


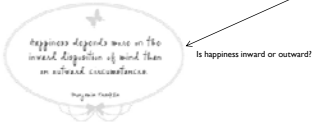
## Feeling Good

Happiness & Positive Emotion




## Entitled to Happiness?

- Making choices ...  
"choose what makes you happy"
- US Constitution  
"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"
- Not a Universal value...  
in Asian culture – pursue contentment from duty toward family & community





## Happiness as an emotion?...

- A comparison: anger/ fear & happiness  
Notice any differences in these states
- Negative versus positive, yes...
- In reaction to situational stimulus?
- Strong physiological reaction?
- Behavioral responses?
- Duration?
- Functional/ adaptive aspects of the emotion?
- *Perhaps happiness might be viewed more as a temperamental trait rather than a transitional emotional state*



## Positivity

- Barbara Fredrickson, University of North Carolina offers the concept of 'positivity', our palette of positive emotions
  - Joy
  - Gratitude
  - Serenity
  - Interest
  - Hope
- A decade of research shows these emotions strongly predict an ongoing, accessible state of 'happiness' or 'well-being'
- *When positivity is low:*
  - easily pulled into negativity
  - behavior becomes rigid
  - feelings of 'lifelessness' or burden

## Broaden & Build Theory

### Broaden:

- These emotions broaden your cognitive focus
- These emotions open you to experience



### Build

- These emotions build positive resources for future use
- These emotions calm physiology
- Small changes in positivity lead to large outcomes
- These emotions can be cultivated

## Broaden & Build II

### Evolutionary Argument

what is the 'function' of happiness/ joy?  
That is, how is it adaptive in an evolutionary sense?

- Negative emotions are adaptive in the moment
  - Immediate response to threat/ danger
- Positive emotions are adaptive as a future investment
  - Broaden perspective to notice opportunities in the environment
  - Facilitate the accumulation of resources that can be utilized later on
- A few findings .... Positive emotions
  - Reduce stereotyping
  - Increase creativity and open-mindedness
  - Increase life satisfaction
  - Increase ability to handle stress



## What makes you happy?



## What do we know about happiness?

- What makes you happy?  
Your perspective/ personality  
or  
The events of your life



- Temperament
  - Genes play a role
  - Those with highly reactive dopamine receptors are more happy
- Circumstances associated with happiness
  - Very poor people are less happy than very rich
  - Countries with equal status for minorities and women have higher happiness
  - Having close relationships
  - Having religious faith
  - Goals directed at welfare of something greater than yourself

## Things that don't lead to happiness

- Wealth/ pursuing wealth
- Physical beauty
- Warm weather
- Higher education
- Youth



## What does increase happiness?

### Decreasing Negativity

- Engage in positive reappraisals
- Practice mindfulness
- Understand the circumstances that trigger it and alter them
- Reconsider your media diet
- Reduce/ eliminate gossip
- Learn ways to deal with any negative people in your life



### Increasing Positivity

- Exercising gratitude
- Being kind to other  
Lyubomirsky, 2004 – spend money on yourself or someone else
- Slow down & savor what you enjoy
- Engage in activities that you can lose yourself in
- Apply your signature strengths
- Connect meaningfully with others
- Spend time in nature

## Contrast Effects

- Emotional response depends in part on expectations
- Joy: when you get more than expected
- Sadness: when you get less than expected
- Student grades
  - Expecting a C and getting a B --- brings joy
  - Expecting an A and getting a B – brings sadness
  - B+ make students more unhappy than other grades
- Comparing an event to its alternatives determines the emotion
  - Can lead to great unhappiness
  - Since we control our expectations, it can also offer an approach to regulate



*It's all in your perspective*

## What makes us happy?

- Dan Gilbert  
Stumbling Upon Happiness



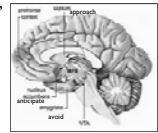
## Expressions of Happiness

- Smile
  - Does a smile always indicate happiness?
  - Duchenne smile (contraction of eye muscles) tempting to focus only on the mouth, but eyes are key
  - Mills College Graduates study
- Move more quickly/ speak more quickly
  - Asking sad people to 'speed up' lifts mood
- Physiology
  - Fleeting elevation of HR with happiness
  - Left brain more active/ approach tendencies



## The Positives: Anticipation

- Anticipation: pleasure from expecting a 'reward' very pleasurable
- Release of dopamine in the reward circuit (nucleus accumbens)
  - Dopamine release is highest when reward is more than expected
  - Dopamine release shuts down once reward is received
- The reward circuit reflects contrast effects whether something is 'rewarding' depends on expected alternatives



## The Positives: Contentment

- A parasympathetic response/ calm satisfaction common with eating a good meal
- Enjoying/ consuming a reward – triggers release of opiates



## The Positives: Hope & Optimism

- Hope: high agency under challenge
  - Seligman's work on religion
- Optimism: expectation that things will turn out
- Most of us are unrealistically optimistic
  - Overestimate our chances of winning the lottery
  - Underestimate how long it takes to complete a difficult task
- Leads to healthy resiliency
- Those lacking it are at risk for depression



## The Positives: Laughter

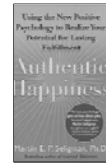
- Laughter is social communication
  - we laugh more at our own comments than those of others conveys "I'm enjoying myself"
  - Makes others feel comfortable, appreciated when you laugh at their humor
- Laughter is contagious
- Enhances the immune system  
allows post-surgical patients to use fewer pain meds



## Brief Intro to Seligman

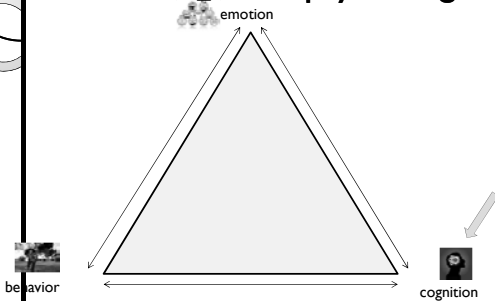
- Authentic Happiness  
increasing the states that lead to 'flourishing'

P(positive) emotion -  
E(ngagement) -  
R(elationships) -  
M(eaning) -  
A(chievement) -



- Martin Seligman  
educated at Princeton and University of Pennsylvania  
Runs Positive Psychology Program at University of Pennsylvania  
President of APA in 1998  
13<sup>th</sup> most cited psychologist in undergraduate textbooks
- Started out studying depression ... but that got depressing

## He's a cognitive psychologist



## Seligman's Position

- Thought Patterns are an important key to happiness
  - Attitudes that increase positive emotion
  - **Past:** gratitude/ forgiveness
  - **Future:** self enhancing views
- Behavior Matters too
  - Choices that increase positive emotion
  - **Present:** savoring pleasure  
pursuing gratification  
applying signature strengths
- [Let's hear him](#)

