or exceeding general expectations of the society
- Pride can come from avoiding "keeping up with the Joneses" by increasing satisfaction with what you have and avoiding negative comparisons with others

Happiness: Genetic or Learned?

- A famous University of Minnesota study measured the happiness of identical monozygotic twins and fraternal dizygotic twins who were reared in separate households
 - The researchers estimated that 50% of happiness could be inborn and related to clusters of genes, including the 5-HTP gene related to serotonin levels
 - Identical twins raised apart in different households were more similar in their levels of happiness than were fraternal twins raised in the same household
- Another Study → When Danish researchers looked at the ups and downs of variability in happiness, they found that 22% of the variance was due to genetic factors
- Personality structure (50% genetic) also had a large effect on happiness with high extroversion and low neuroticism

Sources: Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Bartels et al, 2022

Happiness: Genetic or Learned?

"It is not possible to put a universal percentage on genetic influences on happiness, because genes and the environment influence each other, with interactions with the environment sometimes switching on or off the expression of particular genes." – Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener

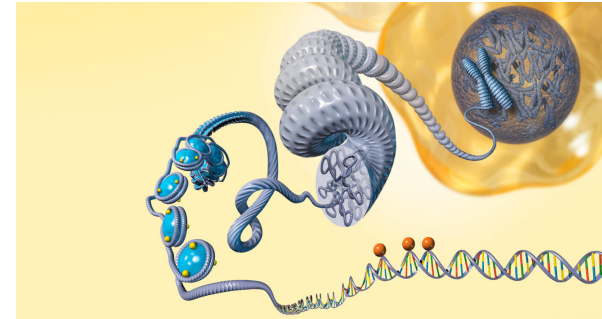
- Interacting with our genes, our PATEM learning history plays a large role in creating levels of happiness – results in a unique combined effect on every individual
 - Even in the Minnesota twins study, some of the twins didn't get separated until a year or more together, most had contact with each other at some level, were raised by a close family member, and about a quarter ended up being raised together or next door
- Environmental interactions also have a significant impact in changing the expression of genes, i.e., *epigenetics*

Happiness: About 50% Genetic

BUT, 40% is PATEM Learned Behavior

- Groups of genes (haplogroups) on several chromosomes are linked to about 50% of happiness and well-being
- **BUT** → There is no genetic “set point” of happiness → learned cognitive reappraisals raise or lower happiness
- **KNOW** → Evidence on the heritability of positive emotions suggests that not everyone has the same capacity to be cheerful, jovial, and optimistic most of the time → some people find it easier to attain happiness and contentment due to their genetic loads
- **KNOW** → But, even those with poor genes can *learn* to become more resilient and happier with good environmental nurturance: **40% is learned PATEM behavior** Sources: Diener, 1984, 1994; Diener and Diener, 1996 2008; Lyubomirsky 2007, 2014; NIMH, 2021; Bouchard, 2003, 2014.

Epigenetics: Changing the Expression of Genes



Epigenetic Effects → Happiness Alters DNA Expression in Several Types of Genes to Cause Changes in the Brain and Body

Brain Changes in Happiness → (1) increased left prefrontal cortex, nucleus accumbens, and ventral tegmental area activation and (2) higher levels of dopamine and endorphins

The Happiest and Unhappiest Countries **Countries Differ Significantly in 2022 Gallup Poll**

There are several polls and surveys that have measured happiness around the world in different cultures utilizing various methods Gardiner et al, 2020; Singh et al, 2023; Svoray, 2022

The **2022 Gallup World Poll of Happiness** in 140 countries → represents nearly 98% of the world's population

- **1,000 people in each country were surveyed**
- **Six variables are a key part of the scores:**
 - How strong the economy is
 - Healthy years of life expectancy
 - Social support—someone to count on in times of trouble
 - Trust in government, business, and other people
 - Perceived freedom to live life as you want to
 - Generosity as in donations and help for others

The Happiest and Unhappiest Countries **Countries Differ Significantly in 2022 Gallup Poll**

- **Happiest Countries** → Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Israel, and New Zealand – **where culture and economy enable people to regularly experience pleasure, purpose, and security with lower have/have not differences**
- **Unhappiest Countries** → Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Botswana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Lebanon, and Afghanistan – **where economic inequality fosters resentment between haves and have nots plus warfare, corruption, and lack of security = a daily struggle to survive**
- Qatar is richest per capita but 31st in happiness
- Hong Kong has lowest murder rate but 67th in happiness
- Japan has 4th longest life expectancy & 44th in happiness
- **United States** → **Now ranks 23rd in World Happiness**

Is Happiness Declining Recently in the United States, Especially in Young People?

- Numerous studies have documented (1) declining levels of happiness and resilience and (2) increasing levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in Americans since 2010, especially in adolescents and young adults. Why?

Happiness in the United States

Mildly Declined from 2000 to 2010, Then Dropped Significantly from 2010 to 2024

“The years since 2010 have not been good ones for happiness and well-being among Americans. Even as the United States economy improved after the end of the Great Recession in 2009, happiness among adults did not rebound into the higher levels of the 1990s, continuing a slow decline ongoing since at least 2000 in the General Social Survey.”

-- Jean Twenge, PhD

How Happy Are Americans?

- In surveys from the 1960s through 2010 → 33% of Americans rated themselves “very happy,” 55% rated themselves “pretty happy,” and 11% “not too happy”
- Happiness levels did not change much over 50 years from 1960 to 2010: even though average incomes and economic status tripled → after 2010, things began to change: *huge increase in smart phones and social media*
- Since 2010: Unprecedented low levels of happiness
- Record Low Happiness In 2020-2023: societal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased social isolation, racial conflicts, economic struggles, and social media usage combined to contribute to all-time lows in studies of happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being in Americans

Sources: Compton, 2013; Gallup, 2010, 2014; 2024; Haidt, 2024; Twenge, 2020; Twenge et al, 2020; Witters, 2011.

2022: Stress and Despair on the Rise

- *“The U.S. population has experienced an intense range of stressors over the past few years, as the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustice, and political divisiveness have dominated news cycles and social media. The Stress in America Survey 2022 shows a battered American psyche, facing a barrage of external stressors that are mostly out of personal control. The survey found a majority of adults are disheartened by government and political divisiveness, daunted by historic inflation levels, and dismayed by widespread violence: 75% think the government doesn’t care about them; 64% feel their rights are under attack; 45% don’t feel protected by U. S. laws; 38% have considered moving to a different country and 40% have considered moving to a different state.”*

-- Stress in America 2022, American Psychological Assn.

2022: An Historic Drop in U. S. Happiness

September, 2022 National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey → found the happiness of Americans remains the lowest in 50 years

- Just 41% of Americans say they are satisfied with their lives (compared to 55% in 2010)
- A historic low of 14% of Americans continue to say they are “very happy” (33% in 2010)
- 2022: a historic low of 23% of Americans continue to say they are “not too happy” (11% in 2010) → The same historical low as in 2021 and 10 percentage points higher than 2018 and highest in the survey since 1972
- **KNOW** → Several Studies: the drop in happiness is matched by a lower level of resilience and optimism and increases in chronic stress, anxiety, depression

Sources: NORC, 2022; Marist Poll, 2022; American Psychological Association, 2022; American Psychiatric Association, 2021.

2022: An Historic Drop in U. S. Optimism

September, 2022 National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey → optimism of Americans hit an all-time low

- Only 42% of people believe that their children's standard of living will be better than theirs when they older (57% in 2018)
- Just 49% of Americans were more optimistic about how things were going in the world (56% in 2020)
- More Americans have said the country is on the wrong track than on the right track over the last 20 years
- Over the last 10 years, less than half of Americans have a favorable opinion of the Republican and Democratic political parties
- When it came to the 2022 midterm elections, one-third of Americans said it didn't matter who won

Happiness in the United States

- **2022 Gallup-Healthways U. S. Well-Being Index Poll:**
 - Only 47% report being satisfied with their *personal* lives since 1979 (60% in 2008)
 - Still, a big gap between personal satisfaction and national satisfaction → only 18% are satisfied with the way things are going in the U. S. (32% of Democrats and just 7% of Republicans)
 - Hawaii and Alaska the happiest states
 - Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Arizona rated high
 - Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, & West Virginia had low happiness (Tobacco)
 - **NOW:** Young people (Millennials and Gen Z) are the least happy—heavily correlated with loneliness and general misery—while older people are the happiest → the opposite of most countries of the world

2010-2020: Declining U. S. Adolescent Happiness

- Happiness and life satisfaction among U. S. adolescents increased between 1991 and 2010, and then began a steady decline until 2022 Twenge et al, 2020
- Since 2010, depression, suicidal ideation, & self-harm have increased sharply in children, adolescents, young adults, especially among girls and women Twenge, 2020

The Rise of Digital Media and the Fall of Everything Else

- The amount of time adolescents spend on screen activities (especially digital media such as gaming, social media, texting, and time online) steadily increased from 2010 to 2020 after the majority of Americans owned smartphones
- By 2017, the average 12th grader (17-18 yo) spent more than 6 hours a day of leisure time on just 3 digital media activities (internet, social media, and texting) → by 2019, over 95% of U. S. adolescents had access to a smartphone

The Social Media Epidemic of Teen Despair

2021 CDC Report: More Sadness in Girls than Boys
In February of 2023, the CDC released a report on teenage mental health based on a survey of 17,000 teens in 2021

- **42% of teens reported pervasive feelings of sadness and hopelessness and consistent despair was markedly higher in girls (59%) than boys (29%) → both levels are dramatically up since 2010** McAllister et al, 2021
- **What has happened since 2010? → Instagram in 2010, Snapchat in 2011, Tik Tok in 2016** Twenge et al, 2018, 2022
- **During the decade from 2010 to 2020, 90% of teen girls reported using social media every day** → largely on apps that put a premium on selfies and videos that create more social comparison, social pressure, and negative peer interactions with teens measuring their self-worth—or lack of—in likes and followers CDC, 2023; Haidt, 2024
During 2021 → Teen girls' cortex shrunk 4.2 years; boys 1.4

The Social Media Epidemic of Teen Dispair

2021 CDC Report: Marked Increases in Misery

- **In 2021, nearly 1 in 3 teen girls seriously considered suicide → up from 19% in 2011** Twenge et al, 2021
- **13% of teen girls report attempting suicide in past year**
- **A record 14% of teen girls report being raped in the past year → an increase of 27% since 2019**
- **COVID-19 pandemic didn't help** → a decrease in face-to-face social interactions and increased habitual use of texting, social media, and "doomscrolling" on the internet
- **Social media has ushered in an era of a phone-based childhood with addictive smart phone use taking the place of sleep and in-person play and socializing**
- Teens with limited impulse control now spend hours a day studying the posts and videos of celebrities, friends, and strangers, setting up poisonous habits in 13-year-old brains

The Social Media Epidemic of Teen Despair

"Don't waste the rest of your time here worrying about other people—unless it affects the common good. It will keep you from doing anything useful. You'll be too preoccupied with what so-and-so is doing, and why, and what they're saying, and what they're thinking, and what they're up to, and all the other things that throw you off and keep you from focusing on your own mind." – Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor, 170 CE

- **Media sources of paralyzing anxiety** → teens are habitually on social media and constantly comparing themselves to others and responding to their "likes", criticisms, and unrealistic comparisons and expectations
- **"Whatever its root causes, this epidemic of teenage hopelessness should be considered a national crisis. Modern internet culture and its emphasis on physical beauty, conflict, criticism, and catastrophizing has become toxic for teens."** -- Derek Thompson

Social Media: Happiness Killer?

- **In 2005, only 5% of Americans used social media daily**
- **Now, 75% of Americans and 93% of teenagers are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc. every day**
- **KNOW** → Research shows that people on social media do NOT experience high levels of happiness but instead feel jealous, annoyed, and unhappy a lot of the time
- Many messages posted online can lead to negative feedback that can be damaging to self-esteem
- While these sites can entertain and help some people feel a sense of connection, many studies have linked excessive social media use to increased social isolation, stress, anxiety, and depression APA, 2023; CDC, 2023; Twenge, 2022
- **Studies since 2010 have shown that increased time on social media—especially by teenagers—is associated with lower levels of happiness** Twenge et al, 2020; Haidt, 2024

Social Media: Happiness Killer?

