



Relationships and Well-being

Instructor Manual

Editors: Dr. Regan A. R. Gurung and Dr. Aaron Richmond

Contributing Authors: Dawn Albertson, Bethany Fleck, Travis Heath, Phil Kreniske, Linda Lockwood, Kristy Lyons, Aliza Panjwani, Janet Peters, Kasey Powers, Amanda Richmond, Anna Ropp, Jeremy Sawyer, Raechel Soicher, Sunda Friedman TeBockhorst, Courtney Rocheleau

The relationships and well-being module introduces students to the idea of subjective well-being, including how to measure happiness and subjective well-being. It focuses especially on the important role that social relationships play in the experience of well-being. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation provides material for your class, including activities and discussion questions, which are designed to help keep your students engaged in the material. This instructor's manual includes discussion questions and activities to help you teach the material, and it includes links to other resources that may help you further personalize this portion of your course.

Learning Objectives

Content Specific Learning Objectives

- Understand why relationships are key to happiness and health.
- Define and list different forms of relationships.
- List different aspects of well-being.
- Explain how relationships can enhance well-being.
- Explain how relationships might not enhance well-being.

Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)

- Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

- Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains (1.2)
- Describe applications of psychology (1.3)
- Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3)

Abstract

The relationships we cultivate in our lives are essential to our well-being—namely, happiness and health. Why is that so? We begin to answer this question by exploring the types of relationships—family, friends, colleagues, and lovers—we have in our lives and how they are measured. We also explore the different aspects of happiness and health, and show how the quantity and quality of relationships can affect our happiness and health.

Class Design Recommendations

This material could be covered in one class period. Please refer to the Noba PowerPoint and the Lecture Framework below for specific details.

Topic Outline

- Establishing the importance of relationships
- Measuring Happiness and Relationships
 - Discussion Question: How do psychologists measure concepts such as happiness and relationships?
 - Operationalization
 - Objective Social Variables
 - Subjective Social Variables
 - Subjective Well-being & Health
- Relationships and Well-Being
 - Presence of Relationships

- Quality of Relationships
- Types of Relationships
- Are relationships the secret to happiness?
- Conclusion: A recipe for happiness?

Module Outline

Introduction

- The introduction discusses the negative effects of being alone by mentioning the novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. Students need not be familiar with this classic novel to understand how isolation and loneliness can rob a person of well-being. The importance of relationships to happiness is the overall emphasis of these paragraphs that introduce the module.

The Importance of Relationships

- This section continues the theme of how important relationships are for humans. Examples include:
 - -- The belief that an “only child” will suffer for lack of siblings
 - -- That prisons punish prisoners with solitary confinement
 - -- That people transform an individual activity such as reading into social ones such as book clubs
 - -- The prevalence of social media.
 - This section also discusses some information about how relationships influence our health and happiness.

The Question of Measurement

- This section outlines some issues with the **operationalization** of happiness, relationships,

and well-being. It is an opportunity to revisit and build on earlier discussion of research methodology, focusing on the specific examples of happiness, health and relationships. How can we measure these variables?

- When measuring relationships, there are objective and subjective ways to do so. **Objective social variables** measure relationships and aspects of relationships in a way that is factual and based on evidence. For example, some objective social variables are number of friends on Facebook or marital status. One objective social variable is **social integration**, how connected people are to others in their social network, which can be measured by assessing the frequency and amount of social contact with others.
- **Subjective social variables** are based on participants' personal opinions rather than facts. These variables help researchers understand participants' perceptions of their relationships. Some examples of subjective social variable are a person's satisfaction with their relationships, their perception of the quality of their relationships, and the amount of conflict in their relationships. Another example of a subjective social variable is **social support**, which is "the extent to which individuals feel cared for, can receive help from others, and are part of a supportive network." Researchers who study social support will often ask participants about both the amount of and satisfaction with their social support.
- One way that researchers assess relationships is through a *daily diary methodology*. This methodology has participants report on their relationships daily, often more than once a day, in order to get short snapshots of participants' relationships. This data helps researchers understand the day-to-day trends that occur in relationships.
- In addition to measuring relationships, researchers measure well-being. Happiness is a part of well-being, and psychologists' term for happiness is **subjective well-being**. Subjective well-being has three components. A person has *high life satisfaction* when they evaluate their life positively, *positive feelings* when they experience positive emotions such as joy, and *low negative feelings* when the amount of negative emotions (e.g., anger and sadness) is relatively low. These components of well-being are often measured with subjective self-report scales. One example is the Satisfaction with Life Scale, which is presented in the module.
- Another aspect of well-being is **health**, which is the physical part of well-being. Some definitions of health include being free of illness. Health can be measured via variables such as mortality or blood pressure. Researchers can also measure **health behaviors**, such as smoking or exercising.

