

Module 2: Emotional Approaches

2.1: Subjective Wellbeing: The Science of Happiness & Life Satisfaction

2.2: Happiness

2.3: The experience of Flow

2.4: The Positive Psychology of Emotional Intelligence



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2.1: Subjective Wellbeing

- Subjective well-being (SWB) is the scientific term for happiness and life satisfaction—thinking and feeling that your life is going well.
- People's levels of subjective well-being are influenced by both **internal factors**, such as personality and outlook, and **external factors**, such as the society in which they live.
- Some of the major determinants of subjective well-being are a person's inborn temperament, the quality of their social relationships, the societies they live in, and their ability to meet their basic needs (Danier Edward)



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- To some degree people adapt to conditions so that over time our circumstances may not influence our happiness as much as one might predict they would.
- “Happy” people are more likely to be healthier and live longer, to have better social relationships, and to be more productive at work.
- Thus, happiness does not just feel good, but it is good for people and for those around them.
- When people describe what they most want out of life, happiness (SWB) is almost always on the list, and very frequently it is at the top of the list.



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- “Happiness” or Subjective well-being (SWB) as a process—results from certain internal and external causes, and in turn it influences the way people behave, as well as their physiological states. Thus, high SWB is not just a pleasant outcome but is an important factor in our future success.
- TYPES of Happiness: Scientists have recently discovered that happiness means different things. Three major types of happiness are **high life satisfaction, frequent positive feelings, and infrequent negative feelings.** “Subjective well-being” is the label given by scientists to the various forms of happiness taken together.



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2.1: Subjective Wellbeing

Three Types of Happiness	Examples	Causes
Life Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think my life is great• I am satisfied with my job	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A good income• Achieving one's goals• High self-esteem
Positive Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoying life• Loving others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supportive friends• Interesting work• Extroverted personality
Low Negative Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few chronic worries• Rarely sad or angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low neuroticism• One's goals are in harmony• A positive outlook

2.1: Subjective Wellbeing

- There is no single key, no magic stick—high SWB is achieved by combining several different important elements. Thus, people who promise to know the key to happiness are oversimplifying.
1. Some people experience all three elements of happiness—they are very satisfied, enjoy life, and have only a few worries or other unpleasant emotions.
 2. Other unfortunate people are missing all three.
 3. Most of us also know individuals who have one type of happiness but not another.



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2.1: Subjective Wellbeing

CAUSES of SWB:

- There are **external influences** on people's happiness—the circumstances in which they live.
- It is possible for some to be happy living in poverty with ill health, or with a child who has a serious disease, but this is difficult.
- In contrast, it is easier to be happy if one has supportive family and friends, ample resources to meet one's needs, and good health.
- But even here there are exceptions—people who are depressed and unhappy while living in excellent circumstances.



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2.1: Subjective Wellbeing

CAUSES of SWB:

- Thus, people can be happy or unhappy because of their **personalities** and the way they **think about the world** or because of the external circumstances in which they live.
- People vary in their propensity to happiness—in their personalities and outlook—and this means that knowing their living conditions is not enough to predict happiness.
- Thus, internal and external circumstances influence happiness. There are individual differences in what makes people happy, but the causes in the next table are important for most people.



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Internal Causes (Top-down influences)	Description
Inborn temperament	Studies of monozygotic (identical) twins raised apart indicate that our genes influence our happiness. Even when raised apart, identical twins tend to be similar in their levels of subjective well-being.
Personality and temperament	Personality is partly inborn and partly learned, and it influences our happiness. For example: Extroverts tend to have more positive feelings. Neurotics tend to have more negative feelings.
Outlook	People can develop habits of noticing the good things in life and interpreting ambiguous events in positive ways. Other people develop negative mental habits, leading to more unhappiness. One's culture also can influence whether we take an optimistic or pessimistic view of life.
Resilience	Happy individuals tend to bounce back more quickly after losses and negative events.
External Causes (Bottom-up influences)	Description
Sufficient material resources	People have enough money to meet their basic needs and fulfill their major goals.
Sufficient social resources	People differ in their need for social contact, but everyone needs some supportive and trusted others: family, a friend, or a partner, or sometimes all three. We need other people to lead a fulfilled life.
Desirable society	Our own efforts and circumstances influence our happiness, but so does the society in which we live. A society of hunger, war, conflict, and corruption is much less happy than one with material resources, high levels of trust and cooperation, and people who want to help each other.

