

The Science of Happiness and How to Pursue It



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Disclosure

- I have nothing to declare regarding the financial relationship

Objectives

- What are positive Psychology and Psychiatry
- What are the advantages of being happy?
- Where does happiness come from? Is it based on Genetics, Circumstances, or Intentional?
- My Happiness Equation
- Follow Vasavada's W's: Road to Happiness

What is Health?

- *WHO says, "Health is not an absence of disease or infirmity but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being."*

What are Positive Psychiatry and Psychology?

- Positive Psychiatry is the science and practice of psychiatry that seeks to understand and promote well-being through assessment and interventions to enhance behavioral and mental wellness (Dilip Jeste, MD)

Usefulness in Psychiatry

- Well-being
- Post-traumatic growth
- Successful aging
- Prevention of mental and psychosomatic illness
- Recovery and remission from mental illness

History of Positive Psychiatry

- Early 20th century: Psychology abandoned normal and talented people
- Maslow and other
- World war II and Industrialization
- Work efficiency and organization psychology
- Positive psychology movement since the 1990s
- Gross Nations Happiness
- The current emphasis on wellness at school, work, and health

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

- Happiness in Eastern literature, Buddhism (Nirvana), Hindus (gratitude, non-violence, boundless compassion, and generosity), and Christians (stresses Makarios [Bliss: supreme happiness] as the ultimate end of humans)
- Aristotle emphasized Eudaimonia can be achieved by being fortunate and living virtuously. In his words, "pursuit of virtue, excellence, and the best within us leads to happiness."
- Pursuit of happiness in our declaration of independence
- Is it individual or collective?

What is Happiness?

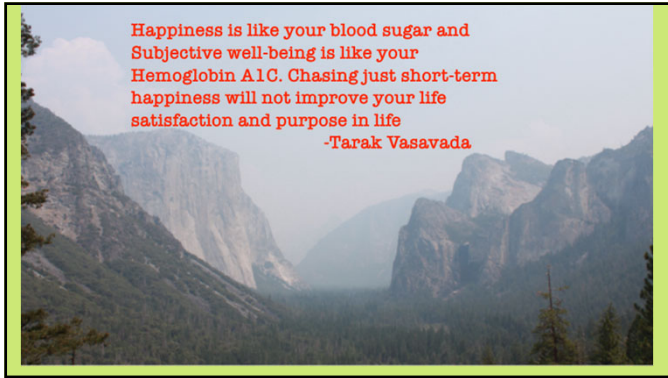
- Is it a pleasure (or Positive emotions)?
- Does it relate to the past, present, and future?
- Is it engagement?
- Is it the meaning of life?

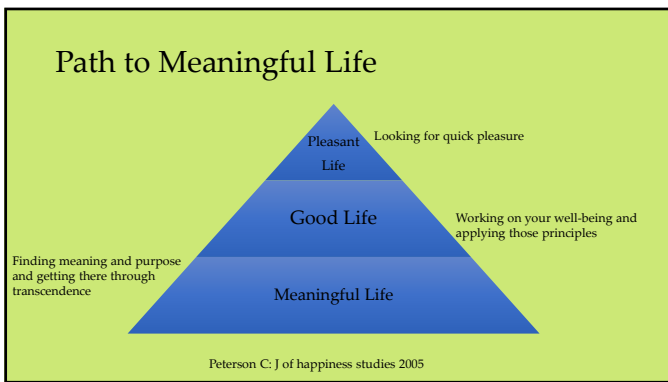
Happiness is a combination of frequent positive affect, high life satisfaction, and infrequent negative affect.

Seligman: Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B (2004) 359, 1379–1381

Terms used for Happiness

- **Well-being:** is the perfect physical and psychological equilibrium between past (contentment), present (happiness), and future (optimism). This term is used more in the term of measuring physical health.
- **Happiness:** Happiness is the current state of positive emotion, and it can fluctuate depending on internal perceptions and external events. Eating a nice meal or listening to music will bring happiness for a short time, but will it last long?
- **Subjective Well-being (SWB):** This is the correct term to measure long-term happiness. It measures life satisfaction and the current state of positive and negative affect. In addition, some scientists also add a sense of purpose and meaning to our life.





Why should we be Happy?

- Happiness brings longer life by about 14%
- It brings success at work and in earnings
- Happiness brings better social relationships (most robust finding)
- If you are happy, your marriage will be happy
- It brings better mental and physical health
- Is it chicken or egg?

