

ONE HOUR OF HAPPINESS

WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THIS THING WE CALL HAPPINESS

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FOR FREE RESOURCES, GO TO: [HTTPS://JOHNSOMMERSFLANAGAN.COM](https://johnsommersflanagan.com)

IN THE BEGINNING

- Psychology spent 100+ years mostly studying: What's **WRONG** with YOU?
 - Psychopathology and mental disorders
 - Anxiety, depression, suicide, OCD, ADHD, ODD, PTSD, etc.
 - Freud: “Neurotic misery” to “common unhappiness”
 - Help people – just like you – become more aware of deficiencies and then usually fail in their efforts to fix them

DAVID MYERS 1967-2000 STUDY

ARTICLES ABOUT

- Depression: 54,040
- Anxiety: 41,416
- Anger: 5,584

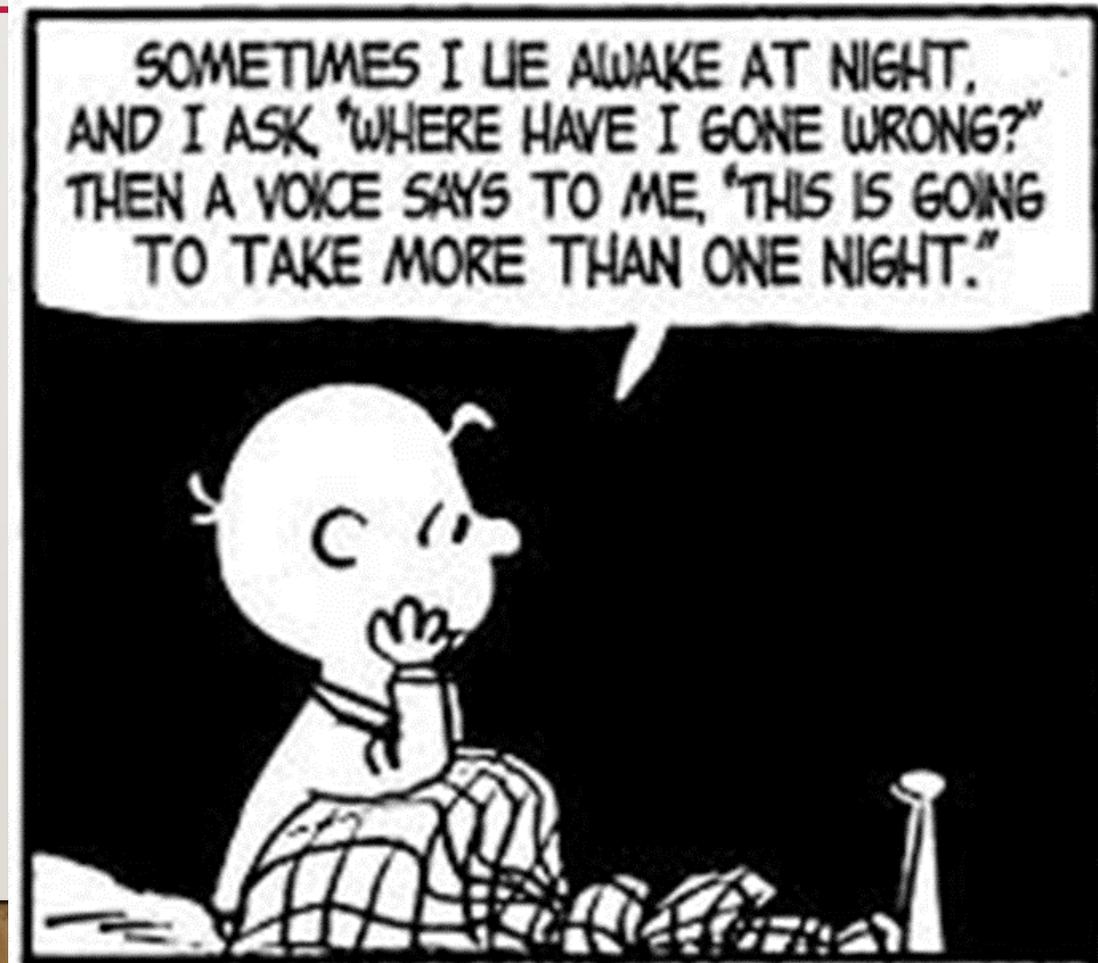
ARTICLES ABOUT

- Life Satisfaction: 2,582
- Happiness: 1,710
- Joy: 415

Overall Ratio: 21/1 – Why?

