Pursuit of Happiness
The Good Life

What is happiness?

Why do we pursue happiness?

One Theory
Fredrickson: Broaden and Build
- Positive emotions are adaptive (evolutionarily)
- They help us build resources for hard times
  - Friendship, love, coalitions build more readily
- Our problem-solving improves
  - More tolerant and creative
  - Open to new ideas and new experience
How happy are you?

- What percent of time do you feel
  - Happy?
  - Unhappy?
  - Neutral?
  - How about most people?
    - 54%
    - 21%
    - 20%

Happiness is good for us

- Happy nuns:
  - Most cheerful: 90% live beyond 85
  - Least cheerful: 34% lived beyond 85

- General Public:
  - Duchenne Smile: happy marriage & well being

Take a moment ....

- Think about happiness in your life for a moment ...

- What is the happiest moment you've ever experienced? What were the circumstances?

Endings Matter

- Hedonics - the science of how we feel moment by moment
- Fredrickson's ratio – 
- Hedonic Theory
  - Good moments minus bad moments = quality of life
  - Research: momentary feelings don't actually predict broad well being
  - Daniel Kahneman – Princeton
  - The 'color' of an ending forever tinges the memory for the entire event

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Positive and negative emotion are only marginally correlated. Women have more of both positive and negative emotion. Men are made of stonier soil. —Stephen King. Our greatest joys often follow as relief from our greatest fears.

Happiness = S + C + V

It’s just that simple

Set Point + Context

- S (50%)
  - Set point
  - Inborn temperament
  - Adaptation
- C (8-15%)
  - Circumstances
  - Income above poverty
  - Romance & friends
  - Spirituality that brings hope

Interesting...

- Don’t increase happiness
  - Wealth
  - IQ
  - Education level
- Don’t decrease happiness
  - Medical problems
  - Exception 5 or more problems
  - Aging
  - Being a racial minority
  - Being female

V – the stuff we can control (35-42%)

- Attitudes about your past
  - Generate attitude of gratitude & forgiveness
- Approach to your future
  - Generate self compassion & optimism
- Living in the present
  - Choose gratifications over pleasures
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/ engagement

Seligman’s Position

Thoughts determine mood (ala Seligman)
- Interpretation, memory, associations, beliefs
- One cultural belief —
  - The past determines your future
- BUT … little research to show that single events are related to later outcomes
- However, events DO shape thinking patterns and brain function …

Thinking about the Past

Depressed People
- Get caught in negative rumination cycles
- Thinking about past harm leads to upset

Angry People
- Rumination about wrongdoing and angry expression raises blood pressure
- Friendliness after wrongdoing lowers it

A deeper look

Emotion, if left alone, dissipates and there is return to set point

In there a way to visit emotional past stories and experiences WITHOUT getting lost in them?
The Past

Part One ...changing the balance

1 negative to 3 positive maintains health

- Gratitude
  - Intentionally focusing on the people who have provided care and support and warmth and all the good stuff throughout your history
  - Intentionally focusing on the 'blessings' in your life

- Forgiveness
  - Intentionally focusing on the people who have betrayed you

Part Two ...forgiveness

- Accept, tolerate, explore all that exists within us and arises in our lives

- Existential realities impinge upon us
  - If we live long enough, we will lose everyone and everything for which we care
  - We will experience betrayals and shame and failure

- How then is it possible to care? To forgive? To try again? To remain open?
  - We must gracefully bear the inevitable losses; let meaning in them
  - "Mental illness must be understood, ultimately, as suffering that has not yet found meaning" — art ling
  - Reflection, mindfulness, writing, gratifications... help us find meaning

Forgiveness

- Think about a time when you were betrayed by someone — it can be a small or large betrayal... doesn't matter.

- Write about this experience for 2-3 minutes

- What did you lose in this experience?

- What did it or would it take to forgive?

- How easy or hard was it/ would it be to forgive? Why?

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- A hospital vigil creases tunnel vision; all I see is my 2.5 year-old boy's face in his hospital bed, and I hear his wheezing calls for us, followed by our answering song: "I'm right here, Jack, I'm right here." My son doesn't want me to look away when visitors enter, as if he shares my fear that the only thing keeping him safe is my concentration on his breathing. This radiation is piled with Chinese food, cooled bland refridgeration

- For those 19 days my husband and I bath, dress, and read to our child while the rest of us stand and watch. What our son needs is to see us happy, to feel safe, to hear us singing. He looks at the surgeons, masks covering their faces, and burrows into my shoulder seeking relief.

- Then flashes The Moment. Many parents will recognize that moment. That split-second flash through your brain, with an intense grip of emotion, a wave that lasts far longer, that squeezes your lungs, no matter how long ago it was. The moment you were forced to focus — acutely, terrifyingly — on your child's mortality.

- "What I know now is that parental love is layered on, with each layer a shield of denial, protecting you from an inner core of fear. And the layers peel away remarkably slowly."

- We did not interpret the serious expression on the nurse's face as fear; We did not even notice the nurse's face. We did not interpret the clear evidence of our child's grave illness as a threat to his life. We did not interpret the nurse's face as a threat to his life. We did not even notice the nurse's face... we ignored the threat."

- A mother finds meaning (Joanna Steinglass)

- On a gurney outside the operating room, he sits on my lap. Or rather he folds over my belly onto my shoulder. He is too young to be told what is going on, to know about the surgery to help clear his lungs. He looks at the surgeons, masks covering their faces, and burrows into my shoulder seeking relief.

