

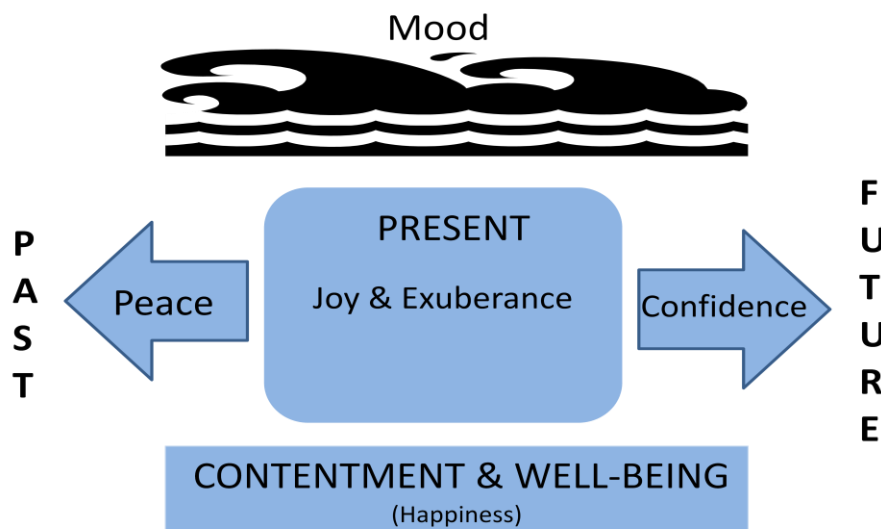
DEVELOPING THE SKILL OF HAPPINESS

What is Happiness?

- “A state of well-being and contentment” Webster’s Dictionary
- It is an attitude, a way of being, a perspective one carries with them. It is more **how** we see the circumstances of our lives than the circumstances themselves.
- Perhaps it is easiest to understand it by identifying the characteristics of someone who is happy:

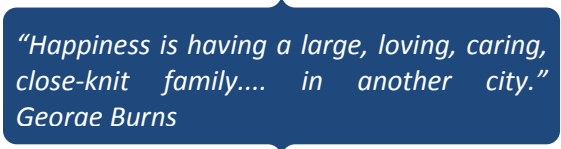
‘Happy people have an underlying predominant sense of well-being and contentment. They remember the past with serenity, anticipate the future with confidence and experience the present with joy and exuberance. This attitude is sourced from a life integrated by meaningful purpose and sound principles and enhanced by healthy relationships and pleasure.’ Doug Smith

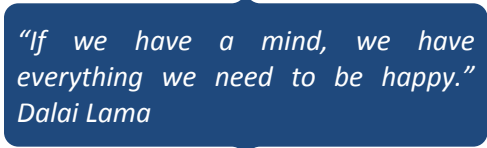
- Happiness is something more substantial than mood. Happiness is a deeper current to one’s life such that even when the surface waters churn, one can still have an underlying feeling of well-being and contentment. Below is model of happiness that will be used throughout the five sessions:



- Dan Baker (author of **What Happy People Know** and former psychologist at Canyon Ranch) suggest the sum of the following 12 qualities is happiness: **love, optimism, courage, a sense of freedom, proactivity, security, health, spirituality, altruism, humor, perspective and purpose.** Not all these qualities must be present for happiness to exist, but most of them must be abundant for someone to experience the kind of lasting, rock-solid happiness that endures even when life gets tough to take – as it always does, sooner or later. Source: **What happy People Know**, Dan Baker pages 19-21

Why is Happiness Worthy of Pursuit?

- **People who are happy do better by almost every measure**, be it success in their careers, health and durability of their relationships, respect for their own needs and the needs of others, acceptance of diversity, even their physical health. Several studies have shown that happy people actually live longer!
- One study done by Carnegie Mellon where researchers (somewhat disgustingly) dropped cold virus directly into subject's nostrils, showed that those with more rich social networks and greater well-being [those who are happier] were four times less likely to get sick.


*"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family.... in another city."
Georae Burns*
- Put all the research aside, who would you rather have as a boss, a co-worker, a friend, a teacher, a son or daughter who would you rather wake up to each morning who would you rather BE? Someone happy or sad?
- Part of the confusion today is that we seem to think that happiness is trivial, like kids on a playground. Seems we have come to make happiness and giddy emotions or pleasure synonymous. This hasn't always been true. Aristotle said: **"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence"**. Our Declaration of Independence puts happiness right up there with "life" and "liberty".
- **The skill of happiness can be developed and it may be the most important life skill we can develop.**
- The field of "Positive Psychology", or what leads to flourishing, fulfilling living, has been a rapidly expanding part of the field of psychology. There has been significant research conducted in who is happy and who is not and why. This research reveals that our level of happiness is primarily determined by three things; genetics (or what researchers call "set point"), circumstances and the voluntary choices we make.


