

Science of Happiness Lecture: A Summary

The science of happiness is a branch of positive psychology, which aims to understand the factors that put individuals, communities and societies in a position where they are able to optimize their own well-being. Basically, it seeks to answer the question “What makes happy people happy?”.

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) are a set of strategies that focus on enhancing and sustaining happiness through positive thoughts and emotions. Seven are listed below.

1. **Savouring:** Focus on an experience with the aim of enhancing the experiential effects. An example would be not multi-tasking during mealtimes. Truly take the time to taste, and savour, your food.
2. **Gratitude:** Expressing thankfulness or appreciation. There are two types of gratitude PPIs:
 - A. Self-reflective: An example would be keeping a gratitude journal.
 - B. Interactive method: An example would be vocally thanking someone.
3. **Kindness boosters:** Doing something kind for someone as a gesture of goodwill, with no expectation of reciprocation or vocal appreciation.
4. **Empathy:** The act of identifying and understanding another person’s emotion or perspective.
5. **Optimism:** Confidence that this world is the best possible outcome, and hopefulness that the future will be successful. Two methods of optimism PPI’s:
 - A. Imagine yourself technique: Write down where you see yourself in the future.
 - B. Life summary technique: Write a summary of your life based on the assumption that you are already happy.
6. **Strength-building:** Acknowledging you have autonomy over your actions and your life.
7. **Meaning-oriented outlooks:** Finding purpose and meaning in one’s actions and lifecircumstances. Examples of meaning-oriented outlooks are self-reflection and decluttering (removing items that serve no purpose or no longer bring you joy).

The belief that to be happy is to experience minimal hardships, pain and sadness is a myth. You’ll notice that many of PPI’s did not directly link to “just think happy thoughts”. Instead PPI’s are daily practices, which when done consistently and honestly, bring about the perspectives that we come to know as intrinsic joy and personal happiness.