- **Researchers at the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark** had half of 1,000 Facebook users refrain from using for a week while the other half continued → those who took the break reported being happier and more satisfied with life with better social lives and ability to concentrate than continued Facebook users
- **Teens** → A large U. S. study of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders found the happiest teens spent more facetime with friends while the least happy spent more time on the internet
- **Studies** → amount of time spent on social media has less of an influence on mental state than *number of sites that are frequented and the emotional investment for them*
- **Study** → in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, **young adults** who use 7 to 11 social media sites had more than 3 times the risk for depression as those using 2 or less

2010-2020: Impact of Smartphones on Teens

- **Adolescents** → As the amount of time spent on digital media increased and time spent in social interactions and sleep decreased from 2010-2020, happiness declined and loneliness increased Twenge et al, 2021
- **KNOW** → Girls spending 5 or more hours a day on social media: 3 times the rate of depression than non-users
- **KNOW** → Activities related to smartphones and digital media are linked to lower happiness while those not involving technology (e.g., attending religious services, face-to-face social interactions, sports and exercise, volunteer activities, movies, and sleeping) are linked to higher levels of happiness in many studies Haidt, 2024
- **KNOW** → Hyperfocus on angry negative media news is strongly correlated with higher levels of unhappiness
Sources: Allen & Vella, 2018; Booker et al, 2015; Lin et al, 2016; Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Kelly et al, 2019; Twenge et al, 2018.

Creating and Fueling Rage on Social Media

"Social media's incentives are changing the tone of our political conversations online. People learn to express more outrage over time because they are rewarded by the basic design of social media to stoke outrage." – William Brady, PhD

"In the internet age, the capacity for emotional contagion of anger has increased and anger crosses populations much more easily." – Aaron Balick, PhD

- Many online social media posts are laced with anger and moral outrage and seem to be increasing over time to match increasing levels of anger in across the world Walthers, 2022
- The infectious anger of Twitter mobs is all too familiar as one tweet goes viral and angry comments escalate Brady, 2021
- **2023 Gallup Global Emotions Report** of 150,000 interviews in 140 countries finds anger increasing over the last 6 years and much of it propagated by social media "anger contagion" along with a significant decline in reported happiness

What To Do About Child Smartphone Use

- Based on a growing body of research on childhood and adolescent brain development, Jonathan Haidt, PhD, in his 2024 book *The Anxious Generation*, makes four foundational recommendations for reducing the negative effect of smartphone/social media use and overparenting on children and adolescents:
 - No smartphones before high school
 - No social media use before age 16
 - Have phone-free schools
 - Have far more unsupervised play and childhood independence in "real world" activities

Why Current Misery in Young People?

Parental Overprotecting and Underprotecting?

- **Two significant changes in parenting children developed in 1990s to early 2000s which appear to have significant correlations with current high levels of teenage misery**
- **Overprotecting** → parents, schools, and other institutions began overprotecting children from “real world” failures and challenges to assure “safety” – blocking the ability to learn resilient coping skills from dealing with challenging real life direct experiences...so developed low resilience
- **Underprotecting** → a lack of protection from negative online encounters developed that has been particularly damaging to brain development during puberty and the adolescent years – **correlated with a marked lowering of happiness in teens connected to the unrestricted use of numerous social media platforms occurring after 2010**

TV-Watching and Happiness

Watching Over 4 Hours a Day is a Happiness-Killer

A study published in the November 3, 2023 *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* followed 473,000 adults ages 39 to 72 who were enrolled in the UK Biobank research project

- Compared to participants who watched TV for less than one hour per day, **those who watched four or more hours per day had a 28% higher risk of developing dementia and a 16% higher risk of developing Parkinson's disease**
- **Importantly for Happiness** → compared to those watching less than 4 hours of TV each day, those watching over 4 hours of TV per day were 35% more likely to develop depression and showed markedly lower levels of happiness
- **Also** → **moderate** computer usage (30-60 minutes per day) was associated with less depression and higher happiness

Happiness, Well-Being, & Health

- **KNOW** → The World Health Organization has determined that happiness is an essential component of mental and physical health, concluding that, *“the influence of subjective well-being on health and all-cause mortality is clear and compelling.”*
- **In order to have significant positive effects on health and longevity** → (1) **positive emotions** must be produced in the long-term along with high levels of core belief-created life satisfaction and over well-being and (2) **resilient stress management skills** need to be learned to manage negative emotions, stress, anxiety, and depression—all of which are connected to risk for major illnesses and all of the top 10 causes of death that kill 4 out of 5 Americans every year
- **KNOW** → **positive emotions, high life satisfaction, and well-being are all linked to better health and longer lives**

Happiness, Immunity, & Health

Happy People Survive Illnesses Better

Back in 2003, Carnegie Mellon researcher Sheldon Cohen and a team of medical and psychological professionals sequestered a group of study participants on a floor of a Pennsylvania hotel for a week

- Before the study, they were thoroughly screened for health issues and tested on their level of happiness
- In the first day, they were infected with cold and flu viruses
- Each day, they were closely monitored by medical personnel and samples of nasal discharge and other symptoms were carefully measured
- **Results:** **Happiest people before the study had stronger immune systems with (1) fewer runny noses, (2) less congestion and sneezing, (3) less mucus produced, and (4) faster recoveries from illness** Cohen et al, 2003

Happiness, Well-Being, & Health

- **Often, strong negative emotions can override positive emotions (for survival)** → plays a causative role in more smoking, excessive drinking, not exercising, and eating an unhealthy diet—all of which contribute to the number one cause of death for Americans: **heart disease**
 - In one study, unhappy people produced 12 times the blood levels of fibrinogen—an essential element of blood clotting—as did happy people → resulting in a markedly *higher risk of heart attacks* in the unhappiest
- **Positive Emotions = Wellness:** A review of 22 studies in *Psychosomatics* found three measures of happiness—**positive affect, well-being, and resilience**—helped people with diabetes to better care for themselves and live longer with *lower blood sugar and death rates* → they were more likely to stick to healthy diet and exercise plans Siegel, 2022

Happiness, Health, & Longevity

- **Happy People:** exercise more, sleep better, eat healthier diets, have better supportive relationships, and have better resilient coping skills → Which all benefit health
- **Many Studies** → compared to individuals with low happiness, the happiest people have lower blood pressure, lower risk of heart attack and stroke, a stronger immune system, lower risk of injuries and frailty, & **longer lifespans**
- 6-year Duke Medical School study published in the August, 2018 journal *Age and Ageing* following 4,478 people → found that the likelihood of dying from any cause was 19% lower for the happiest older people
- 2015 national U. S. General Social Survey National Death Survey → the risk of death in the follow-up period was 6% for the happiest and 14% for the unhappiest

Sources: Chei et al, 2018; Liu, 2016; Lawrence et al, 2015; WHO, 2022.

Happiness, Health, and Longevity

- **Life Expectancy** → 8-year UK study of 9,000 in their 60s found 29% death rate for unhappiest and 9% of happiest
- In 1930s, 180 incoming Catholic nuns (average age 22) completed a one-age autobiography as part of their initiation into American School Sisters of Notre Dame Danner et al, 2001
 - 65 years later, researchers counted the number of positive words in each nun's autobiography
 - By age 85, 90% of the nuns with the most positive words in their autobiography were still alive compared to 34% of those with the least positive words
 - Positive nuns lived **10 years longer** than the negative
- **Unhappy people are more likely to die young** → at higher risk for cardiovascular, immune, and endocrine disorders comprising a high percentage of early deaths Diener et al, 2017

Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- **HAPPINESS CREATES GOOD HEALTH HABITS**
 - **Several positive health habits have been linked to increased happiness:**
 - People who get regular, restful **sleep** (42% of U. S. don't) have higher levels of emotional well-being
 - **Exercise**, of course, raises levels of pleasure-producing endorphins and enhances happiness
 - **Getting outside** in sunlight helps elevate positive feelings, stimulating serotonin
 - Practicing having **good upright posture; Smiling more and not frowning** helps, too
 - Eating a plant-based **Psychobiotic Food Pyramid Diet** with **fatty fish** like salmon that have high levels of omega-3 PUFAs (enhances gut microbiota)

Part VII: Some Common Myths about Happiness

“Many people do not have a clue about what really makes them happy.”

– Michael Howard, PhD

Common Myths about Happiness

People Often Do Not Know What Makes Them Happy

“Nothing in life is as joy-producing or as misery-inducing as we think it is.” – Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

- Research shows that it's difficult for people to predict what will actually make them happy—or unhappy
- When we imagine the future, this is often flavored by how we feel at the moment, which alters how we will feel in the future and makes for inaccurate predictions
- Many of us **WAIT** for happiness → believing if we are not happy now, we will be when that right job comes along or we find the right romantic partner or we get that house and a couple of kids—others predict gloom and doom
- **Research:** Many of our predictions of what will make us happy are not accurate and often hugely wrong

Three Major Myths of Happiness

“Life is so constructed that the event does not, cannot, will not, match the expectation.” -- Charlotte Bronte

- Sonja Lyubomirsky, in *The Myths of Happiness*, outlines three major myths many people believe will give them happiness but research shows are not accurate
 - **Myth number one** is *“happiness must be found”* (it's just out of reach and that true love or great job will get it)
 - **Myth number two** is *“happiness lies in changing our circumstances”* (the “I will be happy IF _____” and “I will be happy WHEN _____” core beliefs that we will be happy only if and when something happens in our lives)
 - **Myth number three** about happiness is *“you either have it or you don't”* (the notion that we are born happy or unhappy and can't do anything about it)

Source: Lyubomirsky, 2014

Myth: Our Job Makes Us Happy

• ARE THERE HAPPIEST/UNHAPPIEST JOBS?

“To be happy is to work and to love.” – Sigmund Freud

“Researchers who have looked for clear relationships between job satisfaction and the actual type of job one holds have overwhelmingly struck out. Professional preferences about their jobs vary wildly among individuals and what makes one person jubilant strikes another as borderline torture.” – Arthur C. Brooks, PhD, Harvard University

- Little effect from salaries, titles, prestige, and sector
- **General Higher Job Satisfaction** → where the employees' values line up with the values of the company and there is recognition, work-life balance, and less egotistical leadership Brooks, 2022; INC., 2022
- **Low Job Satisfaction** → high turnover Charles-Leija, 2023

Beliefs of Worker = Happy Jobs

“The difference between the happiest and unhappiest workers is: their core beliefs about their work.” – Michael Howard, PhD

- Diener and Diener (2008) found **three major core beliefs** people have about their job: (1) it's a **job**, (2) it's a **career**, or (3) it's a **calling**—which has the highest level of happiness
- **Job** → (1) leisure is more important than work, (2) motivated by money, (3) would not recommend the work unless required, (4) look forward to quitting time, (5) does what is told, and (6) works hard for monetary incentives
- **Career** → (1) some enjoyment from work, (2) motivated by advancement, (3) may recommend the work, (4) thinks a lot about vacations, (5) takes initiative to impress supervisors, and (6) works hard for possible advancement
- **CALLING** → (1) enjoys work, (2) motivated by contributing, (3) recommends the work, (4) thinks about work when not working, (5) performing well is rewarding, and (6) finds job rewarding

Myth: Finding Passionate Love

- George Vaillant, in his long-term study of Harvard graduates, found a major input to happiness was having lots of people you love who love you back in return *Vaillant, 2003, 2008, 2012, 2012*
- **However** → formal studies and centuries of human experience clearly show that **passionate romantic love with a significant other**—with all its enchanting flirting and infatuation—**can be a fickle thing and sometimes result in a plunge into just the opposite of happiness – the depths of human misery**
- Usually, after a year or two, the flames of hot love die down into cooling embers, often characterized as **“falling out of love”**
 - Can result in abandoning that relationship in search of another to re-kindle the hot passion, often resulting in multiple unfulfilling relationships and marriages
- However, research shows that the stage after the passionate phase may be more fulfilling **“true love”**: **companionship**

Myth: Marriage and Living Together

- **MARRIAGE AND COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS**
 - NORC found 40% of married couples “very happy” compared to 25% of never-married
 - Although many people believe marriage will be a source of happiness, the Happiness Twins Study found marital status to be only 1% of happiness
 - Studies of moment-to-moment happiness show generally lower results than overall ratings
 - Married men are usually happier than married women
 - Marriage not for everyone → divorce rate is 50% and divorced people can be very unhappy, especially men
 - Marriage has changed with greater expectations
 - **KNOW** → happiness boost from marriage lasts about two years and returns to baseline in a lot of studies

Myth: Marriage and Living Together

- **MARRIAGE AND COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS**
 - **KNOW** → Although a number of studies indicated married individuals are happier than singles, this overlooks the fact that: **happy people are more likely to get married in the first place**
 - **SO** → marital bliss may be less the product of a perfect union than being composed of two people who were happier to begin with
 - **KNOW** → Richard Lucas measured happiness in several thousand people across many years of their lives and found: **married people were about as happy as they were before the marriage—except for a brief one- to two-year spike in happiness right after the marriage that then fell to pre-marriage levels (Hedonic Adaptation)** *Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2005*

Myth: Marriage and Living Together

- **MARRIAGE AND COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS**
 - Current evidence → married people are generally happier than those who are just cohabiting
 - Numerous studies → in general, individuals in stable marriages are happier, healthier, and longer-lived
 - **BUT** → 40% of U. S. adults are single, widowed, or divorced and many of these individuals have also found happiness without being married Oh, Chopik, & Lucas, 2022
 - Of course, individual marriages differ significantly and much depends on the “match” between the two people
 - **AND:** marital relationships evolve with time → as we age and mature, sometimes things that held two people together earlier are no longer viable – sex and romance can evolve into companionship Sources: Whisman Gilmour, & Salinger, 2018; Waldinger & Shultz, 2023; Diener & Diener, 2008.

