

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS: Living Your Best Life



Living Happier
Ever After™



Jessica Dang
learn awesomely™

INTRODUCTION

How happy are you with your life right now?

Ask most people this question and their answers will vary considerably. It's an interesting question to consider and for many of us, a difficult one to answer. If we take the question one step further and ask 'Would you like to be happier?' you'll likely hear a resounding 'Yes!' in the room.

Feeling happy is a wonderful experience. When we feel happy our productivity improves, as do our feelings of self-worth, and our ability to overcome emotional challenges. Happiness has a far-reaching impact across nearly all areas of life, and when we feel happier in one area, it tends to seep into other areas too. Popular culture has picked up on this and no matter your preferred method of learning, there are options for everyone to explore the topic further.

From bestselling self-help books such as *The How of Happiness* by happiness pioneer Sonja Lyubormirsky, to online courses like *The Science of Happiness* offered by the research organisation The Greater Good Science Center, there is no end to the resources available to help us explore and better understand what happiness means.

Aside from the emotional and mental health benefits, happiness also positively impacts our physical wellbeing. From better heart health to a more resilient immune system and the ability to mitigate pain more successfully. It's no surprise the academic and research worlds have turned a keen eye on the subject. One of the areas of psychology research that has really been focusing on happiness is Positive Psychology. It is important that we distinguish between Positive Psychology and concepts like positive mental attitude, positive thinking and other similar practices made popular by thousands of books. Positive Psychology is a highly credible and established area of psychology that incorporates serious research conducted by some of the most accomplished thinkers in academia and clinical practice.

Positive Psychology seeks to help us understand a full spectrum of emotions, both positive and negative, and how they impact our emotional and behavioural responses to different scenarios. The research within this area of psychology has offered some eye-opening science-backed insights into the power of happiness, as well as developing some fundamental tools and resources to help individuals cultivate happier lives.

Within this eBook, we'll be taking a deep dive into just what that research has to say, looking at why happiness is such an important concept, and offering some guidance and tools to help you harness more happiness in your own life. This eBook is part of a complete set of free resources. I encourage you to use it with the accompanying video series, slides, infographics and posters. I assure you, the little time you put aside to do this will be time well spent.



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CHAPTER

ONE

What is Positive Psychology?

+ **Positive [poz-i-tiv]:** a constructive intention or attitude; showing optimism and confidence; measured or moving forward or in a direction of improvement or progress, an affirmative or constructive attribute.

Ψ **Psychology [sahy-kol-uh-jee]:** the study of the mind and behavioural characteristics typical of an individual or group in relation to a particular field of knowledge or activity.

Source: Positive Psychology Institute

“Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living.”

Peterson, 2008

Positive Psychology is a scientific approach to exploring and studying human behaviour, emotions, thoughts, and feelings with a focus on positive experience and personal strengths.

Positive Psychology concepts have been applied to individuals, communities, and organisations around the world.

One of the founding principles of **Positive Psychology** is that each and every one of us wants to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life in

order to flourish. The founders of the field felt that traditional psychological methods, such as psychotherapy, tended to place too much emphasis and focus on painful experiences and negative emotions. While **Positive Psychology** does not seek to deny the importance of these experiences, it does believe that empowering individuals to refocus on their personal strengths can lead to a greater sense of healing. Seligman (2002) has advised that

Positive Psychology considers itself to be a complement to other therapeutic approaches, rather than a replacement for them.

As a whole, **Positive Psychology** aims to represent a commitment to addressing the imbalance it sees within psychological approaches, with a renewed focus on psychological wellbeing, positive emotions, experiences, and environments, as well as personal strengths and virtues (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Who Founded Positive Psychology?

Martin Seligman is considered to be the core founder of Positive Psychology.



His impressive career as a psychological researcher dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, laying the foundation for **Positive Psychology** with research exploring learned helplessness, resilience and character traits.

As his career progressed, **Seligman** became increasingly frustrated with what he considered to be the narrow focus within psychology on negative emotions, trauma, suffering and pain. In his own research, **Seligman** had been discovering the benefits of focusing on and helping individuals to learn how to cultivate more positive emotions, including happiness, as well as personal strengths and characteristics.

In 1998, he was elected as President of the American Psychological Association and used this opportunity to propose a new subfield of psychology:

Positive Psychology. In 2000, **Seligman** and another core researcher in this area, the founder of the psychological concept **Flow**, **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**, published their foundational paper on the field.

Since then, thousands of other psychologists and researchers have taken on the approach, amassing tens of thousands of studies focused on exploring and establishing positive psychology concepts. These studies have gone on to have amazing applications within therapy, coaching, teaching, and many other domains of life.

Four Core Aims of Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology focuses predominantly on character strengths, resilience, life satisfaction, positive wellbeing, happiness, gratitude, self-compassion, esteem and confidence. These topics are explored with the purpose of establishing tools and techniques to help people flourish and live meaningful lives. Regardless of the area of life they are being applied to, it is generally accepted that there are four core aims within **Positive Psychology**:

- 1 To help an individual rise to the challenges of life, accept and understand setbacks, and overcome adversity in positive ways.
- 2 To engage and relate to others empathetically and positively, and build meaningful relationships.
- 3 To flourish and discover a sense of purpose through creative and productive pursuits.
- 4 To look beyond the self and uncover meaning, a sense of satisfaction, and wisdom through helping others and giving back to community.

“Positive Psychology is not a self-help movement or a re-packaging of “the power of positive thinking.” It is not American-style “happy-ology,” and it is not a passing fad. Positive Psychology is a science that brings the many virtues of

science – replication, controlled causal studies, peer review, representative sampling (to name a few) – to bear on the question of how and when people flourish.”
(Robert Biswas-Diener, 2008).

CHAPTER TWO



Happiness [ha-pee-nuhs]: the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.

Source: Lyubomirsky (2007)

“Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and the end of human existence.”

Aristotle

Happiness can be extremely difficult to define as it is so subjective: we all experience our own version of happiness and what creates feelings of happiness changes from person to person, as well as over time.

Within **Positive Psychology**, happiness is often referred to as **Subjective Well Being** (SWB). This reframing of happiness allows researchers to understand, evaluate and measure happiness for the purpose of scientific studies.

