

*Secrets to happiness based on scientific research.  
4 guides developed by experts to lead you to happiness.  
Be happier in just 8 weeks.*

# *Achieving Happiness in Singapore*

**Thrive**

**Dr Christopher Cheok  
Angelina Esther David**

**Extensive research in the last 20 years has uncovered the science to what makes us happy. In a concise toolkit, all the secrets to happiness will be presented to you in an 8 week programme that teaches you to increase your happiness level. This toolkit is our gift of effort to you and is provided with compliments by the support of the Ministry of Health and Agency for Integrated Care under the THRIVE-ASCAT Community Mental Health Programme.**

### **Development Team**

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KNOW

FIND

HEAL

CARE

# KNOW

I WANT TO UNDERSTAND  
ABOUT MIND MATTERS.

# CARE

I WANT TO HELP A PERSON  
I CARE ABOUT

# FIND

I WANT TO FIND HELP  
TO GUIDE ME

# HEAL

I WANT TO HELP MYSELF  
GET BETTER

## WHAT'S ON

- Relaxation Workshop 17 Aug 2013  
Overcoming Depression 24 Aug 2013

[Read more...](#)

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you can change your mind, you can change your life.  
- William James

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Visit **thrive.org.sg** for quality mental health information  
and self help for depression and anxiety disorders.

**Knowledge Booklet**  
*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

# *The Science of Happiness*

**Thrive**

## THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

### INTRODUCTION

Happiness is the sense of well being, satisfaction and joy. In the last 20 years, scientific research has revealed what makes us happy and studies have shown that the way to happiness can be taught and learnt. Studies have also shown that the results of adopting the skills taught in this toolkit can be seen as soon as in 8 weeks.

This toolkit is a compilation of methods and skills that have been scientifically shown to help people achieve happiness. None are my original ideas and I have put them together to benefit the reader. This toolkit is designed to be easily understood, easily learnt and easily implemented. References are made to the original thought leader when the reader wants to learn more.

This toolkit is made available under the THRIVE Community Mental Health Programme that aims to improve the well being, mental health and resilience of people. Visit [thrive.org.sg](http://thrive.org.sg) for more information on mental health issues.

Dr Christopher Cheok Cheng Soon  
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## HAPPINESS –

### LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IN QUESTIONS

Happiness in life can be achieved through living in a way that promotes emotional well being. Happiness is derived from within oneself and not from the outside. Research shows that happiness can be achieved when we invest in these ways of living:

- I. Experiencing positive moments and developing a sense of gratitude;
- II. Investing in a meaningful career or finding meaning in our work;
- III. Developing meaningful relationships with family and friends;
- IV. Contributing to the community and volunteering for a cause we believe in;
- V. Having financial security;
- VI. Finding time to do a hobby which engages our mind;
- VII. Investing time and effort to maintain good physical and mental health.

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**Q. WHY SHOULD I READ THIS BOOK?**

Simply, it would make you happier. Reading this book will give you the knowledge on what makes people truly happy based on scientific research. When you start to implement the methods taught in this book, you will gradually have a better sense of well being. Being happy and optimistic can also lead to a longer and more fulfilled life. Separate studies of over 100,000 people done in Finland, United Kingdom and the United States have also shown that happy and optimistic people have reduced risk of stroke, heart disease and survive cancer longer.

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**HAPPINESS AND WHO YOU ARE**

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**Q. DOES MONEY MAKE YOU HAPPY?**

For those who are trying to make ends meet, making more money generally adds to a person's happiness.

However, once a person has enough to provide adequately for the family and oneself, studies show that more money does not lead to much more happiness. For those who are financially secure, studies show that a balanced life of maintaining relationships, being engaged in a hobby and volunteering add to more happiness than more paid work. If more money comes at a cost of more stress and responsibility in a job that a person is not passionate about, it will not add to one's happiness.

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Q.     DOES OWNING MORE, HAVING MORE AND  
ACHIEVING MORE MAKE YOU HAPPIER?