Presence and Quality of Relationships and Well-Being

- Presence of relationships

- In attempting to understand how relationships influence well-being, researchers look at whether individuals have relationships. This is assessed by with objective social variables, such as number of friends, size or social networks, or marital status. Past research has indicated the number of social relationships is related to well-being, and well-being can be associated with a few high-quality relationships, which means people don't necessarily have to have a lot of friends to experience subjective well-being.
- Some researchers look at the absence of relationships, by studying social rejection, such as **ostracism** or **shunning**. Individuals' well-being is negatively impacted when they are ostracized or shunned.
- Quality of relationships
 - Having good, positive relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners is associated with subjective well-being, or happiness. In addition, the quality and quantity of social relationships is associated with health. This may partially be due to the fact that health behaviors, such as wearing a seatbelt and exercising, can be influenced by friends and romantic partners.

Types of Relationships

- Psychologists use the term, intimate relationships, to describe romantic relationships, which can include physical and psychological closeness. A **confidante** is a person who you can be your authentic, vulnerable self, and those individuals are more important to our happiness than having a large group of friends who aren't confidantes.
- Formal relationships are ones bound by social rules and norms, and they often occur in workplace settings. In informal relationships, such as with friends and lovers, we can be more relaxed. Informal relationships might be most likely to lead to happiness.
- Being married has associated with greater subjective well-being. This relationship, though, is dependent on the quality of the marriage, as a person's satisfaction with their marriage is related to their satisfaction with their life. Also, people who rate their marriage quality as low were more likely to report being depressed, and some research indicates that the conflict between romantic partners can lead to lower ratings of subjective well-being.
- Having high-quality relationships at work can make our experience at work less stressful and more enjoyable. In addition, supportive supervisors "have employees who are more likely to thrive at work." Employees who rate their supervisors high on the dark triad – *psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism* – "reported greater psychological distress at

work, as well as less job satisfaction.”

Fact or Myth: Are Social Relationships the Secret to Happiness?

- Some psychologists believe that relationships are the key to happiness or subjective well-being. Others point out that much of this research is correlational, and that the **correlations** are often small. The module concludes by stating that relationships may not be the secret, but, if there is a recipe to happiness, then social relationships are one ingredient.

Difficult Terms

Confidante

Health behaviors

Machiavellianism

Narcissism

Objective social variables

Operationalization

Ostracism

Psychopathy

Shunning

Social integration

Subjective social variables

Subjective well-being

Lecture Frameworks

Overview: This material can be covered in one class period. The material covers information about measuring happiness and relationships in research and some findings on how happiness and relationships are (and are not) connected.

Warm-Up Activity: Video of *Porcupine Love* with Discussion

- A clip from This Emotional Life (<http://www.pbs.org/video/1275319877/>) Porcupine Love, is a 1 minute, 50 second clip in which author Elizabeth Gilbert discusses how Schopenhauer

discussed the need for relationships and the need for separation through the metaphor of porcupines. The clip ends with her saying that finding the balance between these two needs “is as close to the secret of happiness as I’ve ever learned.”