There are three core ways SWB is measured (Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005):

- 1 Happiness as an assessment of global satisfaction
- 2 Happiness as a measurement of satisfaction within life domains (for example, work and relationships)
- 3 Happiness as a recollection of emotional reactions (Positive or Negative State Affect)

These are Cognitive factors, Affective Factors and Contextual Factors

Subjective Wellbeing

Global Satisfaction
Happiness
Satisfaction with Life Domains
Positive State Affect



Cognitive Factors

Satisfaction Life Domains
Comparison Standards

Affective Factors

Positive State / Trait Affect
Negative State / Trait Affect
Anxiety / Depression / Stress

Contextual Factors

Life events
Socio-Demographic Variable

These labels have been used by psychologists to help them measure what the different components that impact happiness are. Here's what they mean in more general terms:



Cognitive Factors

Cognitive factors refers to the way we think, as well as how we acknowledge, perceive and process information as it relates to us personally and socially. In this component of SWB, psychologists have determined to core areas:

- 1 **Satisfaction with Life Domains:** Life domains are the various areas of life that we might find happiness within. These include our relationships, our work, our finances, and our position within our communities.
- 2 **Comparison Standards:** This relates to how we feel we compare to others around us, who might live within similar standards and whether we feel we compare more favourably or not.



Affective Factors

Affective factors are the emotional factors that influence our capacity to feel happy. These can be positive or negative. Within psychology, these are split into Positive State (or trait) Affect and Negative State (or trait) Affect:

- 1 **Positive State Affect:** How well and how often you tap into positive emotions and personality traits such as optimism, self-confidence, wisdom or gratitude.
- 2 **Negative State Affect:** How often you tap into negative emotions or personality traits such as pessimism, frustration, anger or sadness.



Contextual Factors

Where cognitive and affective factors are related more to our internal capacity to feel happiness, contextual factors are related to the external factors that have an impact. There are two areas that referenced in this diagram:

- 1 **Life Events:** The events or experiences you might have had that influence your capacity to feel happiness. These could be positive, such as a wedding, a job promotion, a new born in the family, or negative such as a death in the family, a redundancy or medical emergency.
- 2 **Socio-Demographic Factors:** This relates to the different situational factors that might impact your ability to find happiness. For example, if you come from a poorer background, you might not have been able to get access to the best schooling and this can have a lead on impact to other areas of your life that impact happiness, such as work.

If an individual has a high level of satisfaction within their cognitive factors, a higher level of positive state affect over negative state affect, and a positive view of their contextual factors, they would be deemed as having a high level of SWB. In short, they'd be considered to be very happy.

7 Benefits of Cultivating More Happiness

Cultivating more happiness has been linked to a number of emotional, mental health, and physical health benefits. We'll be exploring the research in more detail in the next chapter, but for now here are seven core benefits that Positive Psychology has linked to high levels of SWB:



1. Reduced Feelings of Stress

Studies have found a direct link between feelings of happiness and the stress hormone, Cortisol. Individuals who rated themselves as the happiest were also found to have the lowest levels of cortisol in their blood (Steptoe, Wardle, & Marmot, 2005). Other studies have found that when faced with stressful situations, those who report higher happiness interpreted the situation as challenging but ultimately beneficial in some way.



2. A Healthier Heart

Several studies have linked happiness with improved heart health and a lower risk of heart disease by up to 26%. Even amongst individuals who had already been diagnosed with a heart condition, those who rated the happiest had the healthiest heart patterns amongst their peers with similar conditions (Bhattacharyya, Whitehead, Rakhit & Steptoe, 2008).



3. A More Resilient Immune System

Happiness has been linked to the ability to ward off viruses, such as the common cold, and some studies have found that those who report high levels of happiness also have higher levels of antibodies in response to exposure to common vaccines (Marsland et al, 2006).



4. Higher Levels of Productivity

People who are happy tend to exhibit higher levels of connection to their work, and as such act more productively. One study found that individuals who were exposed to scenarios that induced feelings of happiness were up to 12% more productive than their peers who were exposed to scenarios that induced negative emotions (Oswald, Proto and Sgroi, 2009).



5. Increased Relationship Satisfaction

Happy people are repeatedly rated as more likable, approachable, trustworthy and trusting (Fredrickson, 2009). When we are happy, it can have a positive impact on those around us, increasing our range of positive interactions and further creating a stronger sense of belonging with those with whom we share close relationships.



6. A Better Night's Sleep

It makes sense that a good night's sleep will help you to feel less grouchy the next day, but some research has indicated that the reverse can also be true. One study found that individuals who expressed experiencing happiness as an internal personal characteristic by practicing happiness (such as practicing gratitude) consistently rated a higher quality of sleep over individuals who expressed experiencing happiness as a response to external experiences, such as a positive result on a test or a job promotion (Ong et al, 2017).



7. Increased Life Span

One of the most interesting findings from the research on happiness within **Positive Psychology** is that it could lead to a longer life span.

Research has found strong links between individuals who consistently report a higher sense of life satisfaction and their life expectancy. Happier individuals were more likely to live longer, compared with individuals in the same study who consistently reported a low sense of life satisfaction (Carstensen et al 2011).

More and more studies are taking place to explore the reason behind this, but many researchers have speculated it's due to the fact that more consistent feelings of happiness have been linked to better heart health, immune system resilience and lower stress. As excessive stress can create more serious health complications later in life if left unchecked, psychologists see a strong link between low stress and a long life expectancy in the context of happiness.



“The word 'happiness' always bothered me, partly because it was scientifically unwieldy and meant a lot of different things to different people, and also because it's subjective.”

(Martin Seligman)

CHAPTER THREE

Positive Psychology + Happiness: The Research

“The belief that we can rely on shortcuts to happiness, joy, rapture, comfort, and ecstasy, rather than be entitled to these feelings by the exercise of personal strengths and virtues, leads to legions of people who, in the middle of great wealth, are starving spiritually.”

