



“A Series of Discussions on
Life’s Everyday Problems”

Wednesday, April 9 Lambert Lounge “C’mon Get Happy!”

Learn what happy people know at this workshop featuring science-based advice from leading happiness researchers.

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Student Health Services 2008

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What does happiness mean to you? (list on board?)

WHY should you be happier? What’s the point?

- Purpose of positive emotions:
 - Rooted in evolution—positive emotions broaden our intellectual, physical, and social resources (so we can draw upon them when we’re faced with stress/threat/extinction). When we’re in a positive mood, people like us better (and friendships, love, coalitions are more likely to take hold)
 - our mental state in a positive mood is expansive, tolerant, more creative vs. the constricted mental state of negative emotion (we’ll see why when Kathy explains the neurobiology of fear)
- Benefits of positive emotions (supported by research—see resource list):
 - physical health (may live actually live longer; research shows that happy people pay *more* attention to health risks and take action sooner)
 - psychological health (emotionally healthier, improved mood, less depression)
 - productivity—adults and children put into a good mood select higher goals, perform better, and persist longer on all kinds of lab tests.

What the research says:

Dan Baker [Baker, D. & Stauth, C. (2003). *What happy people know: How the new science of happiness can change your life for the better*. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin.]

- The biological circuitry of fear is the greatest enemy of happiness. The automatic fear response was shaped by the powers of evolution; it is faster than the process of rational thought. It enabled human survival, but in that we became hardwired for hard times. In contemporary life, this fear may emerge as anger, perfectionism, pessimism, anxiety, depression, or isolation. Contemporary fear often fits into one of two categories: fear of not having enough and fear of not being enough.
- Fear is not just a thought; the fabric of fear is woven into our brains.
- The brain stem (“reptilian brain”) holds our instinctual fears; incapable of higher thought; cannot process emotions such as love.

- The “Mammalian brain,” the second part to evolve (evolutionarily, and second part to develop in utero) contains the amygdala, the memory center for emotion. Is directly connected to the activating part of your fear system, the endocrine glands (producing adrenaline and cortisol, our stress hormones). These enable you to run faster, fight harder (fight, flee, or freeze). They create the physical symptoms of fear, including racing heart rate, high blood pressure, cold feet, upset stomach, insomnia, etc. Evolutionarily, past threats to our survival were physical, and our fear response enabled us to physically escape/fight/survive. We could “run off” these extra hormones. Now, when threats are things like disapproval, bills, etc., and you’re just sitting at your desk, this stress system doesn’t help and can even be deadly.
- Fortunately, the fear system can be overruled by the neocortex, the last part of the brain to evolve/develop. This is the site of intellect, abstract reasoning, and storage of long-term memories. It evaluates the cries of fear from the other two parts of the brain and has the ability to say “Nothing is wrong—calm down!” However, sometimes we are not able to hear or respond to this, because we’re human. We have to practice.
- Being happy means turning a deaf ear to fear; being your true self, even when it hurts; going after what you really want, even when you don’t think you’ll get it.
- (See handout on Baker’s 12 Qualities of Happiness)

Martin Seligman [Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness*. New York: Free Press.]

Martin Seligman—the “father” of Positive Psychology, pioneered much of the research in the early 1980s focused on mental *health* vs. mental illness (this marked a shift from pathology/what’s wrong to what’s right)

- Most well known for his work on learning theories and the concept of *learned helplessness* (the “giving-up” reaction or quitting response that follows when you believe that whatever you do doesn’t matter). His classic experiments with dogs showed that while the majority did learn to become helpless in response to being shocked, 30% were resilient—didn’t become helpless. He shifted his focus to studying this group.
- He defined ***pessimistic explanatory styles***:
 - explanations for bad events are: personal, permanent, and pervasive
 - explanations for good events are: external, temporary, and specific
 - people with pessimistic explanatory styles are more likely to have symptoms of learned helplessness and ultimately are more at risk for depression--**8x more likely according to his research!**
- He defined ***optimistic explanatory styles***:
 - explanations for good events are: personal, permanent, and pervasive
 - explanations for bad events are: external, temporary, and specific
 - people with optimistic explanatory styles are more resilient and recover from loss more quickly
- Why is optimism important? Seligman’s research shows that optimists:
 - are healthier
 - live longer
 - have better relationships
 - do better in school, sports, and most jobs
 - and anyone can learn to be more optimistic!(regardless of your natural “set point” level of optimism that you were born with)
- Seligman recommends aiming for moderation in optimistic thinking and suggests developing a “flexible optimism”—to be marshaled when the situation calls for it, but not when “clear sight or owning up is called for.”