- Discussion Question: Gilbert says that finding a balance between the need to be belong and “need to be separated” is “as close to the secret of happiness as any I’ve ever learned.” What do you think?
 - This clip and discussion prompt is designed to get students thinking about the relationship between relationships and happiness. It also sets them up for later information about how not all relationships are good, so not all relationships lead to happiness.

Direct Instruction of Measuring Happiness and Relationships

- *Discussion Question:* You might begin by engaging students in their own ideas about how they would go about measuring happiness. Then shift to the central question: How do psychologists measure concepts such as happiness and relationships?
 - Happiness is an abstract concept, and, in order to study happiness, psychologists need to find a way to measure it. This question gets students to think about the need to measure the concept for purposes of research and how we might do that.
 - The module discussed operationalization, and the glossary defines operationalize as “The process of defining a concept so that it can be measured. In psychology, this often happens by identifying related concepts or behaviors that can be more easily measured.”
- *Objective Social Variables:* One way to operationalize social relationships is through objective social variables. Objective social variables measure relationships and aspects of relationships in a way that is factual and based on evidence. For example, some objective social variables are number of friends on Facebook or marital status.
- *Subjective Social Variables:* Another way to operationalize social relationships is through subjective social variables. Subjective social variables are based on participants’ personal opinions rather than facts. These variables help researchers understand participants’ perceptions of their relationships. Some examples of subjective social variable are a person’s satisfaction with their relationships, their perception of the quality of their relationships, and the amount of conflict in their relationships.
- *Activity:* Satisfaction with Life Scale

- As preparation for discussing subjective well-being, have students take the Satisfaction with Life Scale.
- Subjective Well-Being
 - Happiness is a part of well-being, and psychologists' term for happiness is subjective well-being. Subjective well-being has three components: life satisfaction, positive feelings, and low negative feelings.

Direct Instruction of Relationships and Well-Being

- *Presence of Relationships:* In attempting to understand how relationships influence well-being, researchers look at whether individuals have relationships. This is assessed with objective social variables, such as number of friends, size of social networks, or marital status. Past research has indicated the number of social relationships a person has is related to that person's well-being.
- *Quality of Relationships:* Being married has associated with greater subjective well-being. This relationship, though, is dependent on the quality of the marriage, as a person's satisfaction with their marriage is related to their satisfaction with their life. Past research has indicated the number of social relationships is related to well-being, and well-being can be associated with a few high-quality relationships, which means people don't necessarily have to have a lot of friends to experience subjective well-being. This may be an important point to emphasize, as some students may be in class thinking about their relative lack of friends.
- Are relationships the secret to happiness? Highlighting the correlational nature of this relationship may be helpful. Happiness may lead to more relationships, a positive relationship may lead to greater happiness, or another variable (a psychological disorder) may influence both relationships and happiness.
- Conclusion: A recipe for happiness?
 - The module concludes by stating that relationships may not be the secret to happiness, but, if there is a recipe to happiness, then social relationships are one ingredient.
 - Possible discussion: At this point, if you have time, you could ask students what they think about this conclusion. Do they think relationships are simply an ingredient or an essential ingredient to the recipe of happiness?
- Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT)—The One-minute Paper: This CAT will allow you

to assess your students' understanding of the material and give students a chance to ask you questions.

Activities & Demonstrations

Porcupine Love Activity: The purpose of this activity is to get students thinking about relationships and happiness. It may also help students think about how not all relationships lead to happiness.

- Time: 5-10 minutes
- Materials: Ability to show a video
- This is an activity that could take place before looking at the overview of this module's information, which is where it is placed in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. It could also be done during the relationships and well-being portion of the class, in order to get students to think about how some relationships don't actually lead to happiness.
- Show *Porcupine Love* (<http://www.pbs.org/video/1275319877/>). It is a 1 minute, 50 second clip from *This Emotional Life*. In the clip, author Elizabeth Gilbert discusses how Schopenhauer discussed the need for relationships and the need for separation through porcupines who want the warmth of each other at night but prick each other when they get too close. The clip ends with her saying finding the balance between these two needs "is as close to the secret of happiness as I've ever learned."
- **Discussion Question:** Gilbert says that finding a balance between the need to belong and "need to be separated" is "as close to the secret of happiness as any I've ever learned." What do you think?
- This clip and discussion prompt is designed to get students thinking about the relationship between relationships and happiness. It also sets them up for later information about how not all relationships are good, so not all relationships lead to happiness.