Martin Seligman

In the previous chapter, we began to explore the many connections between happiness and a variety of personal, interpersonal, emotional and physical benefits. While the research is still exploring the reasons behind this, there are some truly interesting findings emerging that certainly can't be ignored

- Steptoe & Wardle (2005) asked participants to self-rate their happiness 30 times during the course of one day. Participants were asked to repeat the same exercise three years later. Individuals who rated themselves the happiest on the first day and three years later had the lowest blood pressure and heart rate across all participants. These findings suggest that happiness can contribute positively to having a healthy heart.
- In addition to heart disease, happiness has been linked to reducing the risk of having a

stroke. Strokes occur when the blood flow to the brain is disrupted, resulting in a loss of physical control and responsiveness. Ostir, Markides, Peek & Goodwin (2001) found adults with higher positive well-being, had a reduced likelihood of having a stroke.

- Stone et al (1987) explored the immune system and positive moods, by asking participants to ingest a pill that caused an immune response. Participants were asked to rate their mood and then their saliva was tested for antibodies in response to the pill. Those who rated the

happiest also had higher levels of antibodies. This suggests feeling more positive can help support the immune system to defend against foreign bodies.

- Zautra, Johnson & Davis (2005) found that happier people are able to manage pain more positively when experiencing chronic illness. Participants with chronic pain were asked to rate their positive emotions and experiences of pain over a three-month period. Those who reported more positive feelings also reported fewer increases in pain.

Tavares (2015) explored the relationship between happiness and physical activity across different countries. Citizens were surveyed and asked to self-report feelings of happiness on an index and how physically active

they were. Countries with lower values on the happiness index were also linked to lower physical exercise. This suggests that when we are happy, we are more motivated to take part in behaviours that benefit our overall

health such as exercise. Tavares (2015) devised the Health-Physical Activity-Happiness Triangle (below) to highlight how each factor feeds into each other.



The dotted line between 'Happiness' and 'Physical Activity' is acknowledging the two-way process that these things have on each other. When we feel happy, we are more inclined to engage in positive behaviours, such as exercise. Conversely, when we exercise we also feel happier.

Happiness and Life Expectancy: The Research

There is increasing research exploring the connection between happiness and life expectancy.

- A longitudinal study spanning 13 years conducted by Carstensen et al (2011) found that positive emotional experience predicted mortality. Participants who reported higher positive emotions over negative emotions were more likely to have survived the full length of the study.
- Chida and Steptoe (2008) conducted a review of 70 observational studies exploring the connection between positive well-being and life expectancy. Healthy participants who rated a higher level of positive well being reduced their risk of death by 18%, and by 2% for participants with a high level of positive well being and a pre-existing condition.
- Boehm et al (2015) found participants who reported a low sense of life satisfaction with a high level of variability (meaning they went through high and low phases) were more likely to die early than participants who reported a consistently low sense of satisfaction.

Researchers have speculated over why this link exists. The prevalent connection with individuals who are happiest seems to be they are inclined to engage in behaviors which are positive for their overall health, including physical exercise, healthy eating, avoiding excessive drinking and smoking, sleeping well, and meditation (Strine et al, 2008).

“Probably the biggest insight is that happiness is not just a place but a process. Happiness is an ongoing process of fresh challenges, and it takes the right attitudes to continue to be happy.”

(Ed Diener)

