

Aptitude Advanced

Reading Comprehension Basics

Assignment 03

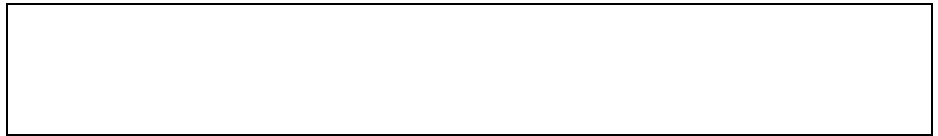
RC Practice Assignment 03

Directions: *Read the passage and, in your own words, put down the idea of the paragraph.*

Passage - 1

People have been debating the causes of happiness for a really long time, in fact for thousands of years, but it seems like many of those debates remain unresolved. Well, as with many other domains in life, I think the scientific method has the potential to answer this question. In fact, in the last few years, there's been an explosion in research on happiness. For example, we've learned a lot about its demographics, how things like income and education, gender and marriage relate to it. But one of the puzzles this has revealed is that factors like these don't seem to have a particularly strong effect. Yes, it's better to make more money rather than less, or to graduate from college instead of dropping out, but the differences in happiness tend to be small.

Which leaves the question, what are the big causes of happiness? I think that's a question we haven't really answered yet, but I think something that has the potential to be an answer is that maybe happiness has an awful lot to do with the contents of our moment-to-moment experiences. It certainly seems that we're going about our lives, that what we're doing, who we're with, what we're thinking about, have a big influence on our happiness, and yet these are the very factors that have been very difficult, in fact almost impossible, for scientists to study.



A few years ago, I came up with a way to study people's happiness moment to moment as they're going about their daily lives on a massive scale all over the world, something we'd never been able to do before. Called trackyourhappiness.org, it uses the iPhone to monitor people's happiness in real time. How does this work? Basically, I send people signals at random points throughout the day, and then I ask them a bunch of questions about their moment-to-moment experience at the instant just before the signal. The idea is that, if we can watch how people's happiness goes up and down

over the course of the day, minute to minute in some cases, and try to understand how what people are doing, who they're with, what they're thinking about, and all the other factors that describe our day, how those might relate to those changes in happiness, we might be able to discover some of the things that really have a big influence on happiness. We've been fortunate with this project to collect quite a lot of data, a lot more data of this kind than I think has ever been collected before, over 650,000 real-time reports from over 15,000 people. And it's not just a lot of people, it's a really diverse group, people from a wide range of ages, from 18 to late 80s, a wide range of incomes, education levels, people who are married, divorced, widowed, etc. They collectively represent every one of 86 occupational categories and hail from over 80 countries.



What I'd like to do with the rest of my time with you today is talk a little bit about one of the areas that we've been investigating, and that's mind-wandering. As human beings, we have this unique ability to have our minds stray away from the present. This ability to focus our attention on something other than the present is really amazing. It allows us to learn and plan and reason in ways that no

other species of animal can. And yet it's not clear what the relationship is between our use of this ability and our happiness. You've probably heard people suggest that you should stay focused on the present. "Be here now," you've probably heard a hundred times. Maybe, to really be happy, we need to stay completely immersed and focused on our experience in the moment. Maybe these people are right. Maybe mind-wandering is a bad thing. On the other hand, when our minds wander, they're unconstrained. We can't change the physical reality in front of us, but we can go anywhere in our minds. Since we know people want to be happy, maybe when our minds wander, they're going to someplace happier than the place that they're leaving. It would make a lot of sense. In other words, maybe the pleasures of the mind allow us to increase our happiness with mind-wandering.



So how could this be happening? I think part of the reason, a big part of the reason, is that when our minds wander, we often think about unpleasant things, and they are enormously less happy when they do that, our worries, our anxieties, our regrets, and yet even when people are

thinking about something neutral, they're still considerably less happy than when they're not mind-wandering at all.

Excerpted from a TED talk by Matt Killingsworth

Passage 2

Every single person knows what they do. Some know how they do it. But very, very few people know why they do what they do. And by "why" I don't mean "to make a profit." That's a result. It's always a result. By "why," I mean: What's your purpose? What's your cause? What's your belief? Why does your organization exist? Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care? Well, as a result, the way we think, the way we act, the way we communicate is from the outside in. But inspired leaders all think, act and communicate from the inside out.

