

Authentic Happiness & Human Flourishing

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SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

Overview of Course

- Week 1 Authentic Happiness, Positive Emotions and Flow
- Week 2 Human Flourishing
- Week 3 Dealing with the “Downside” (vulnerability and shame)—True Self/False Self
- Week 4 Putting It All Together

Positive Psychology

Field of Study about

- Positive emotions – momentary positive emotions (joy, flow, glee, pleasure, contentment, serenity, hope & ecstasy)
- Love
- Gratitude



Three questions:

- Why has evolution endowed us w/ these positive emotions?
functions/consequences (beyond making us feel good)
- Who has positive emotion in abundance, and who does not?
what enables / disables?
- How can you build more and lasting positive emotions in your life?

Thesis for Week 1

Authentic happiness comes from identifying and cultivating your most fundamental strengths and using them every day in work, love, play and parenting.



The Science of Happiness & Longevity

- 180 nuns, Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukee
- Randomized controlled trial (adjusted for diet, smoking/drinking, reproductive/marital histories, economic/social class, access to medical care).
- amount of positive feeling was quantified by raters who didn't each nun's age
- Those who were more joyful lived longer

90% of most cheerful alive

at age 85 (54% at age 94)

34% of the least cheerful alive

at age 95 (11% at age 94)



Feelings and Traits

- Feelings are states – momentary and fleeting
- Traits are characteristics that persist (positive and negative) – abiding
- Traits influence our experience of momentary emotions

Trait of optimism—tend to interpret troubles as transient, controllable, specific to one situation

Trait of pessimism—tend to believe troubles last forever, undermine everything, uncontrollable

Mayo Clinic study – optimists have 19% greater longevity

Positive versus Negative

- Therapeutic Model is built upon negative analysis (DSM)
- Positive Psychology is revolutionary in its focus on the positive
 - 24 strengths available to us
 - Six core virtues that find expression in the strengths
 1. Wisdom and knowledge
 2. Courage
 3. Love and humanity
 4. Justice
 5. Temperance
 6. Spirituality & Transcendence
- Wisdom: curiosity, love of learning, judgment, originality, social intelligence, perspective
- Love: kindness, generosity, nurturance, the capacity to be loved as well as to love

Studies yield remarkable findings

- Positive emotions broaden our intellectual, physical and social resources
- Happy people remember more good events than actually happened, they forget more of the bad events.
- Happier people are markedly more satisfied with their jobs.
- Happy people endure pain better, Take more health and safety precautions when threatened AND, positive emotions undo negative emotions—happiness is propagative of more positive experience
- Happy people are more altruistic, empathetic, and generous (win-win scenario)

The Happiness Formula $H=S+C+V$

H – your Enduring Level of Happiness (not momentary)

S – your Set Range (inheritance)

C – the circumstances of your life

V – factors under your voluntary control



The Hedonic Treadmill



- we adapt quickly to good things
 - accumulate more good things---take them for granted
 - expectations rise – need to get something even better to boost happiness above your set range
 - next possession or achievement – boost / adaptation
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- External circumstances probably account for no more than between 8 and 15 % of the variance in happiness.

Money



Survey of life satisfaction of people in 40 nations:

On a scale of 1 (dissatisfied) to 10 (satisfied):

How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

***Scaled to compare the relative purchasing power of the people of that nation.*

Results: National purchasing power and average life satisfaction go strongly in same direction. Once the gross national product exceeds ~\$8000 per person the correlation disappears

******added wealth brings no further life satisfaction******

Changing the external circumstances

1. Live in an affluent democracy, not an impoverished dictatorship (strong effect)
2. Marry/Life Partner (a robust effect, but perhaps not causal)
3. Avoid negative events and negative emotion (moderate effect)
4. Acquire a rich social network (a robust effect, but perhaps not causal)
5. Get religion (a moderate effect)

No Apparent Correlation with Increasing Happiness:

6. Making more money (the more materialistic you are, the less happy)
7. Staying healthy (subjective health, not objective health matters)
8. Getting more education (no effect)
9. Changing your race / or move to a more pleasant climate (no effect)

The Happiness Formula $H=S+C+V$

H – your Enduring Level of Happiness (not momentary)

S – your Biological Set Point (genetic)

C – the circumstances of your life (life conditions)

V – factors under your voluntary control

- Biological Set Point constitutes approx. 50% of your score on a “happiness test”
- External circumstances factor only 8-15% of overall happiness
PPV
- Voluntary (internal) circumstances will move the needle, but it is hard work!

Moving the Needle



V – variables under your voluntary control can lastingly help you live in the upper part of your set range of happiness

1. look for the positive emotions that you feel about the past.

***N.B. Use your intellect to let go of an ideology that your past determines your future*

2. Release the negative emotions (esp anger)

3. Voluntarily change your memories

4. Increase your gratitude about the good things in your past

5. Learn how to forgive past wrongs.

Living in the Present (Flow)

Savoring the Pleasures and Gratifying Experiences of Life

- Basking (receiving praise and congratulations)
- Thanksgiving (expressing gratitude for blessings)
- Marveling (losing the self in the wonder of the moment)
- Luxuriating (indulging the senses)

Worship is about Savoring the Present (Praise, Glory, Doxology, Communion)

Homework

- Take the Gratitude Survey
 - Take the Satisfaction in Life Survey
 - Consider doing one or more of the exercises related to gratitude and forgiveness
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- More at www.authentic happiness.com



Next Week

- Human Flourishing (eudaimonia)
- Character Strengths as Predictors of Well-being
- Some Pitfalls in all this

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Questions & Conversation