



Enjoy Life: Keys to Increasing  
Happiness  
w/Dr. Elbel

What do you think would make  
you happy today?

# According to Gallup poll

- 60% of Americans feel happy without a lot of stress or worry.

# Happiness doesn't come easy

- Negative emotions (fear, anger, despair) are for SURVIVAL
- Positive emotions (curiosity, delight, interest, joy, etc) are for GROWTH

# What is happiness?

Happiness or hedonism?

# Our current culture

- Is more interested in the pursuit of individual happiness than in the search for meaning.
- Frankl would say that happiness cannot be pursued, it must ensue.
- He adds—the pursuit of happiness thwarts happiness.

What is happiness?

What determines happiness?

What can we do to be  
happier?

**Believe it or not**

It is not money or  
circumstances!



# Humans are poor affective forecasters

- We are very poor at predicting what will make us happy
- Events have a small impact on happiness that doesn't last long
- People who suffer tragedy/trauma recover more quickly than they expect (resilience)
- Good things don't make us feel good as much as we expect

# How to forecast how an event will affect us?

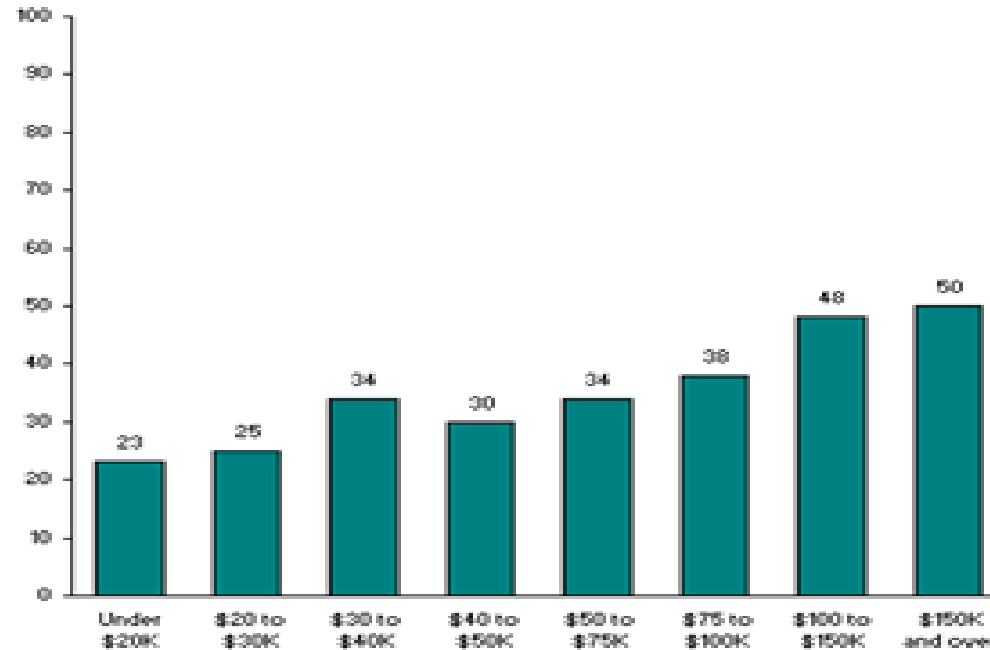
- Look at other's experience
  - How have previous lottery winners felt?
- We don't tend to do that because we think we are unique
  - Daniel Gilbert, 2007, Stumbling on Happiness

# David Geffen

interviewed by Barbara Walters

- BW: “Now that you are a billionaire are you happy?”
- DG: “Anyone who believes money makes you happy doesn’t have money”

## A closer look at money and happiness



Pew 2005: "Are we happy yet?"

Happiness increases with income up to about 50K—after that there is no dramatic effect. (Richard Layard, [Happiness: Lessons from a New Science](#))

# Can Money Buy Happiness?



Yes, if you use it right:

“Just because money doesn’t buy happiness doesn’t mean money cannot buy happiness.”

