Did you know there’s an entire new realm of groundbreaking scientific research on happiness (AKA subjective well-being)? Is the pursuit of happiness the meaning of life? Do happy people live longer? Some health advocates are calling for positive well-being to be incorporated into healthcare worldwide. Come to this lecture to learn more about positive well-being, how happiness studies are conducted, and what the results mean for you.

“The Very Purpose of Life is To Seek Happiness”
The Dalai Lama

I. Defining Happiness AKA Subjective Well-Being
   a. Pleasant emotions and moods
   b. Lack of negative emotions and moods
   c. Overall life satisfaction judgments

II. What Determines Happiness?
   • Biological Set Point: 50%
   • External Circumstances: 10%
   • Intentional Activity: 40% (Within Our Ability to Control!)

III. Why Be Happy?

IV. Measuring Happiness—two primary methods:
   a. Objective/social indicators
   b. Subjective indicators—two types
      - experienced well-being (momentary affective states)
      - evaluated well-being (evaluations of one’s life).

V. A New Paradigm: Well-Being (from Seligman’s Flourish)
   • Positive emotion
   • Engagement
   • Meaning
   • Positive relationships
   • Accomplishment

VI. Selected Important findings from subjective well-being research:
1. We overestimate how long and how intensely a negative or a positive life event will affect us. (We exaggerate the effect a life change will have upon our happiness because we cannot foresee that we won’t always be thinking about it.) Wilson, T.D. & Gilbert, D.T. (2005). Affective forecasting: Knowing what to want. *Current Directions in Psychological Science (Current Directions)*, 14, 131-34.


5. We have a psychological immune system which can cushion us against stress, or ironically, promote hedonic adaptation, which can be an obstacle to happiness. Luhmann, M., et al. (2012). Subjective well-being and adaptation to life events: A meta-analysis. *JPSP*, 102, 592-615.

6. When people behave in ways that fit their personalities, interests, and values, they are more satisfied, more confident, more successful, more engaged in what they are doing, and feel “right” about it. Higgins, E.T. (2005). Value from regulatory fit. *Current Directions*, 14, 209-13.

7. Perfectionist expectations can be an obstacle to a happy life. Ben-Shahar, T. (2011). *Being Happy: you don't have to be perfect to lead a richer, happier life*. McGraw-Hill.


VII. Global Findings—Which Country is the Happiest?

VII. Happiness Myths

#1: I’ll be happy when I’m married to the right person
#2: I can’t be happy when my relationship has fallen apart
#3: I’ll be happy when I find the right job
#4. I can’t be happy when I’m broke
#5. I can’t be happy when the best years of my life are over
#6: If I’m not happy all the time then I’m not a happy person

“Most folks are about as happy as they make their minds up to be.” (Abraham Lincoln)

Resources:


*Research:*