People are happier giving than receiving. Many companies encourage us to buy things to be happy. They suggest to us that we will be happy if we own their product. Studies show that the happy feeling after shopping lasts for hours to a few days. When you reflect on how much happiness you gained from your last purchase, you would agree it lasted for a short time. Much desire occurs prior to the purchase but the good feeling diminishes after a while. True and lasting

happiness comes from within a person's mind. In this toolkit, we will suggest ways of thinking that promote long term happiness. This is done by shaping your views and training your mind to look inward within for happiness. True happiness is achieved by loving others, accepting love, contributing to your family and community, purposeful work, having good relationships and having enough to be financially secure.

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Q. IS IT BETTER TO BE MARRIED OR SINGLE?

People in a stable, nurturing relationship are happier than those who are single or widowed. While in a relationship, betrayal can be one of the nastiest emotions encountered. Time and effort spent building strong relationships with partners, spouses, family and friends will go a long way to add to one's happiness. As part of this toolkit, we have a worksheet on building strong relationships.

**Q. SOME PEOPLE ARE JUST BORN LESS HAPPY THAN OTHERS. IS THAT TRUE AND WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?**

It is believed that about 25% to 50% of a person's personality is genetically determined and stable over time. Scientists have also followed a single group of people over many years. They conclude that the basic temperament of a person is stable over time. For example, people who are anxious or pessimistic when young tend to be the same when they are old. People who are cheerful and extroverted in their youth are more or less the same when they are older. The values of a person may change with life's circumstance and through learning. For example, they may be kinder and more generous at a certain phase in life compared to others. However, their basic personality remains the same. Some people are born more pessimistic than others while others are naturally optimistic. Regardless of the personality that one is born with, they can learn how to enhance their happiness through the exercises in this toolkit.

I am older than I once was  
And younger than I'll be and that's not unusual.  
No it isn't strange  
After changes upon changes  
We are more or less the same  
After changes we are more or less the same

- Paul Simon, The Boxer

**Q. DOES HAPPINESS CHANGE WITH AGE AND DOES IT DIFFER BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN?**

Research involving over 400,000 people show that people are happiest in their early adulthood and when they are older than 50. After 50 years old, the level of happiness becomes increasing higher as one grows older and more mature. Happiness continues to increase until illness occurs. In the 30s and 40s, the drive to succeed, the competitiveness and the need to establish yourself in your career can diminish happiness. There is also the need to balance career, personal time and family time. After 50 years old, people are more accepting of oneself and they are more contented. In general, women are

slightly happier than men as they have more social support from friends and family. Men tend to be solitary and have fewer close friends.

## HAPPY FEELINGS

Happy feelings are more than just joy and peace. The feelings of contentment, gratitude and wonder can add great happiness to your life. Make it a daily habit to seek out funny, amazing stories or read articles of the kind and inspirational acts of people. The more we fill our minds with positive and happy feelings, the happier we will become.

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Q.     WHAT IS THE HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY OF  
ATTENTION?

Humans focus more on bad news than good news. We tend to focus on the bad things that have happened to us rather than the good things. It is said if you offend a

person, it takes 7-10 good things to make up for 1 bad thing done to that person. Newspapers report on accidents, disasters and bad things that happen to people rather than the good things that occur everyday. Therefore, we need to retrain our minds to focus on the many good things in our lives. This can be done through a daily effort to remember 3 good things that happened that day. It can be something that was marvelous such as winning a lottery to simple things like good weather and also appreciating simple things like being alive. By training our minds to look to good things and appreciating that many more good things happen than bad things, we will naturally grow happier.

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Q. HOW DO WE GENERATE GOOD FEELINGS?

Good feelings can be generated easily and feelings of happiness, contentment and wonder can be found on the internet. Websites like [www.dailygood.org](http://www.dailygood.org) have many stories of people who do kind acts which impact the community. [Youtube.com](http://Youtube.com) is an internet service that has many videos on funny things. Just go to [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

and type “funny videos” in the search bar. There are also many website with jokes and all you need to do is type “joke of the day” in the search engine in your internet browser.

Cultivating gratitude is a good way of feeling satisfied. Gratitude can be cultivated by spending a short time each day to think about 3 good things that happened that day. One can also reflect upon those who have helped us. For everyone who succeeds in life, they stand on the shoulders of giants who helped them in one way or another. One must not forget the source of our success and achievement.

