**Laurie Santos: Psychology and the Good Life**

At the Aspen Ideas Festival

*Taken from a .docx file*

* Students are often so stressed and busy that they feel they lack the time to do things that supplement their education like reading
  + At Yale, around a third are so depressed “it’s difficult to function,” 40% report feeling hopeless and over 60% report crippling anxiety
* Including healthy habits as a suggestion in a class syllabus managed to greatly increase interest in the class and actually was followed by Yale students
* About 50% of our happiness is not inherited; we have the power to affect 50% of our happiness if we set out to
* Life circumstances matter significantly less to our happiness than people think
  + People who have a terrible event occur to them tend to see more meaning in life
* Improving our happiness through behaviors (about 40% of happiness controlled by this) takes a lot of hard, **consistent** effort
* GI Joe Fallacy: Knowing is not half the battle, it’s a lot less; following through is more
* Our intuitions lie to us about what will make us happy
  + Having more money, for example, would increase our happiness because it generally means more stability, but the increase in happiness is not even close to linear as money increases
    - Happiness bump from $10k -> $20k salary is vastly larger than $75k -> $85k
* Prioritizing the people they care about is a very important part of living a happy life
  + People on a train asked to try to make a connection with a stranger on the train were much happier than those who were asked to keep to themselves
    - The solitude people would normally spend the time trying to do some work and failing to really accomplish anything, which led to frustration; those who talked with others took away something meaningful
* Helping others can greatly increase your happiness
  + A study showed that people who spent free money on themselves were much less happy both immediately and after a week than those who spent it on another
* Doing simple things to improve your physical health is significantly more effective at causing happiness than people realize
  + 30 minutes of cardio can have the same effect as taking Zoloft
  + Getting proper sleep (high schoolers get 4-5 hours) can greatly improve mood, not just immune system
    - People getting as much sleep as high school students even for a short experimental time ended up having mood levels low enough to be considered clinically depressed
* One strong way to improve mood is to live more in the present rather than being absorbed by anxiety about the future
  + This also means staying in the moment when doing something unpleasurable rather than dreaming of a more pleasurable time
  + Just being aware of your present situation helps you appreciate all the good
  + Meditating even 10 minutes a day is enough to greatly improve your mood
* Prioritizing (leisure) time over money generally causes one to be happier

*Now I have the knowledge…but this is far less than half the battle.*

Ways I Can Improve my Mood (things I’m not already doing):

* Pay more attention to friends and family, making sure to take advantage of opportunities to spend time together when possible
* Help others with things whenever possible
  + Will be a lot easier when WHAT Center starts
* Get back into an exercise routine, half an hour at least each day
* Set bedtime of 11:00 on days that homework allows, which will be easier to follow if I…
* Live in the moment to stay focused on less pleasurable things, like taking notes on a psychology video (ouch, sorry)
* When treating myself, focus on all of the enjoyable aspects about my situation