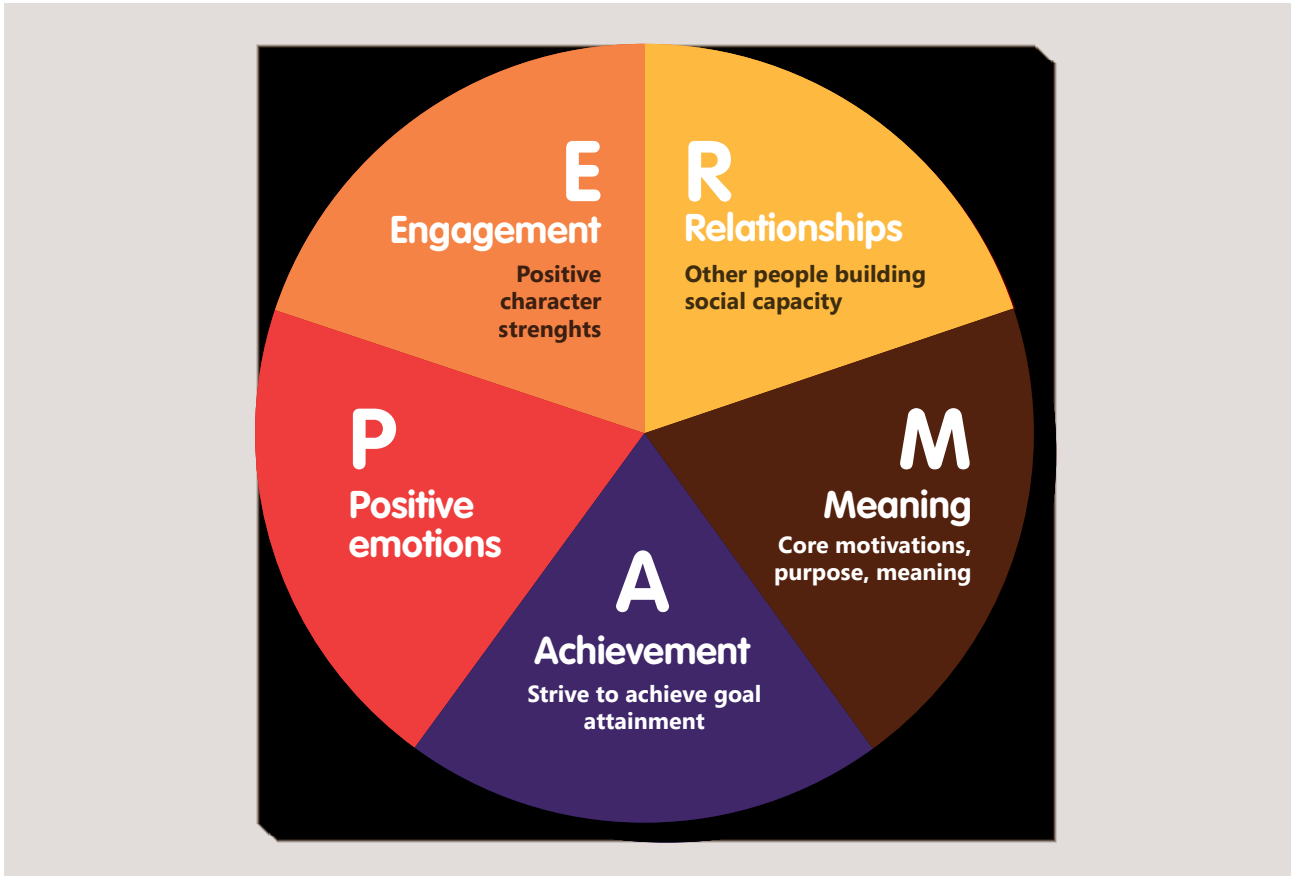
CHAPTER

FOUR

A Look at the PERMA Model for Happiness

The PERMA Model was devised by the founder of Positive Psychology, Martin Seligman, and it's an interesting one to explore for its simplicity in breaking down what happiness can mean for each of us as individuals. The model is comprised of five elements Seligman believes can help us cultivate greater well-being. Understanding how each of these elements applies to the self is key to increasing our overall feelings of happiness. PERMA is the acronym for these elements. Here's what they are and what they mean:

Positive Emotions	P	Positive emotions help us in a number of ways, including tackling negative emotions. For positive emotions to support us, we first need to ensure our basic needs are met. Basic needs include food, water, shelter, and sleep. When these needs are being met, we are able to focus on what can further fuel our positive emotions, such as intellectual and creative pursuits, relationships, and fulfilling work.
Engagement	E	Engagement is also referred to as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Flow is the process of being fully immersed in the activities and tasks that fill our lives. When we are in a state of flow, we are not only engaged, but positively committed to what we are doing. In this state of engagement, we are able to derive enjoyment and pleasure from what we are doing and in return, this further increases our engagement.
Relationships	R	Positive and authentic relationships are crucial to happiness. Positive and inspiring connections lead to more positive emotions, enabling us to feel heard, seen, and supported. Playing an active role within those relationships – by offering support, listening, and helping in return – also leads to more positive emotions.
Meaning	M	Meaning is more than what you do. It includes the ideas, beliefs and values you hold about yourself and life, and how you live those beliefs authentically. Happiness isn't only derived from having already found meaning. Even if you have some ideas around what meaning looks like for you or are starting to pursue a greater sense of purpose, this can lead to greater happiness and well-being.
Achievement	A	Achievement is not simply success or 'winning'. It refers to how much we challenge ourselves in positive and progressive ways which encourage us to develop our positive strengths and skills. Achievement can be found through setting realistic and attainable goals, which create feelings of progress. Finding achievement in these ways encourages positive emotions, such as confidence, and adds to our overall sense of happiness and well-being.



Positive Emotions: Gratitude, Optimism, Resilience, Self-Confidence, Wisdom

Seligman advises there are three characteristics that need to be understood and met in order for each element of PERMA to be utilised fully:

- 1 All elements are equally important as each other
- 2 Each element needs to contribute to overall happiness and well-being
- 3 Each element needs to be measured and considered independently from the others

The model has recently been extended to include the letter H for Health, with the new model acronym becoming PERMAH or PERMA-H (Nourish et al., 2013).

The Health component was added after other researchers felt the original model was missing a crucial element that leads to a sense of wellbeing – physical health.

“P is positive emotion, E is engagement, R is relationships, M is meaning and A is accomplishment. Those are the five elements of what free people chose to do. Pretty much everything else is in service of one of or more of these goals. That’s the human dashboard.”

(Martin Seligman)