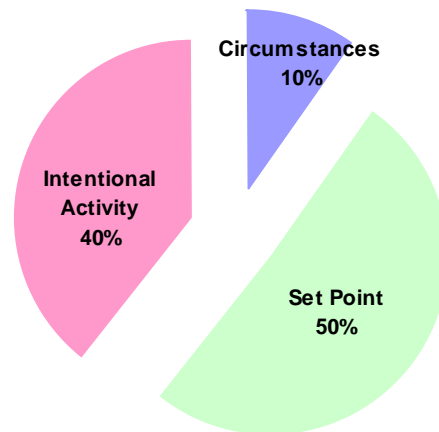
Sonja Lyubomirsky [Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press.]

- Why does optimism boost happiness? (Lyubomirsky, 2007, pp. 106-109).
 - Optimism about the future encourages goal setting and an investment of effort in reaching those goals (giving life purpose/meaning)
 - Optimistic thinking prompts us to engage in active and effective coping (making us less susceptible to depression and anxiety)
 - Great deal of evidence that optimists maintain higher levels of well-being and mental health during times of stress
 - Optimistic thinking promotes positive moods/vitality/high morale

- NOTE: Optimism should not to be confused with naiveté, wearing blinders, or “fooling” yourself. The world can be a horrible/cruel place, and at the same be wonderful and abundant—*both are truths*. You have a choice about which truth to put in your personal foreground. Being optimistic involves making a choice about how you see the world.

- Lyubomirsky’s definition of happiness: experience of joy, contentment, positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile

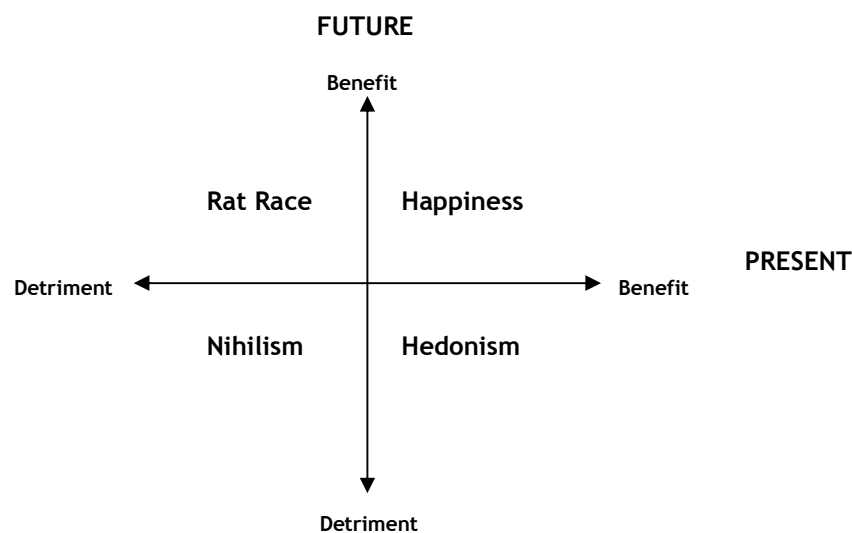
What Determines Happiness?



- 50% of anyone’s happiness is determined by genetics (Much of the knowledge in the field gleaned from “Minnesota twin studies” of David Lykken in the 1980s)
- Only 10% is determined by circumstances
- 40% of happiness is determined by “intentional activity”
- The pie chart helps to debunk the following happiness myths:
 - Happiness must be “found”
 - “If only” the right things would happen (find true love, get dream job, buy bug house), *then* “I’ll be happy”
 - “I’ll be happy IF or WHEN_____”
 - Happiness is “out there” (the truth? cliché as it may sound, it’s “inside” each of us) (See Lyubomirsky, 2007, pp. 38-47 for research)
- Happiness (like IQ or temperature) lies on a continuum—we all fit somewhere on that scale (use the General Happiness Scale as a “happiness thermometer” to check in on yourself from time to time, and to help determine if happiness activities are working/helpful)
- Focus your attention on the intentional activities that you CAN do to improve your happiness level

Tal Ben-Shahar [Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment*. New York: McGraw Hill.]

