The Book of Happiness 2030

Become an expert in the science of happiness for yourself and for building a better society

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Bonus: "30 days to be happier (or less unhappy)" self-coaching included!

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION: HOW THIS BOOK WILL QUICKLY HELP YOU BE A LITTLE HAPPIER (OR A LITTLE LESS UNHAPPY)

How I will keep my promise

How can I quickly help you to be a little happier, or a little less unhappy, depending on your initial situation?

I will keep this promise:

- By giving you a good definition of happiness on which to build your present and future happiness
- By introducing you to the two main sources of happiness and how to use them to be happier, or less unhappy
- By explaining how to use the science of happiness to make better decisions
- By giving you keys to reduce the impact of negative events in our lives on our happiness
- By presenting you with the keys to the science of happiness in the important areas of life – love, family, friendship, money and work.

I have designed the book to facilitate a quick learning curve on your part:

- Each chapter begins with the presentation of the chapter's educational objectives.
- Each chapter then provides a summary so that you have the essentials straight away. Reading the chapter will allow you to deepen your understanding of these key points.
- Each chapter ends with a quiz to test your learning. It is a good idea to repeat the quizzes a few weeks after you have done them the first time to consolidate your memory.
- At the end of the book, in the conclusion section, there is a final exercise that is designed to make you work in depth on yourself and make you a true expert in the science of happiness for yourself and others.
- At the close of the book, following the conclusion, I invite you to embark upon a thirty-day journey of self-coaching—whether taken consecutively or at your own rhythm—designed to help you reshape your life by weaving into it the principal insights of the science of happiness.

When you read the objectives, summaries, chapters and quizzes, you will get the impression that there is a lot of repetition. This is done on purpose. Repetition is educational. The more frequently you see an idea, the more likely you are to remember it.

Note that I have chosen to be sparing in the scientific bibliographical references so that the book seems more accessible.

My legitimacy to write such a book

What is my legitimacy to write this book? I completed a PhD on the science of happiness under the mentorship of one of the world's leading scholars in the field—and, to my mind, the greatest—Professor Ruut Veenhoven[1]. My doctoral thesis consists of five published scientific articles. I have also written several books on happiness related to different subjects. These books have been written in French, here is my translation of their titles: "Happiness and the economy", "Positive psychology or the scientific study of the best of ourselves", "Happiness and public policies", "The finance of happiness" and "Happiness and performance in business. The keys to success". The writing of the scientific articles and books represents more than 10,000 hours of work. In addition, I studied psychology, worked with psychologists, psychiatrists and coaches and underwent psychoanalytical psychotherapy for several years.

The two objectives of the book

The Book of Happiness has two purposes. You know the first one, which is to give you instruction in the science of happiness so that you can more effectively improve your life and be happier, or less unhappy, depending on your initial situation and the life events you encounter. The second purpose is to build a better world by having more and more people know the basics of the science of happiness and make better decisions as a result.

To provide everyone with instruction in the science of happiness so that they can improve their lives in a more effective way

For people who do not have basic access to clean water, food, energy, health and education, an education in happiness is not the priority, the priority is to build these accesses, but when these accesses are built then the education in the science of happiness becomes a necessity.

From my point of view, knowing the basics of the science of happiness is as important as knowing how to read, write and count. If I had known the basics that you will read about in this book when I was young, my life would have been better. If you had known these basics, you would have made other decisions in your life and your life would probably be better.

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[1] Professor Ruut Veenhoven is one of the founding fathers of the science of happiness. The reason why I regard him as the greatest scholar humanity has ever known in this field—and why I believe no one in the future will contribute more than he has—is that he succeeded in creating a system that is at once simple, relevant, and coherent for studying and understanding happiness. His aspiration was to develop a body of knowledge on happiness that would enable each individual to make the most enlightened decisions, and he devoted his life to this endeavour.

To build a better world through instruction in happiness

I believe that widespread instruction in the science of happiness will build a better world through at least three channels. The first channel is that such education will enable everyone to make better decisions not just for themselves, but for the good of society as a whole.

