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The Science of Health and Happiness – Your emotions and you

APRIL 2021 – Dr Trudy Meehan



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SCIENCES

Positive Emotions

Hedonic Positive Emotions

- Joy
- Amusement

Eudaimonic Positive Emotions

- Gratitude
- Serenity
- Interest
- Hope
- Pride
- Awe
- Love
- Inspiration

Broaden and Build

Broaden

- **Mind opens up** (think outside the box)
- **More creative and innovative**
- **Generate solutions**
- **More receptive to alternatives**
- **Expand mindset**
- **Enhance verbal creativity tasks**

Build

When we broaden our thinking we develop real and lasting skills that add to our repertoire of behaviours:

- **Intellectual** (problem solving; openness to learning; visualising)
- **Physical** (increased cardiovascular health; improved coordination)
- **Social** (maintaining and creating relationships)
- **Psychological** (resilience; optimism; sense of identity; goal orientation)

STUDY: A wandering mind is an unhappy mind

- People's minds wandered frequently, regardless of what they were doing - **mind wandering occurred in 46.9% of the samples (2,250 adults)**
- People were less happy when their minds were wandering than when they were not - **people were no happier when thinking about pleasant topics**
- Mind wandering was generally **the cause**, and not merely the consequence, of unhappiness
- What people were thinking was a better predictor of their happiness than was what they were doing

Killingsworth MA, Gilbert DT. A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. *Science*. 2010 Nov 12;330(6006):932.

A note on negative emotion

- Negativity Bias
- Humans and animals have a bias towards attending to negative versus positive stimuli
- Baumeister et al. (2001) - Bad is stronger than good
- Magic ratio 3:1 positive emotions (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

Emotional Intelligence

The capacity to:

- Acknowledge emotions
- Discern between emotions
- Engage effectively with our (and others) emotions

“The ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189)



Homework

- www.positivityratio.com
- 3:1 ratio of positive emotions to negative emotions
- Track your emotion ratio over two weeks
- Do you need to cultivate more positive emotions in your daily life?



Homework

- Take one of Fredrickson's positive emotions (joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love).
 - When was the last time I felt this feeling?
 - Where was I?
 - What was I doing?
 - What else gives me that feeling?
 - Can I think of more triggers for that feeling?
 - What can I do to cultivate this feeling?

Fredrickson, 2009, p. 40



Homework

- Loving kindness meditation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkC0K1F8nPk&list=PL6DbJmB3fDQp_vwTqepv7LDjx3UqB2Ht5&index=5
- Compassionate gestures - every time you touch a hot drink/glass of water, do a compassionate gesture
- Prof. Ian Robertson TedTalk - Stress can make you Sharper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnJAtztON84>
- Stress as enhancing mindset
<http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress/>

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Thank you

Thank you for joining us for the Science of Health and Happiness here at RCSI.

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