Happiness Archetype



Rat Racer: subordinates the present to the future; suffers now for the purpose of some anticipated gain (“no pain, no gain”)

Nihilist: lost the lust for life; neither enjoys the moment nor has a sense of future purpose

Hedonist: enjoys the present while ignoring the potential negative consequences of their actions (“seek pleasure, avoid pain”)

Happy: lives secure in the knowledge that the activities that bring them enjoyment in the present will also lead to a fulfilling future

- Not *everything* we do can provide both present and future benefit—sometimes it is worthwhile to forgo present benefit for greater future gain (i.e., in every life, some mundane work is unavoidable—like cleaning the toilets and studying for exams)
- Objective is to spend as much time as possible engaged in activities that provide both present *and* future benefit. HOWEVER, to expect *constant* happiness is to set yourself up for failure and disappointment!

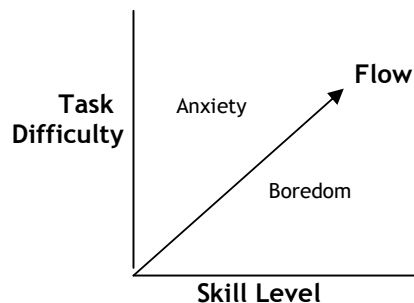
Happiness is the *Ultimate* Currency

- By translating money, or anything else, into the currency of happiness (by evaluating how happy something makes us), we have a common currency that enables us to compare seemingly unrelated experiences
- When we question why we want certain things, other than happiness, we can always question their value with another “why?” (i.e., infinitely regressive “why” question)

- Nothing challenges the validity and finality of the answer “because it will make me happy”
- Happiness is the highest on the hierarchy of goals, the end to which all other ends lead

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced “chicks sent me high”) [Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow*. New York: Harper Perennial.]

- Flow is a state in which you are immersed in an experience that is rewarding in and of itself—a state in which you feel one with the experience—“action and awareness are merged”
- In flow, you enjoy both peak experience and peak performance (your skill level/resources for dealing with the situation are matched with the difficulty of the task/situation). Athletes might call this “being in the zone.” Flow activities can be anything—sports, cooking, writing a poem, playing with a child, having a conversation, studying for an exam, etc.
- Having goals, or a clear sense of purpose, is necessary in order to attain flow (can’t be distracted by other possible things we could be doing)
- Flow experiences lead to happiness because in flow, present and future benefit merge. When we are performing at our best (in flow) we are learning, growing, improving, and advancing toward our future purpose



- Happiness doesn’t just happen—it must be prepared for and cultivated.
Discussion: When do you experience flow? How might you create opportunities for flow experiences in your daily life?

Exercises for increasing happiness (see handouts)

- Half-smile meditation
- Increasing Optimism
- Cultivating Gratitude
- The Meaning, Pleasure, Strengths (MPS) Process

Useful Information/Handouts

- To find out more about your strengths (and to take a variety of questionnaires to track your happiness, gratitude, etc) take the **VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire** on Martin Seligman’s website at:
<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>

- (You will need to create a username and password—just make one up, and then use it each time you login to take any of the questionnaires)
- G. Baker's 12 Qualities of Happiness
 - H. Ben-Shahar's 6 tips

Resources:

- Baker, D. & Stauth, C. (2003). *What happy people know: How the new science of happiness can change your life for the better*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment*. NY: McGraw Hill.
- Csikszentmihaly, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. Steps toward enhancing the quality of life*. NY: Harper Perennial.
- Emmons, R.A. (2007). *Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness*. New York: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. (2006). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York: Vintage Books.

Half-Smile Meditation

Adapted from *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Mindfulness*
by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1976, Boston: Beacon Press

Half-Smile

A tense smile is a grin—one that might tell your brain that you are hiding or masking something. A half-smile, on the other hand, is an expression of serenity—slightly turned-up lips with a relaxed face. Try to adopt this serene facial expression, remembering that your body communicates to your mind. Inhale and exhale quietly three times, allowing your facial muscles to relax and your lips to turn up slightly at the corners of your mouth.