Good feelings can also be generated when we give generously to others. Volunteering in a cause you believe in will add heaps to your happiness. Giving to others in gifts, actions, time or service will generate good feelings. Giving should be selfless and done with no expectation of a return from others. This will lead to abundant happiness.

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**Q.      WHAT IS FLOW?**

Flow occurs when you are engaged deeply in your activity and you experience great enjoyment and purpose. Time seems to pass easily. The best way to experience flow is to do a hobby that you really enjoy. For example, a good baker will feel engaged while he makes incredible pastries. The more one experiences a state of flow, the happier he will be. By finding time to enjoy your hobby, you are more likely to find yourself in a state of flow and happier.

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**Q.      CAN HAPPINESS BE TRANSMITTED FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER?**

Humans are social creatures and we have empathy neurons in our brains that allow us to feel what others feel. Smiling even when there is nothing funny can make one happier. By smiling more, other people smile back and everyone is happier. If you can help your situation, it is better to hang around happy and positive people. In a similar way, studies have also shown that low mood

can be transmitted between people and affects the morale of the whole group. If you want a happy environment, be the change that makes others happy.

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

- Gandhi

## VALUES, MEANING AND AUTHENTICITY

The most contented people live life authentically where they are true to their values. They have few conflicts in their mind and their public and private selves are quite similar. They come across to people as real, genuine and warm.

### Q. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR VALUES AND LIVE AUTHENTICALLY?

Most people find it tiring to pretend to be someone they are not. It is important to understand your values and

what you find important in life. If you can find ways to live authentically and to find a job which uses your skills well, then you will be more engaged in your work. It is important to find a job that appeals to you, matches your skill-set and fits your personality. Getting along with your boss and colleagues goes a long way to your overall happiness. No one on their deathbed wished they worked more so in the time you are at work, it is important to get a good fit and work not just for the salary. When you find time either at work or in your personal life to do something you are passionate in, you will feel happier. We have devoted one worksheet to help you discover your values and guide you to plan activities to express your values in your life.

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Q.     WHAT MUST YOU TRY TO DO MAXIMISE YOUR CHANCE OF HAPPINESS?

The Grant Study followed 2 groups of people for over 65 years. The first group was made up of 237 physically and mentally healthy Harvard college students from the classes of 1939-1944, and the second group was made up of 332 disadvantaged non-delinquent inner-city

youths who grew up in Boston neighbourhoods between 1940 and 1945. They were followed for 68 years until they reached the ages of 70 years for the inner-city group and 80 years for the Harvard cohort. They were asked questions on their health and well being every 2 years. The following factors were associated with well being in old age:

- Happy marriage
- No mental illness
- Good relationships
- No smoking, no alcohol abuse
- Healthy weight
- Mature ways of coping

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Q.      WHAT CAN I DO TO CHANGE TO MAKE MYSELF HAPPIER?

Change needs patience and perseverance. We have provided an 8 week guide in this toolkit to get you

started. Follow the guide and after the 8 weeks, continue to practice the principles in your daily life.

## REFERENCES

### Books

Flourish by Martin Seligman

Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman

Happiness: A Guide To Developing Life's Most Important

Skill by Matthieu Ricard

Aging Well by George Vaillant

*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

*Your  
8 weeks  
guide to  
happiness.*

**Thrive**

*This guide helps you to get the most out of the knowledge and skills found in this toolkit. By following this guide, you will be happier at the end of the 8 weeks when you do the exercises and implement the knowledge in the book. It takes effort and perseverance to change your way of thinking and constant practice and effort is needed. Butter comes from milk but does not become butter unless it is churned. We hope that at the end of the period, you would have learnt the skills and change your styles of thinking to those that promote happiness. We also hope you will invest in building strong relationships and contribute meaningfully to a cause you believe in. We hope that you will achieve well being by having*

- Positive Emotions
- Positive Relationships
- Meaning in life
- Engagement and Flow in work or leisure
- Good Health

## ***Aim to have more***

- Positive Emotions***
- Positive Relationships***
  - Meaning in life***
- Engagement and Flow  
in work or leisure***
- Good Health***

## ***Do this everyday***

- Remember 3 good things that  
happened that day***
- Think of someone you are  
grateful for***
- Watch funny or inspirational videos,  
read jokes on the internet or in books***
- Practice your religion  
(if you have one)***

## **Week 1**

Read the book. Reflect on how the content can be applied in your life.