Myth: Having Children

- **HAVING CHILDREN: CONFUSING SCIENCE**
 - Many people believe having children will make them happy and a birth is viewed as a joyful event **BUT** day-to-day care can be stressful and cause marital strife
 - Daniel Kahneman found childrearing ranks low on the list of what makes mothers happy—they said they were happier eating, exercising, shopping, napping, & watching TV than they were spending time with their children (but they had the core belief: “*Raising children is greatest joy*”)
 - A review of 100 studies → found couples had a permanent moderate decline in marital satisfaction after 1st child that typically lasted until the last child leaves home
 - A large Princeton study found having children has an overall small negative effect on parental happiness
 - Parenthood → fathers are generally happier than mothers

Myth: Owning a Home

- **DOES HOME OWNERSHIP BRING EXPECTED LEVELS OF LASTING HAPPINESS?**
 - For many years, a widely-accepted part of the “American Dream” has been: a lot more happiness is to be found in finally be able to own a home **BUT**, contrary to popular belief, homeowners do not show the expected lasting happiness boost from buying and owning a home Odermatt & Stutzer, 2022
 - **Hedonic adaptation** reduces the first flush of happiness of home ownership in the first few years
 - **Studies** → Homeowners derive more pain and worry from their homes, spend more time on housework, spend less time with their friends and neighbors, and homeowners are generally less happy than renters

Myths: Attractiveness & Possessions

- **MORE PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS**
 - Most people believe they would be happier if they were more physically attractive with fewer faults
 - **Studies:** after having successful cosmetic surgery or weight loss that makes people feel more attractive, people soon revert back to previous happiness levels
- **MORE MATERIAL POSSESSIONS & WEALTH**
 - “Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.” – Epictetus, Greek Stoic Philosopher
 - **Studies:** acquiring more & more material possessions and wealth does not make people happier
 - Instead of buying *things*, purchasing things involving *experiences* like dinner out, vacations, and concerts that don’t last long but actually create the most lasting happiness in most people Lyubomirsky, 2014

Myths: Attractiveness & Possessions

- **MORE MATERIAL POSSESSIONS & WEALTH (Cont'd)**
"He who is not content with what he has will not be content with what he would like to have." -- Socrates
 - Material possessions are largely purchased by income
 - Psychologists Wendy Johnson and Robert Krueger studied incomes, material possessions, and happiness of identical twins – to control for genetic influences
 - The amount of income or possessions that individuals had only modestly predicted happiness
 - Some people with a lot of possessions, including money, could not meet their desires and were generally unhappy while others with few possessions were generally very happy
 - So → that brings us to a famous formula regarding possessions/attainments and aspirations/desires:

Myths: Attractiveness & Possessions

- **MORE MATERIAL POSSESSIONS & WEALTH (Cont'd)**
What we have (possessions/attainments)
HAPPINESS = What we want (aspirations/desires)
 - What matters for happiness → is that your income and possessions are sufficient to attain your desires
 - The bulk of the happiness research finds that, in general, those with more money and possessions are happier than those with less → **BUT NOT ALWAYS!**
 - KNOW → Whether possessions are equal to or exceed what we want it the key → explains why some poor people are significantly happier than some rich people
 - KNOW → Helps explain why, although possessions and incomes have dramatically increased since World War II, people are **not** any happier → as we have become more affluent, desires have escalated as well—**wanting more**

Myth: Making A Lot More Money

- **MAKING MORE MONEY**
 - To be sure, a lot of our daily lives revolves around acquiring and spending money
 - Much of our daily lives in adulthood is spent earning money → plus, a lot of time is spent *managing* the money: trying to accumulate money and increase wealth, saving money for acquisitions and vacations, creating and keeping budgets, going to the bank, writing checks, paying bills, comparing salaries to others, paying taxes, arguing with significant others over finances, using credit cards, and admiring and envying people who are extremely wealthy
 - Making money can be more important than spending it
 - KNOW: Despite how useful money is, people generally have a complicated love-hate relationship with money

Myth: Making A Lot More Money

- (In US: 18% make \$100,000+; <1% make \$500,000+)
 - Recent research by Matthew Killingsworth of Wharton School at University of Pennsylvania following 33,000 Americans found → money has a modest impact on happiness at any income level **BUT** above \$80,000 a year, dollar increases have a diminishing effect
 - In US: Low socioeconomic class is unhappier *Twenge, 2022*
 - **Wealthier people need a bigger raise to get the same boost in happiness** → it takes a doubling of salary from \$100,000 to \$200,000 to get the same happiness boost as doubling \$25,000 to \$50,000 *Killingsworth et al, 2018*
 - KNOW → Higher earners are generally happier because they believe that they have more **control** over their lives **BUT** as income rises, people spend more time at work and feel more pressed for time— they **WANT MORE** *Siegel, 2022*

Myth: Making A Lot More Money

• MAKING MORE MONEY

"Just when the ends meet, someone moves the ends." -- Hoover

- Household Income of "Very Happy" → \$100,000 or more 58%; \$40,000-\$99,000 43%; Less than \$40,000 39%
- Happiness Twin Study: income level <2% of happiness
- Study of 22 lottery winners: In 2 years, they were just above baseline level of happiness *Brickman, 1978, JPSP*
- Once we make more money, we adapt very quickly to it—and want more money → U. S. income & economic status tripled in last 50 years from 1960 to 2010 but life satisfaction was unchanged until 2010 → then declined
- More money brings more responsibility & complexity and we compare ourselves to others—H. L. Mencken said, *"The happy man is one who earns \$100 more than his wife's sister's husband."*

Myth: MORE and MORE Choices

Does Having More of Them Make Us Happy?

- When asked, most Americans say that they want more choices about everything—cars, pizzas, homes, etc.
- Although it seems counterintuitive, research shows having more choices with an abundance of possible decisions actually weighs us down and decreases level of happiness
- Having some choices is good, but up to a point → the more choices we have: (a) the harder it is to make them, (b) the more time we spend on the quandary of making them, and (c) the more regret we have afterward about the choice that we finally did make *Source: Schwartz et al, 2002.*
- Making many choices can be mentally exhausting → *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* Study found more shopping choices impaired attention and the ability to do simple arithmetic problems (2 to 4 choices was optimal)

Myth: MORE and MORE Choices

Two Choosers: Maximizers and Satisficers

- Maximizers → "perfectionists" who do not want to settle for second best and exhaustively evaluate all available choices for the *absolute best deal possible* before making a decision
- Satisficers → have standards for what they want in a given circumstance and, as soon a choice meets those standards, they make the decision and feel good about it
- KNOW → Maximizers may make the best comparable choices BUT DO NOT achieve the highest level of satisfaction and happiness → College graduates were rated as maximizers or satisficers as they job searched:
 - Results 2 Years Later: Maximizers found jobs making 20% more money than satisficers, BUT maximizers had more negative emotions, less job satisfaction, and less overall happiness than satisfiers

Myth: Younger are Happier

- IS HAPPINESS FOUND IN THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH?
 - NOW in the United States → Studies show "U-Shaped" Curve of Happiness: where people (1) start out reasonably happy in childhood, but then (2) have a significant fall in happiness in their teens that stays fairly low in the 20s-40s before (3) having an increase in over-50 happiness in their older years if healthy, independent living, and cohabiting with someone
 - Teen years can be miserable for many, especially girls
 - A Gallup Poll of more than 340,000 Americans → found that happiness grows with each decade after the 50s until it peaks in the 70s to mid-80s
 - Of course, health problems, disability, and losses can decrease happiness for some older people, including a drop for some just before death

Happiness Across the Life Span

The “U-Shaped” Curve of Happiness

- **The U-Shaped Curve of Happiness** remains when you control for factors like birth cohort, physical health, income, number of children, marital status, & education
- The happiness curve is pervasive in most high-income countries but is not universal → some Eastern European countries have lower happiness in childhood that steadily deteriorates throughout the lifespan
- Is found in both sexes, although men report slightly more happiness than women (although women smile more)
- **NOW in U. S.** → A sharp decline begins in adolescence

Sources: Twenge et al, 2018, 2019; Blanchflower, 2021; Blanchflower & Oswald, 2019; Galambos et al, 2020; Bardo, 2017; Bauer et al, 2017; Cheng, Powdthavee, & Oswald, 2015; Graham & Pozuelo, 2017; Grover & Helliwell, 2019; Hellevik, 2017; Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2018; Kolosnitsyna, Khorkina, & Dorzhiev, 2017; Laaksonen, 2018.

Happiness Across the Life Span

The “U-Shaped” Curve of Happiness

Childhood

- Often have high levels of happiness due to having needs of freedom, fun, and belonging satisfied → If frustrated in these needs and are overly managed, scheduled, and controlled, they feel their freedom is deprived and are often frustrated, unhappy, and angry
- Increased freedom must have limits, but children who cope with new challenges and learn to take risks and learn from their mistakes **develop resilience and increase happiness**
- **KNOW** → Children who connect with their families and friends in face-to-face contacts, have a core belief of belongingness, and have support groups often have the highest levels of measured happiness on several scales

Happiness Across the Life Span

Recent Sharp Decline in Adolescent Happiness

Adolescents

- **Happiness:** is often linked to the quality of interactions with peers and greater involvement in face-to-face contacts → social events, sports, volunteering, religious services, and even going to movies with friends – and getting good sleep
- **KNOW** → Since 2010, happiness has markedly declined in teens, especially girls, reaching dramatic lows in 2022
- Being alone, listening to music on earbuds (i.e., “Don’t try to talk to me!”), and time online are linked to **less happiness** in numerous studies → recent sharp declines in adolescent happiness have been linked to **increased smart phone and other digital media use** Twenge et al, 2018, 2020
- Adolescent happiness has dramatically fallen since 2010 with **higher social media use & loneliness** Twenge, 2021

Happiness Across the Life Span

The “U-Shaped” Curve of Happiness

Adults

- **Happiness is relatively low in early adulthood** → begin working, often raising families, dealing with financial issues, and dealing with effects of unfulfilled childhood dreams
- **There is a significant slump in happiness in the 40s** → 2020 research study by National Bureau of Economic Research following 500,000 people in 132 countries found the lowest levels of happiness occurred at age 48.2 in developing countries and 47.2 in high-income countries
- **A subsequent increase in happiness begins in the 50s** → is often related to greater financial security, children raised and leaving home, appreciation of accomplishments, and a increased sense of realism and contentment to enjoy life as it is, day to day Source: Blanchflower, NBER, 2020.

Happiness Across the Life Span

The “U-Shaped” Curve of Happiness?