Half-Smile Exercises:

1. Half-smile when you first awake in the morning

Hang a sign with “smile” on the ceiling, wall, or near your alarm clock so that you see it right away when you open your eyes. This sign will serve as a reminder. Use these seconds before you get out of bed to take hold of your breath. Inhale and exhale three breaths gently while maintaining a half-smile. Follow your breaths.

2. Half-smile during your free moments

Anywhere you find yourself sitting or standing, half-smile. Look at a picture, a leaf, a painting on the wall, or anything else that is relatively still. Half-smile as you inhale and exhale quietly three times.

3. Half-smile while listening to music

Listen to a song or a piece of music for two or three minutes. Pay attention to the words, music, rhythm, and sentiments of the music you are listening to (and not to your daydreams of other times). Half-smile while you watch your inhalations and exhalations.

4. Half-smile when irritated

The moment you realize “I’m irritated,” half-smile at once. Inhale and exhale quietly while maintaining a half-smile for three breaths.

5. Half-smile in a lying-down position

Lie on your back on a flat surface, keeping your two arms loosely by your sides and keep your two legs slightly apart, stretched out before you. Maintain a half-smile. Breathe in and out gently, keeping your attention on your breath. Let go of every muscle in your body. Relax each muscle as if it were sinking down through the floor. Let go entirely, keeping your attention only on your breath and half-smile. Think of yourself as a cat or dog, curled up and completely relaxed before a warm fire, whose muscles yield without resistance to anyone’s touch. Continue for 15 breaths.

6. Half-smile in a sitting position

Sit on the floor or in a chair with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Half-smile. Inhale and exhale while maintaining the half-smile. Let go.

7. Half-smile while contemplating the person you despise the most

Sit quietly. Breathe and smile a half-smile. Imagine the image of the person who has caused you the most suffering. Regard the features you despise the most or find the most repulsive. Try to examine what makes this person happy and what causes suffering in his or her daily life. Imagine the person’s perceptions; try to see what patterns of thought and reason this person follows. Examine what motivates this person’s hopes and actions. Finally, consider the person’s consciousness. See whether the person’s views and insights are open and free or not, and whether or not the person has been influenced by any prejudices, narrow-mindedness, hatred, or anger. See whether or not the person is master of himself or herself. Continue until you feel compassion rise in your heart like a well filling with fresh water, and your anger and resentment disappear. Practice this exercise many times on the same person.

Exercises for Increasing Optimism

From **Martin Seligman** (2006). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York: Vintage Books. (pp 210-223)

It's a Matter of ABCs:

When we encounter adversity (A), we react by thinking about it—these thoughts rapidly become beliefs (B)—beliefs that become such a habit that we may not even realize we have them until we stop and focus on them. These beliefs have a consequence (C). Certain kinds of beliefs set off the giving up response (usually negative/distorted beliefs) while others can lead to constructive action on the other (usually more rational, more optimistic beliefs).

Example:

A	+	B	=	C
(adversity/stressor)		(belief/perception)		(consequence/emotional reaction)

It is not the adversity/activating event that leads to an automatic consequence, but rather your *interpretation* of it that causes your emotional reaction (or $A \neq C$).

Example:

A	+	B	=	C
Your friend breaks the news that s/he is going out with someone else and wants to break up		"I must be worthless" "I'll never find someone like him/her" "If s/he doesn't want me, who will?"		<i>DEPRESSION</i>
		and/or		
		"This is awful!" "Terrible things always happen to me!" "What a jerk!" "S/he shouldn't be that way!!" "This is so unfair—life sucks!"		<i>HOSTILITY</i>

Changing your irrational beliefs/interpretations (by disputing and challenging the beliefs) will in turn change your emotional reaction, leading to a new effect (or $D \rightarrow E$)