When we communicate from the outside in, people can understand vast amounts of complicated information like features and benefits and facts and figures. It just doesn't drive behavior. When we can communicate from the inside out, we're talking directly to the part of the brain that controls behavior, and then we allow people to rationalize it with the tangible things we say and do.



In the summer of 1963, 250,000 people showed up on the mall in Washington to hear Dr. King speak. They sent out no invitations, and there was no website to check the date. How do you do that? Well, Dr. King wasn't the only man in America who was a great orator. He wasn't the only man in America who suffered in a pre-civil rights America. But he had a gift. He didn't go around telling people what needed to change in America. He went around and told people what he believed. "I believe, I believe, I believe," he told people. And people who believed what he believed took his cause, and they made it their own, and they told people. And lo and behold, 250,000 people showed up on the right day at the right time to hear him speak.

How many of them showed up for him? A zero. They showed up for themselves. We followed, not for him, but for ourselves. And, by the way, he gave the "I have a dream" speech, not the "I have a plan" speech. Listen to politicians now, with their comprehensive 12-point plans. They're not inspiring anybody. Leaders hold a position of power or authority, but those who lead inspire us. Whether they're individuals or organizations, we follow those who lead, not because we have to, but because we want to. We follow those who lead, not for them, but for ourselves. And it's those who start with "why" that have the ability to inspire those around them or find others who inspire them.

Excerpted from TED Talk by Simon Sinek

Passage 3

It may not surprise you to learn that healthy, well-fed people in affluent countries are often unhappy and anxious. But it did startle Zbigniew Lipowski when he came to a full realization of this fact. Lipowski was born in Poland and, in 1944, took part in the Warsaw Uprising, a mass revolt against the German Army that left more than two hundred thousand civilians dead. Lipowski, masquerading as a French refugee returning to France, was one of the fortunate few who escaped. "We were bombed and shelled daily, food was very scarce, and water had to be obtained at night from a well some distance away. I was so hungry as to almost hallucinate food."



North America, however, greeted him with constant abundance and leisure. As he pondered the contrast, Lipowski thought of Buridan's ass: an apocryphal donkey that finds itself standing between two equally appealing stacks of hay. Unable to decide which to consume, it

starves to death. For Lipowski, this scenario helped to explain the type of anxiety that he was witnessing around him. He called it an approach-approach conflict: faced with enticing options, you find yourself unable to commit to any of them quickly. And even when you do choose, you remain anxious about the opportunities that you may have lost: maybe that other stack of hay tasted sweeter.



In a series of imaging studies, Shenhav and Randy Buckner, a cognitive neuroscientist at Harvard, observed students making various choices. One to three days before the actual study began, Shenhav and Buckner had all of the participants evaluate more than three hundred different products, ranging from iPods and digital cameras to water bottles and T-shirts. When the experiment started, participants were put inside an fMRI scanner, shown pictures of the objects, and then asked to indicate which ones they preferred: Would they, for example, like to choose a digital camera or a camcorder? (The participants were told that, at the end of the study, they would randomly receive their object of choice from one of the trials.) Each choice was between either two similarly ranked items—both relatively low-value or both

relatively high-value—or two items that were on opposite ends of the spectrum.



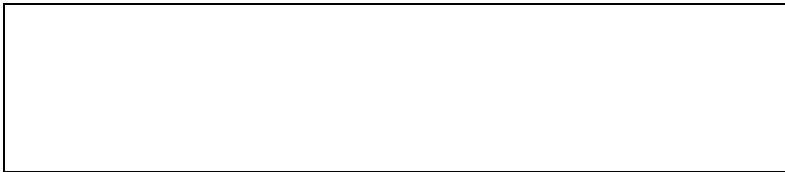
Unsurprisingly, when people were asked to decide between something like an iPod and a bag of pretzels, they didn't feel particularly anxious: the choice was clear and life was good. When both choices were low in value, the emotions were similarly clear-cut. No one was particularly happy, but neither were they anxious. But when multiple highly positive options were available—a digital camera and a camcorder, say—anxiety skyrocketed, just as Lipowski had predicted. The choices between those objects that they valued most highly were both the most positive and the most anxiety-filled. The more choices they had—the study was repeated with up to six items per choice—the more anxious they felt. “When you have more good choices, you don't feel better,” Shenhav says. “You just feel more anxious.”

