

Hayden Fuller

Well-Being: Creating a Toolbox

For my project, I simply journaled and tracked how I was feeling on a scale of 1-10. I was originally a bit too ambitious, tracking 18 different factors on a scale to graph, plus a few “key words” (how I’m feeling in about 3-4 words), plus a journal entry. Every hour. It took about two days for me to get tired and give up on that, and a few days for me to restart with an easier method, where I dropped from 18 scaled factors to 1, focused more on the journal entry, and only did it when I felt available to do so. I’ve so far averaged 2.714 entries per day (very nearly the natural number $e=2.718!$)

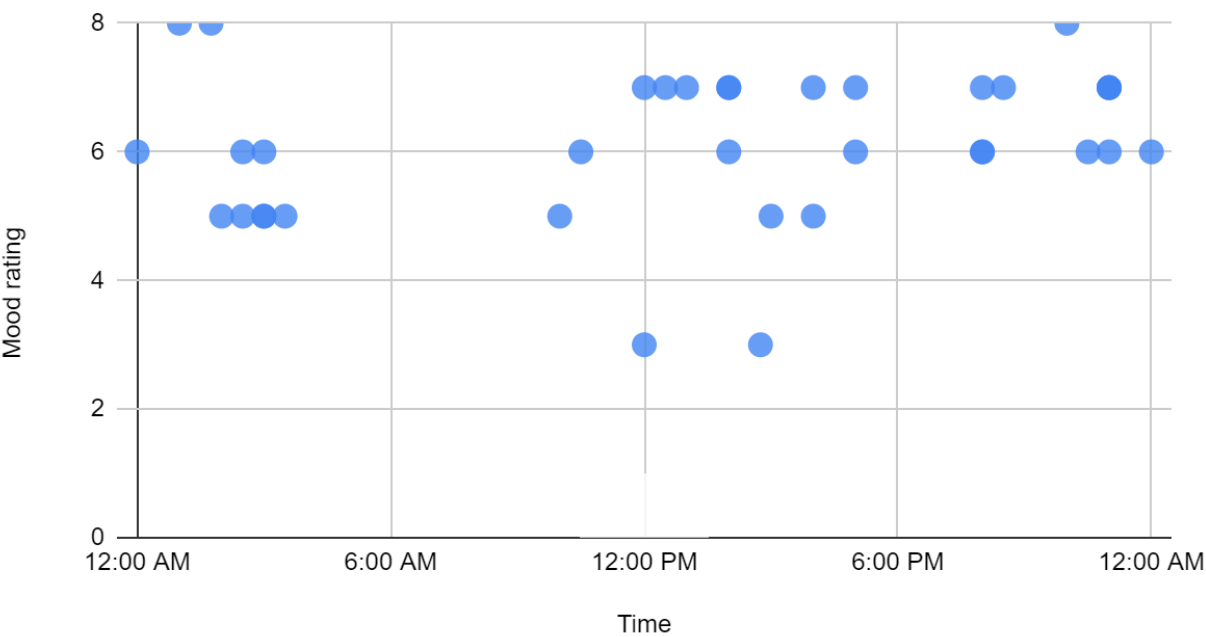
I’ve certainly enjoyed journaling and it’s helped me be more mindful of... well pretty much everything, including how I’m feeling, how productive I am, how much sleep I’m getting, etc. Simply having an alarm go off every hour to remind me of it (even if I didn’t actually fill it out every hour) has helped me keep track of time and notice how long I’ve been working on a task or how long I’ve been procrastinating. For example, I’ve been writing this for about two hours because I’ve gone down the rabbit holes of 1) apparently Google Docs broke last night and removed Times New Roman for some people and 2) how to show data with repeated values in google sheets, which is surprisingly difficult. This both helps me in the moment to realize when I’ve gotten distracted, as well as allowing me to notice some patterns. One thing I’ve noticed is that I yo-yo between productivity and relaxing over the course of a couple days to a week. I’ll be very productive for a few days, burn out, relax and fall behind for a few days, and cycle back to productivity. I’d like to see if I can change these habits to be more consistent, so I can both be productive and relax every day rather than these large fluctuations.

I've also noticed that I get much better sleep when I go to bed happy, even if I don't sleep for as long. With this combined with the previous factor, I hope to be more productive throughout the day and for longer, and then only take a break once I've done enough work for the day, as opposed to currently, where I may stop working earlier, only to then have to do more before going to bed. These often shorter periods of "relaxing" also often lead to me not actually feeling very relaxed, as it's easy to just waste that time on my phone or something. To solve this issue, I hope to waste less time throughout the day, and instead spend that time working on personal projects, playing games I actually enjoy, and spending time with friends.

I've certainly found this to be helpful, and I plan to continue to do this throughout the semester and beyond. I've always liked the idea of journaling, but never really got around to it. Now that I've gotten started, I hope to keep up with it consistently from now on, and maybe I'll eventually have quite a bit of interesting data I can compile and analyze. I would love to add more factors into this as well, maybe tracking sleep? Maybe a way to actually analyze and utilize the key words? Maybe some ways of tracking how active/social/productive I've been so I can correlate that with how I'm feeling? Maybe split it up by day and compare it to my schedule? The possibilities are endless, they just come at the cost of more time and effort. As it is right now, it doesn't really show any data besides how I'm feeling on a scale of 1-10 at random times throughout the day, but it's a fairly good indicator when matched with the key words and journal entries, and arguably more importantly, it just makes me think about it and be more mindful of everything going on.

Looking at the data, there are two things I can think about improving upon. Firstly, there's a large correlation between stronger emotions and not filling out the journal. If I'm hanging out with friends, I'm probably in a good mood, and I'm probably not going to take the time to fill out the journal at all during that time. If I'm just having a bad day, I probably just don't care and don't have the energy to fill it out. I'd like to correct this by giving weight to previous hours as well, so I can at least journal once after one of these happens and give that same value to some previous hours. Secondly, I think I've fallen into the "decent" trap when recording numbers. When picking a number between 1 and 10, people tend to always pick 7 because it's not "good" and not "bad", just decent. I ended up picking 7 a full third of the time, going down to 5 or 6 when I wasn't doing great, and only going up to 8 when I was doing really well. Thinking back, I don't think I ever really went up from 7 enough. Some 7's could have been 8's and some 8's could have been 9's, but I was reserving those higher numbers for really good days, and the lower ones for really bad ones, and just got stuck in the middle. I might change the scaling a bit, maybe even just setting 0 as what I want the average to be, and have the range of -5 to +5 could fix the issue. I haven't included any actual journal entries, but a lot of these trends can be seen in the graphs below.

Mood vs time of day



Mood over time (long term)