“I hope I die before I get old.” Pete Townsend, The Who, 1965

Older Adults

- **KNOW:** Happiness generally increases in older age, starting in 50s and peaking in the 70s and 80s, especially in those healthy, living independently, and cohabiting
- Much of this increasing happiness in older age has been attributed to → **meaningful relationships, purpose-driven goals, and things like volunteer work helping others**
- While younger adults often crave novelty and adventure, older adults tend to appreciate smaller moments of joy such as a visit from an old friend or a delicious meal
- However, there is often a dip in happiness in the last year or so of life, especially if there are declining health issues

Old People Are More Positive Than Young

- Research shows older adults generally enjoy better emotional well-being and higher levels of positive emotions like happiness, calmness, and serenity than younger and middle-aged adults → **plus fewer negative emotions such as anger, irritability, and sadness**
- Laura Carstensen of Stanford → **“Foreshortened Horizons”**: where older individuals realize they only have so many years left and do not want to spend that time being unhappy, so more positive cognitive appraisals
- The **“aging paradox”** has limits → recent research shows more negative emotions reported just before death in those with health declines—but those in good health were more positive and often happy Schilling et al, 2018; Beng et al, 2022.
- **Loneliness** → can be a major problem in older adults

Loneliness: An Elderly Happiness Killer

“It’s hard to put a price tag on the amount of human suffering that people are experiencing right now from loneliness. In the past few decades we’ve just lived through a dramatic pace of change. We move more, change jobs more, and are living with technology that has profoundly changed how we interact and talk with each other.” – Surgeon General Vivek Murthy

- The U. S. Surgeon General released a 2023 report *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* showing that 53% of older U. S. adults are experiencing measurable levels of loneliness → **correlated with high levels of depression**
Lee et al, 2020; Robb et al, 2020; Williams-Farrelly, et al, 2024
- **Loneliness** → often is difference between an individual’s desired and actual social contacts—can be big difference
- **Loneliness and Low Happiness** → numerous studies show loneliness is correlated with unhappiness AND: *in teens, is linked to high levels of social media use*

Loneliness: An Elderly Happiness Killer

“Loneliness is more than a feeling. It is a significant biopsychosocial stressor and linked to chronic physical and mental health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, hypertension, Alzheimer’s disease, all-cause mortality, anxiety, depression, poor quality of life, and unhappiness.”

– Monica Williams-Farrelly, PhD

- **Older Americans with high levels of loneliness: have a risk for premature death comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day!** → a 29% increased risk of heart disease, 32% increased risk of stroke, and 50% increased risk of developing dementia Williams-Farrelly, et al, 2024
- **Loneliness is correlated with longevity** → the famous 1979 Alameda County Study found those who had the fewest social relationships died nearly 3 years earlier than those with the most social contacts Sources: Berkman and Syme, 1979; Holt-Lunstad et al, 2017; Petitte et al, 2015

Myth: You Can't "Catch" Happiness

"Happiness never decreases by being shared." – The Buddha

"A key to happiness is to keep company only with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best." – Epictetus

- **Actually, Happiness IS Contagious!** → when someone becomes happier, people around them increase in their level of happiness, too Matteson et al, 2013; Matsunaga, 2017
- A *BMJ* study following participants in the Framingham Heart Study showed that when people became happy, their nearby friends experienced a 25% greater chance of becoming happy and their next-door neighbors had a 34% increase
- **It helps to surround ourselves with optimistic and happy people who are positive, confident, and encouraging**
- **Under adverse circumstances, people are best able to maintain their own happiness and be resilient when others around them are doing the same**

MYTH: Lasting Happiness Comes When Good Things Happen to Us and Lasting Misery When Bad Things Happen

"Bad things don't affect people as profoundly as they expect them to. That's true of good things, too. People adapt remarkably quickly to either." – Daniel Gilbert, PhD

- **Many life decisions—some of them not so good—are based on these predictions of what we think will make us happy or unhappy → Which are usually inaccurate!**
- **We overestimate how long a negative event like getting fired from a cherished job will throw us into despair and also overestimate how a positive event like getting a cherished job will make us ecstatically happy → Most people adapt remarkably quickly to either one, called *Hedonic Adaptation***

Myth: Good Things KEEP Us Happy

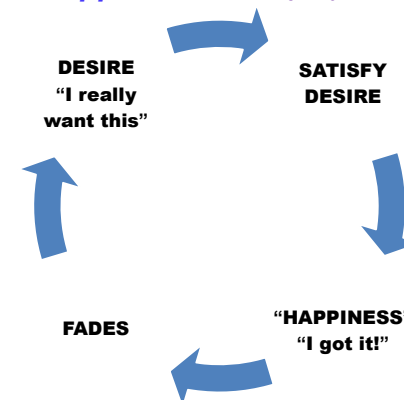
"Nothing in life is as joy-producing or as misery-inducing as we think it is." – Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

"Glory is fleeting." – Whispered by slave to the ear of a Roman conqueror marching triumphantly through Rome

- **We also tend to overestimate the pleasure they will get from having more and more of what they want → we are seldom satisfied for long after we get what we want**
- **Hedonic Adaptation Studies** → positive life events like making new friends, getting married, getting a new job or promotion, buying a home, or even winning the lottery only briefly increase the level of happiness – people are usually back to baseline in three months to two years
- **Several Studies** → Big money lottery winners in the U. S. typically return to their pre-lottery happiness baseline within two years or so after winning huge money prizes

The Hedonistic Treadmill

"Hedonic Adaptation can be the enemy of long-term happiness." – Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD



Myth: Bad Things KEEP Us Unhappy

- Humans overestimate how negative events will make them unhappy and adapt quickly, which has helped us survive ice ages, plagues, famines, and wars—resilient
- **A positive side to Hedonic Adaptation** → the capacity to adjust quickly to negative life events has fueled a lot of human progress, promoted resilience, protected us from being overwhelmed by powerful sadness, and allowed us to adapt quickly to negative changes in the environment
 - People quadriplegic in accidents adjusted rather quickly and their level of happiness in two years → back at the level before the disabling injury [Brickman et al, 1978](#)
 - Most people recover after relationship breakups and get back to baseline happiness [Sources: Ashton-James & Chemke-Dreyfus, 2019; Gilbert, 2007; Headly & Wearing, 1989; Sheldon & Lucas, 2016; Suh, Diener, and Fujita, 1996.](#)

Myth: Good Things Last Longer Than Bad

People React Differently to Negative and Positive Events

- **Positive Life Events Have Short-Term Effects** → getting married initially boosted happiness for the first two years BUT then happiness tended to decline back to the prior level of happiness before to the marriage
- **Certain Negative Life Events (e.g., divorce, death of a spouse, unemployment) Can Lead to Longer Declines in Happiness with Delayed Hedonic Adaptation** → even years later, some people may not have recovered back to their baseline of happiness: *why resilience is important!*
- **Negativity Seems to be a Bit More Long-Lasting** → Studies of ordinary circumstances (i.e., a typical “good” or “bad” day): feeling lousy on a “bad” day tended to carry over into the next day but positive feelings on a “good” day did not (may have evolutionary importance) [Siegel, 2022](#)

SO: Minimize Bad and Maximize Good

- **KNOW** → Lyubomirsky, Larsen, Prizmic, Diener, and other happiness researchers believe: hedonic adaptation is a built-in barrier to happiness that must be overcome to some degree
- A number of exercises have been developed to help slow the return to the happiness set point after positive and rewarding things happen →
 - **This generally involves:** (1) adjusting to and reducing/eliminating negative emotions quickly and (2) slowing down hedonic adaptation and maintaining positive emotions for longer periods of time → some studies show that the happiest people are skilled at using both strategies

NOTE: Keeping a “Gratitude Journal” can help

[Lyubomirsky, 2014; Larsen and Prizmic, 2008; Siegel, 2022; Yoke, 2015.](#)

Myth: Conditional Self-Esteem Lasts

- **CONDITIONAL SELF-ESTEEM IS LONG-LASTING**
 - Amazon lists over 40,000 books on how to boost self-esteem by creating indestructible self-confidence and ascending into the upper 1% of the successful
 - **BUT** → research shows enduring happiness is found more among the ordinary, not being better than others
 - **We often compare ourselves to others:** feeling good when we are on top and bad when on the bottom—called *conditional self-esteem* → since 2010, social media has greatly exacerbated this phenomenon
 - **BUT, any positive effect is usually short-lived** → and longer-lived negative emotions like sadness and shame can come from inadequate comparisons and failures
 - **WHY?** Instead of internal self-satisfaction, well-being and happiness are based on comparisons with others

Part VIII:

Achieving Happiness, Life Satisfaction, and Well-Being: How to Do It

“Most folks are usually about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” – Abraham Lincoln

What DOES Make Us Happy?

“It’s a hell of a start, being able to recognize what makes you happy.” – Lucille Ball

- A major key to achieving happiness is to know what actually makes you happy
- This often takes some work, since, as previously shown, many people don’t have a clear idea of what really makes them happy
- In 2005, Lyubomirsky, Diener, and King reviewed over 200 studies on subjective well-being and found → the happiest people who experienced the most positive emotions (a) had better marriages, (b) had more fulfilling friendships and social relationships, (c) had better coping skills, (d) were more satisfied with their jobs, and (e) generally had higher incomes – but, as will be seen, it’s complicated

Happiness: 40% is PATEM

The 40% Solution to Happiness

“The key to happiness lies not in changing our genetic makeup (which is impossible) and not changing our circumstances (i.e., seeking wealth or attractiveness or better colleagues, which is usually impractical), but in our daily intentional activities.” -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

- The antithesis of Maslow’s self-actualization pyramid → happiness comes from everyday behaviors & not a goal
- 40% of happiness is our PATEM-produced behavior
- Happiness researchers have concluded → all of us could be a great deal happier if we scrutinized carefully what precise cognitive appraisals and resulting behaviors that very happy people habitually engage in
- Happiness researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky found very happy people have 8 common PATEM behavioral habits:

Happiness and Well-Being

The 8 Things Very Happy People Do

- Show **resilience** in coping in the face of challenges.
- Devote a great deal of time to their family and friends, nurturing and enjoying their **relationships**.
- Are often the first to offer helping hands to coworkers and passersby in **random acts of kindness**.
- **Savor** life’s pleasures and **engage mindfully** in the moment.
- Are comfortable expressing **gratitude** for all they have.
- **Forgive others and yourself, accepting yourself as OK.**
- Are **committed** to lifelong **goals** and **accomplishments** and have strong core beliefs about **meaning** and **purpose** of life.
- **Exercise** regularly and practice **healthy lifestyle** habits.
- Practice **optimism** when imagining future outcomes.

Sources: Haidt, 2024; Paulson et al, 2016; Jackson, 2021; Diener, 1984, 1994; Diener and Diener, 1996 2008; Lyubomirsky 2007, 2014

Be a Resilient Stress Manager

“Recent research reveals that people who have experienced some adversity (for example, several negative events or life-changing moments) are ultimately happier (and less traumatized, stressed, or impaired) than those who have experienced no adversity at all.” – Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

“Interventions designed to increase happiness may benefit from the inclusion of activities to manage and cope with stress.” – Katherine Nelson, PhD

“Take care of the bad stuff to get the good stuff.” -- MH

- **Studies** → show that individuals who have developed and utilize resilient coping skills to manage the ongoing stressors of life under their control have higher levels of happiness and well-being than those who have not learned and practiced effective coping skills

Mutually Supportive Relationships

- **#1 for MOST: MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS**
 - May be the most important factor in predicting happiness, as happiness researcher Ed Diener notes, *“the most important characteristics shared by the 10% of students with the highest levels of happiness and the fewest signs of depression were their strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them.”*
 - **2019 National Opinion Research Center Study** found that people with 5 or more close friends are 50% more likely to describe themselves as “very happy” than those with smaller social circles → key: be responsive
 - **Harvard Study of Adult Development** → followed 268 Harvard sophomores from 1938 to the present (and 2,000 others) and found that social relationships mattered more than anything in predicting health, longevity, & happiness

Longest-Running Happiness Study **Biggest Predictor: Relationships**

The 85-year-old **Harvard Study of Adult Development** discovered that the strongest predicting long-term happiness and longer lives was **Mutually-Supportive Relationships**.