Excerpted from ‘When It’s Bad to Have Good Choices’ by Maria Konnikova in The New Yorker Aug 14



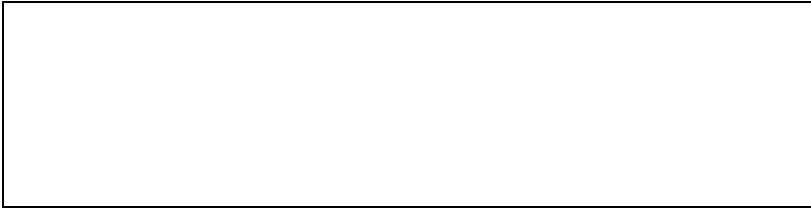
Passage 4

Is depression a chemical problem or a psychological problem? And does it need a chemical cure or a philosophical cure? Actually, we aren't advanced enough in either area for it to explain things fully. The chemical cure and the psychological cure both have a role to play, and depression is braided so deep into us that there was no separating it from our character and personality.

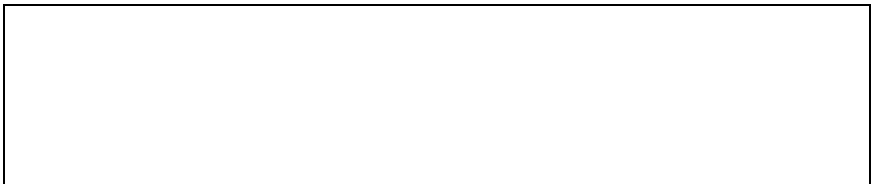


There are three things people tend to confuse: depression, grief and sadness. Grief is explicitly reactive. If you have a loss and you feel incredibly unhappy, and then, six months later, you are still deeply sad, but you're functioning a little better, it's probably grief, and it will probably ultimately resolve itself in some measure. If you

experience a catastrophic loss, and you feel terrible, and six months later you can barely function at all, then it's probably a depression that was triggered by the catastrophic circumstances. The trajectory tells us a great deal. People think of depression as being just sadness. It's too much sadness, too much grief at far too slight a cause.



You don't think in depression that you've put on a gray veil and are seeing the world through the haze of a bad mood. You think that the veil has been taken away, the veil of happiness, and that now you're seeing truly. It's easier to help schizophrenics who perceive that there's something foreign inside of them that needs to be exorcised, but it's difficult with depressives, because we believe we are seeing the truth.



But the truth lies. People will say, "No one loves me." And you say, "I love you, your wife loves you, your mother loves you." But people who are depressed will say, "No matter what we do, we're all just going to die in the end." Or they'll say, "There can be no true communion between two human beings. Each of us is trapped in his own body." To which you have to say, "That's true, but I think we should focus right now on what to have for breakfast."



A lot of the time, what they are expressing is not illness, but insight, and one comes to think what's really extraordinary is that most of us know about those existential questions and they don't distract us very much. There was a study I particularly liked in which a group of depressed and a group of non-depressed people were asked to play a video game for an hour, and at the end of the hour, they were asked how many little monsters they thought they had killed. The depressive group was usually accurate to within about 10 percent, and the non-

depressed people guessed between 15 and 20 times as many little monsters as they had actually killed.



I went to Rwanda and I happened to meet someone who described his experience in east Africa. He said, "but we've had a lot of trouble with Western mental health workers, especially the ones who came right after the genocide." And I said, "What kind of trouble did you have?" And he said, "Well, they would do this bizarre thing. They didn't take people out in the sunshine where you begin to feel better. They didn't include drumming or music to get people's blood going. They didn't involve the whole community. They didn't externalize the depression as an invasive spirit. Instead what they did was they took people one at a time into dingy little rooms and had them talk for an hour about bad things that had happened to them." He said, "We had to ask them to leave the country."

Excerpted from TED Talk by Andrew Solomon



Passage 5

If you think about it, if you want to live in a world in the future where there are fewer material goods, you basically have two choices. You can either live in a world which is poorer, which people in general don't like. Or you can live in a world where actually intangible value constitutes a greater part of overall value, that actually intangible value, in many ways is a very, very fine substitute for using up labor or limited resources in the creation of things.

Here is one example. This is a train which goes from London to Paris. The question was given to a bunch of engineers, about 15 years ago, "How do we make the journey to Paris better?" And they came up with a very good engineering solution, which was to spend six billion pounds building completely new tracks from London to the coast, and knocking about 40 minutes off a three-and-half-hour journey time. Here is my naive advertising man's suggestion. What you should in fact do is employ all of the world's top male and female supermodels, pay them to walk the length of the train, handing out free Chateau

Petrus for the entire duration of the journey. Now, you'll still have about three billion pounds left in change, and people will ask for the trains to be slowed down.

