
THE HAPPINESS ADVANTAGE

BENEFITTING FROM POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

PSY451: Psychology of Adjustment

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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- Most of psychology deals with Normality and extremes of Abnormality
- Positive psychology is a branch of psychology introduced by *Martin Seligman* and *Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* in 1998
- They believed that psychology of positive human functioning will achieve a scientific understanding and lead to effective interventions to build thriving individuals, families, and communities.
- Positive psychologists seek to:
 - Find and nurture genius and talent
 - Make normal life more fulfilling
- Positive psychology is primarily concerned with using the psychological theory, research and intervention techniques to understand the positive, adaptive, creative and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior

PRINCIPLE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- If the belief “*Happiness follows Success*” is true then every employee who gets a promotion, every student who gets an acceptance letter, every executive who complete his sales target would be happy. But since with each victory our goal posts for success keep getting pushed further, happiness gets pushed over the horizon
- Why? Because the above formula is broken. Actually it is *backwards*.
- Happiness and optimism fuel performance and achievement. This competitive advantage is termed as the Happiness Advantage by its proponent Shawn Achor.



SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Studies have shown that:

- Doctors put in a positive mood before making a diagnosis show almost 3 times more intelligence and creativity than doctors in a neutral state, and they make accurate diagnosis 19% faster.
- Optimistic salespeople outsell their pessimistic counterparts by 56%.
- Students primed to be happy before taking their math achievement test far outperform their neutral or negative peers.

It turns out that our brains are hardwired to perform at their best not when they are negative or neutral but when they are positive



PHYSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- *Dopamine*, a neurochemical released by our body which helps us experience enjoyment and happiness, has an ancillary benefit.
- It activates the learning centers of the brain, allowing our brains to become intellectual sponges
- For instance, we remember lyrics from a song we heard decades ago but fail to recall information crammed under stress such as during examinations.



HAPPINESS ADVANTAGE IN WORK

- Research suggests that, happiness is the single greatest competitive advantage in the modern economy.
- Only 25% of your job successes are predicted based upon intelligence and technical skills
- The “silent 75%” of long-term job success is based upon your ability to positively adapt to the world:
 - Optimism
 - social support creation
 - viewing stress as a challenge instead of as a threat.

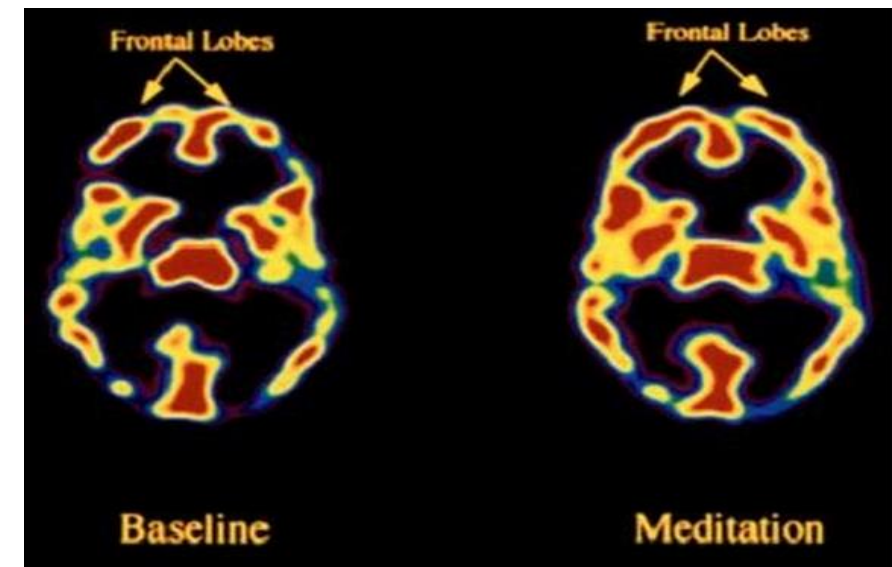
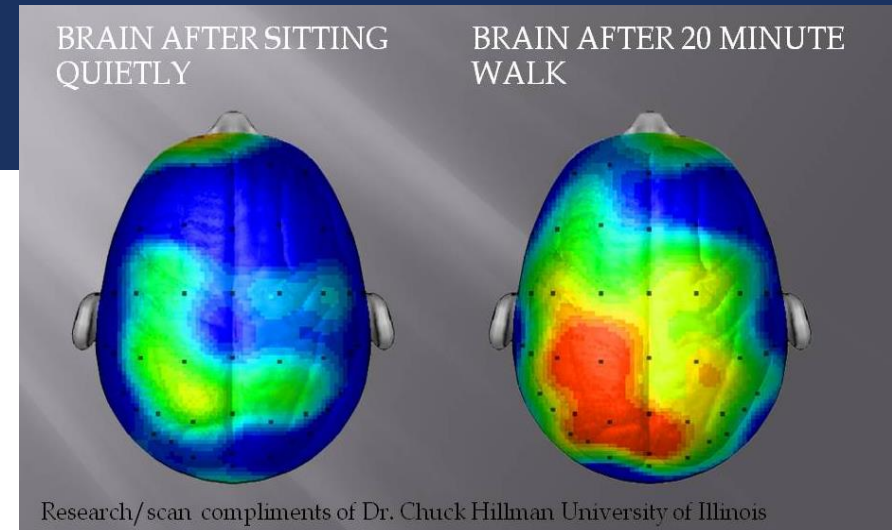
HAPPINESS BOOSTERS