Do worksheet 1 on discovering your values.

Contact a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.  
Start with a brisk walk.

## **Week 2**

Reflect upon the content of the book.

Revisit worksheet 1 and implement the changes.

Start your hobby.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 3**

Do worksheet 2 on getting rid of difficult emotions.

Try to arrange a meal with a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 4**

Reflect upon the content of the book.

Practice the skills in worksheet 2.

Revisit worksheet 1 and review what you wrote.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 5**

Do worksheet 3 on changing your style of thinking.

Contact a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 6**

Continue to review worksheet 3 as it takes time to fully understand and implement the skills taught in it.

Try to arrange a meal with a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 7**

Continue to review worksheet 3.

Do worksheet 4 on building strong relationships.

Contact a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Week 8**

Read and reflect on the content of the book.

Review all 4 worksheets.

Try to arrange a meal with a friend or family member.

Exercise 30 minutes several times a week.

## **Worksheet 1**

*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

# *Finding and living your values*

Thrive

*Discovering your values and identifying your strengths are important as you journey through life on your path to happiness. Values are a set of beliefs and qualities that define you as a person. They are standards that you grew up with and are important to you even today. Values are important because they are internal qualities that serve to align you with your actions and behavior on a daily basis. This worksheet guides you to find and live your values.*

## ***Values and behavior***

We find that when our behavior is in line with our values, we feel a sense of engagement and connection with what we do. Mihali Csikszentmihalyi, father of positive psychology describes the term, 'flow' to occur when people are involved in activities that engage us, challenge us and are fulfilling to us that we lose track of time. However, when our behavior is not in sync with our personal values, we tend to feel lost, frustrated, disengaged, confused and even upset. Therefore, values can also be said to be an 'internal compass' that guides us and sets our direction in life. Discovering your core values and personal strengths can be a liberating experience and adds value and satisfaction to your journey towards becoming a happier person. When you identify your core values, you begin to value yourself for who you really are. Some questions to ask yourself as you ponder on your core values are:

1. When have I felt happy, fulfilled and proud of myself?
2. When have I felt most regretful?
3. When have I felt frustrated, unfulfilled and empty?
4. What activities do I enjoy doing the most?
5. Who are my role models? What qualities do I best admire in them?
6. What are my natural gifts and abilities?

As you evaluate your values and strengths, it may be good to ask yourself the following:

1. Which values can I most relate to and can connect with?
2. When and how did I learn the importance of this value?
3. What feelings does this value bring up in me?
4. Do I live out this value on a daily basis?

## ***Making it real:***

1. Imagine yourself 10 years into the future. What do you see your life looking like?
2. What activities here and now can I use to live out my five most important values?

## *Circle the values that describe you*

**Wisdom and knowledge**  
*(strengths that involve the use of knowledge)*

- Creativity**
- Curiosity**
- Open mindedness**
- Love of learning**
- Perspective**  
*(views you have on life)*

**Courage**  
*(strengths that allow one to achieve goals even in difficulty)*

- Bravery**
- Persistence**
- Authenticity/ Integrity**  
*(What you say is what you do)*
- Vitality (Strength)**

**Humanity**  
*(looking outward to others and beyond yourself)*

- Love**
- Kindness**
- Social Intelligence**

**Justice**  
*(strengths that make a healthy community)*

- Citizenship/loyalty**
- Fairness**
- Leadership**

**Temperance**  
*(strengths that protect against excess)*

- Forgiveness and mercy**
- Humility/ modesty**
- Prudence (carefulness)**
- Self-regulation**

**Transcendence**  
*(strengths that stand for connection to spirituality)*

- Appreciation of beauty**
- Gratitude**
- Hope (sense of optimism)**
- Humor/ playfulness**
- Spirituality**

Identifying your core values also directs you to your personal strengths that are unique to your personality (Peterson, 2006).