D	→	E
(disputing the irrational beliefs)		(new effect/new emotion/energization)
"Where is the evidence that because s/he wants to end out relationship that I am worthless, or that I'll <i>never</i> be able to have another good relationship, or even that I couldn't be happy alone?"		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>SADNESS VS. DEPRESSION</i></p> "Well, we did have a good relationship and I'm sorry to see it end, but it did have its share of problems. Now I've learned and am free to grow and move on"
		and/or
"Why is it <i>awful</i> that I'm not getting what I want?" "Why <i>shouldn't</i> the world be unfair?"		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>ANNOYANCE VS. HOSTILITY</i></p> "It's annoying that s/he is seeing someone else, but that's life—it bugs me, but it's not awful or interolerable"

Disputing Negative Thoughts: Learning to Argue with Yourself

Fortunately you already have a lifetime of experience in disputation (you use this skill every time you argue with other people). By learning to dispute your own unfounded accusations about *yourself* following adversity, you can change your old reactions from dejection and giving

up to activity and improved mood. But don't confuse this type of learned optimism with "the power of positive thinking." The latter often involves trying to believe upbeat statements in the absence of evidence (or even in the face of contrary evidence), while the former is about accuracy. Most often, the beliefs that follow adversity are inaccurate (and sometimes "catastrophic"). *Learned optimism works not through an unjustifiable positivity about the world, but through the power of "non-negative" thinking.*

▪ **4 Ways to Dispute Irrational Thinking:**

1. **Evidence.** Adopt the role of detective and ask yourself, "What is the evidence for this belief?" Most of the time you will have the facts on your side because pessimistic reactions are often overreactions and don't take into account other explanations.
2. **Alternatives.** Rarely does any event have only one cause, so why latch onto the most insidious one? Ask yourself, "Is there a less destructive way to look at this?" Scan for all possible contributing causes, with a focus on what is changeable, specific, and non-personal.
3. **Implications.** Sometimes, the facts may not be on your side and the negative belief you hold about yourself may be correct. In this case, learn to *decatastrophize*. For example, ask yourself, "Even if my belief is correct, what are the implications? Are they really that awful?"
4. **Usefulness.** Often the consequences of holding a belief matter more than the truth of the belief. For example, a technician doing bomb demolition might be thinking "This could go off and I might be killed" (resulting in heightened arousal, hands shaking, etc). In this case, **distraction** might be more useful than disputation. Whenever you have to perform NOW, use distraction (i.e., rather than asking yourself "Is this belief true?" ask yourself "Is it functional for me to think it right now?" If not, use distraction techniques like saying Stop! and then promising yourself you will worry about it later, *after* you performed your task).

Practice

Keep track of some of your own ABCs over the next few days. Be objective about the adversity—record what happened, just the facts, not your evaluation of what happened.

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

Choose one of your own examples and practice disputing (write this after the "D" and note any new energization—"E")

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

D: _____

E: _____

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

D: _____

E: _____

From **Sonja Lyubomirsky** (2007). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press. (pp. 108-109)

Best Possible Self Diary

This empirically based technique for enhancing well-being is a way to put your optimistic "muscles" into practice.

Step 1: Find a quiet place to sit—take about 20 minutes to think about what you expect your life to be in one, five, ten years from now. Visualize a future in which everything has turned out the way you've wanted—you've tried your best, worked hard, and achieved your goals. Try to focus specifically on yourself at your best.

Step 2: Write down what you imagined.

Note: Even if thinking about your brightest future doesn't come naturally at first, it will get there with time and training. Amazing things can come naturally as a result of writing—as William Faulkner once said "I never know what I think about something until I read what I've written on it."

Cultivating Gratitude

Research on gratitude and appreciation suggests:

- People who score higher on gratitude scales, also score higher on happiness
- Measures of cardiovascular functioning and autonomic nervous system balance show improvements when subjects experience appreciation (vs. impaired or weakened functioning when subjects experience frustration)
- Gratitude exercises are similar to a focused meditation (which has a powerful impact on the nervous system, muscular tension, the heart and the mind)

Exercises for cultivating gratitude:

3 Good Things Exercise

The practice of gratitude has been widely researched over the past few years and proves to be one of the most powerful ways to increase positive emotions (which in turn help you feel more resilient during times of stress). The simplest gratitude exercise is keeping a “3 Good Things” journal. This doesn’t require an actual fancy journal—post-it notes work fine—but it does require writing (psychological research shows that translating your thoughts into concrete words has advantages over just thinking the thoughts). You can decide what time of day works best for you, but doing this right before bed is a great way to feel less stressed before you go to sleep.