Satisfaction with Life Scale: This activity will provide a concrete example of the material, by having students know their own Satisfaction with Life score. Making connections and applying the course content to the student's life can help them remember the material. Time: 10 minutes

- Materials: Project the Satisfaction with Life Scale or provide a handout of the scale

- Have students take a few minutes to take the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The items for the scale are:
 - In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.
 - The conditions of my life are excellent.
 - I am satisfied with my life.
 - So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
 - If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
- The scale individuals use to rate the above statements is from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).
- After taking the scale, have students add up their total for the 5 statements. The scoring is as follows:
 - 31-35 extremely satisfied
 - 26-30 satisfied
 - 21-25 slightly dissatisfied
 - 20 neutral
 - 15-19 slightly dissatisfied
 - 10-14 dissatisfied
 - 5-9 extremely dissatisfied
- Note: You can ask them if they are surprised or not by their rating. You will want to be sensitive in your explanation of the results, because there will likely be students who score low on the scale. You can point out that “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life” may be lower for them if one of the things they are working on is a college degree. Most people score in the 21-26 range so it may be that some students compare their score against scores in the 30s and believe they are not satisfied. Not true! Even for those who might be slightly dissatisfied the difference between, say, a 17 and the modal college student score of 23 is far less than the target (a score in the 30s) to which they are likely mentally comparing.

Additional Activities

Authentic Happiness Website: <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

- This website has many different questionnaires that people can take (as long as they sign up for an account on the website). Some examples include the Authentic Happiness Inventory, Close Relationships Questionnaire, and Compassionate Love Scale. Students could take these questionnaires in class (if there are computers with internet access or if you convert it to a paper-and-pencil measure) or out-of-class, and an assignment could be to reflect on their score, as well as how they could improve their score in the future.

Thinking Critically About Research

- Have students watch this TED Talk: What You Don't Know About Marriage.
 - http://www.ted.com/talks/jenna_mccarthy_what_you_d...
 - This is a funny 11-minute video outlining some of the research on marriage, including some information about marriage and happiness. Please note that this video does contain profanity.
- Assignment:
 - Have students find a research article that backs up **one** of the research findings McCarthy mentions in the video.
 - Have them read the research article and answer the questions such as:

Discussion Points

- What is more important to happiness: the quality or quantity of your social relationships?
 - This is likely to bring up some different opinions from students, and probing them for why they think quality or quantity of relationships is more important is likely to bring up their assumptions about relationships. While it might be tempting to think that people with a lot of Facebook friends are happier, the quality of our relationships is more impactful on our happiness. A romantic relationship, for example, that is full of conflict can negatively impact our happiness.

- More people are staying single and not getting married than in years past. What do you think about their happiness level if they remain single?
 - This question will likely get them to think about how marriage affects happiness. The research indicates that people who are married are happier on average than people who are single. However, people in negative, conflict-ridden relationships are the least happy.
- The module states that if there is a recipe to happiness then social relationships are one ingredient. Do you think relationships are an *essential* ingredient to happiness? Does your answer change if we are discussing intimate relationships, friendships, or work relationships?
 - Students may make differentiations between intimate relationships, friendships, and work relationships in how much they impact our happiness. It might be helpful to follow up with questions such as “What is someone isn’t in an intimate relationship, does that affect how much their friendships and work relationships impact their happiness?” Ultimately, we do need social relationships, but some people are getting their social needs met with an intimate relationship while others are getting these needs met with friendships or work relationships.