You can also use the following online resources at

<http://www.behaviourlibrary.com/strengths.php> or at [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org) to get a comprehensive list of your top strengths.

**“Use your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are”- Martin Seligman**

### ***Skill to develop***

***Reflect on your  
values***

***Use and embrace  
your strengths***

***Engage in meaningful  
activities***

***Live out your  
values and strengths***

### ***References***

A Primer in Positive Psychology by Christopher Peterson  
Flourish by Martin Seligman  
<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>

## **Worksheet 2**

*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

# *Getting rid of difficult emotions*

Thrive

*Hatred, envy and jealousy are some of the most destructive emotions to have. They can lead us to make disastrous decisions driven by the intensity of the emotion rather than logic. For example, a person jealous of his brother's success may choose a more stressful job that does not suit him well but pays better. After a year in the job, he quits and wishes he had stayed at the earlier job where he was more competent. In this worksheet, we will teach a skill on how to handle difficult emotions which when practiced over time will allow the emotions to have less intensity and reduce its control over you.*

# ***Understanding the nature of thoughts & emotions***

## **1. Ownership of difficult emotion is one own self**

When one feels a difficult emotion, it is easy to attribute it to another person who seemed to have caused it. For example, if John cheated James of money and James hates John, James may feel it was John who caused him to hate him. If the difficult emotion persists after a period of time, one must accept ownership that the continued emotional suffering is due to the person's own self. For example, if after many years James continues to hate John, the cause of the continued emotional suffering is due to James' handling of his own emotions. It is no longer John causing the pain. If you continue to have difficult emotions over a past incident, you must take ownership of the emotion and see that the cause of the suffering is yourself. Therefore, to get rid of the difficult emotion, one must be willing to take ownership of the thought and emotion and then change the way it is handled.

## **2. You have the freedom to choose**

Viktor Frankl was a psychiatrist who survived through detention in a concentration camp during the Second World War. He saw that even in the camp when people were on the way to their deaths, some chose to comfort and help their fellow campmates. He concluded that everyone, even in the harshest of conditions still retained the freedom to choose their reaction to any situation. Remember, you have the choice and it is your choice how you react to any given circumstance. You can choose to forgive a person because if you continue to hate someone, the emotional suffering is yours to have.

**“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.” — Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning***

## **3. Thoughts and emotions are transient**

Thoughts lead to emotions and eventually to a behaviour. For example, you think a particular mobile phone is good (thought) which stirs your desire (emotion) and eventually you buy the phone (behaviour). Thoughts and emotions themselves are transient. Think of the last time you got angry but the emotion went away after a while. By remembering that thoughts and emotions are transient, when difficult thoughts or emotions arise, tell yourself that they will go away once you don't pay attention to it. Hence, you can distract yourself and the thought and emotion will eventually go away.

#### 4. Thoughts and emotions that generate negativity are empty in itself

It is important to recognize that thoughts and emotions that generate negativity are empty in nature and hold no value. They do not add value to our lives and serve only to continue our emotional suffering. Each time a thought emerges and provokes a negative emotion, take one step back and tell yourself these thoughts are empty of value.

#### 5. Difficult emotions can be neutralized with antidotes

There are types of emotions which are incompatible with one another, like oil and water. One cannot in the same instance of time, hold hate and love together in consciousness.

The antidote to hatred is loving kindness.

The antidote to greed, envy and desire is joy and freedom.

The antidote to anger is patience.

The antidote to pride is humility.

Hence, when a particular difficult emotion arises, we can tell ourselves it is transient, has no value in itself and you can get rid of it by thinking about its opposite emotion, the antidote. For example, if a thought enters your mind about someone you dislike, you can first acknowledge your own thought and the emotion it created. Then, tell yourself you have a choice to be free of it or dwell in continued suffering. When you choose to be free of it, you can get rid of it using two skills. The first is to think about how empty that thought is and useless to your life while acknowledging the thought is transient and will go away in a while. The second way is to think about someone or something you love and this will neutralize the thoughts of hate.