Begin by reflecting on your day and then writing down anything that you were grateful/appreciative/thankful for that happened that day. Try to be specific (i.e., write down a specific act that inspired your gratitude for your mom, rather than just putting down “mom”). Don’t worry about what makes it on to your list—it can be anything at all (warm socks, a smile from a stranger, a home-baked cookie).

Do this everyday for one week. If you enjoy it, keep it up. You can also practice just once a week (i.e., every Sunday evening). Keep it fresh by including things you appreciate/are grateful for from the mundane to the magnificent. (Lyubomirsky, 2007)

Express gratitude directly to another person—verbally, in an email, text message, or in a formal letter. Writing a gratitude letter to someone who has made a major positive difference in your life and to whom you have never fully expressed your thanks can be a life changing experience (for both of you). Take your time. This is more than a thank-you note—it is a thoughtful examination of the meaning and pleasure that you derive from the relationship. Buy special paper. Use your best hand writing. Hand deliver (and read it out loud to the person if possible). (Seligman, 2002)

Remember the bad. It may sound contrary to everything you’ve learned about optimism, but reflecting on your worst moments/sorrows/losses and then remembering that you are here right now/able to remember them (and how you got through them—enduring, surviving, making your way out) will set up an undeniable contrast in your mind—this contrast is “fertile ground for gratefulness” (Emmons, 2007)

Answer this Question (in writing if possible): When was there a time when I faced adversity in my life and, in the end, learned astonishing, life-giving things about myself and the people around me? How did that experience help me grow in ways I didn’t believe were possible?

Watch Your Language. “We are what we think about all day long,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson. The talk becomes so automatic that you don’t even realize that you’re doing it (or realize the pervasive effect it is having). You can change your mood by changing what you say to yourself. The goal is to shake up these internal monologues and to replace the negative/dysfunctional thoughts with more positive/functional one. Examples:

“I have so much in life to be thankful for”

“There are people in my life that would help me if I asked”

“I am truly blessed”

“Everyday is a surprise”

“My life is a gift”

(Emmons, 2007)

Fake it ‘til you Make it (or Go Through the Motions). Research suggests that going through the motions can actually trigger the emotion. The relevance for practicing gratitude is direct—if we go through grateful motions, the emotion of gratitude should be triggered. What is a grateful motion? Saying “thank you.” Writing a gratitude letter. So what if the emotion has to be forced? The important thing is to do it. Do it now (fake it) and the feeling will come (make it). There is a great deal of psychological evidence that shows that attitude change often follows behavior change (good intentions are often crushed by old habits). If you stand around waiting for a feeling to move you, you may never get going—but going through the motions can trigger the desired emotions, setting the stage for emotions to reinforce the behavior. (Emmons, 2007)

Resources:

Emmons, R.A. (2007). *Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press.

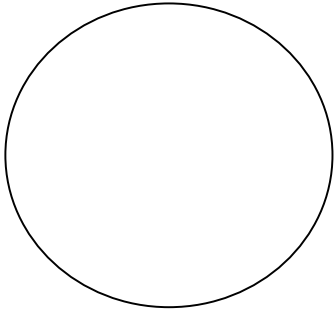
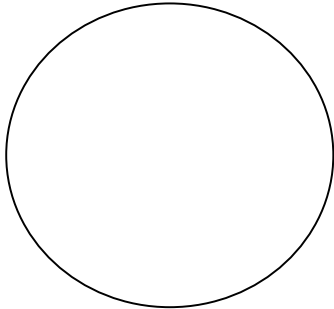
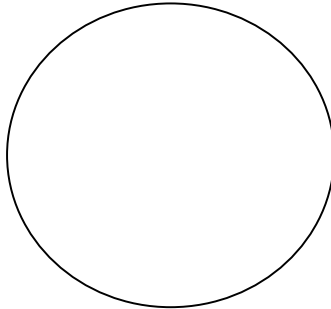
Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness*. New York: Free Press.

The Meaning, Pleasure, Strengths (MPS) Process

Ben-Shahar states that thinking about meaning, pleasure and strengths can lead to more happiness/more success. Finding the right work (that corresponds to both our passions and our strengths) can be a lifelong challenge. But spending time asking yourself the following questions often (weekly, monthly, yearly) is a good place to start the process:

- “What gives me meaning?”
- “What gives me pleasure?”
- “What are my strengths?”