“Having reliable, emotionally supportive relationships is the most powerful factor in predicting long-term happiness. The quality of relationships is more important than the quantity. It's never too late. People can find love in their 70s and 80s. Loneliness can be as harmful to happiness and longevity as alcoholism and smoking. If you don't have people to help you weather the inevitable stresses that come along, the body stays in a low-level flight-or-fight mode, with higher levels of circulating stress hormones and higher levels of inflammation, and we know that those things gradually wear away many critical brain and body systems.” – Robert Waldinger, MD, PhD

Lack of Close Social Relationships

- Research studies show that social relationships have the power to influence physical and mental health
- Lack of social companionship is a problem in U. S. → 20-45% of adults over 60 experience frequent or intense loneliness, 30% of married couples report severe problems in relationships, and the size of the average American's social network has declined 33% since 1985
- Several studies in a special edition of the *American Psychologist* (2017, Vol. 72, No. 6) demonstrated that → **a lack of supportive social relationships over the lifespan significantly raised the risk of (1) unhappiness, (2) mental disorders like anxiety and depression; (3) chronic illnesses like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and ulcers; and (4) shortened life expectancies** Sources: Perissinotto et al, 2012; Whisman et al, 2008; Pew, 2009; Russek, 1997.

Real Relationships: A Key to Happiness

- **KNOW** → The happiness research contains numerous studies showing that the people are the happiest when they are in positive, warm, caring, accepting, and mutually supportive relationships with others in “real world” face-to-face situations, *NOT on social media*
- Many marital studies done on large groups have found that overall happiness in marriage peaks in the first two years and declines somewhat over time—and declines even further with the arrival of the first child
- **BUT** → recent studies show happiness in individual marital and cohabiting couples varies up and down significantly dependent upon ongoing fluctuating positive and negative experiences with spouses, children, other family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other situations Joiner et al, 2024

Mutually Supportive Relationships

- **#1 for MOST: MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS**
 - Research shows it's not the **number** of relationships you have (another reason to stop checking how many Facebook friends you have) but the **type** of relationships
 - **The Most Fulfilling** → long-term relationships that require effort and responsiveness to maintain
 - **The happiest people believe they are accepted rather than judged by their partners, friends, and family**
 - A study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed that couples who pursued “**flow**” kinds of immersion in leisure tasks together (e.g., sailing, hiking, learning a new skill, cooking, playing games, playing music, dancing, sex) had more positive beliefs about their relationship and more positive emotions for up to five hours after engaging in such activities

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

- **The long-term Harvard graduates study** → found that happiness was most dependent on the experience of having lots of people you love—who love you in return
- **But, exactly, what is love?**
- **Research studies have found that interpersonal love in dyad significant other relationships exists in three stages and often evolves through three stages:**
 - **Sexual and Lustful Attraction**
 - **Romantic Passionate Love**
 - **Compassionate Companionship Attachment**
- **These three stages exist for different reasons and are each powered by different motives, neurobiology, and behaviors** Sources: Bode & Kushnick, 2021; Edwards, 2024; Fehr, 2013, 2015; Fisher, 2004, 2010, 2016; Han et al, 2024; Mizrahi, 2022.

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

- **Sexual and Lustful Attraction**
 - Lust is driven by the desire for sexual gratification
 - This has an evolutionary basis in the need to reproduce and pass on genes that is shared by all species
 - High levels of lust helped produce high numbers of offspring needed to perpetuate the human species because of the high death rates in infants and young children that existed for much of the time humans have been on the planet → **causing brief, immediate pleasure**
 - The hypothalamus of the brain plays a big role in this, stimulating the production of the sex hormones testosterone and estrogen that drive sexual attraction
 - **Sex/Lust can be longstanding but often is brief and can exist with or without an actual loving relationship**

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

• Romantic Passionate Love

- Most of us have felt it when we encountered someone we felt was hugely attractive → stammering, hands sweating, saying ridiculous things, and feeling overwhelmed with the heart hammering in the chest
- Romantic passionate love involves a **powerful attraction or longing for union with another person** – often an enchanted state called being “**in love**” and “**smitten**” that can be hugely exhilarating and even all-consuming
- We can certainly lust for someone we are romantically attracted to but one can happen without the other
- Reward centers of the brain become hugely active in love
- **Romantic passionate love is related to sexual lust but there are big differences – and often doesn’t last**

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

• Romantic Passionate Love

- **In the brain, high levels of the brain neurotransmitters dopamine, norepinephrine, and endorphins are released during romantic attraction → excites reward pathways in the brain and make us euphoric, infatuated, energetic, and highly focused** (NOTE: the neurotransmitter serotonin is reduced, lowering appetite and powering focused and repetitive infatuation – close to the same neurobiological pattern seen in OCD)
- **Both lust and romantic love also down-regulate areas of the prefrontal cortex for critical thinking, self-awareness, and rational behavior → which may explain some of the behavioral difficulties of many individuals who are hugely lustful and smitten**

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

“There isn’t time, so brief is life, for bickerings, apologies, heartburnings, and callings to account. There is only time for loving, and but an instant, so to speak, for that.” – Mark Twain

• Romantic Love: The Agony and the Ecstasy

- **Total Eclipse of the Heart** → While romantic love can be linked to overwhelming peaks of ecstatic happiness, having difficulties with romantic love or the loss of it, according to Bonnie Tyler, can also be linked to the most wretched depths of human misery and unhappiness
- **The downside?** Romantic infatuation is usually time-limited to months to a couple of years and doesn’t last
- Many, accepting the “Hollywood” version, call this “*falling out of love*” and some go looking for the next infatuation
- **However, the next phase of love is typically happier**

The Mystery of Loving Relationships

• Compassionate Companionship Attachment

- **Compassionate companionship and attachment become the predominate focus of successful long-term relationships → and the highest long-term happiness**
- **While periods of lust and romantic attraction can be found in many long-term relationships, attachment also mediates friendship, parent-infant and later parent-child bonding, and other social bonding and intimacies**
- **Neurobiology of long-term companionship and attachment** → appears to be higher levels of the bonding hormones vasopressin and “cuddle hormone” oxytocin
- **When people evolve into companionship attachment** → they often make sacrifices for one another, doing things for the other because they know it makes their mate feel better

Random Acts of Kindness: **Is Giving Better than Getting?**

- **KNOW** → An integral part of the meaning of life is the concern for others outside one's own self and a desire to help reduce their suffering and improve their lives
- **Seligman: doing an act of kindness to another person produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being and happiness of any exercise ever tested**
- Two Japanese studies in *The Journal of Happiness Studies* found that students who tracked how many times they were kind to others each day rated themselves higher on happiness than those who did not
- A study in the journal *Social Science and Medicine* found that people who volunteer are happier than those who don't—as much as going from \$20K to \$75-100K salary

Random Acts of Kindness: **Is Giving Better than Getting?**

- **Spending money on others rather than oneself also increases happiness** → A *Science* study: employees who spent a greater proportion of a \$3,000 to \$8,000 profit-sharing bonus on others or made charitable contributions showed greater happiness than those who spent the money on themselves—and the link begins early in life
- A 2012 study in *PLOS One* → found that even 2-year olds who shared their treats were happier than those who kept them for themselves
- **Lyubomirsky and colleagues found that when people try to do three to five acts of kindness each day, they get 40% happier → just giving letting someone get in line ahead of you, giving a compliment, or just smiling can do it** Lyubomirsky, 2013; Lyubomirsky & Kurtz, 2013

Acts of Kindness: **Loving and Taking Care of Pets**

- Numerous studies have shown that loving and taking care of pets has a major boost on life satisfaction
- In 2015, researchers from the University of Kent in Great Britain surveyed 2,500 British households, asking how satisfied they were with their lives
 - Living with a cat or dog to cuddle and love was associated with a huge increase of 4 points on a life satisfaction scale of 1 to 7 – with 1 being miserable and 7 being perfectly content
 - The researchers found that it would take an average increased of \$90,000 in salary to achieve the same increase in life satisfaction that came from loving and caring for pets

Gmeiner & Gschwandtner, *Social Indicators Research*, Mar 31, 2015

Mindfulness: Savoring Pleasure & Flow

"I leave a little time in the morning to savor my showers. I go out of the way to buy the best gels and best scents." -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

"Do what you love and love what you do." – Michael Howard

- Many of us live by the theory that we have to constantly get things done and achieve goals while simultaneously getting ready for the next challenge in order to be successful and happy → As we are clearing things off the "to do" list we are already focused on the next ones
- **KNOW** → Research shows that constantly trying to get things done and focusing on the next thing actually prevents us from being happier Lyubomirsky, 2013
- **KNOW** → Slowing down and focusing on what is happening at the moment – **being mindfully focused on the present and not focusing on past and future things = happiness**

Mindfulness: A Path to Happiness

- **Mindfulness** → the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment and accepting it—both positive and negative aspects—without judgement
- **KNOW** → Savoring and Flow involve attending to and appreciating pleasurable sensations BUT: Mindfulness involves opening fully to both pleasant and unpleasant
- Mindfulness has its ancient roots in Buddhism BUT most religions include some type of prayer or meditation technique that helps shift your thoughts away from your usual preoccupations and worries toward an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life Siegel, 2022
- **KNOW** → Following Jon Kabat-Zinn's work in the 1970s, studies show that regularly practicing mindfulness is associated with higher levels of positive emotions, long-term life satisfaction, and subjective well-being

Mindfulness: A Path to Happiness

- **Practicing mindfulness meditation**—specific exercises designed to cultivate mindfulness—changes the brain in ways that *reduce stress and increase positive emotions and moods in children and adults* Dunning et al, 2019
- Back in 2003, Richard Davidson PhD showed the right prefrontal cortex was more active in negative emotions and the *left prefrontal cortex was more active in positive emotions*
- Tibetan monks who were experts at practicing mindfulness meditation consistently had dramatic left-sided brain activity
- **Significant Study** → a group of stressed-out high-tech office workers with high levels of negative emotions and strongly right-sided prefrontal brain activity were able, by practicing mindfulness meditation → *switched dominant brain activity to the left prefrontal cortex and reported more positive emotions*

Sources: Davidson et al, 2003; Gotink et al, 2016; Tang et al, 2019.

Basics of Mindfulness Practice

- **The Goal of Mindfulness Practices** → achieve a state of alert, focused, relaxed consciousness by deliberately paying attention to thoughts and sensations without passing judgment on them, focusing the mind on the present moment with an attitude of acceptance
- **Basic Mindfulness Practice**
 - Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing or the sounds around you
 - Allow thoughts to come and go without judgement but then repeatedly return your focus to breath and sounds
 - While sitting quietly, experiment with different ways of recognizing and focusing on the various things that are arise in your conscious awareness in the here and now → for example, various **sensations, sights, emotions, and urges**

Basics of Mindfulness Practice

- **Sensations** → Notice subtle itching or tingling and any other sensations in the body and let them come and go freely, without judgment
 - **Sights** → Notice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that come and go occur without judgment
 - **Emotions** → Allow emotions to be present without trying to hold onto them or push them away – sometimes naming them, e.g., “joy,” “anger,” or “sadness”
 - **Urges** → When feeling a craving or urge (e.g., to eat excess food, do an unwanted behavior, or submit to addictive cravings), acknowledge the urge and know it will pass; notice how your body feels as the urge arises, know there is no need to act on it, and notice it comes and goes
- NOTE:** Should focus be interrupted by intrusive thoughts, gently and lovingly return to chosen focus Siegel, 2022

When—And Why—Are We Happy?