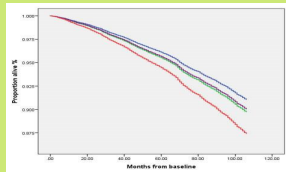
Lyubomirsky, King and Diener: Psychological Bull 2005

Why should we be Happy? Importance of Subjective Well-being (SWB)

- **Question 1.** Do people with more positive emotions live longer and healthier?
- [Chida and Steptoe \(2008\)](#) reported in a meta-analysis that positive psychological well-being was related to lower mortality and higher longevity in healthy and diseased populations, independently of negative affect.
- Positive moods such as joy, happiness, energy, and characteristics such as life satisfaction, hopefulness, optimism, and sense of humor were associated with reduced mortality risk in healthy populations.

English Longitudinal Study (ELSA) 2013

- 9050 lives
- Follow up over 8.5 years
- Mean age 65 years of age
- Morbidity: 58% reduced risk
- Mortality: Demonstrates that those in the higher quartile (Blue) of Subjective Well-being live longer than those in the lowest quartile of SWB (Red).



42% Vs. 21% death in the lowest quartile of happiness vs. the highest quartile

[English Longitudinal Study of Ageing \(ELSA\)](#)

Q 2. Can SWB Improve the Chances of Surviving Existing Illnesses?

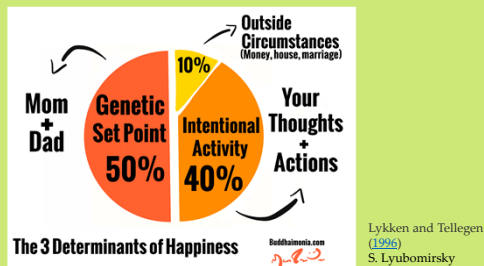
- The results on survival are mixed.
- Some studies (Cardiovascular in particular) show clearly that high SWB increases the likelihood of survival from certain diseases.
- The evidence regarding cancer or acute infectious illness is mixed, with uncertain overall support. You do not want to be irrationally optimistic when choosing the right treatment for complex medical conditions.
- While other studies show no effect
- Happiness has also been associated with favorable profiles of health-related biomarkers: lower cortisol output, lower concentrations of inflammatory biomarkers such as C-reactive protein and interleukin-6, and reduce allostatic load.

Happy People Live Longer: Subjective Well-Being Contributes to Health and Longevity: Diener & Chan 2011

Question 3. Why should I be in pursuit of happiness? How can it improve my life?

- Positive affect is associated with protective psychosocial and behavioral factors.
- These include greater social connectedness, perceived social support, optimism, preference for adaptive coping responses, and a greater probability of performing positive health behaviors.
- Cross-cultural research has documented associations with positive affect mixed with exercising regularly, not smoking, and eating a prudent diet, making you live longer and making your life worth living.
- More likely to be married, have friends, participate in clubs and organizations, do more volunteering, be wealthy, and have less loneliness,

Is Happiness a Genetic gift?



Set Point Theory: Genetics

- Longer-term emotional states are not as powerfully affected by life events as you might expect.
- Two years: This is what it will take to overcome a loss -like death, divorce, injuries, etc. (Hedonic Treadmill)
- A year: or less is what it will take to go back to set point after good events like winning the lottery or being newly married

Brickman & Campbell, 1971
Kahneman, 1999; Tversky & Griffin, 1991

Circumstances

- Can Money, Marriage, education, and power make us happy?
- Not more than 3% of total life satisfaction
- It may not be in your control, but how you look at the adverse life events is in your control, and it helps your set point go up faster.

Intentional Activity

- Behavioral: activities that make you happy like exercise, random kindness, altruism
- Cognitive: reframing, gratitude letter writing, writing down positive things at the end of the day, counting one's blessings, and mindfulness
- Volitional: putting the above in practice on your own



12 Intentional Activities for Increasing Life Satisfaction

Watch for Midlife Drop: Level of Happiness by Age: UK Life Satisfaction Study



<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuringnationalwellbeing/atwhatageispersonalwellbeingthehighest>

Happiness through Life Cycle

- Happiness is highest when you are young or old
- The worst time for males is from 36-44; for females, it is 40-52 years.
- Childbearing years are the most miserable years!
- An empty nest has lots of growth potential.
- The last year of life could be the most unhappy if your health, wealth, or relationships suffer.

