

Happiness in a Time of COVID-19

- The government and health departments have been very focused on physical health
- Hand washing, social distancing, wearing masks.. But this physical health prioritization is having vast repercussions
- COVID-19 is not going anywhere and we are living in a state of constant threat
- Focusing on happiness and doing practical behaviors can help to offset the negative effects of coronavirus pandemic





THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS PERFECT



"FOR AS IT IS NOT ONE SWALLOW OR ONE FINE DAYTHAT MAKES A SPRING, SO IT IS NOT ONE DAY OR A SHORT TIME THAT MAKES A MAN BLESSED AND HAPPY."

- ARISTOTLE

More Than Joy

Happiness is associated with:

- More **engagement**
- More creativity
- Quality relationships
- Increased ability to cope with stress
- Stronger immune system
- Increased sense of satisfaction with your life
- More likely to set and achieve goals

It's not just about feeling good, but sustaining happiness in order to be more successful and live a more rewarding work and personal life

(Lyubomirsky, 2007)



(Danner, Snowdon, Friesen, 2001)



What would make you happier?

"If I only I had/did/was _____, would be happier."



Genetic Set Point (Who we are)

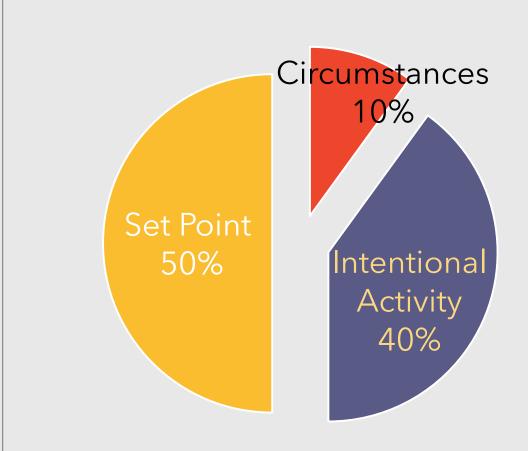
a baseline or potential for happiness to which we are all bound to return after major triumphs and set-backs

Circumstances (What we face)

rich vs. poor healthy vs. unhealthy beautiful vs. plain married vs. divorced warm climate vs. cold

Intentional Activity (What we do and think)

we will chat about these!



(Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade, 2005)

Myth-busters

1. Happiness can be found.

Happiness is a state of mind, a way of perceiving and approaching the world around us. It is created.

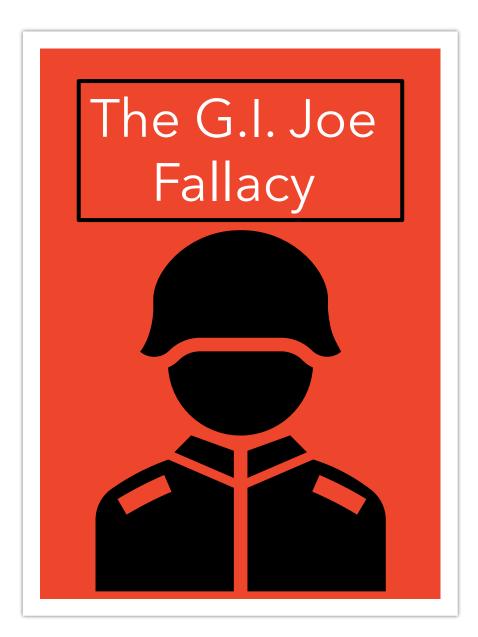
2. Happiness lies in changing our circumstances.

Hedonic adaptation prevents circumstances from creating happiness. Circumstances have little impact on our happiness.

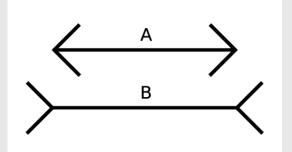
3. You either have it or you don't.

Research shows we can overcome our genetic programming. People are not "born happy."

(Lyubomirsky, 2007)



"Knowing is half the battle."