*"If we have a mind, we have everything we need to be happy."
Dalai Lama*

Happiness = Set Point & Circumstances & Voluntary Choices

- Most of us tend to think that circumstances play a prominent role in our happiness. ("If only I could win the lottery!") Research does not support this point of view. Circumstances account for only about 10% of our happiness. The other two factors, set point and choices, play a relatively equal part in our happiness. **For most of us happiness really is a choice.**

Making Peace with Our Past and Finding Confidence in Our Future

Happiness is found in the present, but many of us continually step out of the present and into the past with anger or remorse and/or into the future with fear. In sports stepping out of the present is called “choking;” in life it’s called “unhappiness.” When we make peace with our past and find confidence in the future we are free to enjoy the abundant opportunities for happiness in the present.

“For most of us the past is never dead and buried, it’s not even past.” William Faulkner

Making Peace with Our Past

The past, like the future, is a concept only. It doesn’t really exist. Our only access to it is how we choose to remember it, to think about it. When the happiest among us think about the past they do so with a sense of serenity. There are two key happiness skills that enable this.

1. Forgiveness

- There are only four things we can do with negative events in our past. We can forget them. Great if it happens, but difficult to force. We can repress them, but they always come back in insidious ways that hurt us even more. We can hold on to them (the strategy we probably choose most often). Finally, **we can forgive.**
- Forgiveness is really two very distinct and separate skills: *forgiveness of self*, which is about self-esteem (about being worthy of forgiveness) and *forgiveness of others* which is about releasing the need or desire for vengeance or revenge.
- It helps to realize that forgiveness is not a gift we give to others, but to ourselves, and it is an act independent of justice or apology. We do ourselves a disservice by withholding forgiveness until an apology is made or justice is done.
- One way to increase the level of forgiveness between you and your spouse is to commit to deal with any hurts you have caused one another within 48 hours. After that it is not fair game for an argument. Think of it as dumping the garbage at the end of every day.

2. Gratitude

- Gratitude is the second key skill of happiness when it comes to dealing with our past. Just as forgiveness releases negative things, gratitude enables us to hang on to positive things in our past.
- Those who are happiest among us find a myriad of things for which they are grateful and it has less to do with how privileged their past was and more to do with how they choose to perceive it.
- Consider your own life story. Do you focus on what was wrong or painful or do you choose to dwell on what was pleasant and positive.
- Research has shown that if people will write down three things at the end of everyday that they are thankful for, within 3 weeks they are measurably happier and if they keep this up they continue to elevate their happiness level.

Forgiveness and gratitude are two mega strategies of happiness. Together they synergistically can boost our level of happiness, perhaps to a greater degree than any of the other qualities we will cover.

Finding Confidence in the Future (“FOFO”)

In looking to the future, the happiest among us look forward with excitement, with eagerness and with confidence. There are four skills that enable them to achieve this.

1. Faith

- In his play Othello, Shakespeare said it well, “Imagination without faith is a cruel master.” Having faith that we can handle things, no matter what life brings, is essential to self-esteem and, therefore, to happiness. Without faith our imaginations can and will conjure up all manners of disasters and heartaches.
- Faith offers an alternative. The happiest among us view themselves as part of a “benevolent universe,” such that if we do our part, it will bring us what we need – not necessarily what we want, but always what we need.

2. Optimism

- A close cousin of faith is optimism, the ability to believe that things will work in your favor. We tend to understand this quality in sports, but in life we tend to think being a little pessimistic is a virtue. It isn’t.
- Imagine Sir Edmund Hillary thinking “I will never be able to climb Mt. Everest” or Roger Bannister thinking “I will never break the 4 minute mile. “
- There is a high correlation with optimism and happiness and like happiness, optimism is a skill. (Martin Seligman has a new book out titled *Learned Optimism*.)

“I never met a pessimistic general who ever won a battle.” General Dwight Eisenhower

3. Flexibility

- While we can continually plan and shape the future, we don’t control it. This is tough to accept for most of us, especially those of us who are the most proactive. Trying to control the future leads to frustration and unhappiness.
- Those who deal most successfully with the future figure out what they want to occur, work to bring it about and then adjust to whatever the outcome is. If it is very different than what they had hoped, they spend little time in anger or denial, but rather move forward with flexibility.

4. Openness

- The final trait that the happiest among us share is an openness to new directions, new pathways forward.
- They are open to new pathways as they keep moving with the punches life invariably throws our way.
- Happy people have the openness to not fall into the trap to which Helen Keller was referring when she said: “When one door to happiness closes another opens. However we are often so fixed on the closed door, we fail to see the open door.”