Happiness Equation by the Economist

$$\text{Happiness}(t) = w_0 + w_1 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} CR_{jt} + w_2 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} EV_{jt} + w_3 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} RPE_{jt}$$

Happiness Equation

- H= Genetics + Circumstances+ Volitional activities
- W=Perfect Past + Prefect Present + Perfect future
- W= Contentment + Mindfulness+ Optimism
 - Contentment: Expectations, forgiveness, and gratitude
 - Present: mindfulness, savoring, and flow
 - Future: Optimism and hope

M Seligman.

Past is experience, Present is experiment and Future is expectation.
Use your experience in your experiments to achieve your expectations.
- Unknown

My Equation

$$\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Contentment} + \text{Mindfulness} + \text{Optimism}}{\text{Expectations} + \text{Control} + \text{Events}}$$

Vasavada's W's

- Wellbeing: physical, mental, and personality
- Wealth or absence of poverty
- Worthy partner/Spouse/Love
- Work & Retirement
- Well-wishers (Friends, Family, Culture, Religion, institutions)

Developed by Tarak Vasavada

Well-being

- Healthy people are happy. Disability will lower your happiness
- Take care of your body and mind
- Enhance your positive virtues to bring happiness
- Cultivate optimism
- Search for a more profound meaning of life (Spirituality)

Self Well-being

- **Diet:** Research suggests that [healthy eating](#) leads to happiness. Students who ate a healthy breakfast and three meals daily had the highest happiness score. [Eating together daily](#) or [consuming holiday feasts](#) makes people happy.
- **Exercise:** Exercise works like any antidepressant and anti-anxiety meds. People who are [physically active](#) and not doing rigorous exercise are happy too. 7500 steps are reasonable enough. Hiking in nature and exercising in groups have advantages.
- **Sleep:** [Chronic Sleep deprivation](#) has been linked to an increased risk of car crashes, poor work performance, and problems with mood and relationships.

Self Well-being

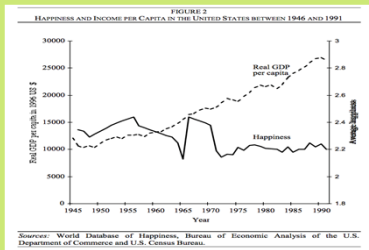
- **Control Intake of Alcohol:** Research suggests people are momentarily happier when drinking alcohol. It increases the happiness level by 11% with the first drink. -- but drinking more over extended periods does not satisfy them more [with life](#).
- **Coping skills and Regulation of affect:** Learn to improve your coping skills. There are three types of skills. Appraisal-focused (Know your problem, accept, deny, defer or fight), **Problem Focused** (What one does about the problem), **Emotion Focused coping** (How do one Controls emotions, venting, humor, acceptance).
- **Disability:** People with disability have [lower life satisfaction](#) - if their disability is recent and they lack social, economic, and health resources. Adaptive functioning will bring your happiness back to normal, but you do not have much time to gain that lost ground in your old age.

Wealth:

*“Money can't buy you happiness,
but it does bring you a more
pleasant form of misery.”*

-Spike Milligan

Easterlin Paradox



[Easterlin, 1974](#)

Wealth:
Two sides of the Coin: Heads or Tails?

Heads:

- Money can buy happiness only at a certain level. Happiness plateaued out at 75K in 1990 money (now 105K)
- Increasing income is commonly associated with increased happiness and subjective well-being. However, a point at which subjective well-being no longer increases with income ([Clark 2008](#); [Dolan 2008](#); [Easterlin, 1974](#)).
- Being wealthy will bring turmoil like pressure to continue making money, insecurity, people depending on you, and less time for leisure.
- Hedonic Treadmill: Rich people have inner dissatisfaction.

Easterlin 1974
Andrew Jebb 2018: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0277-0>

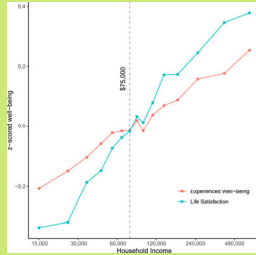
Wealth: Two sides of the coin Heads or Tails?