How could this be?

WHY? THIS SEEMS TO BE THE WAY MOST OF OUR BRAINS ARE BUILT



ENTER: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- Martin Seligman – 1998 – San Francisco – Positive psychology
- Let's study joy, happiness, what strengthens people, and what makes people emotionally healthy and well?
- Seligman and others created evidence-based happiness/well-being interventions or activities [they're coming soon!]

BUT FIRST: ARE YOU HAPPY?



- What happens when you're forced to reflect on this question?
 - Self-consciousness and self-awareness increase
 - You say “Yes” and feel a little fake or you say “No” and feel more depressed
 - We aren't meant to expect a consistently happy state or to continuously monitor whether we're happy or not ... Stop It! It's not a yes-or-no question.
 - Preoccupation with the state of happiness will, in most cases, make you feel worse [There are so many stupid happiness quotations on the internet that it makes me so unhappy I need to show you.]



Are You **HAPPY** Or **SAD?**

What ever you decide to do, make sure it makes you happy



It isn't what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about.
Dale Carnegie
THELAWOFATTRACTION.COM™

NO ONE CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY UNTIL YOU'RE HAPPY WITH YOURSELF FIRST.
- ANONYMOUS



DO WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY

NOTHING IS WORTH IT IF YOU AREN'T HAPPY.

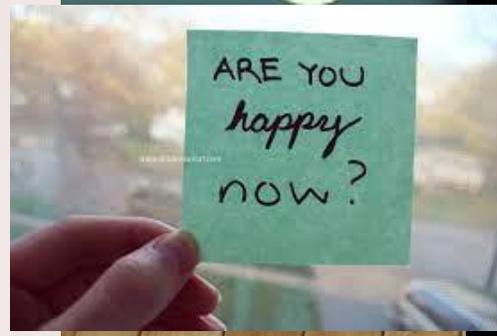
I'M SO HAPPY YOU'RE HAPPY!

I hope you're happy now.

May you be happy always.
Honoré de Balzac



Are you happy?



“
The only thing that will make you happy is being happy with who you are, and not who people think you are.
— GOLDIE HAWN
GRACIOUSQUOTES.COM



JUST FEEL THIS ...



HAPPY DISTRACTIONS

- Are good ...
- But they're only happy distractions
- They're not "Happiness"

DEFINING HAPPINESS

- I'm not just talking about smiley hedonistic (material) happiness ... That won't last because of hedonic adaptation ... and emotional opponent process theory



DEFINING HAPPINESS – 2

- **Hedonic adaptation**: Your new car (or house or boyfriend or award or facelift gets old and you want more)
- **Emotional opponent process theory**: What goes up, must come down; and what goes down, must come up



DEFINING HAPPINESS – 3

We're talking about **eudaimonic happiness** that involves living well physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and more. The secret to happiness is no secret ...

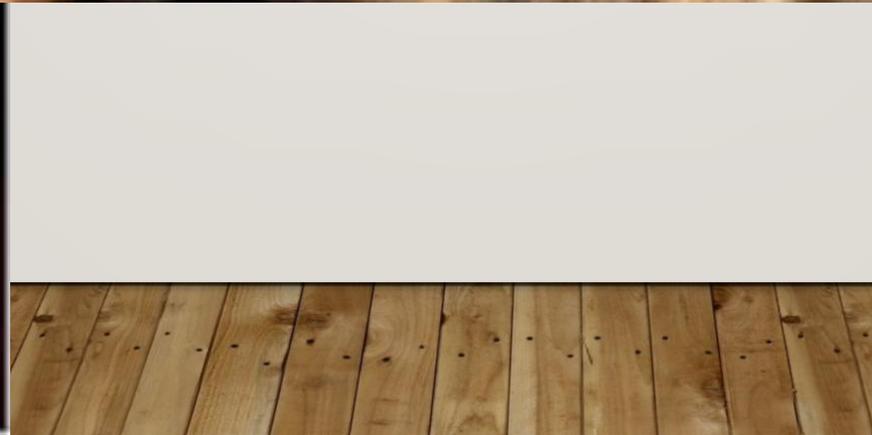
Eudaimonic happiness requires effort



BIG PRINCIPLES OF HAPPINESS PRACTICE

1. Nothing works for everyone (even EBTs)
2. Pick a tool or intervention and practice with an experimental mindset [Maybe one in five will work for you]
3. Build on your strengths and past successes