- Merely knowing something is not enough to change your behavior or thoughts.
- 2. To change behavior, you have to change habits not just learn about the stuff

(Santos and Gendler)

The Behaviors

Changing your Perspective- Gratitude and optimism

Replacing Comparison with Compassion-

Forgiveness and avoiding comparison & overthinking

Building Community- Quality relationships and acts of kindness

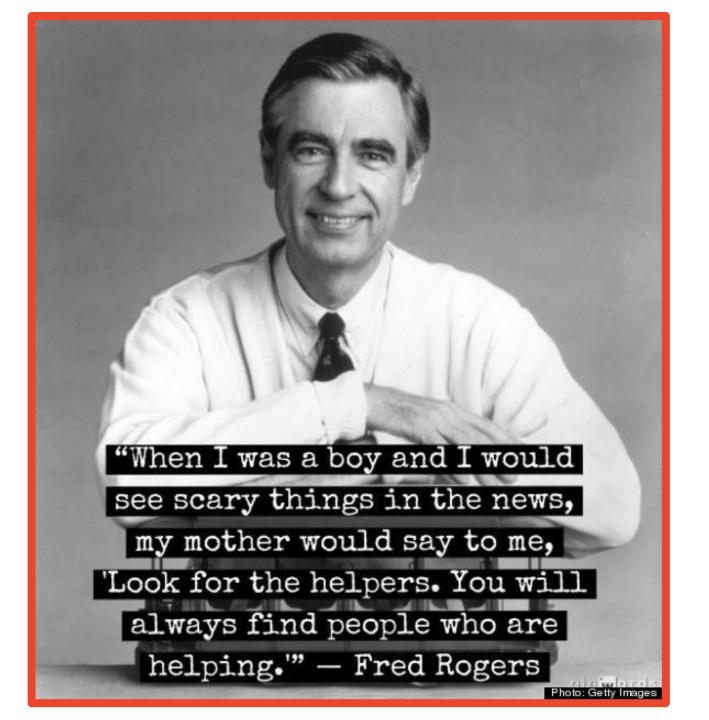
Resilience- Developing healthy coping mechanisms

Mindfulness- Flow experiences and savoring life's joys

Focusing on Your Whole Self- Spirituality, balance, nutrition, and activity levels

Continuing Your Journey- Setting and committing to your goals

(Lyubomirsky, 2007)



CULTIVATE HOPE

- In what ways has COVID-19 changed your life for the better?
 - Reconnecting with old friends
 - Slowing down
 - Taking breaks to walk outside
- Three Gratitudes Exercise
 - "Everything is awful" doesn't help us
 - Counting 3-5 things you are grateful daily can bump up your mood
 - What can you appreciate right now? Healthy family, having a yummy cheese in the fridge
- Look for positive stories, the good in humanity
- Finding meaning and purpose during this time



Coaching Yourself, Kobe Style

- Refer to yourself in third person
- Tell yourself what you'd say to a close friend
- Practice positive self-reinforcement ("Katie, you can do this. You are strong and resilient.")
- When feeling panic, coach yourself through it ("Ok Katie, there isn't any toilet paper left at the grocery store, but you know your neighbors will gladly share some with you because they lucked out at Costco yesterday.")

(Laurie Santos, The Happiness Lab, 2020)



Information from: The Happiness Lab; Ep 1 (Laurie Santos)

Beating COVID Isolation Loneliness

- Loneliness damages our physical and mental health
 - As bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Pain (physical and emotional) is alleviated by connection to others
- Stop panic scrolling to connect on SM; seek information in an intentional way
- Remember we are all having a common, shared, experience
 - Less feeling alone, more feeling connection
 - Comforting someone else is a good way to comfort yourself
- How can we use tech to interact in the way that we normally would; "hang around together"
- Find co-activities (can you do an activity "with" someone else at the same time?)
- Bring in susceptible people (how are your elder friends doing, how is your friend on chemo meds?)
- Help others where and when you can; Donations? Picking weeds?

Meditation and Mindfulness



MINDFULNESS

- 1. The act of being present; not worrying about the future or the past
- 2. The act of bringing awareness to your immediate environment, in a non-judgmental way
- 3. Remind yourself of physical safety in the moment

MEDITATIONS

- 1. Don't focus on the time (start with a minute)
- 2. What kind do you like?
 - 1. What is your focus? Breath, gratitude, a positive mantra
 - Love and Kindness Meditation (the act of wishing well people in your life; practicing compassion)
 - 1. This can help with burn out by feeling care for other people without feeling their pain
 - 2. Studies show this lets you engage with people who are suffering without feeling it yourself
- 3. Use a tool
 - 1. Headspace App
 - 2. Calm App

What if "the worst" is happening?

- Remind yourself of what you can control; do not busy yourself with trying to control things you can't
- Practice your resiliency strategies; how are you taking care of yourself?
- Realize this situation is temporary
 - Research shows that many people come out of terrible, life changing situations with new purpose, new perspective, and feeling altogether a better person because of their challenges
- Practice visualization for the future.. What will a year look like from now? How might you come out on the other side better, stronger





Questions?

Katie Gordon, MAEd UCCS Recreation and Wellness Center kgordon4@uccs.edu