Tails (More money, more happiness)

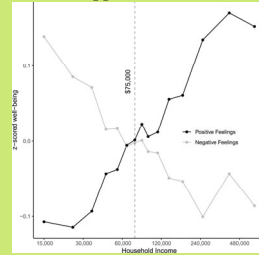
- [Stevenson \(2008\)](#) has tried to debunk the Easterlin paradox.
 1. Rich people are happier than poor people.
 2. Richer countries are happier than poorer countries.
 3. As countries get richer, they tend to get happier.
- [Wolf \(2015\)](#): People with higher incomes tend to be given lighter prison sentences for the same crimes, have [better Physical & Mental health](#), have [greater longevity](#), are less frequently the victims of violent crime, and experience fewer stressful life events.
- [Killingsworth \(2021\)](#) took a live cell phone sample from 33,391 US adults and asked them to rate their [present](#) happiness and life satisfaction. Those with larger incomes were associated with more momentary positive feelings and life satisfaction. The finding held even in incomes well above \$75,000 annually, refuting earlier research. The happiness level kept climbing even for those who made half a million dollars annually.

Tails: Money does Bring Happiness [Killingsworth \(2021\)](#)

Life Satisfaction



Present Happiness



Third side: It's all in perception and anticipation

- If people perceive they are poorer, they have a higher chance of lower life satisfaction.
- The inability to "keep up with the Joneses" might result in dissatisfaction, even for high-status people.
- Evidence suggests that perceptions of positive change in financial circumstances, as opposed to current circumstances, may also be necessary for well-being. Remember your first job or your first year out of residency?
- Loss of income brings more misery than a gain in income
- People are unhappy if they perceive their current financial situation to be worse than last year and will be worse in the coming years.
- A classic example is the current inflation and the bear stock market. Do not be surprised if our [misery index](#) (unemployment, inflation, and bank-lending rates, minus the percentage change in real GDP per capita) will increase in the following years.

Hank, S: <https://www.cato.org/commentary/hankles-2020-misery-index-when-miserable-when-happy>

Wealth

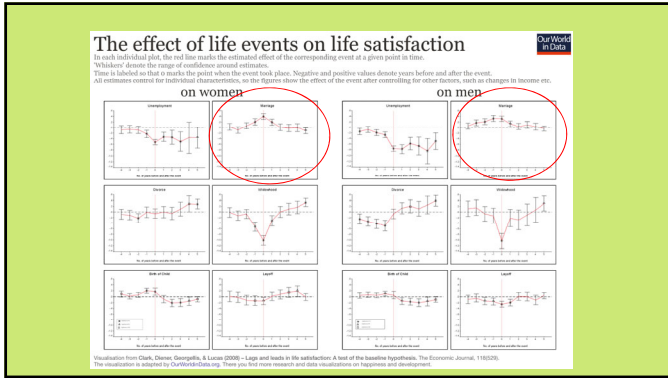
- At some extent money does buy happiness. People did not see happiness level rising after income of 75K/year.
- Citizens of wealthy nations have 7/10 chance of being happy and if you add free choice the chance jumped to 8/10
- Money can make you happy if you do something with it for others

How can Money buy Happiness

- **Buy an Experience and not stuff:** Experiences elevate our sense of happiness more because we anticipate and remember them better.
- **Spend money on others or a cause:** Personal (expenses and gifts for themselves) Vs. Prosocial spending (gifting money to others or a charity, buying for a cause).
- **Outsource your mundane and tedious work:** A 2017 study suggests spending money on time-saving services (such as a house cleaner, lawn care, or grocery delivery) can make them feel happier than spending money on material purchases. Buying time with money may reduce feelings of time pressure on a given day. Time pressure is stressful and reduces life satisfaction

How can money buy Happiness

- **Buy Material goods that help you experience joy:** You did buy expensive stuff. Now your job is to make the best out of it.
- **Express Yourself Through Spending:** if you love to travel and identify with an adventuresome lifestyle, spending money on travel (an experience) or even a travel gadget (possession) will give you joy. Introverts found happiness in spending \$10 in a quiet bookstore, whereas extroverts loved spending on a drink in a crowded bar.
- **Rent a dose of happiness:** Lyubomirsky, the author of "The How of Happiness," says you can still enjoy something without owning it, whether it's a video, cabin hideaway, or sports car.



Worthy Partner/Spouse/Love

- The last 45 years of studies show that marriage has been thought to affect well-being by elevating financial resources, fostering better physical health, and providing more incredible emotional support.
- **Married people are three times happier** than cohabitating partners.
- Marriage brings good health: Lower substance abuse and suicide—**higher chance of surviving** after heart attacks and cancer.
- It reduces loneliness, prolonging life.
- It brings financial stability.
- Divorced and single parents have more difficulty with parenting. Divorcees were the most unhappy and likely to commit suicide, even more than widowed.

Why do we Work?