How many problems of life can be solved actually by tinkering with perception, rather than that tedious, hardworking and messy business of actually trying to change reality? Here's a great example from history. Fredrick the Great of Prussia was very keen for the Germans to adopt the potato and to eat it, because he realized that if you had two sources of carbohydrate, wheat and potatoes, you get less price volatility in bread. And you get a far lower risk of famine, because you actually had two crops to fall back on, not one. The only problem is: potatoes, if you think about it, look pretty disgusting. And also, 18th century Prussians ate very, very few vegetables. So, actually, he tried making it compulsory. The Prussian peasantry said, "We can't even get the dogs to eat these damn things. They are absolutely disgusting and they're good for nothing." So he tried plan B. He tried the marketing solution, which is he declared the potato as a royal vegetable, and none but the royal family could consume it. And he planted it in a royal potato patch, with guards who had instructions to guard over it, night and day, but with secret instructions not to guard it very well. Now, 18th century peasants know that there is one pretty safe rule in life, which is if something is

worth guarding, it's worth stealing. Before long, there was a massive underground potato-growing operation in Germany. What he'd effectively done is he'd re-branded the potato.

Another example is of Ataturk who was very keen to discourage the wearing of a veil, in Turkey, to modernize it. Now, boring people would have just simply banned the veil. But that would have ended up with a lot of awful kickback and a hell of a lot of resistance. Ataturk was a lateral thinker. He made it compulsory for prostitutes to wear the veil. What Ataturk realized actually is two very fundamental things. The first one is that all value is actually relative. All value is perceived value. All value is subjective. Second point is that persuasion is often better than compulsion.

Marketing has done a very, very good job of creating opportunities for impulse buying. Yet we've never created the opportunity for impulse saving. If you did this, more people would save more. It's simply a question of changing the interface by which people make decisions and the very nature of the decisions changes. But if anybody did want to do that, that's the kind of thing we need to be thinking about, actually: fundamental opportunities to change human behaviour. I think an important philosophical point, which is, going forward, we

need more of this kind of value. We need to spend more time appreciating what already exists, and less time agonizing over what else we can do.

Extracted from a TED talk by Rory Sutherland

1. As used in the first paragraph, please give an example of intangible value.

2. What is the pun used in the second paragraph?

3. What ideas would you suggest in order to encourage people to go about doing the impulse saving (referred to in the last paragraph)?

RC Practice Assignment 03 – Answer Key

Passage		Explanation
Passage-1	Para 1	Mystery – what causes happiness?
	Para 2	The sum of small joys is greater than the whole of riches et al
	Para 3	Research involving phones to track happiness and check the state of the environment at that time for the person being tracked..
	Para 4	Mind wandering – is it good or bad?
	Para 5	To be happy you need to stop mind wandering, concentrate on what you are doing.
Passage-2	Para 1	We seldom think of deeper questions about our purpose. Agar marna hi tha to paidakyohuen? If we know our purpose, life becomes simple and meaningful. Or if we know the purpose of anything that we do, we do it better..
	Para 2	When I communicate “ <i>the what</i> ” you ignore; When I communicate “ <i>the why</i> ” you listen,
	Para 3	People turned up to hear Dr King because they believed in what he

believed.

Para 4 Inspiration always comes from *the Why*

Passage-3 Para 1 Food and shelter are basic necessities and in times of plenty people tend to forget this fact and take it for granted.

Para 2 Choice anxiety – whatever you end up choosing, you still worry..

Para 3 Study of choices: Hi-Hi, Lo-Lo and Lo-Hi..

Para 4 The anxiety peaked in Hi-Hi – and increased with number of choices given.

Passage-4 Para 1 How is our thinking influenced by chemistry?

Para 2 To be sad is natural, but when it persists it is depression...

Para 3 Do depressives see more of the truth than normal people?

Para 4 Probably depressives are sad because they focus too much on the truth!

Para 5 Confirmation that depressives actually are closer to the truth than the normal..

Para 6 The cure for depression is to get people more involved..make them take part in activities..

**Passage-
5**

- Q. 1. Iphone, Samsung S60
Anything that is a premium product or connotes status..
- Q. 2. left in change – the change refers to small denomination money, as also transition from one state to another.
- Q. 3. A mobile phone app, where you can forego a coffee at CCD or Barista – and divert the sum they would have spent into a designated savings account.
-