Fill in the circles below with your answers:

Meaning	Pleasure	Strengths
		

Which of your answers overlap?

Can you see how this overlap might pay in the *ultimate* currency?

How can you craft your current work/obligations to have more meaning?
(hint: think about how you perceive the work/obligations)

The 12 Qualities of Happiness (from Dan Baker's What Happy People Know)

Happiness doesn't come all at once. It doesn't "happen" to us. It is a catch-all term for a condition that is really a by-product of several different "qualities" or ways of being. These we have control over; they are the 40% of the "happiness pie" that we can influence.

1. **Love:** Loving someone else is a powerful happiness tool. Emotionally and neurologically, love is the opposite of fear. Performing loving and generous acts or thinking with "loving kindness" towards yourself and others is a first step toward happiness.
2. **Optimism:** Optimism is not merely a trick of perception. It is the attitude of seeing the glass as half full and truly appreciating that half. The half-empty half is still there and is no less true or real; however, when we focus on the half-empty, our lives are more difficult. In truth, even hurtful events hold lessons, and often the more it hurts, the more we learn. It is possible to suffer deeply and still hold onto (or cultivate) optimism. Optimism, too, gives us power over fear of the future and regret for the past.
3. **Courage:** Fear is hard-wired into our neural circuitry, and so we cannot live without fear. However, we can learn to make choices from our "higher" selves, choices rooted in love or generosity, for example. We can choose to let fear run our lives, or we can choose courage in the face of fear.
4. **Sense of freedom:** Everyone has the power to make choices, but unhappy people don't acknowledge that freedom. Choice (e.g., in our interpretations, in our coping, in our meaning-making) is available to anyone who has the courage to exercise it.
5. **Proactivity:** Happy people don't wait for events or other people to make them happy. They forge their own happiness.
6. **Security:** Happy people know that nothing lasts forever - not money, not achievement, not even life itself. They don't try to "hold onto" things. Security is an "inside" job - happy people simply like who they are.
7. **Health:** Happiness and health are interdependent. Happy people tend to live healthier lives.
8. **Openness (or Spirituality for some people):** Happy people welcome extraordinary experiences. They're not concerned about dying - they're concerned about not living.
9. **Altruism:** Unhappy people are often self-absorbed. Happy people know that giving to others connects you, gives you a purpose, gets you outside your own suffering, and feels good.
10. **Perspective:** Unhappy people tend to see things in black and white, in absolute terms, and often can't distinguish small problems from big ones. Happy people see shades of gray and don't lose sight of the big picture during bad times.
11. **Humor:** Humor involves a shift in perspective. It "lifts suffering off the heart and hands it to the intellect and spirit," which can be healing. It doesn't deny reality, but provides a moment of abandonment.
12. **Purpose:** Happy people know why they're here on earth. They are doing what they are meant to do. If they died today, they would be satisfied with their lives.

Tal Ben-Shahar's Six Happiness Tips

1. Give yourself permission to be human. When we accept emotions – such as fear, sadness, or anxiety – as natural, we are more likely to overcome them. Rejecting our emotions, positive or negative, leads to frustration and unhappiness.
2. Happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. When this is not feasible, make sure you have happiness boosters, moments throughout the week that provide you with both pleasure and meaning.
3. Keep in mind that happiness is mostly dependent on our state of mind, not on our status or the state of our bank account. Barring extreme circumstances, our level of well being is determined by what we choose to focus on (the full or the empty part of the glass) and by our interpretation of external events. For example, do we view failure as catastrophic, or do we see it as a learning opportunity?
4. Simplify! We are, generally, too busy, trying to squeeze in more and more activities into less and less time. Quantity influences quality, and we compromise on our happiness by trying to do too much.
5. Remember the mind-body connection. What we do – or don't do – with our bodies influences our mind. Regular exercise, adequate sleep, and healthy eating habits lead to both physical and mental health.
6. Express gratitude, whenever possible. We too often take our lives for granted. Learn to appreciate and savor the wonderful things in life, from people to food, from nature to a smile.

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