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced “cheeks sent me high”), a Hungarian-born co-founder of positive psychology, invented a method of measuring an individual's ongoing level of happiness by the “**Experience Sampling Method**”

- **How?** Subjects were given beepers that went off several times a day and, at that time, they were to record (1) what they were doing at that particular moment and (2) how much they were enjoying doing it
- He discovered that there were two different kinds of enjoyable activities → (1) physical or bodily pleasure, e.g., mealtimes, sex, and spending time with others were often the most pleasurable but often **brief** in duration and (2) **total immersion in tasks that required skills to meet a challenge**, e.g., singing in a choir, painting, writing, or dancing that were pleasurable for **longer** periods of time

Savoring Pleasure

- **Savoring:** is placing your attention on pleasure as it occurs and consciously enjoying the experience as it unfolds → Most people are primed to experience pleasure of special moments like a wedding day, but everyday pleasures can often slip by without really savoring them
- Mindfully focusing on the present is not easy → Studies show U. S. adults spend only 50% of time in the present
- In a seminal 2006 study, Bryant and Veroff found that when tasks are done with undivided attention, they are done better and savored a lot more → Being completely into what we are doing markedly increases the enjoyment of it and brings with it an overall sense of pleasure, joy, self-satisfaction—and a more pervasive mood of overall happiness Sources: Bryan et al, 2022; Bryant, 2021; Bryant & Veroff, 2006; Bunkers, 2022; Klibert et al, 2022; Lyubomirsky, 2013; Villani, 2023

Savoring Pleasure

- **Doing things like:** (1) a single task at a time, (2) celebrating good moments, (3) slowing down to thoroughly appreciate each moment, (4) simplifying choices, (5) sharing an activity with others, (6) reminiscing and enjoying past cherished moments, and (7) planning and doing new and novel activities can all enhance savoring
- A recent *The Journal of Positive Psychology* study found that, when keeping diaries, those who savored and enjoyed a good thing and shared their delight with others maintained high levels of happiness no matter what the day brought—the non-savorers needed positive events to keep them happy
- **People focused on the present were the happiest—even if what they were doing was considered unpleasant!**
- **The Essence of Savoring** → Find what you love and immerse yourself to get maximum pleasure from it

Get In The “Flow”

- **It is especially hard to be mindful when multitasking**
- **Americans live in a world full of distractions that are only increasing in numbers:** televisions, radios, computers, think pads, and smart phones are constantly snatching our attention from things we are doing and it is only getting worse with smart watches and virtual-reality headsets
- **Studies** → Americans look at their smart phones 80 times a day and 10% of us do it up to 300 times a day!
- **Multitasking has become a way of life for many of us BUT** studies show that rapidly shifting attention between tasks leads to lower overall productivity, higher levels of stress, less ability to filter irrelevant information & more mistakes
- **KNOW** → The brain learns to be distracted and finds it harder to concentrate fully on what you are doing → a habit of thousands of intrusive thoughts every day

Get In The “Flow”

- Have you ever been so engrossed in what you were doing that all distractions, background chatter, and time seemed to fade away? Mikaly Csikszentmihalyi of Claremont Graduate University called that state of intense focusing **“Flow”** *(happens three times more in work tasks than leisure)*
- People using mindfulness-based attention-focusing techniques get into this state → like being **“in the zone”** experienced by many athletes who are hyper-focused, fully engaged, highly productive, and have great sports performances (it works for jobs and relationships, too)
- **Resisting mind-wandering, distractions, and multitasking has significant benefits** → **Forty years of studies show people who are mindfully-focused on the present without distractions have the highest levels of happiness and well-being** Csikszentmihalyi & Lebuda, 2017

Get In The “Flow”

A seminal 2010 Science study shows people are happiest → when focused on the present, “being here now” and experiencing “flow” to the fullest, rather than thinking about other things

- **People in “flow” immersion:** (1) lose awareness of time, (2) lose self-consciousness and don’t think about themselves or their emotions, (3) are not interrupted by extraneous thoughts or worries about control, (4) have clear feedback and goals in the moment but are not focused on the end result down the line, (5) are active and intrinsically involved in the task, doing it for its own sake, (6) work effortlessly, (7) enjoy it very much when thinking about it later, but were not aware of their pleasure while doing it, and (8) **feel satisfied, content, and happy afterward in both work and leisure activities** Peifer et al, 2022; Csikszentmihalyi & Lebuda, 2017

James Bond Came From The “Flow”

- Ian Fleming was the author of the 11 intriguing and trend-setting James Bond novels in the 1950s and 1960s upon which all of the later movies were based upon
- Fleming wrote the imaginative novels in a barren, mundane hotel room with no other stimuli to distract him, becoming deeply immersed in a “flow” state where his creative mind flourished → he called it “The Rule of Forced Boredom” because that environment forced him to focus on his writing
- In today’s world, brimming with incessant distractions, makes it very difficult for individuals to enter this “flow” immersion state
- In the modern world with constant exposure to alluring distractions, people become quickly conditioned to having their attention constantly diverted

“Flow” = Balance of Skills & Challenge

- **“Flow” Experiences** → **tend to maximally occur when there is a matching balance between the challenge of an activity and the skill you have in performing it**
- As Siegel (2022) notes → for an adult, playing a child’s card game that requires abilities far below the person’s skill set is not likely to be a “flow” experience BUT playing the next level on a video game you have partially mastered may be “flow”
- **High skill + low challenge = boredom – no “flow”**
- **Low skill + high challenge = overwhelmed – no “flow”**
- **“Flow” is more likely when the skill is just below the challenge** → when you are playing tennis with a well-matched opponent, practicing a piece on a musical instrument that is slightly better than the last one mastered, AND playing chess with a slightly more skillful opponent (in one study: more satisfying for both the winner and loser)

Getting in “Flow” at Work

“Be happy in your work!” – Japanese Colonel Saito to British prisoners of war in the film “The Bridge on the River Kwai”

- We spend most of our adult waking lives working, which, to many, doesn’t seem to be a place for increased “flow”
- **BUT → early research studies showed people are three times more likely to enter “flow” states at work than when doing leisure activities** Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989
 - This worked for managers, clerical staff, and blue collar workers
- **How To Do It: Make Your Work a “CALLING”**
 - Identify moments of pleasure at work and think and talk about your job in terms of enjoyment, challenge, and engagement rather than drudgery and obligation
 - Increase the challenge, skill, and accomplishment involved in tasks that ordinarily don’t result in flow, e.g., paperwork, filing, or assembly-line repetitive work

Less “Flow” In Leisure Tasks?

- **KNOW → Unfortunately, research findings show that very little of people’s leisure time is spent in “flow”**
- **Interestingly → driving** is the activity most likely to be a “flow” experience while **TV watching** was among the lowest
- **TV Watching – Not Much →** may be relaxing and a needed downtime, but most studies show it is not very satisfying
- **More “Flow” →** do leisure activities requiring skill but have challenge → sports, carpentry, artwork, music Siegel, 2022
- **Alternating leisure activities** between a mix of physical activities, social interactions, and hobbies that require a skill set or provide rich sensory experiences is more likely to lead to satisfying “flow” experiences Csikszentmihalyi, 2008
 - Pay attention to novel stimulation, choose activities with new feelings and experiences, focus on accomplishments, and **engage fully in supportive social relationships**

The Power of Gratitude

- **Gratitude →** a thankful appreciation for what you receive that acknowledges the good things in your life, whether they are tangible or intangible
- **Gratitude helps to (1)** recognize that the source of the good things in your life lies at least partially outside yourself and **(2)** connect to something larger than your individual experience, e.g., other people, nature, or a higher power
- **In positive psychology studies → gratitude** is strongly connected to higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction, including **(1)** having more positive emotions, **(2)** savoring more positive experiences, **(3)** having better health, **(4)** coping with stress during difficult times, and **(5)** developing and maintaining strong and supportive relationships

Sources: Aparacio et al, 2019; Cunha et al, 2019; Day, Robert, & Rafferty, 2020; Ding & Liu, 2022; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Siegel, 2022

The Power of Gratitude

- **People who are regularly grateful—acknowledging the goodness in their lives and appreciating the sources of it—are generally healthier and happier**
- **Gratitude experiences generally increases with age**
- **Studies show Americans are most grateful for (1)** families, **(2)** the freedoms of living in America, **(3)** good health, **(4)** close friends, and **(5)** the ability to practice the religion of choice NORC, 2022; Gallup, 2023
- **Experiencing gratitude is only half of the deal → you need to express it to others to get the full benefits,** which can be done either in writing or in person
- **Shared Gratitude →** a study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that when Partner A conveys appreciation for his/her Partner B, Partner B then develops a reciprocal higher level of appreciation for Partner A

The Power of Gratitude

How To Do It

- **Keep a “Happiness Journal” with Gratitude Statements**
 - A seminal 2003 study by Emmons and McCullough showed that people who keep a gratitude journal where they write down things they are grateful for each day were markedly happier and optimistic than people who wrote down daily hassles that displeased them
 - A 2022 study of over 65 who journaled gratitude found better cognitive function and less brain shrinkage
- **Write a Gratitude Letter**
 - Studies show you can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a gratitude letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person’s impact on your life → try to do it once a month and even send one to yourself

Forgive...and Forget

“Forgiveness acknowledges the wrong and helps you be free from it. It frees you from the offender as well, replacing ill will toward the offender with goodwill. When appropriate, forgiveness can lead to restored relationships, bringing happiness, satisfaction, and social support—which evidence also links to better health.” – Tyler VanderWeele, PhD

- A 2023 study on 4,600 adults in five different countries by VanderWeele and colleagues at the T. H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard University found **forgiveness boosts happiness and well-being** as well as reducing the risk to develop anxiety and depression
- Not forgiving yourself or someone who has wronged you often leads to being “stuck” in guilt, anger, and resentment → leading to damaging mental and physical health issues

Sources: Long et al, 2020; McCauley, Billingsley, & McCullough, 2022

Self-Forgiveness: Can Be Hard

“Genuine self-forgiveness needs to acknowledge the wrong, but in spite of the bad, you should want what’s good for you. And that may involve changing.” – Tyler VanderWeele, PhD

- Forgiving yourself can seem a little odd, but it’s a worthwhile effort → as with forgiving others, self-forgiveness is linked to less psychological distress, less depression, and **higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being**
- No matter how badly you’ve behaved, you’re in a relationship with yourself that deserves respect and compassion
- A 2022 study in the journal *Spiritual Care* → found **3 components of self-forgiveness: remorse, apology, and the making of amends – combine to increase happiness**
- The chronic spin cycle of guilt and recrimination only go so far → self-forgiveness liberates us to ask the same from other people and **accept ourselves** Cherry, 2023; Long, 2020

Self-Acceptance and Compassion

- How do you treat yourself when you make a mistake, fail to reach a goal, or have a lack of direction? Do you blame yourself or feel worthless? Or do you console and forgive yourself, take time to nurture yourself, and start to build the motivation to try again? — **self-compassion: warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer and fail without flagellating ourselves with criticism** Neff, 2015
- **Self-compassion is a key to resilience and happiness**
- Failure is part of life and can be construed as life-shattering or constitute a learning experience that increases resilience → **J. K. Rowling**, author of the Harry Potter series, said, *“It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all.”* – her first two novels were not published – early failures often have preceded future success

Self-Acceptance and Compassion

"Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune."

-- William James

- **Acceptance of the reality of a situation**, even if that situation is frightening and threatening, is an important component of *mindfulness* and a key step to building *resilience and happiness*
- **KNOW** → Understanding what can be controlled and what cannot -- and accepting what cannot be controlled
- **KNOW** → Involves not only acknowledging the reality of one's situation, but also assessing what can and cannot be changed, abandoning goals that no longer seem feasible, and intentionally re-directing efforts toward that which can be changed -- and change those things
- **KNOW** → Acceptance is not the same as resigning and does not involve giving up, quitting, avoidance, or denial

Self-Acceptance and Compassion

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." -- Carl Rogers

- A big part of acceptance is accepting oneself in a realistic, positive, and forgiving manner
- Self-acceptance is a major factor in building resilience and achieving happiness and includes (1) the awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, (2) the realistic cognitive appraisal of one's talents, capabilities, and general worth, and (3) feelings of satisfaction with one's self despite deficiencies and regardless of past behaviors and choices Siegel, 2022
- **People with a high level of self-acceptance:** do not wish they were anyone other than who they are, **have a positive overall attitude**, acknowledge and accept all aspects of themselves including the good and bad, and are **not** highly self-critical -- a major block to happiness

Self-Acceptance and Compassion

"Self-compassion means being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than flagellating ourselves with self-criticism or blame." -- Kristin Neff, PhD, University of Texas, Austin

- **Some researchers believe that self-compassion has three components:** (1) **self-kindness** -- the ability to be warm and understanding toward yourself when suffering and soothing and nurturing yourself when in pain rather than getting angry; (2) **common humanity** -- the awareness that you are not alone in your imperfections, making it easier to forgive yourself; and (3) **mindfulness** -- the nonjudgmental observation of your own thoughts, feelings, and actions without trying to suppress or deny them & accepting the bad with the good with compassion
- **How To Do It** → treat your body well with diet/exercise, write a letter to yourself, give yourself encouragement

Mindful Self-Compassion

- Kristin Neff, PhD, and Christopher Germer have developed an 8-week training program, **Mindful Self-Compassion**, which has been shown in randomized, placebo-controlled trials to result in greater self-compassion for themselves and others and less depression in those who completed the training program Neff & Germer, 2018
 - Access: www.chrisgermer.com and www.self-compassion.org
- Neff and Germer founded the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion where individuals can take online courses and learn more about self-compassion as well as find other self-compassion training programs and teachers around the world
 - Access: www.centerformsc.org

Appreciating Accomplishments

Happy people pursue success, accomplishment, winning, achievement, and mastery for their own sakes, not to compare one's own achievements to those of others

- When we accomplish something and reach a goal, we have a cognitive appraisal of personal achievement and tend to develop core beliefs of pride in ourselves and confidence in our abilities **Seligman, 2011**
- Feeling good about winning simply for winning's sake, not just to achieve pleasure or engagement or the comparative besting of someone else
- Accomplishments come from many areas of life, including sports, work, hobbies, and relationships
- **KNOW** → Setting realistic goals, creating plans to reach the goals, and achieving success boosts core beliefs of self-confidence and enhances positive well-being

The Meaning of Your Life: Do You Know What It is? You Should

“Deep down, in my opinion, man is dominated neither by the will to pleasure nor by the will to power, but by what I call the will to meaning: his deep seated striving and struggling for a higher and ultimate meaning to his existence.” -- Victor Frankl

- What gives your life meaning? Only you can know
- Martin Seligman, PhD, defines a *Meaningful Life* as: *“using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are.”*
- Most evidence suggests that to have a meaningful life with lasting happiness → people must focus on concerns outside of and greater than themselves

The Meaning of Your Life: Do You Know What It is? You Should.

“Happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being happen when you focus on concerns outside of yourself and have a core belief that your life has a purpose—you need both pleasure and meaning to be truly happy.” – Michael Howard, PhD

- Believing in a meaning or purpose of life is distinct from the pursuit of pleasure BUT they often happen together!
- In one European study of 10,000 people → endorsement of statements like *“I feel my life is part of a larger plan”* was associated with higher overall happiness
- People who have a strong sense of the meaning of their lives also (1) protect their own lives better, e.g., are more likely to be nonsmokers or former smokers than current smokers and (2) look back on their lives to determine their overall legacy

The Meaning of Your Life: Do You Know What It is? You Should.

- Studies done at the University of Missouri-Columbia → the activities subjects did that increased positive emotions also enhanced core beliefs of meaning about their daily lives
- An exercise that Siegel (2022) suggests to increase core beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life is to look back at your life by **writing an obituary for yourself**:
 - Think: if I died tomorrow, how might I be remembered?
 - Try to write a summary of your best qualities and accomplishments without ignoring those things you might have done better → how has your life mattered?
 - What aspects of your life gave you the most satisfaction?
 - What effect have you had on the world and how have you impacted other people in your life? **Siegel, 2022**

Spirituality and Happiness

- **SPIRITUALITY: SOMETIMES YES, SOMETIMES NO**
 - The idea that happiness in this life should be a goal of religion is a recent one but many studies find people practicing religion are happier than those who don't
 - **2015 London School of Economics Study** found participating in a religious organization was the only social activity associated with sustained happiness
 - ***The social aspect may be the strongest factor—even more predictive of happiness than faith***
 - **Two studies of U. S. adults by sociologist Chaeyoon Kim of the U. of Wisconsin** → found 33% of those who attended church weekly and had close friends at church were extremely satisfied with life compared to 19% weekly attending with no close friends at church

Spirituality and Happiness

- **SPIRITUALITY: SOMETIMES YES, SOMETIMES NO**
 - Kim states, *"the evidence substantiates that it is not really going to church and listening to sermons that makes people happier, but making church-based friends and building intimate social networks there."*
 - Studies show biggest connection between religion and happiness is strongest among people who live in difficult situations → fear, poverty, and hunger
 - **BUT:** the countries of the world rated highest in well-being and happiness tend to be highly nonreligious with abundant atheists—Denmark, Norway, & Finland
 - The social benefit of religion on happiness is the strongest in countries where the majority are religious

Resilience and Optimism

"Not that we wish cancer on anyone, but it's often negative experiences that help us grow and learn, which is vital for being happy." -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., author of *The Myths of Happiness*

Helicopter Parenting Core Beliefs → ***"No Child Should Fail and No Child Should Have Negative Experiences"***

- Even resilient people get emotionally overwhelmed by initial cognitive appraisals of traumatic events **BUT** → they quickly begin to ***cognitive reappraise*** and **see threats as a challenge** that either (1) cannot be controlled and (2) can be controlled and dealt with
- **KNOW** → Resilient people focus on what can be controlled and successfully manage it → creating **optimism** for being able to effectively cope with future challenges since they were managed in the past

Happiness and Optimism

The Importance of Resilience

- **Happy People usually have Optimistic Core Beliefs**
- **Optimism** → pattern of ***learned*** cognitive appraisals and core beliefs characterized by a future-oriented attitude involving high hope and confidence that things will turn out well – a belief that the future will be bright, good things will happen, and with hard work they will succeed
 - **WHY?** ***Because they handled problems within their control with resilient coping skills in the past and believe they will cope with any future challenges***
- On the opposite side of the continuum are **pessimists**: who see the future as dim, believe bad things will happen to them, and doubt that they have the skills and stamina to achieve their goals → ***optimism & pessimism are independent of each other and can occur together***

Happiness, Optimism, and Health

"An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity." – Winston Churchill

- Although studies have some mixed results, large meta-analytic studies largely find that optimistic, happy people have a 20% reduced risk of developing disorders like heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease
- Research from the Nun Study, Harvard Aging Study, English Longitudinal Study, Nurses Health Study, and Veterans Affairs Normative Study shows that the most optimistic women had a 50% greater chance of living to age 85 and optimistic men a 70% greater chance compared to pessimists
- Learned optimism has major health and mental health benefits: longer & happier lives, better cancer outcomes, better recovery from heart surgeries, fewer deaths from heart disease, and increased immunity Danner et al, 2001

Learned Resilient Optimism

How To Do It

"Resilient optimists believe that they will handle the future bad stuff that will happen and, therefore, will be able focus on and experience the good stuff." – Michael Howard, PhD

- **Seligman, Peterson, and others have shown that optimism can be learned by challenging negative core beliefs and appreciating strengths—principles of positive psychology** Peterson, 2001, 2006; Seligman, 2018
- **Optimism is learned by utilizing many of the positive cognitive reappraisal techniques of cognitive behavioral therapy → Optimists learn:** to recognize and challenge automatic negative thoughts and then dispute these thoughts so that new, more positive patterns of thinking can replace the old negative ones—resulting in optimistic and hopeful expectations for the future Seligman, 1990, 1995, 2011

Teaching Resilient Optimism

"Optimism can be taught and learned." – Martin Seligman

- **Stop negativity in the moment** → ungrounded pessimism eats away at hope and optimism, so target and reduce negative thoughts and statements
- **Use hopeful beliefs** → substitute and reward positive core beliefs, e.g., "I'll find a way to get through this and succeed."
- **Teach brainstorming** → spark your brain for solutions to stressors and challenges by **STAND: Slow down** so you can think; **Tell** your problem; **Ask** "What else can I do?"; **Name** everything you could do to solve the problem without judgements; and **Decide** the best choice and do it
- **Share hopeful news** → media information focuses on negative events, so point out good things that happen, e.g., "Remember when you had trouble making friends? Now you have great buddies!"

Teaching Resilient Optimism

"Optimism can be taught and learned." – Martin Seligman

- **Ask "What if?"** → weigh potential outcomes realistically, "What's the best/worst that can happen? How likely is that?"
- **Celebrate small gains** → recognize small successes and show learning from failures will help create future successes
- **Boost assertiveness** → teach self-advocacy—between passivity and aggression—to build confidence to stand up for oneself in challenging situations without harming others
- **Create gratitude rituals** → optimistic individuals are grateful, so create mealtime tradition where each person names someone or something they are grateful for that day
- **Resiliently manage challenges** → by using past resilient coping skills to effectively manage challenges, resilient optimists believe everything will work out for the best—creating high levels of life satisfaction and well-being

Addendum:

Creating Happiness, Higher Life Satisfaction, and Greater Well-Being on a Daily Basis

"Happiness consists more in small conveniences or pleasures that occur every day, than in great pieces of good fortune that happen but seldom." – Ben Franklin

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

"The key to happiness lies not in changing our genetic makeup (which is impossible) and not changing our circumstances (i.e., seeking wealth or attractiveness or better colleagues, which is usually impractical), but in our daily intentional activities." -- Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD

"Happiness is more of a daily process than an emotional destination." – Ed Diener

Find Happiness Moment by Moment



Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

"It is only possible to live happily ever after on a day-to-day basis." – Margaret Wander Bonanno

- Many of us expect happiness to show up on our doorstep like a pizza, but it doesn't work that way
- Happiness has to be planned for and made to happen
- There are many things that can be part of a daily routine which are associated with higher levels of happiness
- Happiness and optimism can be learned by developing cognitive appraisals and core beliefs through daily activities associated with increased happiness
- You don't have to do all of them and each person will differ in which ones are most beneficial

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

30 Things to Pick and Choose From

“A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness.”

— Albert Einstein

“What we do becomes who we are.” — Michael Howard, PhD

- **Spend Money on Experiences, Not Possessions** → doing things with others in particular
- **Take Time to Focus on Yourself** → especially women in heavy multitasking roles—find some personal time
- **Take Time to Nurture Your Relationships** → regular connecting with other people, especially close and intimate relationships; doing things with partners; being responsive to partners; turning to others in crises – and loving pets

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Smile at the First 10 People You Meet Every Day** →

Whenever you come in contact with the first 10 people, smile at them—chances are they will smile back. It can become a habit—and, studies show people who smile more each day report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Hopefully, it's a genuinely happy “Duchenne” smile with upturned mouth, raised cheeks, and crinkled crows-feet at the eyes, but even a fake smile (just the upturned mouth), when practiced, can evolve into a genuine smile

- **Do Something Nice for Someone Else or a Pet** →

Numerous studies document that being kind to other and doing nice things for them has a marked positive effect on happiness. Try to do 3 acts of kindness toward others each day. Love and take care of your pets.

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Bring Happiness to Commutes and Alone Times** → walking or biking instead of driving or taking the bus, chatting with other commuters on public transportation
- **Fake Happy until You Feel Happy** → the act of smiling increases feelings of happiness; practice being happy
- **Appreciate Your Strengths and Focus Less on Making Improvements** → a core principle of positive psychology, people who focus on their top 5 or 6 strengths are happier than those who try to improve weaknesses (www.viacharacter.org has strength test)
- **Try to Create 10 Positive Emotions Every Day** → Joy, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, Awe, and Love *Fredrickson, Positivity, 2009*

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Find Some Play, Every Day** → tedious daily chores can sap pleasure from life and finding playful pleasures puts energy back into relationships, in particular
- **If Married or Cohabiting, Find Ways to Handle Disagreements** → marital quality often declines over time and disagreements increase; Northwestern U. study found spending 3 7-minute periods each day thinking about 3 questions increased happiness: (1) How would a neutral party view your recent marital spat? (2) Going forward, what obstacles stand in your way of thinking like this third party during arguments? (3) How might you succeed at thinking like the third party during conflicts—and how would it help your relationship?

