

Treadmill Of Happiness

Dr. Tarundeep, Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology, Goswami Ganesh Dutta S.D College, Sector-32, Chandigarh

Abstract

The positive psychology perspective advocates a shift in the lens with which the world is viewed, i.e., one characterized by opportunity for growth rather than mired by problems. Positive psychology has begun to create a roadmap for building positive qualities as a complement to reducing negative influences. Despite a relatively short history, positive psychology has influenced research across most sub-areas of psychology and beyond, including education, management, coaching, therapy, public health, social services, philosophy, and political science. Positive psychology research has made important contributions in finding ways to strike a balance between the inherently positive and negative aspects of human experience and explain both. *This research paper tries to explore positive psychology interventions given by researchers which can help individuals cultivate positive emotions and happiness. These interventions can help understand and improve the quality of life for all, regardless of their current life circumstances.*

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Happiness, Interventions

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Introduction

Happiness can be pursued via numerous pathways – through sensory experiences, using savoring; through social interactions, using active-constructive responding and gratitude; through cognitive experiences, using optimism activities. Taken together, these types of techniques are called Positive Psychological Interventions (Parks & Schueller, 2014). Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) stresses two important factors which describe PPIs: concentration on increasing positivity rather than decreasing negativity, and long term effects. Happiness is practicable and changeable. According to twin studies, the factors that determine long-term happiness are 50% genetics and 10% circumstance (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). The remaining 40% is

determined by learned techniques and active efforts to promote happiness, which is important for the experience of frequent positive emotions and life satisfaction because of *hedonic adaptation* (i.e., the Hedonic Treadmill; Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). Hedonic adaptation occurs when, despite positive or negative events, healthy individuals tend to return quickly to a relatively stable emotional baseline. According to Seligman(2002) there are at least three distinct and better-defined routes to "happiness" (a) positive emotion and pleasure (the pleasant life); (b) engagement (the engaged life); and (c) meaning (the meaningful life).

Basic Views of Happiness

Two basic views according to Haybron (2003), when looking at theories of happiness:

➤ **Hedonic** or, in other words, the pursuit of pleasure over pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001) Hedonic enjoyment is a state whereby an individual feels relaxed, has a sense of distance from their problems and, can be said to feel 'happy'.

➤ **Eudaimonic** theories of happiness argue that rather than the pursuit of pleasure, happiness is the result of the development of individual strengths and virtues (Norris & Vella-Brodrick, 2008). The theory of eudaimonic happiness has its basis in the concept of the self-actualising individual (proposed by **Maslow**) and the concept of the 'fully functioning person' (Rogers)

Theoretical Model Of Happiness (Seligman): Basis of Interventions of Happiness

Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, developed a five core element of psychological well-being and happiness (PERMA Model). Seligman believes that these five elements can help people work towards a life of fulfillment, happiness, and meaning.

➤ **P – Positive Emotion:** Focusing on positive emotions is more than smiling: it is the ability to remain optimistic and view one's past, present, and future from a constructive perspective.

➤ **E – Engagement:** Activities that meet our need for engagement flood the body with positive neurotransmitters and hormones that elevate one's sense of well-being. This engagement helps us remain present, as well as synthesize the activities where we find calm, focus, and joy.

➤ **R – Relationships:** Relationships and social connections are crucial to meaningful lives. We thrive on connections that promote love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans. Positive relationships with one's parents, siblings, peers,

coworkers, and friends is a key ingredient to overall joy.

➤ **M – Meaning:** Religion and spirituality provide many people with meaning, as can working for a good company, raising children, volunteering for a greater cause, and expressing ourselves creatively.

➤ **A – Accomplishments:** Having goals and ambition in life can help us to achieve things that can give us a sense of accomplishment. You should make realistic goals that can be met and just putting in the effort to achieving those goals can already give you a sense of satisfaction when you finally achieve those goals a sense of pride and fulfillment will be reached.