CHAPTER

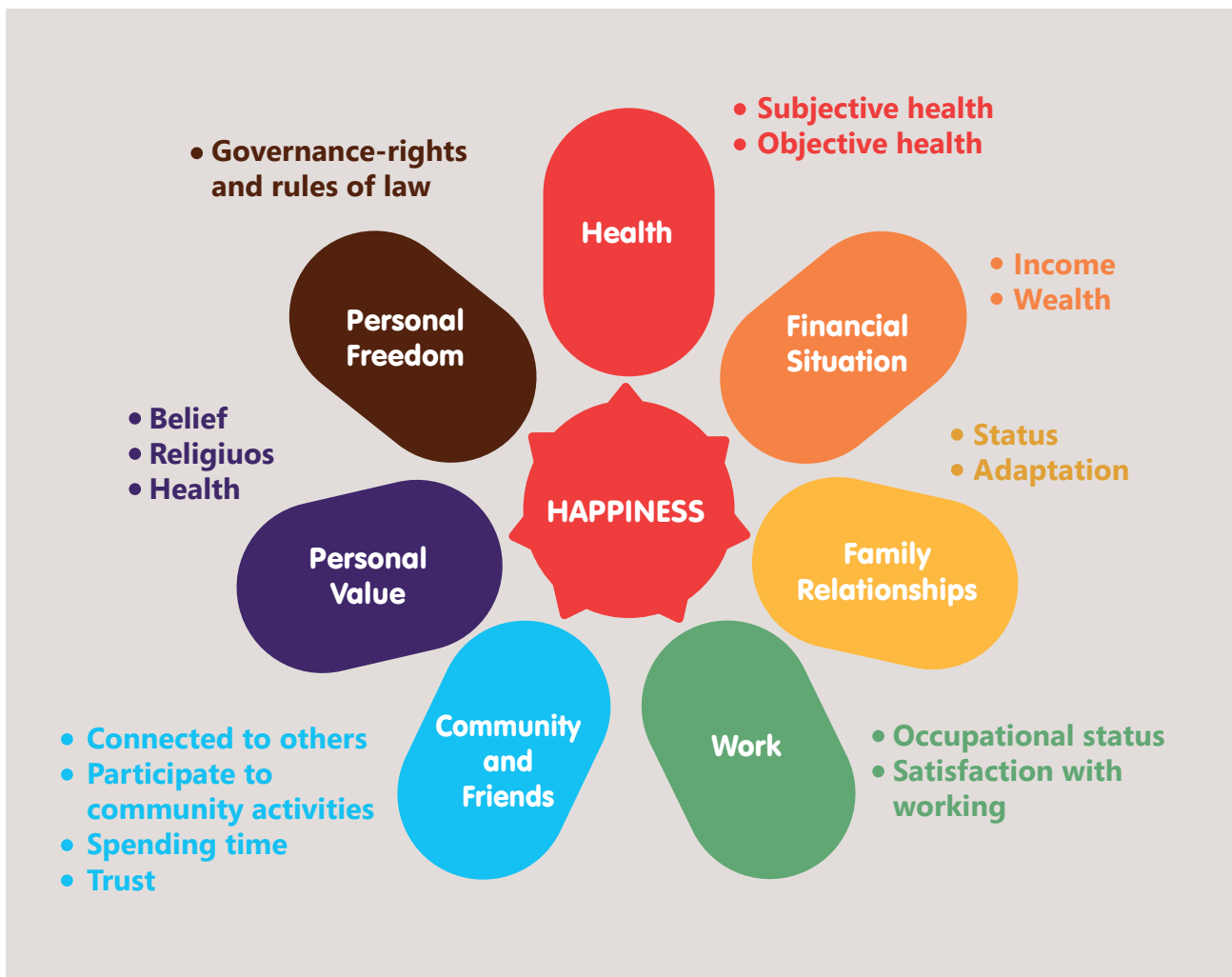
FIVE

Positive Psychology + Personal Happiness

“Happiness can be successfully pursued, but it is not ‘easy’”

Sonja Lyubomirsky and Kennon M. Sheldon

Personal happiness is influenced by a range of different factors:



While there are many types of happiness, but they all fall within one of two core categories:

- 1 **Hedonic Happiness:** Happiness is the experience of more pleasure and less pain, and is composed of an affective state (positive versus negative) and a positive cognitive state (a sense of satisfaction with life).
- 2 **Eudaimonic Happiness:** Happiness is the result of pursuing, attaining and maintaining a sense of purpose, meaning, and personal growth. (AIPC, 2011)

In this particular book, we'll be focusing more on Eudaimonic happiness.

Positive Psychology promotes the concept of personal happiness and pursuing a 'good life' which can be defined in four ways:

- **The Pleasant Life** – The drive to do things that enhance self-satisfaction.
- **The Engaged Life** – The process of seeking deeper insights into emotions, and character strengths, and acting to make changes where needed.
- **The Meaningful Life** – The act of seeking your true purpose and meaning of life.
- **The Achieving Life** – Where happiness and a true sense of self are derived from understanding, acknowledging and acting on core life dreams.

3 Simple Ways to Increase Personal Happiness



1. Practice Mindfulness

There are many forms of mindfulness and meditation. Regular mindful practice has been linked to increased positive emotions, well-being, and social connectedness, so it pays to spend some time finding the right practice that works for you.



2. Reconnect with Nature

Probably one of the easiest ways to feel happier is to reconnect with what psychologists call 'Green Spaces' - Nature. Even a short walk a day in a park or nature has been shown to have significant outcomes for feelings of joy, calmness, and happiness. Walking encourages the release of the 'happiness' hormone, endorphins (Elaine: endorphins are a class/ type of neurotransmitter, not single hormone. Please rephrase. which can help us to feel more connected to ourselves and the world around us.



3. Make Time for Laughter & Play

Laughter and play have been linked with reducing feelings of stress, and the related health concerns (high blood pressure and heart disease to name a couple). As adults, we often forget to make or allow time for play. This could simply be putting on some music and having a dance, doing a fun activity with family or friends, or laughing at ourselves when we do something silly or make a mistake. Play and laughter encourage discovery, creativity, and feelings of pleasure. Find a moment each day to make time for them.

“If positive psychology teaches us anything, it is that all of us are mixture of strengths and weaknesses. No one has it all, and no one lacks it all.”

Christopher Peterson

Positive Psychology Exercise: Three Things Daily Gratitude Practice for Personal Happiness

How often do you take the time each day to reflect on the good things that have happened, no matter how small they are? Often, we get caught up ruminating on the negative things that have impacted our day we forget to show appreciation for all the good. Daily Gratitude practice can help invite more positive emotions into your life. The premise is simple but extremely effective.

The template below can be duplicated as many times as you need. From once a day to once a week, it's a great reflection tool to realise all the positive things that are easily missed. Note that you don't have to write down your responses. Simply lying down in bed and responding in your mind works too.



Personal Gratitude

Write down three things about yourself that you are grateful for today:

1	
2	
3	

Relationship Gratitude

Write down three things you are grateful for in your relationships.
This could be your spouse or partner, children, friends, family or colleagues:

1	
2	
3	

Work Gratitude

Write down three things about your work or professional life that you are grateful for today:

1	
2	
3	

Three Good Things I Want to Remember From Today

Write down three good or positive things that happened for you today, no matter how small:

1	
2	
3	

CHAPTER SIX

Positive Psychology + Relationship Happiness

“On the relationship side, if you teach people to respond actively and constructively when someone they care about has a victory, it increases love and friendship and decreases the probability of depression.”

Martin Seligman

Relationships play a pivotal role in our overall feelings of personal happiness. A growing body of research has been looking into the core habits and characteristics of those who rate their relationships as the healthiest and happiest, with findings that anyone seeking to improve this area of their life can utilise.

When psychologists refer to relationships, they don't just mean our spouses or partners. Relationships encompass all of our social connections including those with our children, friends, family, colleagues, and even customers or clients in the workplace.

Why Does Relationship Happiness Matter?

Anyone who has ever experienced an unhappy relationship can tell you why a happy one really matters, especially for personal happiness. Studies in this area are offering some deeper insights that are well worth paying attention to:

- Diener and Seligman (2002) surveyed a population of university students to understand what contributed most to their feelings of happiness. The top 10% of students who self-rated themselves as the happiest and lowest for signs of depression, also cited strong relationships to friends and family and a high commitment to spending time with these relationships.

- Jackson, Soderlind and Weiss (2000) studied the quality of relationships and found that as long as individuals had one strong relationship or friendship, they were less likely to feel lonely and more willing to self-disclose personal issues and feelings. Individuals who reported lots of friends but the inability to self-disclose still reported high feelings of loneliness. This study

suggests that quality is key to relationship happiness over quantity.

