

COACH *Notes*



Volume III, No. 1

Newsletter

How to Be Happier: 5 Keys

Why do some people always seem happy, and others not? Is it really a question of life circumstances? Are they happy because their life is better, because they have more luck, and they just don't have as many worries and upsets?

Or is it more a question of disposition and character? Since luck happens to everybody, just as problems do, could it be that some people are genetically wired to be happy no matter what?

People who are highly satisfied with their lives are less likely to have psychological or social problems, less likely to get sick or be stressed out, and more likely to do well at work.

Hard-Wired for Happiness?

Current research reveals that mood and temperament have a large genetic component. In a 1996 study, University of Minnesota psychologists David Lykken and Auke Tellegen surveyed 732 pairs of identical twins and found them closely matched for adult happiness, regardless of whether they'd grown up together or apart. Such findings suggest that while we all experience ups and downs, our moods revolve around the emotional baselines or "set points" we're born with.

But even if we have an inherited range of happiness, are there some tools that we can learn to become happier and more satisfied with life?

In an attempt to understand and quantify the state of "subjective well-being" (the scientific term for happiness), a new question emerges: How many positive vs. negative experiences must people have before they can call themselves genuinely "happy"?

The Little Things that Count

The general consensus of current research is that happiness is greatest when we combine frequent numbers of good experiences with a few very intense ones. To feel happy, focus on the frequency, not the intensity, of positive events in our lives.

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL



**HERDLINGER
ASSOCIATES**

"Turning potential into performance"

David Herdlinger, Herdlinger Associates

Dreamers Welcome

At Herdlinger Associates, I encourage people to dream. And the positive results have been astounding!

When individuals pursue their dreams, their lives percolate with purpose, passion, success, and fulfillment.

As a coach, I don't try to make my clients' dreams come true. That's their privilege...and responsibility.

My role – and my joy – is to stand by their side to encourage, guide, challenge, and cheer them on.

Are your dreams big enough? Let me help you unleash your potential and accomplish more than you ever dreamed possible.

...David Herdlinger

HERDLINGER ASSOCIATES has helped thousands of professionals at all levels in all types of organizations achieve extraordinary success and satisfaction.

We serve clients in North America, Europe, and Asia, ranging in size from individuals and very small businesses to corporations with annual sales in excess of \$40 billion.

Learn more about HerdlingerAssociates at our website:
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Learning how to take pleasure in little victories, recognizing their importance in our lives, and working hard to minimize negative events will accomplish more than waiting around for a burst of intense pleasure.

The Control Factor

Happiness also means that you believe you contribute to events - that you play a major role in the things that happen to you. Such a sense of mastery over both the good and bad events in your life is essential to an overall sense of well-being (Reich, J., & Diener, E., *Psychology Today*, "The Road to Happiness", July 1994).

Positive psychology researchers Dr. Nansook Park, Dr. Christopher Peterson and Dr. Martin Seligman have been studying 24 character strengths in depth, and are looking at the role of individual strengths in creating subjective feelings of happiness.

Five Key Strengths

A study with more than 4000 participants revealed that there are five key strengths that are related to life satisfaction:

1. Gratitude
2. Optimism
3. Zest
4. Curiosity
5. The ability to love and be loved

These five strengths of character are more closely and consistently related to life satisfaction than the other strengths.

A very compelling reason to give special attention to these five key strengths is that each strength on the list can be learned.

Everyone can become more grateful, optimistic, zestful, curious, and loving if we are willing to make a concerted effort to do so.

Dr. Seligman, one of the founders of Positive Psychology, did a controlled experiment in which 575 participants were given either an exercise or a placebo (an innocuous task having no affect). They were measured on their perceived feelings of happiness and life satisfaction after one week, one month and three months.

There is now good scientific evidence that three specific interventions can make people lastingly happier, also reducing depressive symptoms.

Here are the three interventions that successfully raised levels of happiness in participants:

Intervention 1: The Gratitude Visit

Volunteers were asked to write and present a letter of gratitude to someone they have never properly thanked.

Intervention 2: Three Good Things

Those who received this exercise were asked to write down three good things (big or small) that happened during the day every night for one week. Next to each, individuals addressed the question, "Why did this good thing happen?"

Intervention 3: Using Your Top Strengths

Individuals were asked to take the Values in Action Signature Strengths Survey, (www.authentic happiness.org), write down their top five strengths. In addition, volunteers received detailed instruction about how to use these strengths in new ways every day for one week.

One month (for all) and three months later (for Three Good Things and Using Your Top Strengths), people were significantly happier and less depressed.

Coaching for Happiness

Online happiness surveys can create self-awareness and enhance your ability to experience more happiness and life satisfaction.

Even more effective is using these tools with a professional coach. Your coach can help you to develop gratitude, and awareness of your other strengths. With your coach, you can discover ways to effectively use your character talents in new ways.

These three exercises are useful tools in achieving lasting happiness, and ultimately greater health and life success.