The second channel is related to the fact that some human beings have more power than others, however, at the time of writing, they have no instruction in the science of happiness and so when they make decisions they cannot benefit from this instruction to make better decisions. Instruction in the science of happiness will enable people who have more power than others in the functioning of societies to make better decisions.

The third channel is related to the fact that a world where everyone masters the basics of the science of happiness is a world where there will be greater trust and better communication between human beings and where better institutions will be built.

In order to help build a better world through an education in happiness, the first nine chapters of this book focus on

In order to build a better world through happiness education, the first nine chapters of the book focus on what we can do in our own lives to become, fairly swiftly, a little happier—or a little less unhappy, depending on our starting point. The last chapter of the book is different: it focuses on collective elements that promote human happiness. Indeed, the most important determinants of our individual happiness are collective determinants over which we individually have little power, but which we can collectively influence, and I will explain simple methods that can be implemented in public policies and that require few resources and little energy.

The future of the Book of Happiness

This book, in its digital format, is and will remain free of charge. The idea as I write this is :

1. *To improve its content every five years, taking into account developments in scientific research*
2. *To produce books adapted to different contexts: cultural areas, age, gender, standard of living, marital status, etc.*

If you like the book and want to thank me for having written it, then share it with others. Share it with the people you love. Share it on social networks. The free digital format makes the book easy to share.

CHAPTER 1: THE BEST DEFINITION OF HAPPINESS TO BE TRULY HAPPIER

The first question to ask in order to be happier, or less unhappy, is not how to be happier, or less unhappy, but what is happiness? This is why the first chapter of this book deals with the definition of happiness. Humanity has produced a lot of definitions, many of them very bad, some of them very good.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Give you an overview of the main definitions of happiness used in psychology
- Give you a definition that you can use in your life today to be happier (or less unhappy)
- Increase your ability to judge the quality of a definition of happiness in order to make a different choice from the one I am proposing if you do not find the one I am proposing the most relevant

The gist of the chapter

If we don't have a good definition of happiness, it's more complicated to make the best changes in our lives to be happier.

The best definition of happiness is, in my opinion, liking the life one leads. In other words, the more we like the life we lead, the happier we are. The more we hate the life we lead, the more unhappy we are. This is a definition used by Professor Ruut Veenhoven, emeritus professor of social conditions for human happiness at Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands) and the founder of the World Database of Happiness.

Four arguments can be used, in my opinion, to justify this choice:
- This is a good definition of what happiness can be, namely a positive, global, and enduring state
- This is a definition that respects the freedom of each person by not imposing an idea of what a happy life should be
- This is a stable definition of happiness
- This is a definition of happiness that each of us can easily appropriate and use in our lives

The definition liking the life one leads is more beautiful in French than in English. The French translation is 'aimer la vie que l'on mène'. The verb like is replaced by the verb love. The

beauty of words is certainly subjective, but you can use the definition loving the life one leads rather than liking the life one leads if you prefer. As a native speaker of French, I would be inclined to choose the verb love rather than the verb like when defining happiness for my personal life, however, my knowledge of English is not sufficient to make an enlightened choice.

Research in psychology is influenced by two approaches to happiness from philosophy: the hedonic approach and the eudemonic approach.

The definition of happiness as liking the life one leads is part of a hedonic approach to happiness, i.e. it focuses on the pleasurable or unpleasant character of the life one leads.

Here are 3 other hedonistic definitions, which are good, but from my point of view, not as good as the definition of liking the life one leads.
- Professor Ed Diener's subjective well-being is composed of three dimensions: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect.
- Professor Daniel Kahneman's objective happiness is defined as the average utility over a given period.
- Professor Mark Chekola's happiness is defined as the realization of a life plan, associated with the absence of both significant dissatisfaction and an attitude of dissatisfaction with our life and associated with a readiness to experience pleasant feelings and attitudes in relation to the realization of the life plan.