Elizabeth Dunn, Ph.D. Social Psychologist, U. British Columbia

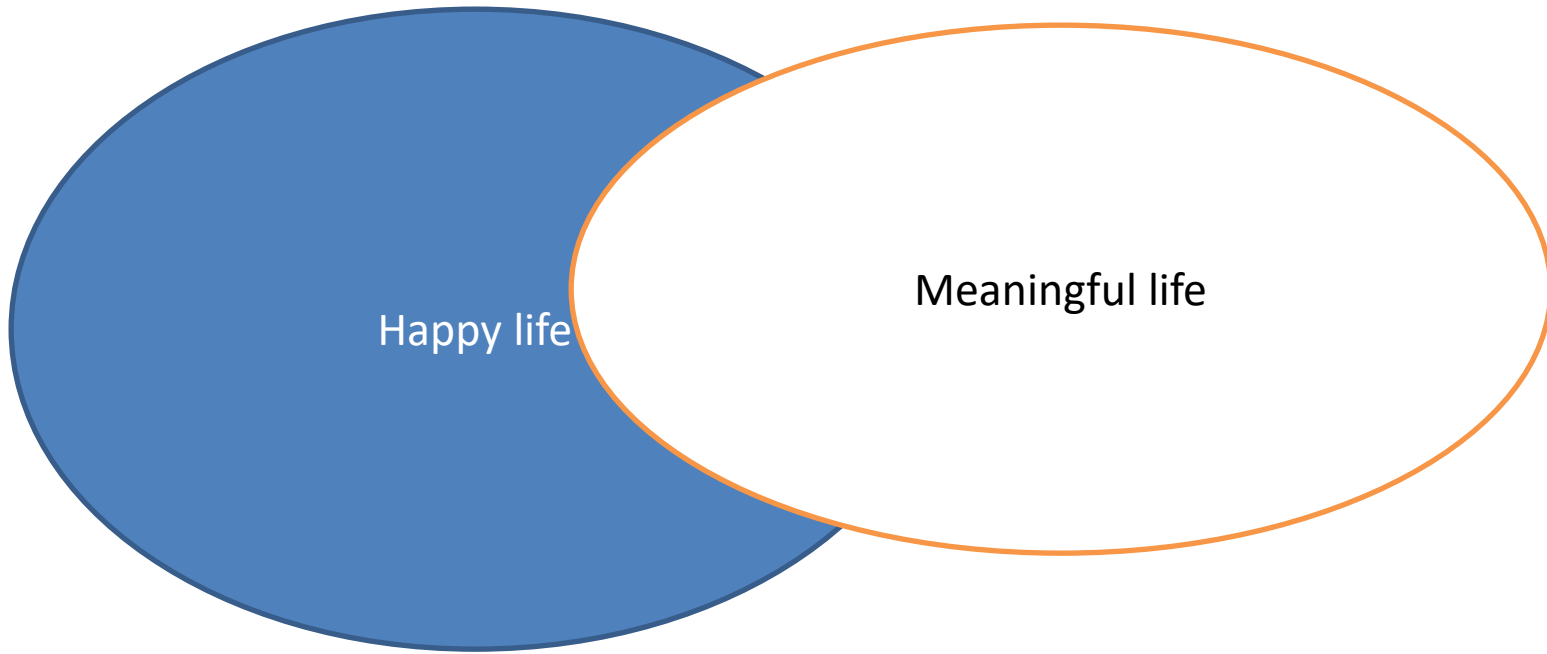
-Create positive memories by spending with / on others.

-Share / give to worthy causes.

Dunn, E.W., \*Aknin, L., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, 319, 1687-1688.

# Happiness without meaning

Characterizes a relatively shallow,  
self-absorbed or even selfish life



Happy life=taking  
Meaningful life=giving

Victor Frankl's observations in Nazi concentration camps led him to conclude:

The difference between those who had lived and those who died came down to one thing--**Meaning**



# Those who had meaning

- Were more resilient to suffering
- “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing. The last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way”  
Victor Frankl

# Path to happiness

according to Caroline Myss

- Discovering our true paths—our meaning
- Appreciating the lives we have (not the ones we want)—gratitude
- Recognizing who we really are—authenticity & self acceptance

- Nearly all people are capable of much more happiness than they have.
- See your potential.
- Create opportunities to invest in your own highest and best self.

In a meaningful life you use your highest strengths and talents to belong to and serve something that is larger than the self.