Societal influences on Happiness

- When people consider their own happiness, they tend to think of their relationships, successes and failures, and other personal factors.
- But a very important influence on how happy people are is the society in which they live.
- It is easy to forget how important societies and neighborhoods are to people's happiness or unhappiness.
- The next Figure shows life satisfaction around the world. You can see that some nations (darkest shading) are high in life satisfaction. Others, are very low (lightest shading). The grey areas in the map are places happiness data couldn't be collected—they were just too dangerous or inaccessible. (Danier,et.al.)

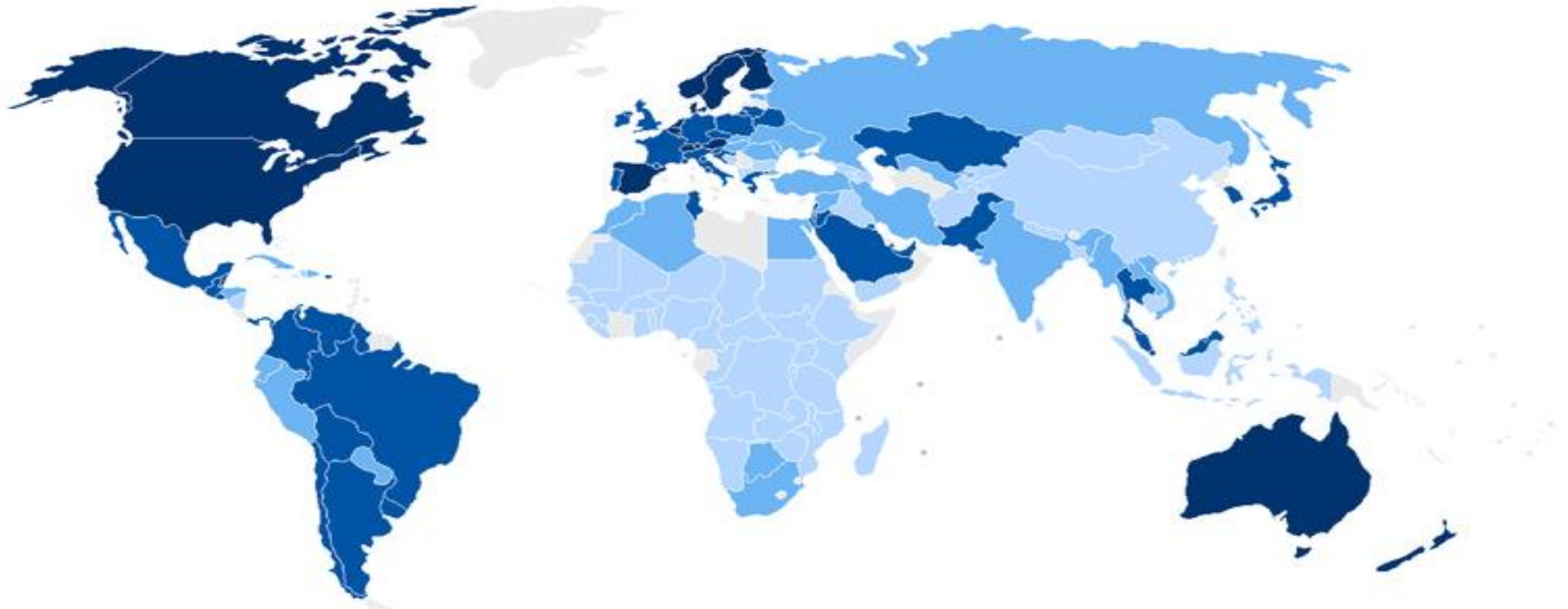


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Societal influences on Happiness



Mean Satisfaction Response 0-10



- Much of North America and Europe have relatively high life satisfaction, and much of Africa is low in life satisfaction.
- For life satisfaction, living in an economically developed nation is helpful because when people must struggle to obtain food, shelter, and other basic necessities, they tend to be dissatisfied with lives.
- However, other factors, such as trusting and being able to count on others, are also crucial to the happiness within nations.
- Indeed, for enjoying life, our **relationships with others** seem more important than living in a wealthy society.
- One factor that predicts unhappiness is conflict—individuals in nations with high **internal conflict or conflict with neighboring nations** tend to experience low SWB.

Money & Happiness

Will money make you happy?