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Once You Know What Makes You Happy—Prioritize and Do It!** → Focus more on the “want to” than the “have to” tasks in life and prioritize them to get done
- **Make Happiness a Daily Goal** → many people believe you can’t control happiness; making happiness a goal with focused activities to increase it—people who listened to music with a goal of feeling happy were happier than those who just relaxed listening to music
- **Find Ways to Practice Gratitude** → keeping a gratitude journal, writing gratitude letters, thanking people for what they have done, posting gratitude sticky notes, and practicing the “*George Bailey Thinking Effect*”: think about benefits of air travel during a flight delay

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Keep a Happiness/Gratitude Journal: Counting Your Blessings, Being Kind, and Being Your Best** → (1) 3 things that went well that day, why they happened, and what you had to do with it; (2) 3 times you were kind to others (“Pay It Forward”); (3) something that happened where you responded with the best you have in you; (4) using a signature strength in a new and different way; (5) recalling a pleasant event from the previous day; and (6) gratitude statements.
- **Cultivate Spirituality** → especially social experiences
- **Practice Relaxation and Meditation** → regular practice of mindfulness and other stress reduction/relaxation techniques increases resilience, happiness, & well-being

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Have Electronic and Social Media Time-Outs** → plan times without electronic devices interrupting mindful focus and take time away from social media (social media use linked to unhappiness in many studies)
- **Weekends and Vacations: “Me” and “We” Plans for Satisfying Escapes** → planning, anticipating, and then doing really pleasurable things raises happiness; blissful weekends often have “*PEP*”: *physical* activities that energize us, *escapist* activities that relax us and take us away from day-to-day worries, and interacting with *people* that we love, like, and inspire us; weekends and extended vacations without electronic connections to work (40% check these) increase pleasure of time away
- **Believe “I’m OK, You’re OK”** → Accept and like yourself

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Exercise, Eat Well, and Take Care of Yourself** → Exercise regularly, do things like practicing yoga, and eat a healthy, plant-based diet with essential nutrients
- **Have an Optimistic Outlook on the Future** → Believe you can cope with any future stressors and that there will be a higher chance of positive future outcomes
- **Savor the Things In Life that You Like to Do** → Once you find things you like to do, immerse yourself in the experience and fully savor the pleasure
- **Try Not to Constantly Follow News Media** → Violence, catastrophes, and other negative events are often endlessly portrayed in the news media, which can cause negatively-distorted core beliefs and lowered happiness

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Practice Mindful Breathing When Upset** → abdominal breathing and focusing on 5-second inhales and exhales can result in a peaceful, positive calming when stressed
- **Distract Yourself with Activities that Divert Attention from the Negative Aspects of Life**
- **Become a Resilient Stress Manager and Optimist** → Learn to manage challenges that you have control over and develop these skills so they can be used to cope with the future challenges that will come in life—see challenges as opportunities and develop a core belief of hope and optimism that things will turn out for the best because you will be able to handle whatever negative situations life throws at you

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **We Spend Most of Our Adult Lives Working: Make Work a “Calling” Rather Than a Job or Career**
 - Find ways to enjoy your work
 - Become motivated by contributing things to the job
 - Recommend the work to other people
 - Think about your work when not working
 - Reward yourself for performing well
 - Believe that the job is rewarding
- **Find Support and Connection in Parenting**
 - 2024 Surgeon General study found 40% of parents were so stressed that they could barely function
 - Getting support and help in managing children and financial problems can increase happiness

Daily Things You Can Do That Increase Happiness & Well-Being

- **Practice Mindfulness-Based Stress Management**
“Take care of the bad stuff to achieve happiness.” -- MH
 - Mindfulness can not only increase happiness but also can give an individual a greater capacity to cope with the stressful adversities and challenges that commonly occur
 - By focusing on the “here and now,” many who practice mindfulness find they are less likely to get caught up in (1) worries and regrets about the past, (2) concerns and apprehensions about the future, and (3) preoccupations about comparative success and self-esteem
 - Practitioners of mindfulness are typically better able to form deep relationship connections to others that are so important in creating and maintaining long-term happiness

Positive Psychology’s Role in Sad Times: Positive Psychotherapy Thwarts Depression

“Whether you think you can or think you can’t, you’re right!” – Henry Ford

- **Studies have shown that happiness or positive subjective well-being—how happy a person thinks or feels about his or her life—is inversely correlated with the development of anxiety and depressive episodes**
- **Learning to increase positive thoughts and practicing positive thinking on an everyday basis is a powerful path to happiness, and long-term life satisfaction**
- **Recent studies → find increased positive thinking is an effective way to reduce negative rumination and emotional reactivity, increase control of fear responses, increase focus and working memory, and increase cognitive flexibility** Okbay, 2016.

Positive Psychotherapy for Depression

- Overall moods tend to be predominantly positive or negative—maintained by core beliefs
- The negative mood of depression is the opposite of long-term happiness and positive life satisfaction
- Most psychotherapy for depression focuses on decreasing negative depressive symptoms, but Rashid and Seligman have created a 14-session model for **positive psychotherapy** of depression → utilized at Counseling and Psychological Services at the Univ. of Pennsylvania that increases positive emotions & moods (accessed at <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu>)
- **One study of severe depression:** positive psychotherapy relieved depressive symptoms on all outcome measures (55% remission) better than treatment as usual (20% remission) and antidepressant meds (8% remission)

Staying Happy My Way: 5 Things

- Be grateful for and satisfied with what you have, loving and taking care of family and pets
- Believe that you are only in charge of your emotions, not other people's emotions
- Think positive most of the time for positive emotions and moods and try keep negative emotions brief to avoid negative moods
- Resiliently manage stressful situations and only worry about things you can control – and accept the things you can't control
- To help get through the bad stuff, look forward to some thing(s) good every day and enjoy it (them)

**Thanks for attending
and have a great day**



Please remember to send in the test and evaluation to earn your certificate, which will come by email in the next five business days.

Michael E. Howard, Ph.D.

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- National Alliance on Mental Illness. www.nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov

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NOTES

NOTES

1. Patterns of thinking are influenced and biased by ____ memories.
 - a) Induced
 - b) Semantic
 - c) Declarative
 - d) Procedural
2. Perception and thinking combine to produce:
 - a) Cognitive appraisals
 - b) Stage 2 deep sleep
 - c) Prioritized values
 - d) None of the above
3. Similar cognitive appraisals that are repeated over time can develop into powerful and influential:
 - a) Auditory hallucinations
 - b) Core beliefs
 - c) Procedural perceptions
 - d) Cingulate gyrus blockages
4. Happiness is a(n) _____ produced by cognitive appraisals.
 - a) Emotion
 - b) Mood
 - c) Core belief
 - d) Dissonance
5. Well-being is an overall construct that is measured by:
 - a) How people rate themselves on having positive and negative emotions
 - b) How people engage in life activities, achieve aspirations and goals, & assign meaning to life
 - c) Self-ratings of optimism, a sense of purpose, and how worthwhile life is
 - d) All of the above
6. Happiness and positive life satisfaction are associated with the following OCEAN personality traits:
 - a) High neuroticism high openness to experience, and being an extrovert
 - b) Low neuroticism, low openness to experience, and being an introvert
 - c) Low neuroticism, high openness to experience, and being an extravert
 - d) High neuroticism, high openness to experience, and being an introvert
7. Which of the following is **NOT** one of Martin Seligman's 3 Pathways to Happiness:
 - a) Feeling Good (Pleasurable Life)
 - b) Engaging Fully (Engaged Life)
 - c) Doing Good (Meaningful Life with Relationships and Accomplishments)
 - d) Achieving High Self-Esteem
8. A 2021 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on U.S. adolescents found ____ of teenage girls and ____ of teenage boys reported pervasive feelings of sadness and hopelessness and consistent despair.
 - a) 10%; 20%
 - b) 20%; 10%
 - c) 59%; 29%
 - d) 29%; 59%
9. The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant sources of stress such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, and workplace and financial stressors is called:
 - a) Stress inoculation
 - b) Resilience
 - c) Cognitive rigidity
 - d) Flow
10. Fredrickson's "Broaden and Build" model of positive emotions impacts the building of resilience because:
 - a) Type 1 Emotional Thinking helps widen choices and create flexible thinking
 - b) Type 2 Rational Thinking creates "tunnel vision" and restricts behavioral choices in a crisis
 - c) Type 2 Rational Thinking is intuitive and happens fast without a lot of thinking
 - d) Type 2 Rational Thinking produces *positive emotions* that increase the scope of attention, expand awareness and cognitive capacity, enable acquire knowledge, think creatively, make better decisions, and acquire coping skills

Examination

Course Title: Pursuit of Happiness: Resilience and Positive Psychology

NAME: _____
(please print)
DATE: _____
PROFESSION: _____
SEMINAR LOCATION: _____
INSTRUCTOR: _____

For each item below please circle the correct response. Circle only one response per item.

11. In the Kauai Longitudinal Study:
 - a) All the children raised in adverse circumstances had significant problems in childhood and the teen years
 - b) One-third of the children raised in adverse circumstances had no significant adjustment problems
 - c) 5 out of 6 children who had initial teen and early life problem behavior were doing well by age 40
 - d) Both (b) and (c)
12. Which of the following is **NOT** one of Linda Graham's "5 C's of Resilient Coping?"
 - a) Clarity
 - b) Competition
 - c) Connection
 - d) Competence
13. The main topic of positive psychology is well-being and the best way to measure well-being is:
 - a) Flourishing
 - b) Meaning
 - c) Happiness
 - d) Lack of depression
14. Sonja Lyubomirsky's research has found that a major myth of happiness is:
 - a) Happiness is related to doing random acts of kindness
 - b) Happiness lies in changing our circumstances
 - c) Happy people express gratitude for all that they have
 - d) Happy people savor life's pleasures
15. U.S. income and economic status has tripled in the 50 years from 1960 to 2010, but life satisfaction:
 - a) Only doubled
 - b) Increased by 4 times
 - c) Only increased 10%
 - d) Remained virtually the same until 2010, then declined
16. Most studies show that American are happiest:
 - a) In their teens and 20s
 - b) In their 30s and 40s
 - c) In their 50s and 60s
 - d) In their 70s and 80s
17. Happiness researcher Ed Diener found the most important characteristics shared by the happiest 10% of students was:
 - a) Their strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them
 - b) Getting a good night's sleep and eating well
 - c) Achieving a high level of accomplishment by making good grades
 - d) None of the above
18. Research shows that people experience more than three times as much immersion or "flow" during:
 - a) Activities that involve exercise
 - b) Leisure activities than during work tasks
 - c) Work tasks than during leisure activities
 - d) Easy tasks than during tasks that are challenging
19. The pattern where initial happiness from things like winning the lottery rapidly fades over time is:
 - a) Happiness inertia
 - b) Baseline attraction
 - c) Pleasure fading
 - d) Hedonic adaptation
20. Keeping a "Happiness Journal" has been shown to increase happiness by writing down:
 - a) Gratitude statements
 - b) Unpleasant events that happened during the day
 - c) Things that went wrong during the day
 - d) The discouraging effects of failures and mistakes

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Continuing Education Seminar

Institute for Natural Resources

Questionnaire

Course Title: Pursuit of Happiness:

Resilience & Positive Psychology

NAME: _____

(please print)

DATE: _____

PROFESSION: _____

SEMINAR LOCATION: _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____

- I. Please circle the appropriate number indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. The rating scale ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
A. The course content was consistent with stated learning objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
B. The course content was appropriate for the intended audience.	1	2	3	4	5
C. To what extent did you achieve each of the course's major objectives?					
1) explain three major causes of stress.	1	2	3	4	5
2) describe why happiness is at all time lows in youth while stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at record highs.	1	2	3	4	5
3) list three reasons why stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at record highs.	1	2	3	4	5
4) list two common myths about happiness and the evidence-based approaches that promote sustained happiness.	1	2	3	4	5
5) describe three key principles of positive psychology, cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness and spiritual practices in reducing stress and pursuing happiness.	1	2	3	4	5
6) describe how the information in this course can improve patient care and patient outcomes for nursing, dental, pharmacy, mental health, dietetic, occupational and physical therapy and other health professionals.	1	2	3	4	5
D. The length of time to complete this course matches the number of CE credits approved.	1	2	3	4	5
E. The instructor's ability to use course-appropriate technology to support participant learning, including active learning strategies, were appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
F. The instructor was knowledgeable of the subject and was well qualified.	1	2	3	4	5
G. The learning assessment activities, including the post-test, were appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
H. Overall, the seminar met my educational needs, and the educational materials were useful.	1	2	3	4	5
I. Instructions to request accommodations for a disability were clear.	1	2	3	4	5
J. The Zoom webinar technology was user friendly.	1	2	3	4	5

- II. I would recommend this course to a professional colleague.
Yes _____ Not sure _____

No _____

- III. I would recommend this instructor to a professional colleague.
Yes _____ Not sure _____

No _____

- IV. Did this course provide you with helpful and useful information to change your practice?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, how do you intend to change your practice, including how you intend to use the knowledge and skills gained?

Please note Registered Dietitians and DTRs registered with CDR can share feedback about this activity directly with CDR at QualityCPE@eatright.org

- V. The presentation was balanced and free of commercial influence or bias.
Yes _____ No _____

If no, please explain:

- VI. How much did you learn as a result of this CE program?

Very Little				Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5

- VII. How useful was the content of this CE program for your practice or other professional development?

Not Useful	A Little Useful	Some what Useful	A Good Deal Useful	Extremely Useful
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- VIII. Please use this space for additional comments, including future programming needs. Thank you!