- Smith et al (2012) found similar results, with individuals who self-rated as the happiest and higher in life satisfaction also reporting a strong network of social connections and working with their spouses to maintain low marital distress.

3 Ways to Improve Relationship Happiness

Just as with personal happiness, improving the amount of happiness you have in your relationships is a process. It requires reflection and work from you to explore what changes might be required. Below are three ways to help you begin this process:

1. Learn How to Respond Effectively

As individuals, we respond and react in different ways. How we respond is usually a reflection of how we've interpreted the situation. When it comes to communicating within our close relationships, learning to communicate in open and curious ways is key for increasing happiness. Gable, Reiss and Downey (2003) found that couples who responded in particular ways to good or bad news from their partners, had stronger relationships. They called this way of responding Active Constructive Responding (ACR).

In very simple terms, ACR involves responding to the news being shared by demonstrating interest and curiosity. This includes statements like:

- "I'm very excited to hear this and so happy you shared the news with me."
- "I want to hear more about this. When did it happen and how did you feel when it did?"
- "I know how much you've been wanting this to happen. I'm so happy it has."

ACR can feel unusual at first, especially if communication has stalled in your relationships, but responding in these ways can really help to increase how meaningful your relationships are.

2. Learn About Their Love Language

In 1992, Gary Chapman released his book *The Five Love Languages* and changed the way we think about how we engage in our relationships. Chapman ascertains that each of us has a core 'love language' - the way in which we most enjoy expressing our love and care for others, and the way we prefer others to demonstrate their love and care for us. The five languages are:

- **Words of Affirmation:** Positive phrases and acknowledgements
- **Acts of Service:** Doing small chores or tasks for the person you care about
- **Receiving Gifts:** The process of giving and receiving gifts
- **Quality Time:** Spending positive time together doing activities you enjoy
- **Physical Touch:** Showing you care through small physical gestures including holding hands, squeezing their arm or hugging

The love languages have been adapted for almost every type of relationship you can think of including parent and child, and work colleagues. You can [complete an online assessment](#) to determine what your love language is and use this to help others understand how you like to engage in relationships.

3. Keep Working on Yourself

People who are happier are rated as more likable overall, so it makes sense that if you want to improve the quality of your personal relationships, working on yourself and the things that make you happy will help to increase feelings of happiness in your other relationships too.

Positive Psychology Exercise: Self-Reflection DRAIN Worksheet for Relationship Happiness

Much like how changing our personal happiness requires reflection on how you talk about yourself internally and externally, the same is true when it comes to relationship happiness.

The following is a self-reflection exercise that you can do alone or with a partner, child, relative, colleague or friend. Its purpose is to have an honest conversation about how you interact and communicate with those you care about, and problem solve towards positive changes.

DRAIN is an acronym that stands for:

- D = Disconnection**
- R = Reactive**
- A = Avoidance**
- I = Insights**
- N = Neglectful**

Work through the following to enhance your understanding of how you are engaging in your relationships. This reflection can help you begin to change these behaviours, and invite more positivity and happiness into your relationships. This version uses the word 'partner', but you can switch this for whoever you want to focus this exercise on.

Disconnection

How do I disconnect from my partner?

(Do I get bored or irritable? Do I close off or shut down? Am I distracted rather than present?)

How does my partner disconnect from me?

What would you like to do differently?

(How can you communicate more effectively? What strategies can help you reconnect?)

Reactivity

How do I react impulsively without stopping to consider 'what I am doing'?

(Do I yell, snap, swear, walk away, say hurtful things, blame, or accuse?)

How does my partner react impulsively?

What would you like to do differently?

(How can you communicate more positively? What strategies can help you stay calm?)

Avoidance

How do I avoid painful or uncomfortable feelings related to the issues in this relationship?

(Do I use drugs, alcohol, food, or cigarettes? Do I withdraw from my partner? Do I distract myself with TV, computers, books, or going out? Do I avoid talking to my partner about how I am feeling?)

How does my partner seem to avoid or get rid of their painful or uncomfortable feelings?

What would you like to do differently?

(How can you engage more positively? How do you communicate your feelings?
How would you like your partner to respond?)

Insights

How do I get trapped inside my mind?

(Do I worry about the future? Do I relive old hurts & rehash old arguments? Do I get caught up in judgment or blame? Do I get caught up in thoughts of rejection or betrayal?)

How does my partner seem to get trapped inside their mind?

What would you like to do differently?

(How can you and your partner share your insights without arguing? What do you each need to achieve this?)

Neglectful

What core values do I sometimes neglect, forget about when I am disconnected, reactive, or avoidant?

(Do I neglect values such as being loving, kind, caring, generous, compassionate, supportive, easygoing, sensual, or affectionate?)

What core values does my partner seem to neglect?

What would you like to do differently?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Positive Psychology + Happiness at Work

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.”

Steve Jobs

If we refer back to the diagram detailing the factors that influence personal happiness (Chapter 5), you'll see that work is one of the key ones. The work we do and the ways we commit our life to work has a deep roll-on effect into other areas of our life, and other factors that influence our happiness. These include our financial situation, our sense of personal value, our friendships and sense of community, and even our ideas of personal freedom.

Ideas of happiness at work and fulfilling work have been some of the key ways the research from Positive Psychology around happiness have been utilised.

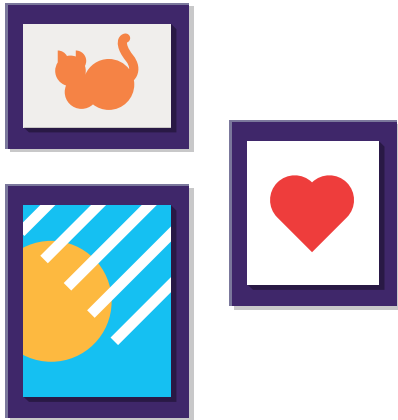
What is Happiness at Work?

Researchers across leadership, management and even neuroscience have been working to better understand what happiness at work looks like, and why some people feel happier at work than others.