- **Source of income:** Losing income is more detrimental
- **Structure and Routine:** A routine can also give you a psychological sense of daily progress and shape and structure your activities. Routines keep bad habits away and bring a sense of control and familiarity into your life. It also prevents procrastination and, in turn, reduces your anxiety.
- **Source of personal status and Identity:** Our **identity** and self-esteem are closely bound together. They derive from a sense of personal value, worth, and being needed and loved for what we are, not just from our work.
- **Socialization:** Being away from stress at home. Home life with kids can be stressful. People in their child-rearing age are **more unhappy than older ages**. Some people work to fight loneliness.

Friedmann and Havighurst (1954)

Why do we Work?

- **Personal growth:** "calling" includes the idea that people have been summoned to meaningful, socially valued work by a transcendent call. This calling could be from God, society's needs, or a sense of spiritual connection with a type of work.
- **Burnout:** work can be detrimental for some, increasing their physical and mental health burden.
- **WFH:** when organizational and social support is present, individuals feel less socially isolated, increasing their job satisfaction levels (Bentley et al., 2016). Social and professional isolation and perceived threats to professional advancement are negative aspects

Friedmann and Havighurst (1954)

Work

- Unemployment reduces the probability of a high life satisfaction score by 19% and a high overall happiness score by 15%
- Americans maximize their utility (happiness) by working, and Europeans maximize their utility through leisure!
- Unemployed men, middle-aged and educated suffer most in reach countries. Being unemployed was associated with a [two to three-fold increased relative risk of death by suicide](#).
- Retirement can only be beneficial if viewed positively. We educate for 12-20 years to prepare for work. We spend minimal time planning for retirement.

Work

- Find a work that fulfills your "meaning of life."
- Find a work that makes you get up in the morning
- If you can not change your job, think about ways you can be creative and change the ways you do things.
- Always look for other opportunities and challenges
- If you are a boss: find people's strengths and create a team

Poor Outcome in Retirement

- Poor health,
- Being single,
- High physical work demands,
- High work pressure,
- Low job satisfaction,
- Lack of physical activity in leisure time.

Van Den Berg: J Occup Environ Med. 2010

Well-Wishers (Social Connections)

- [In a meta-analysis of 148 studies](#), researchers found a 50% increased likelihood of survival for participants with stronger social relationships .
- **Family (positive):** = close friends
- **Friends:** Equally important, it increases happiness by 1.5 times if a friend lives nearby (Framingham Study). Survival was 25% more for those with friends in an Australian study.
- **Religion:** Religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes, including greater longevity, coping skills, less anxiety and depression, and suicide. [Pew Research study](#) stated that actively religious people are likelier to be “very happy” in a religious country. The study also found that religious people are in good health, smoke or drink less, exercise more, and are more engaged in civic participation.
 1. Julianne Holt-Lunstad: PLOS 2010, Meta-analysis of 148 studies
 2. Framingham Study: BMJ 2008
 3. Pew: Religion and Happiness study 2019

Well-Wishers (Social Connections)

- **Pets:** Most are short studies, better in cardiac, anxiety, and PTSD (1).
- **Community/Institutions/Organizations:** Living in a close community or good governance nation increases happiness and provides better health and longevity (2).
- **Volunteering:** it increases your connections and improves your health. Volunteers had low mortality rates (3). It brings meaning to your life.
- **Hobbies:** bring a “Flow” and reduces stress. It has mental and physical boosts. It can improve your connections or helps your loneliness. It can keep you out of trouble with your spouse if you are retired.

1. Nancy R. Gee & Megan K. Mueller (2019) Anthrozoös, 32:2, 183-207,
2. ShareCare community Index study: 2021
3. Kornath,s: Health & Psychology 2011

Can you Buy Happiness?

- Buy Experience and not material things
- May buy Experiential products: Like collecting things
- Experience of buying and thinking about buying is as big as actual purchase
- Buying experience will provide sense of accomplishment and buying experiential products gives you sense of connectedness
- Paying for not to have an experience: buy help, pay more to live in downtown to not to commute

Gilovich, Van Boven: J of Personality and social science, 2003
 Howell, Hill: J of Positive Psychology, 2009

12 Intentional Activities for Increasing Life Satisfaction (see Handout)



https://chatsworthconsulting.com/Chatsworth_Consulting_Group_12_Intentional_Activities.pdf

Vasavada's W's

- Wellbeing: physical, mental, and personality
- Wealth or absence of poverty
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