- Exercise
- Meditate
- Find Something to look forward to
- Commit Conscious acts of kindness
- Infuse positivity into your environment
- Spend Money(but not on stuff)
- Exercise a Signature strength



HAPPINESS BOOSTERS

- **Exercise more**
7 minutes might be enough.
 - Endorphins released during exercise minimize the discomfort of exercise and are associated with a feeling of euphoria.
- **Meditate**
Take 5 minutes a day to watch your breathe go in and out.
 - Neuroscientists have found that monks who spend years meditating develop their left prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for feeling happy.
 - Regular meditation permanently rewires the brain to remain happy, lower stress and even improve immune system.



HAPPINESS BOOSTERS

■ Find something to look forward to

- A study found out that people who just thought about watching their favorite movie actually raised their endorphin levels by 27%.
- Tip: Even if you don't have time for a vacation or a night out, put something on your calendar.
- Anticipating future rewards lightens up the pleasure centers in the brain as much as the actual reward will.

■ Commit acts of social kindness

- A study over 2,000 people shows that acts of altruism- giving to friends and strangers alike- decreases stress and contributes to mental health.
- Tip: Pick a day per week to commit 5 acts of kindness. Make sure you do them deliberately and consciously.



HAPPINESS BOOSTERS

- **Infuse positivity into your surroundings**

- Our physical environment has a huge role in our mindset and sense of well-being
- E.g. In office, people who flank their computers with pictures of loved ones aren't just decorating- they are ensuring positive emotions.
- Avoid watching negative TV especially violent media. The happier we'll be.



- **Spend money (but not on stuff)**

- A research on more than 150 people suggests that people who recently spent their money on concerts, group dinners, donations etc. were happier than the ones who spent money on material goods like TV, car, mobiles etc.
- Practice “pro-social spending” i.e. spend on other people.

HAPPINESS BOOSTERS

■ Exercise a **Signature Strength**

- Everyone is good at something or the other – some in giving away advices, some are great with kids, some are very good cooks etc.
- If you find yourself in need of a happiness booster, revisit your talent which you haven't practiced in a while.
- When 577 volunteers were encouraged to pick and practice one signature strength for each day in a week, they became happier and less depressed than control groups. Also, the impact of this happiness booster lasted for around six months!

CONCLUSIONS

- Recent advances in positive psychology and neuroscience has taught us that success actually revolves around happiness, not the other way around.
- This finding is important because it's not just our own individual success that orbits around our happiness.
- By making changes within ourselves, we can actually bring the benefits of Happiness advantage to our teams, organizations, and everyone around us.

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THANK YOU

And stay happy