### ***Skill to develop:***

### ***Own, Choose, Wait, Contemplate***

The following method when practiced repeatedly when a difficult emotion arises will help you to get rid of it over time. Practice this when difficult emotions arise and you find that you have control again over your mind. The difficult emotion may arise again but you can use this method over and over again. After a period of time, you will find that these negative emotions will start to lose their power over your mind.

## **Exercise**

### **Own**

Take ownership of the thought and emotion. Remember the suffering it causes you is not due to another person's fault but it is within your mind and your control.

*Think of a time when you were angry. Take ownership of the emotion and don't blame other. You chose to be angry.*

### **Choose**

You have a choice always to determine your reaction. You can choose to free yourself from emotional suffering or choose to dwell in the negative thought.

*Choose that you want to free yourself from that anger.*

### **Wait**

Negative thoughts are valueless and are transient. You can distract yourself and actively tell yourself that the negative thoughts are valueless and empty.

*Think of what purpose the anger served. You may conclude it served little useful purpose. Recognize the emptiness of the anger. Distract yourself with purposeful activity e.g. a hobby. The anger will go away with time.*

### **Contemplate**

Neutralize difficult emotions with antidotes.

The antidote to hatred is loving kindness. Think of someone or something you love.

The antidote to greed, envy and desire is joy and freedom. Think of someone who was free of desire and lived his life confidently yet humbly. E.g. Gandhi.

The antidote to anger is patience. Think of a time when someone was patient with you. E.g. your parents or good friends or teacher.

The antidote to pride is humility. Think of someone who was humble. E.g. Mother Teresa.

*Think of someone or something you love and the anger will go away.*

### ***References***

Man's Search For Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Happiness: A Guide To Developing Life's Most Important Skill by Matthieu Ricard

## **Worksheet 3**

*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

# *Changing unhelpful patterns of thoughts*

Thrive

*On a daily basis, the human mind has on an average 25,000 to 50,000 thoughts running through it. Understanding that negative thoughts are a normal aspect of human behavior, it is therefore important for us to consciously change the way we think for the better.*

# *The link between thoughts, behaviors and feelings*



Thoughts lead to feelings which lead to behavior. These three abilities- thinking, feeling and our behavior are interlinked and they all affect each other.

## *Thoughts and behavior*

When we think positively, we tend to be more confident about our tasks, smile more and radiate positivity wherever we go. On the other hand, when you are feeling low, you realize that you want to do fewer things, and tend to withdraw more.

How you think affects the way you feel as well. For example, think of an embarrassing moment. If you think about it for a while, you'll probably find that you start to sense the feeling of embarrassment. Maybe you even get a little embarrassed. You are obviously not doing anything embarrassing right now. The thought alone makes you feel embarrassed! Therefore, you can see how we think affects how we feel.

## *Behavior also affects our thoughts*

Getting approached by someone who is asking for money to buy food can give rise to thoughts about poverty and injustice. Watching a relationship drama on TV may provoke thoughts about your own family. As you can see, behaviors, thoughts and emotions affect each other. If you can change any one of them it will affect the other two. Each time a change occurs in the system it can be expected to lead to a "ripple effect" throughout the system. Although nothing has changed in the "real world", your thoughts create very different feelings. It is therefore important to realize the power of thoughts. Research tells us that emotions are difficult to change

immediately even if you want to. It is therefore important to learn how to deal with negative thoughts and change our patterns of thinking. Since thoughts occur spontaneously and habitually, we often forget that they are simply personal interpretations and not factual truths.

To be able to change your thoughts and patterns of thinking and thereby gain more control over your emotions, it is necessary that you learn to identify and challenge your thought habits. The more time you are willing to invest in this, the faster you'll notice a change!

### ***Skill to develop***

The following method is for you to learn how to change your thoughts and patterns of thinking. Begin to realize that you are in control of the way you think and are therefore responsible for your thoughts. You can also work with a loved one or a family member on the following model to improve your thought patterns.