- A certain level of income is needed to meet our needs, and very poor people are frequently dissatisfied with life.
- However, having more and more money has diminishing returns—higher and higher incomes make less and less difference to happiness.
- Wealthy nations tend to have higher average life satisfaction than poor nations, but the United States has not experienced a rise in life satisfaction over the past decades, even as income has doubled.
- Thus, the appropriate goal would be to find a level of income that you can live with and earn. As aspirations continue to rise, one always feel poor (less), no matter how much money one has.

- Research shows that materialistic people often tend to be less happy.
- Therefore, putting emphasis on relationships and other areas of life besides just money can be a wise strategy.
- Money can help increase life satisfaction, but when too many other valuable things are sacrificed to earn a lot of money—such as relationships or taking a less enjoyable job—the pursuit of money can harm happiness.
- There are stories of wealthy people who are unhappy and of janitors who are very happy. For instance, a number of extremely wealthy people in South Korea have committed suicide recently, apparently brought down by stress and other negative feelings.

- On the other hand, there is the hospital janitor who loved her life because she felt that her work in keeping the hospital clean was so important for the patients and nurses.
- Some millionaires are dissatisfied because they want to be billionaires. Conversely, some people with ordinary incomes are quite happy because they have learned to live within their means and enjoy the less expensive things in life.
- High materialism seems to lower life satisfaction—valuing money over other things such as relationships can make us dissatisfied.
- When people think money is more important than everything else, they seem to have a harder time being happy.

Adaptations to Circumstance

Pop Quiz



You Passed!