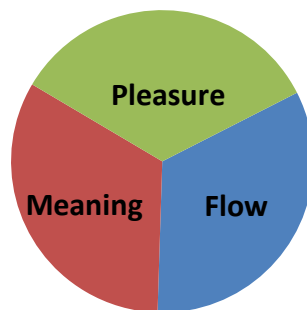
If we can look to our past and feel serenity through the skills of forgiveness and gratitude and if we can look to the future with confidence through the skills of faith, optimism, flexibility and openness (“FOFO”), then we are free to experience the place where happiness is abundantly found – in the present.

DEVELOPING THE SKILL OF HAPPINESS

Living in the Present

By making peace with our past and having confidence in our future, we are then able to *live* in the present and enjoy an abundance of opportunities for happiness. This session is devoted to enabling us to experience those opportunities.

There are three primary sources of positive emotions in the present:



1. **Pleasure** – These are favorable experiences that come primarily through the senses.
2. **Meaning** – These are activities that we perceive as important in fulfilling some purpose to which we are committed or to strengthening relationships which we view as important.
3. **Flow** – The state of being where we are totally engaged in an activity that fully utilizes our unique talents.

People who have a deep level of contentment and well-being enjoy all three fundamental forms of positive emotions in the present. They enjoy pleasurable experiences, they find meaning in life through purpose and relationships and they discover and utilize their talents such that they experience a high degree of flow.

Below are six skills that when consistently practiced have been shown to lead to an increase in our positive emotions in the present.

“Happiness is not in another place, but in this place ... not for another hour, but for this hour.” Walt Whitman

1. **Doing Now What I Am Doing Now**

I can read the paper, watch golf on TV, carry on a conversation with my wife and balance the check book all at the same time. The only problem is that when I do so, I do a lousy job of each. You have to be present to enjoy the present. Do one thing at a time and stop multi-tasking. Time is the most valuable commodity you can bestow on someone and by doing so in a singular fashion; we bring pleasure to ourselves and others. Stop multi-tasking.

2. **Savoring, Spacing and Being Mindful of Pleasures**

Ever watch a wine taster? What he/she is doing is savoring, spacing and being mindful of the wine and by so doing is discerning everything about the experience. We can do the same with most any

form of pleasure. Savor the pleasure by focusing solely on it and by focusing on individual aspects of the pleasure. Space pleasures so that you can be more receptive to the experience. Slow down when you eat and drink. Be mindful of pleasurable experiences. Capture them through writing about them, sharing them with friends and making a point of focusing on them.

3. Honoring our Mind, Body and Spirit

By taking care of ourselves we raise our self-esteem which is a foundation of happiness. Eating well, exercising, limiting our use of alcohol, not using drugs, and practicing meditation, yoga and other means of centering ourselves are all means of increasing our happiness in the present. Canyon Ranch is an ideal environment enhancing our practice of these skills. While here contemplate to what and to whom do I give access to my mind and body? Make revisions which lead to greater health of mind and body and learn new skills that lead to a healthier, happier life style..

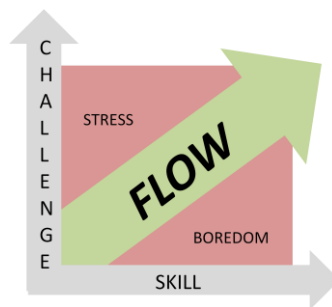
4. Finding Meaning

Man is a searcher of meaning. It is difficult to feel happy without a deep level of meaning in our lives. The number one quality associated with people of high well-being is “my life has meaning and purpose.” We can find meaning in life through discovering and pursuing a purpose or set of purposes that we deem to be important and through developing and nurturing healthy, fulfilling relationships.

“Purpose is like underwear, don’t be caught without it.” Doug Smith

5. Finding Flow

When a person is fully engaged and energized in an activity and singularly focused on its achievement, they are in a state which psychologists call “flow”. It is a state we can attain when the challenge we face matches the talents we possess such that we neither feel stress nor boredom. The experience of flow is spontaneous joy. Developing our unique talents and utilizing them in a manner we deem to be meaningful is a fundamental source of happiness.



6. Altruism

The happiest among us know how good it feels to be generous. They have overcome one of the two biggest fears in life – “I won’t **have** enough.” (The other major fear is “I won’t **be** enough.”) Altruism brings joy to those who can practice it freely and without concern for recognition or expecting something in return.

7. Thinking With Abundance

Our society worships competition. In sports, in the workplace, in intellectual pursuits we relish competition. Interestingly though, those who are the happiest among us are focused more on cooperation than competition. They tend to focus more on “win-win” than “win-lose.” Playing the alpha-male role (for men or women) has a tendency to lead to unhappiness and (interestingly) less career success than those who focus on cooperation.