- Track it! Keep a record of your negative thoughts using a thought record or journal
- Identify particular situations that trigger negative thinking
- Challenge the negative thought with truth and fact
- Replace the negative with positive thoughts
- Make the choice to stay positive as you face the situation

### ***Exercise***

Think of a situation you are not looking forward to. For example, you are going to travel alone to a new place. Let's apply the following steps to our thought pattern:

1. Bring yourself to imagine the situation that you are about to face.
2. Allow yourself to experience the thought that runs through you as you process the whole encounter in your mind.
3. Identify the thought that comes to mind. You probably think that you are going to be scared, you imagine getting lost, and you feel nervous and anxious and may even start to sweat a bit.
4. Next, ask yourself how much of these feelings are based on actual truth and fact. When you realize that most of the negative feelings are just baseless and just passing, you can choose to ignore it and begin to counteract it with positive thoughts such as excitement, anticipation and looking forward to the adventure.
5. Decide to focus on the positive outcome that this trip may bring rather than the negative which are not real anyway.
6. Talk to a loved one you trust as you work through changing your thought patterns.

## **Common Styles of Negative Thinking**

1. ALL OR NOTHING: You place things into black and white categories, ignoring the exceptions and subtle shades of gray, “It’s perfect or defective”, “I’m lovable or unlovable”, “I either succeeded or failed.”
2. OVERGENERALIZATION: A few (or even a single) bad experiences makes you believe that all similar situations will turn out badly. You see a never-ending pattern, where exceptions could still exist; “Since I’ve made several bad decisions, I’ll always fail.”
3. LABELING: A form of overgeneralization, often in the form of ‘name calling’; “I’m a loser”, “I’m a failure”, “I’m unlovable.”
4. DISCOUNTING THE POSITIVES: Positives are explained away, they “don’t count.” You minimize or entirely disqualify your resources, your ability to cope, possible help from others, alternative opportunities, etc.
5. JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS: Mind Reading: You assume that you know why and what others are thinking, feeling and doing, without proof.
6. MAGNIFICATION (CATASTROPHIZING): You focus on what might be lost and exaggerate either how likely it is to happen or how terrible it will be when it does: “I’ll probably be rejected, and that’s terrible”, or “it’s horrible that I lost.”
7. EMOTIONAL REASONING: You reach conclusions based on your feelings, “I feel this way so it must be”, “it feels terrible, so it must be terrible”, “I’ll wait until I feel like doing this.”
8. ABSOLUTE THINKING: A rigid and inflexible type of thinking. It takes the form of demanding (within yourself) that things should be what they are not. You think with over-simplistic phrases such as – “shoulds, musts, have-tos, oughts”.
9. MENTAL FILTER: You find and then dwell on negatives and other losses. Information that confirms your negative views are seen as proof, while facts that don’t fit are seen as rare exceptions and ignored; “nothing good ever happens to me”, “I will always lose”, “no one cares about me.”
10. PERSONALIZATION: You mistakenly believe you are the cause of events and that you’re the reason people act and feel as they do; “I was rejected because of my looks or my job.”
11. BLAMING: The opposite of personalization, the reason bad things are happening is because of what the other person is doing or not doing. You overlook your own contributions to the problem.

## *Changing your pattern of thoughts*

*Track it*

*Identify your negative thought pattern*

*Challenge the negative thought*

*Replace the negative with positive thoughts*

*Make the choice to stay positive*

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall” ~Confucius.

## **Worksheet 4**

*Part of the Achieving Happiness in Singapore Toolkit*

# *Building Loving Relationships*

**Thrive**

*We are social beings made for relationships with one another.*

*As we relate to and interact with one another in our journey through life, we all have a distinct need to feel loved.*

*Both men and women have an “emotional love tank” that needs to be filled regularly in order to feel happy, loved, secure and full. When we are running on an empty tank, we feel lonely, lost, upset and frustrated with both ourselves and our loved ones. The key question each one of us faces is “What makes us feel loved?”*

*Renowned author Dr Gary Chapman of the book, ‘The 5 Love Languages’ teaches that every one of us communicates through one of the 5 love languages- Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, Physical Touch.*