Happiness at work is not considered as a fleeting experience. While you might experience a momentary high for landing a new client, getting a promotion, or delivering on a project, happiness at work is deemed as something deeper. Simon-Jones and Keltner (2014) have proposed the following dimensions to measure happiness at work:

- An overall sense of enjoyment and engagement at work
- The ability to handle setbacks positively and professionally
- Positive connections and relationships with colleagues, clients, customers and management
- The sense that the work you do matters to you, those around you, your company and even your wider industry

Why Does Workplace Happiness Matter?



Leading on from the measures of happiness at work above, it's easy to see why workplace happiness matters. Not only for us as individuals to feel our lives are meaningful, but also for the organisations we work for. When we're happy at work, we're focused, productive and we talk positively about our work and organisation to others externally.

- People who are happier at work are more likely to secure promotions. Boehm and Lyuborsky (2008) conducted a review of cross-sectional, longitudinal and experimental studies exploring the link between happiness and work. They found significant evidence that being happy leads to more success at work, rather than vice versa.
- Another review of the literature surrounding workplace happiness found that individuals who are higher in SWB (Chapter 2) tend to have better health and lower absenteeism, are more motivated, more creative and better able to solve problems, alongside encouraging more positive workplace relationships (Tenney, Poole and Diener, 2016).
- Further research has also found that individuals higher in SWB also make better leaders. In a study of 357 managers, Sirkwoo, Myeong-Gu and Shapiro (2016), found that leaders with high rankings of positive affect were viewed as more transformational (as rated by their subordinates). These leaders were more effectively able to lead their teams through big changes over leaders low in positive affect.

Utilising PERK to Improve Workplace Happiness

Like a lot of the research around happiness, the studies relating to workplace happiness are pretty compelling and will probably lead you straight to thinking 'How can I build more of that?'

There is no easy or quick answer to that question. Increasing your happiness at work is influenced by a lot of different factors, including the starting point you act from. One way to begin assessing this and building more happiness at work is through the PERK acronym, created by Simon-Jones and Keltner (2014).

Here's what that looks like:

P = Purpose

Our ideas of purpose are linked to our core values. When we feel the work we do has meaning and is linked to those core values, the work we do in return becomes linked to who we are. This brings more passion and enjoyment at work. People who have found purpose in their work are the ones who jump out of bed on Monday, usually after a weekend of working on other activities and behaviours that are also linked to their purpose. Work is just another addition to this.

E = Engagement

When we have purpose at work, a follow on behaviour is our engagement. We find ourselves fully immersed in our tasks and activities. People who are actively engaged at work very rarely watch the clock. To determine if you're engaged at work try asking yourself the following: How often do you feel curious about your work or colleagues' work? Do you feel effective and like you're 'getting things done'? Are you active in decisions about the tasks you do? Do you enjoy most of the work you do?

R = Resilience

Resilience at work is not about avoiding challenges, difficulties or shirking responsibilities. It's about facing up to them, understanding them, and using

them as opportunities to learn and grow. Resilience at work is also about knowing when to switch off from work and taking the time you need to recharge and refuel through other positive activities.

K = Kindness

Workplaces can be hotbeds of confrontation and clashing personalities. It's a given that we will not be the best of friends with every single person we work with. Happiness at work also stems from tapping into empathy for others and always being kind. People who are better able to mediate their own feelings towards other people and who always act from a place of professional kindness, are happier at work.

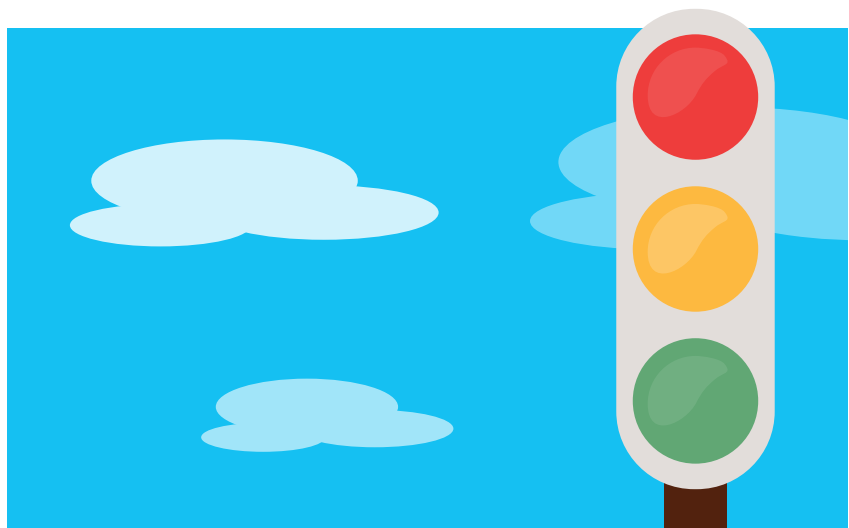
"Love and work are to people what water and sunshine are to plants."

Jonathan Haidt

Positive Psychology Exercise: Traffic Light Thinking For Workplace Happiness

With work, it's easy to feel stuck in a rut. You might have been in the same job or company for years and are now sticking with it because it's familiar, rather than having any real connection or sense of purpose you derive from it.

This exercise can help you reflect on your feelings about work over time and help you make decisions about what and how you might like to change it.



Traffic Light Thinking

Consider the following questions in relation to your work. You could reflect on this every day for a period of time, every Monday and Friday, or simply once a week. Over time, they will build a picture of how work makes you feel:

1. What was your mood when you arrived at work today?

2. What was your mood when you left work today?

3. How engaging did you find your work tasks today? (Please tick)

RED (Not Engaging At All)	AMBER (Some Engagement)	GREEN (Highly Engaging)

The second part of this exercise requires you to reflect more deeply on the specific things that keep you engaged (or not) at work. The things you enjoy (or don't), and the different factors at work that contribute towards these things:

WORK FACTORS	GREEN (Things that I enjoy and engage me)	AMBER (Neutral things or things that have little impact)	RED (Things I don't enjoy and cause me to become disengaged)
Specific Work Tasks			
Leadership & Management			
Colleagues			
Salary and Benefits			
Opportunities for Learning, Development and Progression			

The final part of this exercise requires you to think about what you can do to increase the number of things in your work life that fall within the Green category and reduce the number of things that fall within the red category. What this looks like can vary depending on the individual and your line of work. Use the section below to think of five strategies:

1

2

3

4

5

CHAPTER

EIGHT

What is a Growth Mindset?