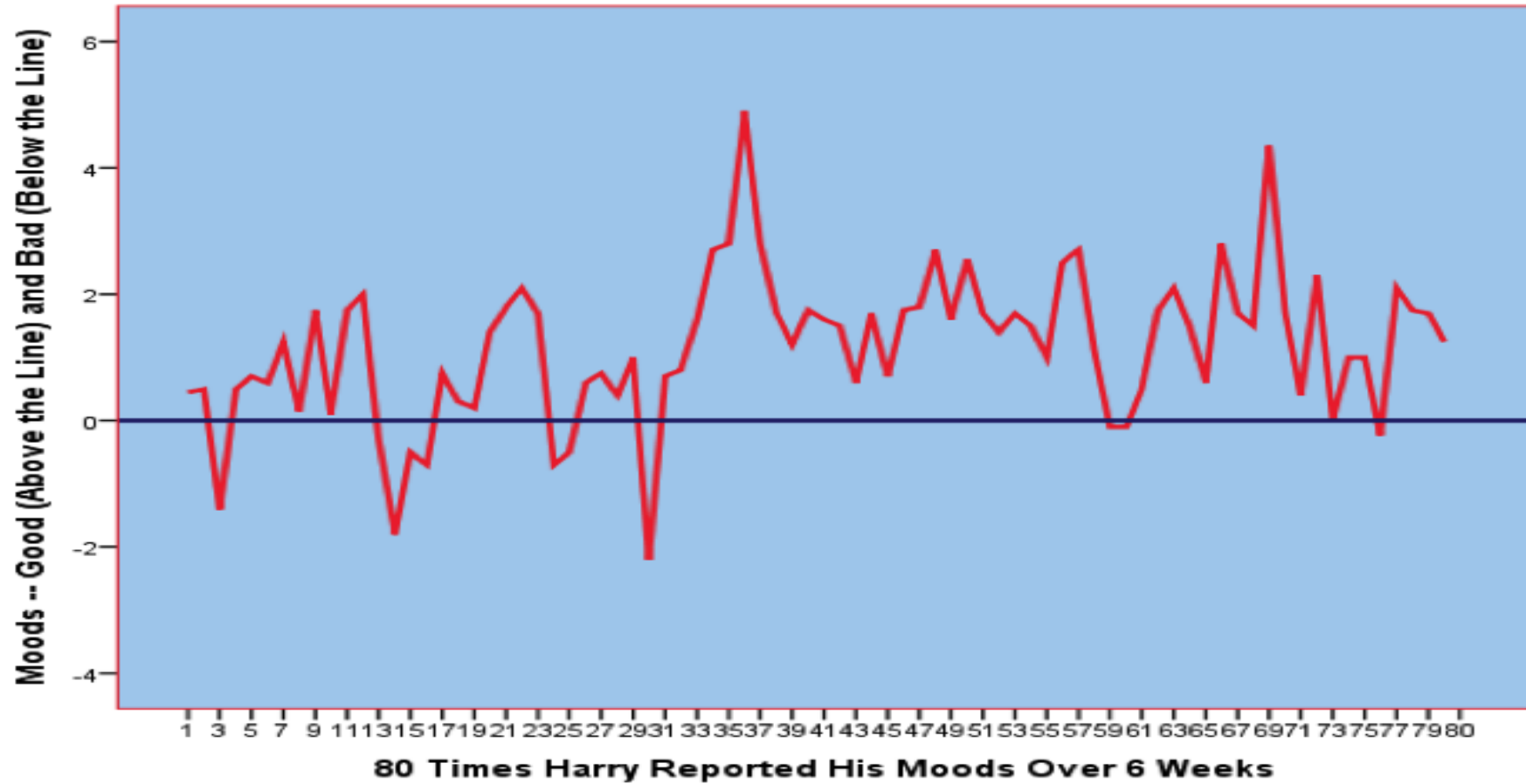
Only Kidding, You Failed



- The process of adaptation is important in understanding happiness. When good and bad events occur, people often react strongly at first, but then their reactions adapt over time and they return to their former levels of happiness.
- For instance, many people are euphoric when they first marry, but over time they grow accustomed to the marriage and are no longer ecstatic. The marriage becomes commonplace and they (most of us) return to their former level of happiness.
- People also adapt over time to bad events. However, people take a long time to adapt to certain negative events such as unemployment. People become unhappy when they lose their work, but over time they recover to some extent. But even after a number of years, unemployed individuals sometimes have lower life satisfaction, indicating that they have not completely habituated to the experience.

- However, there are strong **individual differences in adaptation**, too. Some people are resilient and bounce back quickly after a bad event, and others are fragile and do not ever fully adapt to the bad event.
- Example: “Harry,” a college student who had Hodgkin’s lymphoma (a form of cancer), and over the 6-week period Harry’s moods, went up and down. A few times his moods dropped into the negative zone below the horizontal blue line. Most of the time Harry’s moods were in the positive zone above the line.
- But about halfway through the study Harry was told that his cancer was in remission—effectively cured—and his moods on that day spiked way up. But notice that he quickly adapted—the effects of the good news wore off, and Harry adapted back toward where he was before.
- So even the very best news one can imagine—recovering from cancer—was not enough to give Harry a permanent “high.”

- Notice too, however, that Harry's moods averaged a bit higher after cancer remission. Thus, the typical pattern is a strong response to the event, and then a dampening of this joy over time. However, even in the long run, the person might be a bit happier or unhappier than before (Danier et al.).



BENEFITS OF HAPPINESS

Positive Outcomes	Description of Some of the Benefits
Health and Longevity	Happy and optimistic people have stronger immune systems and fewer cardiovascular diseases. Happy people are more likely to perform healthy behaviors, such as wearing seat belts and adhere to medical regimens. They also seem on average to live longer.
Social Relationships	Happy people are more popular, and their relationships are more stable and rewarding. For example, they get divorced less and are fired from work less. They support others more, and receive more support from others in return.
Productivity	Organizations in which people are positive and satisfied seem to be more successful. Work units with greater subjective well-being are more productive, and companies with happy workers tend to earn more money and develop higher stock prices.
Citizenship	Happy people are more likely to donate their time and money to charitable causes and to help others at work.



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Below are eight statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by picking the appropriate response for each statement.

7 – Strongly agree

6 – Agree

5 – Slightly agree

4 – Neither agree nor disagree

3 – Slightly disagree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly disagree

___ I lead a purposeful and meaningful life

___ My social relationships are supportive and rewarding

___ I am engaged and interested in my daily activities

___ I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others

___ I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me

___ I am a good person and live a good life

___ I am optimistic about my future

___ People respect me

Scoring:

Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest PWB possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.



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Self-Questions for Becoming Happier

Are there controllable things in your life that could be changed to make your life more meaningful and happy? What are the avenues to change and why haven't you taken them?

Do you generally see the bright side of things - the part of the glass that is half full, or do you always see the dark side of things? Can you change this outlook on life by working to break the empty-glass view of life? Can you develop more positive mental habits, such as being grateful to others for all of the things they do for you?

Are there people around you who make you feel good about yourself and who make your life more enjoyable? How can you reduce the number of "downers" who might surround you?

In your relationships, seek to make others happy and help others, not just receive support from others. The happiest and healthiest people are often those who help others and the world. Beyond actually helping others, express gratefulness to them and be a person who gives lots of compliments.

Find work that you will love and be good at, while being realistic about your chances of finding certain jobs. Don't over-weigh the importance of money or status in selecting an occupation. Find a job that interests you and plays to your strengths. If you find a job you love, this can be a big boost to happiness.