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The future

Looking Forward

- Learned helplessness/ pessimistic
  - How do you explain events?
  - Negative: internal, stable, global
    (permanent, universal)
- Positive: fleeting, temporary
- Pessimism undermines hope & motivation
  - These are habits of thinking
  - They can be modified
- Optimism
  - Optimists live 19% longer than pessimists
  - (839 patients from Mayo Clinic followed for 40 years)

The Present

- Seligman
  - It’s misguided to devote much effort to correcting your weaknesses
  - Highest success, deepest satisfaction comes from exercising strengths
- Strengths/Virtues
  - Valued in nearly every culture
  - Vested in their own right (not just as a means to another end)
  - They can be developed/learned
  - Virtue -- from Latin virtue meaning ‘mighty works’

We maintain ‘earned’ happiness longer

- Seeking pleasurable experiences
- Using personal strengths
  (Character)

Harry Bailey Strengths . . .

- One study: 60 years of data
  - Harvard Grad (1939-1943) & Inner City Boston Males
- Strong Character in these men
  - Led to:
    - Successful aging, wealth, and joy
- What are those traits?
  - The Harry Bailey Traits . . .
    - Ability to delay gratification
    - Altruism
    - Humor
Seligman’s Strengths & Virtues
- Wisdom
  1. Curiosity
  2. Love of learning
  3. Open-mindedness
  4. Ingenuity
  5. Emotional Intelligence
  6. Perspective
- Courage
  1. Bravery
  2. Perseverance
  3. Integrity
- Humanity
  1. Kindness
  2. Loving/ Receiving Love
- Justice
  1. Loyalty
  2. Fairness
  3. Leadership
- Temperance
  1. Self control
  2. Caution
  3. Modesty
- Transcendence
  1. Appreciation of beauty
  2. Gratitude
  3. Optimism
  4. Sense of purpose
  5. Forgiveness
  6. Humor
  7. Zest

Being in the Moment
- Pleasures
  - Bodily focused
  - Fleeting/ easily satiated
- Enhance pleasures – two ways
  - Savoring
  - Tell others how you enjoyed the experience
  - Save the moment with photos or mementoes
- Mindful Pleasure
  - Focus attention on the sensual experience
  - Slow down … and stop when pleasure stops

- Gratifications
  - Activity consonant with noble purpose
  - Jen: “are you completing good in yourself or others”
  - Utilize our strengths and virtues
  - Willingness to invest effort to accomplish
  - Often evoke absorption and flow

A possible metaphor… investment
- Pleasures
  - We are consuming
  - Sensory delights, emotional highs
- Gratifications
  - We are investing
  - How to develop skills, show gratitude
  - Accumulating well being
  - Building psychological capital
- Csikszentmihalyi (cheeks sent me high)
  - Teens mall kids versus hobby kids
A Lizard Tle…

- Amazonian lizard for pet
  - Refused to eat, not mango, not ground pork, not flies, not blended fruit juices
  - One day offered a ham sandwich – lizard refused again
  - Absentmindedly tossed a newspaper over the sandwich
  - The lizard leapt onto the paper, shredded it, and then gobbled the sandwich

- The lizard wanted to use its signature strengths to attain food; no shortcuts

Reflect on American Culture…

- What is encouraged/rewarded?
- Why?
- What might be the consequences?

Depression

- Rates of depression 10x higher now than 1960
- Average age of first episode:
  - 1960: 29.5
  - Now: 14.5
- Rates of suicide jumped in equal proportion
- Why?

Calming
- Social connection
- ‘approach’
- Promote health
- Promote cognitive integration
- hippocampus

Activating
- Avoidance
- Compromise health
- Interfere with cognitive integration
- Amygdala

Seligman’s Recommendations

Stress & Emotional Imbalance
Bottom Line

- Lasting Happiness:
  - 50% - genetic set point
  - 10% - circumstances
  - 40% - choices in living/attitude

Lasting Happiness = set point + circumstances + (gratitude + optimism + gratifications)

WE CAN IMPACT OUTCOMES AT ANY INSERTION POINT:

底線

"If you want happiness for an hour ?
  take a nap.
If you want happiness for a day ?
  go fishing.
If you want happiness for a year ?
  inherit a fortune.
If you want happiness for a lifetime ?
  help someone else." --- Chinese Proverb

Becoming the conductor of your own symphony . . .

in that available 40% — that which you can control

mindfulness

Impacts S and V

- More functional immune response
- Lower BP
- Lower right brain resting activity

- Thicker Prefrontal Cortex
- More focused attention
- Amygdala & prefrontal cortex links

Positive Psychology as Emotion Regulation

Alter triggers

Deploy attention

Cognitive change

Modulate behavior

Take charge

Exercise of strengths

Cultivating optimism

Cultivating gratitude/forgiveness

Choosing goals to gratify

Demanding good in groups

Meditators

• More functional immune response
• Lower BP
• Lower right brain resting activity

• Thicker Prefrontal Cortex
• More focused attention
• Amygdala & prefrontal cortex links

Impacts S and V

Exercise

Optimal

Response

Contributing positive thoughts

Manipulating negative thoughts

Attention

Gratitude

Optimism

Impacts of awareness

Gratitude