NOW ... LET'S EXPERIENCE HAPPINESS



STRATEGY #1: THREE GOOD THINGS

- Going to bed [Survey]



STRATEGY #1: THREE GOOD THINGS

- Seligman's signature technique
 - Before you go to sleep (or right now)
 - Write down (or think about) three good things that happened during the day (or last 24 hours)
 - Then track down in your mind "Why" those things happened
 - Seligman: After a week, you'll want to keep doing it (JSF: Maybe)

DEMONSTRATION



- A Pretend Volunteer – Three Good Things
- Report three good things that happened during the day (or last 24 hours) ...As you think of these three things, notice your thoughts and feelings
 - What happens when... Spoiling
 - Not remarkable [coffee; dog walk; talked to old friend]
 - What it took (why): Self-awareness, initiative, set aside time

WHY DOES THREE GOOD THINGS WORK?

- When you go to bed, you inevitably and **NATURALLY** embark on either a negative (depressive) review or anticipatory (anxiety) preview
- Thinking three good things shifts you partway
- Identifying “Why” those things happened activates a brain search toward positive and empowering attributions

THE ATTENTION FOCUS TUG OF WAR



STRATEGY #2: ATTENTION TRAINING AND ATTENTION CONTROL

- Attention control (aka mindfulness) ALWAYS FAILS; this failure is another natural obstacle to eudaimonic happiness
- But Harvard study (n = 2,000+) paying attention to what you're doing increases happiness ratings (JKZ)
- The amazing brain – Now

PRETEND ACTIVITY

- Everyone
- Two minutes
- Begin at 1 and mentally count your “out” breaths
- If you lose track, start back at 1
- Be mindfully non-judgmental of losing track

MINDFULNESS KNOWLEDGE AND TRICKS

- The mind is a yapping dog – Give it a bone – Mantra
- Balance how much you care about being mindful with **NOT CARING AT ALL** about being mindful
- Extend your outbreath (**or use a soothing object**) to engage the parasympathetic nervous system (and be less mentally jumpy)
- Practice. But remember, practice **DOES NOT** make perfect

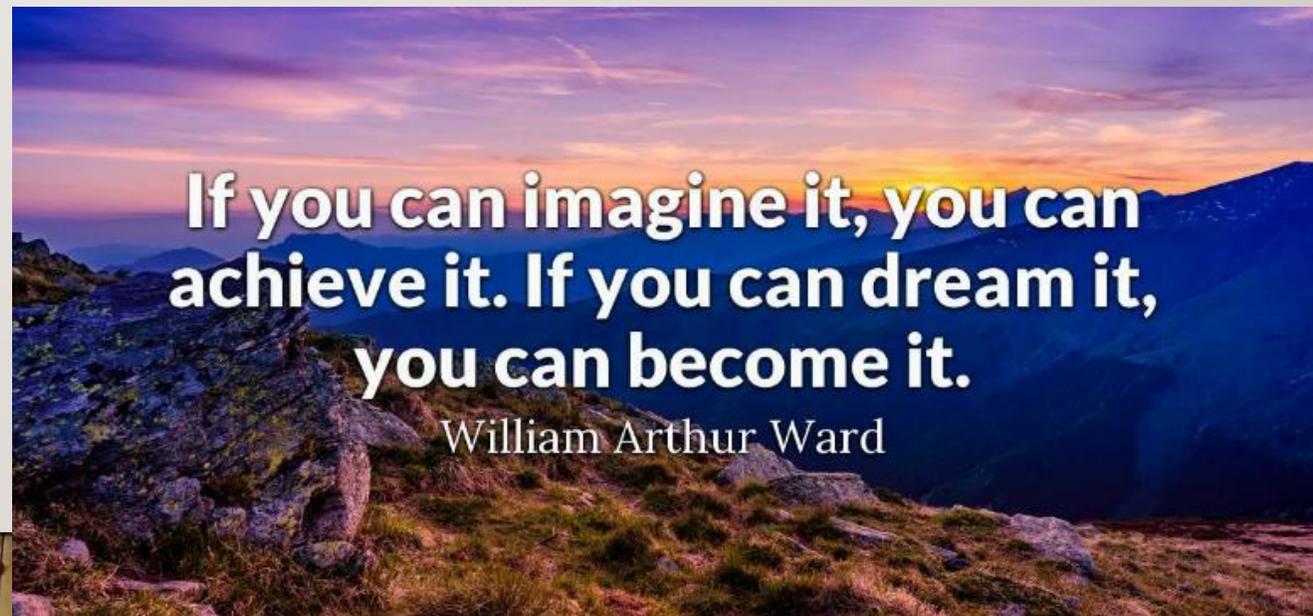
THE BIG TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