“If we only did things that were easy, we wouldn’t actually be learning anything. We’d just be practicing things that we already knew.”

David Dockterman

Psychologists know that our internal belief systems about our abilities have the potential to fuel how we behave and respond to challenges, as well as predict our success when overcoming challenges.

Most of the current research and understanding of this stems from the work of Dr. Carol Dweck, who first began researching the power of our conscious and unconscious belief systems, and how making small changes to these systems could have profound implications across nearly every area of life.

In her research, Dweck has summarised that there are two core types of mindset and we tend to fall into one or the other. These are a Growth Mindset or a Fixed Mindset:

- **Growth Mindset:** People with a Growth Mindset tend to believe that their talents and abilities can be developed through hard work, good learning strategies, positive and constructive feedback, as well as personal motivation and confidence. They see failure as uncomfortable but ultimately a useful experience in order to help them grow and further develop new skills.

- **Fixed Mindset:** People with a Fixed Mindset tend to believe that their talents and abilities, and even their level of intelligence, is completely fixed and cannot be changed. They see failure as meaning they are incapable of something or unable to achieve a certain level of expertise, and so there is no point in trying again or seeking out creative solutions to solve challenges.

Why Does a Growth Mindset Matter for Happiness?

These two mindsets govern a lot of our behavior, feeling successful, ideas of failure in professional and personal contexts, and ultimately, our capacity for happiness.

Having a Growth Mindset empowers you to believe you are in control of how you achieve the core fundamentals for creating happiness in life including your relationships, the work you do and how you do it, your capacity to problem solve positively and overcome challenges.

With a Growth Mindset, the possibilities for your life can seem endless and as nothing is predetermined, setting new goals and achieving them becomes exciting and engaging.

Can You Change Your Mindset?

Absolutely. As Dweck says herself:

“Mindsets are an important part of your personality, but you can change them. Just by knowing about the two mindsets, you can start thinking and reacting in new ways.”

At the core of having a Growth Mindset is the understanding that nothing is fixed when it comes to your character, intelligence or creative abilities. But changing your mindset doesn't happen magically overnight. It takes conscious thought and action to make the shift you want.



3 Tips For Building a Growth Mindset

1. Participate in Deliberate Practice

If you're seeking to build a Growth Mindset, you have to engage in what Dweck refers to as Deliberate Practice. This is the process of consciously and consistently working towards developing the skills or ways of thinking you want more of in your life. Even when you fail, you have to use open questions - questions that start with what, why, when and how - to learn from the experience, ready to try again.

2. Reconsider Your Self Talk

Self-Talk is the psychological term for the internal narrative we all hold in our heads. When we act from a place of a Fixed Mindset, Self-Talk tends to sound negative and biased towards failure. For example,

“This is too hard and I'll never be able to do it.”. Tuning into the Self Talk you use every day can showcase how often you might be slipping into a Fixed Mindset. By consciously paying attention and changing how you talk to and about yourself, you can slowly build a Growth Mindset.

3. Get Comfortable with the Phrase Not Yet

A Growth Mindset acknowledges and accepts things take the time they take. There are no quick wins, just motivation, and determination. When you come up against an obstacle or challenge that on the surface seems unsurmountable, practice saying Not Yet. It acknowledges that you have some way to go, but that you will get there and you are on your way

Conclusion

“I think you can be depressed and flourish, I think you can have cancer and flourish, I think you can be divorced and flourish. When we believed that happiness was only smiling and a good mood, that wasn't very good for people like me, people in the lower half of positive affectivity.”

Martin Seligman

When we reflect on the fact that **Positive Psychology** has only been around for a little over twenty years, it's impressive to see how influential it has been in changing some of the key messages within different areas of psychology, as well as the wealth of research that now exists to support some of its core concepts.

There are many key messages which shout out from that research, particularly when it comes to happiness, and it's important to maintain these at the heart of any practice that aims to cultivate more happiness.

They include:

- A high level of happiness does not mean nothing negative ever happens to you or you cannot respond with negative emotions when you experience challenging, painful or traumatic experiences. Cultivating more happiness is about claiming ownership over how you react and respond, and knowing you have the strengths to overcome these challenges.
- We all have the capacity and ability to cultivate more happiness in our lives. Through purposeful and consistent practice, utilising Positive Psychology tools and resources, you can build a more robust

picture of your personal strengths and characteristics. In doing so, you can begin to identify areas for improvement and over time, make positive changes that lead to a greater sense of life satisfaction and happiness.

- Happiness cannot be forced or faked. For happiness to be truly beneficial, it must be authentic. This means spending time reflecting on the different areas of life and being honest with yourself about where you are unhappy, thinking carefully about what changes could lead to more authentic happiness, and working overtime to create these changes.

While the research can show us connections between happiness and various benefits, it is far more complex than this. Happi-

ness is very subjective and personal to each and every one of us. The only real thing the research can tell us is that

pursuing happiness is definitely worth a try.

Further Reading & Resources



Books

- Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment By Martin Seligman
- Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being By Martin Seligman
- Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- How of Happiness: A New Approach For Getting the Life You Want By Sonia Lyubomirsky
- Mindset: Changing The Way You think To Fulfil Your Potential By Carol Dweck
- Websites
- The Greater Good Magazine from The Greater Good Science Center
- Happiness from Psychology Today
- The How of Happiness from Sonia Lyubomirsky
- Authentic Happiness from University of Pennsylvania
- Action for Happiness



Videos

- How to Be Happy – The Secret of Authentic Happiness – By Martin Seligman from Practical Psychology
- Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness - By Professor Tal Ben-Shahar from WGBH Forum
- The Happiness Advantage: Linking Positive Brains to Performance - By Shawn Achor from TEDx Talks
- The Surprising Science of Happiness - By Dan Gilbert from TED
- Flow, the Secret to Happiness – By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi from TED
- Choice, Happiness and Spaghetti Sauce – By Malcolm Gladwell from TED
- What Makes A Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness – By Robert Waldinger from TED

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