Positive Psychology Interventions

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs), are interventions that have been developed within Positive Psychology that aim at creating positive outcomes. According to Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, it has been defined as "treatment methods or intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviors, or cognitions". As such, they are strategies for people who desire to increase their well-being. The interventions that have been developed and evaluated thus far focus on a broad variety of psychological constructs (e.g., gratitude, hope, goal-attainment, compassion, humor, etc.) and use diverse techniques. The following interventions will increase and sustain happiness as given by (Park and Schueller, 2014) which are given below:

➤ **Savoring PPIs:**

Savoring interventions focus on a particular experience and aim to enhance their effects for maximizing happiness (Peterson, 2006). The core principle of these interventions is to encourage the person to grab every little aspect

of experience – physical, sensory, emotional, or social (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

➤ **Gratitude Interventions:**

Gratitude evokes strong feelings of positivity in the person who gives it and the person who receives it (Schueller & Parks, 2014). No matter what type of practice we follow, gratitude interventions have proven benefits in increasing happiness and satisfaction (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Gratitude interventions are categorized into two parts:

a. Self-reflective practices, for example, writing a gratitude journal that we keep to ourselves and use as a tool for self-expression.

b. Interactive methods where we actively express our gratitude to others by saying ‘thank you,’ giving small tokens of appreciation, or paying gratitude visits.

➤ **Kindness Boosters:**

Kindness is a trait all happy people possess. Studies have shown that happiness and kindness go hand in hand and complement each other (Aknin, Dunn, and Norton, 2012). Positive psychology interventions focusing on compassion can be simple acts like buying someone a small token of love, volunteering for a noble cause, donating something, or helping a stranger in need. Kindness reinforces happiness and positivity.

➤ **Empathy PPIs:**

Empathy-oriented PPIs focus on strengthening positive emotions in interpersonal relationships. Healthy social bonds – both at personal and professional fronts are essential for happiness and inner peace. (Diener and Seligman, 2002). PPIs that promote empathy include activities like self-love meditation and mindfulness

practices, where individuals create positive feelings toward themselves and others by being more mindfully connected to the present (Fredrickson, Cohn, and Finkel, 2008).

➤ **Optimistic Interventions:**

Optimistic interventions create positive outcomes by setting realistic expectations. An example of an optimistic PPI is the ‘Imagine Yourself’ test where participants are asked to note down where they see themselves in the future. Evidence suggests that although this may seem to be an easy task, non-directed imagination is a great way for people to understand how positive they are about themselves and others in life (King, 2001).

➤ **Strength-Building Measures:**

Strength in positive psychology refers to internal capacities and values (Parks and Biswas-Diener, 2013). Studies have illustrated that awareness and acknowledgment of power help in reducing symptoms of depression and increases self-contentment (Seligman et al., 2005).

➤ **Meaning Oriented PPIs:**

This category of PPIs helps in understanding what is meaningful to us in life and why, and what we can do to achieve the things that matter in life. A person who has clarity of goals and expectations is more likely to feel happier and content (Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). Meaning-oriented PPIs include activities like finding meaning in our daily activities, setting realistic goals and employing effective means to achieve them, or just reflecting on our thoughts and emotions.

Final Remarks

Happiness interventions practiced for a couple of days, or even a couple of weeks, is unlikely to fuel endless amounts of happiness. Just like eating one piece of broccoli isn't going to suddenly make you healthy, or going for one run instantly makes you fit. To have a lasting effect, intentionality and effort toward specifically designed happiness-increasing strategies are major contributors to their efficacy. The goal for happiness-increasing strategies should not be to eliminate negative emotions altogether, but instead to serve as "daily emotional maintenance". Everyone should try to choose happiness activities through which you feel enjoyable and interesting, that you can value and identify with, and that make sense for your situation, your resources, and your lifestyle. Instead of trying to change your circumstance, look for ways to change your emotions, thoughts, and actions to meet your basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and connection.

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