- Mindfulness is about accepting failure ...
- We always fail to achieve perfect mindfulness
- We accept that and value the process
- It's NOT about ACHIEVING mindfulness or relaxation
- It's about the EXPERIENCE of the process of taking time to not try too hard to achieve mindfulness



CAVEAT: THE POWER OF POSITIVE MENTAL FOCUS

- You can if you think you can [Norman Vincent Peale]
- If you can imagine it, you can create it
- The secret [vision boards]
- Any problems with these?



STRATEGY #3: SAVORING

- What is savoring?
- Deliberate effort to extend and expand positive experiences [improves mood; increases satisfaction]
 - Track/review fun
 - Track/review meaning
 - Your next run

THE OPPOSITE OF SAVORING

- We often dampen or spoil good experiences, while savoring or chewing on our mistakes
- Anybody ever get stuck chewing on the negative or spoiling the positives? [Yet another natural obstacle to happiness]

EASIER SAVORING

- Mutual savoring
- Find a friend – Remember when ...
 - Improves mood and hope
 - Improves likelihood of repeating
 - Increases planning

STRATEGY #4: GRATITUDE

- Do you want to increase optimism, improve life satisfaction, be healthier, and exercise more?
- Weave intentional gratitude into your life





GRATITUDE – PART 2

- But the mind is built to count up hassles rather than blessings
- “My two years of rejections”
 - ✓ There had been many
 - ✓ But there had also been much more
 - ✓ This was like counting cloudy days – the outcome is easy

GRATITUDE – PART 3 – HOMEWORK

- Who do you want to express gratitude toward?
- Write a **postcard or letter or email or text or IM** of gratitude to a person you value
- Even better: Tell the person directly
- Results?? Not about the response.

STRATEGY #5: YOUR BEST SELF

- From Laura King, professor at U of Missouri-Columbia
- Spend **10 minutes a day** for four consecutive days writing a narrative description of your “best possible future self.”
- Pick a point in the future – write about what you’ll be doing/thinking then – and these things need to **capture a vision of you being “your best” successful self**

BONUS: PHYSICAL/SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL ROADS TO WELL-BEING

- Movement
 - But who likes getting sweaty and sore?
- Active pursuit of meaning
 - But it's so easy to watch television and play on Instagram
- Regular involvement in spiritual, religious, or social justice groups
 - But staying home can feel good in the moment

ONE LAST POSITIVE DISTRACTION

- Life is hard
- We all experience common unhappiness and wonder about ourselves
- Emotions are a pain 😊
- Sometimes, we need distractions
 - What songs help you feel your feelings?
 - What songs help boost your mood? [JSF and 9th grade basketball]

STUNNING CONCLUSIONS

- The brain, our culture, the news ... are all built to track negativity (and outrage)
- Well-being (eudemonic happiness) requires at least awareness, intention, effort, reminders, and persistence
- Most of us will forget to apply these unless we have a reminder plan
- Select and practice a few evidence-based positive psychology interventions and then see what happens. Experiment!

WORDS FROM A HAPPINESS STUDENT

Hi John,

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude for the Happiness Class. Literally transforming my life after a very difficult and sad nine months; plus it's a heckuva lot of fun. Again, thank you.

-- Happiness class student

RESOURCES

- For more homework ideas, just do an internet search: **Sommers-Flanagan + Happiness Homework**
- University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center: <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>
- Greater Good Magazine: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>
- Positive Psychology: <https://positivepsychology.com/>
- Happy habits for hard times: https://coehs.umt.edu/happy_habits_series_2020/default.php