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*centre for*  
**positive psychology**  
*and health*

# The Science of Health and Happiness

**NOTES LECTURE 4: What are the routes to happiness? I**  
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## Notes: Lecture 4: What are the routes to happiness? I

1. **WHO definition of mental health:** a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. [https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\\_health/en/](https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/)
2. **World Happiness Report:** <https://worldhappiness.report>
3. **The Dichotomy of Control:** “The chief task in life is simply this: to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to the uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own...” Epictetus, Discourses 2.5.4-5
4. **Factors influencing happiness:** Building relationships; Setting highly valued goals; Identifying and using personal strengths; Savouring pleasures; Finding flow; Being grateful; Developing an optimistic outlook; Strengthening couple relationships; Strengthening parent-child relationships; Practising forgiveness; Regular physical exercise; Mindfulness meditation; Progressive muscle relaxation; Problem solving and solution finding; Being courageous; Courageously managing anxiety; Assertively managing anger; Developing grit and resilience; Learning to live with trauma.
5. **Mindsets:** The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life; Growth and Fixed Mindsets: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO5Yz2x0Gsk>
6. **Developing a growth mindset:** Embrace challenges; Persist in the face of setbacks; See effort as part of the journey; Learn from criticism; Find lessons and inspiration in the resilience of others; Tap into your “calling”.

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- **Gratitude:** (i) An affirmation of goodness; (ii) Sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves; (iii) The social dimension is especially important.
- **Time Perspective:** “A fundamental dimension in the construction of psychological time that emerges from cognitive processes partitioning human experience into past, present and future temporal frames” <https://www.thetimeparadox.com/zimbardo-time-perspective-inventory/>
- **The 5 time perspectives:** past positive; past negative, present fatalistic, present hedonic, future.
- **Flexible Balanced Time Perspective:** Low on past negative; Low on present fatalistic; High on past positive – gives you ROOTS; Moderate on present hedonistic – gives you ENERGY; Moderately high on future- gives you WINGS; Key is being able to adopt a time perspective appropriate to the situation.
- “True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise person is content with his lot whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.”  
- *Seneca*.

# Exercises

1. Complete the **PERMA Profiler** to assess your current level of happiness. Reflect on the results and how you might use your understanding of the various components of PERMA to increase your happiness. You will find the questionnaire on the Authentic Happiness website at the University of Pennsylvania. You will need to register (for free) to access the questionnaire. <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter>
2. Complete the **Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory** and reflect on your scores. Use your profile to become aware of how you currently perceive time and what the implications of your profile are for you. How might you develop more a balanced time perspective? <https://www.thetimeparadox.com/zimbardo-time-perspective-inventory/>
3. Begin to keep a **gratitude journal**
  - Set aside 10 minutes per day (or weekly), preferably in the evening
  - List three good things that happened today (this week), that you can give other people, a higher spiritual entity or nature some credit for.
  - Visualise the good thing happening and write down:
    - What exactly happened
    - Why you think it happened
    - What it means to you
    - All the reasons you can think of that explain why you think it went well
    - Whether or not you told someone that it happened
    - What you can do to make it happen again, and remember next time to tell someone about it
    - Before and after the exercise rate how you are feeling on a 10 point scale where 1= “extremely sad” and 10 = “extremely happy”

## Further reading

### **Suggested popular texts:**

Boniwell I. (2012). *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Carr A. (2020). *Positive Psychology and You: A Self-Development Guide*. Oxon, Routledge

Dweck CS. (2017). *Mindset: Changing The Way You Think To Fulfil Your Potential*. (Revised ed.) London, Robinson.

Emmons R (2007). *Thanks: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Boston MA, Houghton Mifflin.

Zimbardo P, Boyd J (2008). *The Time Paradox: The New Psychology of Time*. New York, Free Press.

### **Technical references:**

Emmons RA, McCullough ME (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *J Pers Soc Psy* 84(2), 377-389

Emmons RA (2013) *Gratitude Works: A 21 day programme for creating emotional prosperity*. San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass

Emmons R, McCullough. (2004) *The Psychology of Gratitude*. Oxford, OUP.

Smith JA et al. (2020). *The Gratitude Project*. Oakland, New Harbinger.

## Further exploration - videos

### **Professor Carol Dweck speaks at the RCSI**

World famous psychologist Professor Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset*, delivered the Foley Lecture at the RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences in 2018. A brief edited version of the lecture can be found here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO5Yz2x0GSk>

### **Professor Carol Dweck speaks at Stanford on mindsets**

Here Carol Dweck speaks about developing a growth mindset in children and explains the power of “not yet”.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiiEeMN7vbQ>

### **Professor Philip Zimbardo on the psychology of time**

2009 TEDx talk in which Philip Zimbardo, most famous for the Stanford Prison Experiment, does a whistle-stop tour of time perspectives based on his book *The Time Paradox*. For Zimbardo happiness and success are rooted in a trait most of us disregard: the way we orient toward the past, present and future. [https://www.ted.com/talks/philip\\_zimbardo\\_the\\_psychology\\_of\\_time?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_the_psychology_of_time?language=en)

### **Oprah Winfrey speaks about her gratitude journal**

In this short, not-even-4-minute video, Oprah focuses on the power of gratitude by discussing what she has learned from her own gratitude journal, an exercise she had been practicing for 16 years at the time of the talk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saZWjllwU8c>

### **Professor Robert Emmons on gratitude**

A short video from 2010 of the world’s leading researcher on the psychology of gratitude speaking about the benefits of gratitude

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRrnfGf5aWE>