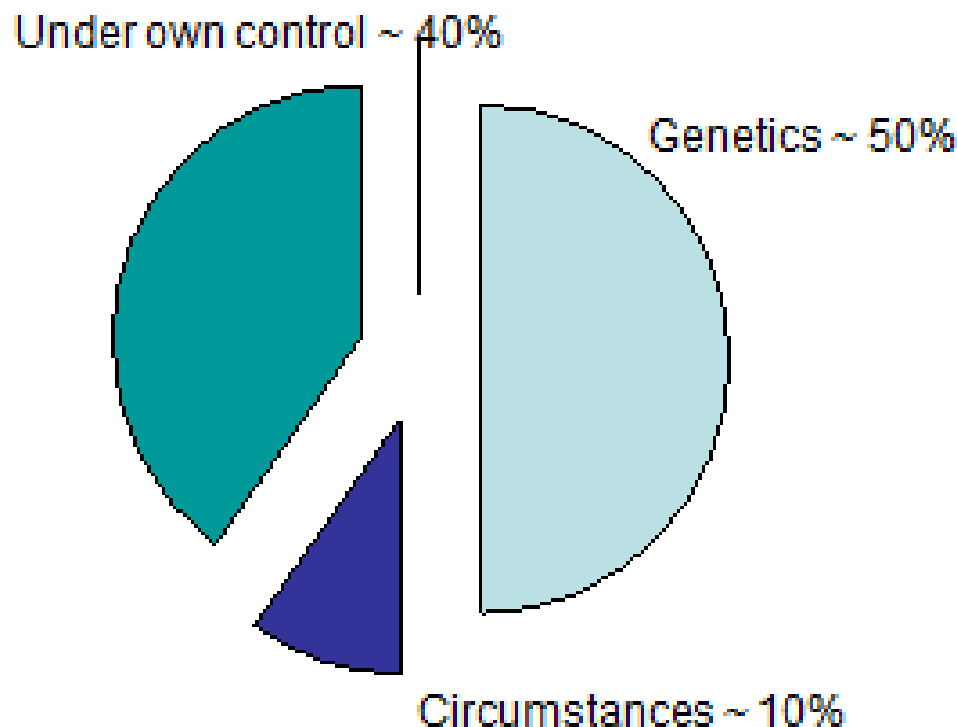
Martin Seligman

You may also have more worry, anxiety and stress because you are invested in something bigger than yourself.

# Example: parenting

- Having children is associated with a more meaningful life
- Higher stress, anxiety and self sacrifice
- On a day to day basis parents are less happy interacting with their children than they are exercising, eating and watching television
- Daniel Gilbert, Harvard psychologist

# What Can We Change?



Positive Psychology has identified at least 14 interventions that raise happiness persistently.

Lynbomirsky, S. (2008) *The How of Happiness*. New York: Penguin.

# Reframing

- Happy people don't have a magic button to get them out of traffic or that mutes an impolite boss—they draw different messages or meanings from the situation.
  - David Niven 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People

# To improve happiness

- 5 random acts of kindness per week (journal it)
- Gratitude journal
- Gratitude letter
- Connect with others
- Discover your strengths and put energy into increasing strengths



# Random Kindness (new today)

- Once day per week, do five acts of kindness.
- Write about it in your diary.
- Result: Sustained increase in Well Being

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology, 9*, 111-131.

# Gratitude

- A validated intervention for depression
- A validated intervention to increase happiness

# The Gratitude Diary

- Each day, write 3 – 5 things that you liked.
  - What happened to me?
  - What did I do right?
- Then write one thing that you *didn't* like
  - Ask yourself: “And how is it also good, a blessing in disguise?”
  - Find two or three ways it helps you.

“If the only prayer you said in life was ‘Thank you,’ that would suffice.”

Meister Eckhardt

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others”.

Cicero



# Learning to be Grateful

“You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing, and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.”

“Gratitude produced the most purely joyful moments that have been known to man.”

G. K. Chesterton

# Gratitude Letter

**Build and maintain better  
relationships!**

# For better relationships

- Real enthusiasm after partner's positive event most important
  - It's more important than support through negative event



## 2.9 Positive to 1 Negative: The Magic Ratio

Fredrickson and Losada reviewed high functioning individuals, families, and work teams.

When we observe the positive to negative communications, a common fact emerges:

Languishing:  $>.4:1$

Flourishing:  $>2.9:1$

Ideal: 4 or 5:1



Marcial Losada



Barbara Fredrickson

Fredrickson, Barbara L.; Losada, Marcial F. (2005) Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 60(7), 678-686

# *Appreciative Inquiry*

- Without excessive modesty, what are your gifts and talents?
- When have you make a real difference in the lives of others?
- What gives those around you energy, spirit, and life?
- How do those around you help you to find energy & meaning?
- What happens when you share your sense of wonder and appreciation?

# VIA survey of character strengths

At Martin Seligman's web site:

[Authentichappiness.com](http://Authentichappiness.com)

You must register

**Build on your strenghts!**

# Life Hurts

## Happiness is the cure

- Very happy people have the same pain and trauma.\*
- Their happy disposition helps them bounce back very quickly.\*\*

\*Bonanno, G. (2004) Loss, Trauma and Resilience. *American Psychologist* 58, 1, 20-28.

\*\*Fredrickson, B. L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C. E., & Larkin, G. R. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crisis? A prospective study of resilience and emotion following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 365–376.

# Optimism Survey

- [Authentichappiness.org](http://Authentichappiness.org)
- Martin Seligman's website

# Health improves happiness

- Meditation
- Savoring—living in the moment
- Sleep
- Omega-3

Enjoy Life: Healing with Happiness; *How to harness positive moods to raise your energy, effectiveness and joy*, by Lynn D. Johnson, 2008

# Savor life!

Focus intently on ordinary experiences.

Chew food slowly and thoughtfully.

Drink slowly and attentively.

Listen to a friend with intensity. Keep your mind quiet as you listen.

Notice the daily experience of walking.



# The Power of Positive Emotion

The brain is many times more attracted to primitive negative emotions!

That helped out ancestors survive.

Today, to flourish we can develop positive emotions.

**Keep a diary of things you feel grateful about today (just for today) and want to have continue in your life.**

# Happiness is a positive sum game

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”

Buddha

# Recommended Books

- Enjoy Life: Healing with Happiness; How to harness positive moods to raise your energy, effectiveness and joy, by Lynn D. Johnson, 2008
- Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment , Martin Seligman, 2003