Articles, Links, and More

Happy

- A documentary film about happiness, *Happy*, is for purchase on the following website. It includes discussions of whether and how children, family, and work contributes to our happiness.
- Link: <http://www.thehappymovie.com/film/>

Positive Psychology Activities

- This resource includes some activities on subjective well-being.
- Froh, J. J., & Parks, A. C. (2013). *Activities for teaching positive psychology: A guide for instructors*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

TED Talks on Happiness

- A collection of TED talks about happiness, including some talks about intimate relationships (see In the Mood for Love).
- Link: <http://www.ted.com/playlists/browse?topics=happine...>

Your Friends' Friends Can Make You Happy

- A 1 minute, 50 second video clip from *This Emotional Life*, a PBS documentary that discusses social networks and happiness.
- Link: <http://www.pbs.org/video/1376654831/>

Outside Resources

Article: The New Yorker Magazine—"Hellhole" article on solitary confinement
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/03/30/hellhole>

Blog: The Gottman Relationship Blog
<https://www.gottman.com/blog/>

Helen Fisher on Millennials' Dating Trends
<https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/504626/tinder-wont-change-love/>

Web: Science of Relationship's website on social relationships and health
<http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/home/2015/7/10/how-do-romantic-relationships-get-under-the-skin-perceived-p.html>

Web: Science of Relationship's website on social relationships and well-being
<http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/home/2014/10/20/how-do-important-relationship-events-impact-our-well-being.html>

Evidence-Based Teaching

Diener, E., & Scollon, C. N. (2014). The what, why, when, and how of teaching the science of subjective well-being. *Teaching of Psychology, 41*, 175-183. doi:10.1177/0098628314530346

- This article reviews the literature on happiness and subjective well-being, with an emphasis on teaching the topic. The article includes information on relationships and well-being. It ends with information about further resources.

Isbell, L. M., & Tyler, J. M. (2005). Using students' personal ads to teach about interpersonal attraction and intimate relationships. *Teaching of Psychology, 32*, 170-172.

- This article discusses a classroom activity in which students write a personal ad and then evaluate classmates' personal ads based on the interpersonal relationships literature. Students in this study reported more accurate knowledge of interpersonal relationships after the activity compared to before the activity.

Kurtz, J. L. (2016). Affective forecasting: Teaching a useful, accessible, and humbling area of research. *Teaching of Psychology, 43*, 80-85.

- This article reviews the literature on affective forecasting, which is predicting future feelings. This review includes a section on how affective forecasting relates to happiness. The article concludes with where affective forecasting can fit within the psychology curriculum and some positives and negatives to teaching the concept.

Links to ToPIX Materials

Authentic Happiness: A link to Martin Seligman's book, Authentic Happiness.

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/39235788/Personality>

Happiness May Come With Age, Study Finds: A link to a New York Times article about happiness and age. The ToPIX entry has a summary, a possible discussion question for students, and the citation for the journal article, as well as a link to the Times write-up of the article.

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/23075273/Research%20Methods%20in%20the%20News>

Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth - Dr. Ed Diener's book on

happiness

<http://tinyurl.com/hde5uo4>

Stumbling on Happiness TED Talk: This provides a link to Dan Gilbert's TED talk, The Surprising Science of Happiness, a 21 minute video in which Gilbert gives some relevant information from his book, Stumbling on Happiness.

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/39235788/Personality>

Talk Deeply, Be Happy?: A link to a New York Times article reporting on a research study that found that people who have deeper conversations report higher levels of happiness. The ToPIX entry has a brief summary, a possible discussion question, and the citation for the original journal article.

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/23075273/Research%20Methods%20in%20the%20News>

Teaching Topics

Teaching The Most Important Course

https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf

Content Coverage

https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf

Motivating Students

https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf

Engaging Large Classes

https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf

Assessment Learning

https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf

Teaching Biological Psychology

https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/297/Relationships%20and%20Well-being.ppt?1475617760.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award-winning university teachers.

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Contact Information:

Noba Project
www.nobaproject.com
info@nobaproject.com