## **The 5 love languages**

1.     **Words of Affirmation**- People who have words of affirmation as their love language will value any words of affirmation and encouragement spoken to them. To them, hearing the words, “I love you”, “You are special” sparks more happiness than buying gifts or doing things for them. On the other hand, they can feel disappointed when they are not verbally encouraged or when their loved one fails to compliment their accomplishments.
2.     **Quality Time**- The person with this particular love language finds greatest pleasure in spending full, undivided attention with the ones they love and cherish. Any time they can get together with you, whether it be just going to the supermarket together, waiting with you in line at the bank or spending time on a long drive, makes him/her feel special and valued. Therefore, any sort of distraction, cancelled dates or the failure to listen to the person can be hurtful and can make them feel unloved.
3.     **Receiving Gifts**- Although this does not mean materialism, the receiver of gifts thrives on love, and the thought behind every gift that he or she receives. People with this gift, like to be shown love and care through the gifts or tokens of appreciation that their loved one showers on them. They have a special fondness for special occasions, birthdays, anniversaries. Forgetting these meaningful days can be a big deal for your loved ones who use this love language. This person also cherishes everyday gestures that show you care and think about them.
4.     **Acts of Service**- For the person with acts of service as their love language, even the slightest of work or help rendered can mean a lot. Helping out with chores such as sweeping or mopping the house, taking the garbage out, cooking a meal, will instantly earn brownie points with them. Anything to help ease their burden or responsibilities speaks volumes to them and they value being offered help, even if it is in a small way. However, laziness, broken promises and creating more work for them communicate that their loved one does not care for them and that their feelings don't matter.
5.     **Physical Touch**- Last but not the least, physical touch is one of the most important love languages. A person with physical touch as his/her primary love language values any kind of appropriate physical touch. This person appreciates hugs, pats on the back, touches on the arm, shoulder as they convey care, concern and love to the person. If your loved one speaks this language, the best way to make them feel most loved would be to be there for them and show your affection using touch. On the other hand, neglect and abuse can be extremely detrimental to a relationship where physical touch is a primary love language.

## ***Skill to develop***

### **1. Know the love languages**

It is important that we understand the different love languages as they are crucial to flourishing and enriching relationships, be it relationships with our family members, romantic relationships and even with our close friends.

### **2. Discover your love language**

You can also visit the 5 Love Languages website at [www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/](http://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/) and do a simple questionnaire to identify your key love language. When you identify your love language, you realize how you appreciate being shown love in your relationships.

### **3. Appreciate and learn your partner's love language**

Studies by Dr Chapman show that people are usually drawn to those who speak a different language than their own love language. Learning your partner's love language deepens your appreciation and understanding of your differences. When relationships fail, it is often because of the difficulty in communicating with one another and mostly because they are each speaking different languages.

Appreciating your partner's love language helps you recognize the way they want to be loved.

### **4. Speak your partner's love language**

Making the effort to speak their love language enables you to communicate better with your loved one more effectively. When you consciously begin to speak their language by expressing your love and care to them in the love language they speak, they feel loved, your relationship grows stronger and you feel happier as you continue to build your relationship.

## **Example**

**Know the  
5 Love Languages**

**Discover your  
Love Language**

**Uncover your partner's  
Love Language**

**Speak your partner's  
Love Language**

*Yvonne bought Nicholas a brand new set of expensive headphones thinking he would like it. However, Nicholas kept wondering why she didn't give him a birthday card which he would have appreciated more.*

*Yvonne attempts to build her relationship and she identifies her love language is 'receiving gifts.'*

*Yvonne discovers that Nicholas's primary love language is 'words of affirmation.'*

*Yvonne attempts to surprise him yet again with a hand written note for every day of the coming week which Nicholas appreciated more than the headphones.*

**"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."**

**-Leo Buscaglia**

## **References**

Love Is A Verb by Gary Chapman

The 5 Love Languages. The Secret to Love that Lasts by Gary Chapman

*Extensive research in the last 20 years has uncovered the science to what makes us happy. In a concise toolkit, all the secrets to happiness will be presented to you in a 8 week programme that teaches you to increase your happiness level. This toolkit is our gift of effort to you and is provided free with the support of the Ministry of Health and Agency for Integrated Care under the THRIVE-ASCAT Community Mental Health Programme.*

### **Development Team**

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KNOW

FIND

HEAL

CARE



## WHAT'S ON

- Relaxation Workshop 17 Aug 2013  
Overcoming Depression 24 Aug 2013

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## QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you can change your mind, you can change your life.  
- William James

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