Here are two definitions from the eudemonic approach to happiness, i.e. centred on happiness as optimal functioning, and the hybrid approach, i.e. mixing hedonic and eudemonic approaches.
- Professor Carol Ryff's psychological well-being has six dimensions, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.
- Professor Martin Seligman's authentic happiness is composed of three dimensions: positive emotions, engagement and meaning.

Eudemonic and hybrid definitions are problematic not least because they do not distinguish the state of happiness from its possible determinants.

Why a good definition of happiness is essential

How do you improve something that is not well defined? It's complicated, because it means acting somewhat randomly. Imagine a computer. The computer has a breakdown. Are you going to change the components one by one at random until it doesn't break down anymore?

If the problem is not with the computer, but with the software that is installed, then you will have changed all the parts without having solved the problem. It's the same with happiness. If we don't have a good definition of happiness, then it's more complicated to make the best changes in our lives to be happier.

There is a concept from psychological research that is useful here: implicit theories. Implicit theories are the beliefs we have that are supposed to account for our psychology and the psychology of others. An example of an implicit theory found in reality is that beautiful people are good and ugly people are bad. We tend to attribute other qualities to beautiful people just because they are beautiful. This common implicit theory is also used in the movies with the good guy being good-looking and the bad guy being bad-looking.

We have implicit theories on many subjects related to psychology: personality, love, friendship... happiness. Having implicit theories is part and parcel of being human and one can imagine that few, if any, other animals are capable of having implicit theories.

There is a problem when these implicit theories drift away from reality, and this can be the case with happiness, because the happiness education of most people is, at the time I am writing these lines, extremely low, even in countries where children and teenagers spent thousands of hours in schools.

A cognitive bias is a misleading logical thinking pattern and having wrong implicit theories about happiness is a major cognitive bias that makes us make wrong decisions in terms of happiness and therefore makes it more difficult to be happier or less unhappy.

While it is not possible to have only true implicit theories of happiness (or any other subject), it is possible to improve one's implicit theories of happiness. That's what you're doing by reading this book on the science of happiness, and that improvement starts with having a good definition of happiness.

The best definition of happiness and why it is so

I will give here what I think is the best definition of happiness and then I will explain why I think this definition is the best.

The best definition of happiness

The best definition of happiness, in my opinion, is:

Liking the life one leads.

I will rewrite the definition of happiness I just gave because this definition is central to the book you are reading. The best definition of happiness, in my opinion, is:

Liking the life one leads.

In other words, the more we like the life we lead, the happier we are. The more we hate the life we lead, the more unhappy we are.

Arguments to justify this choice

One of the processes that reading this book should trigger in you is the choice of a definition of happiness. There are two possible choices: to take the definition I am proposing or to take another definition, either one of the other definitions I am going to present to you, or a definition that you will construct by reflecting on the definitions I am presenting to you and your own life. In any case, it is important that you can give YOUR arguments to justify your choice of definition to yourself.

In justifying my choice of definition, I am doing what it will be useful for you to do yourself in your choice of definition of happiness. Here are my arguments, of which there are four.

Argument 1

Liking the life one leads is a definition that represents well what happiness can be.

From my point of view, happiness is a positive, global and lasting psychic state, and the expression "to love the life one leads" is a good summary of this positive, global and lasting psychic state.

On another note, most people want to like the life they lead. If they have children or grandchildren, they usually want them to like the life they lead.

There have certainly been societies in history that have valued suffering, but if you are reading a book to educate yourself on the science of happiness, I can imagine that this is not the kind of society you hope for yourself, for the people you love, and for humanity.

Argument 2

Liking the life one leads is a definition that respects the freedom of each person by not imposing an idea of what a happy life should be.

With the definition of happiness liking the life one leads, two people can have the same high degree of happiness for totally different reasons. They can have made different choices, lived different lives and still have the same high degree of happiness. Liking the life one leads is therefore a definition of happiness that fits our individuality, that fits what makes us who we are.

We will see in this chapter that some definitions of happiness are ideological, they impose their idea of what a 'happy' life should be, and, from my point of view, these definitions are problematic.

Argument 3

Liking the life one leads is a stable definition of happiness.

With this definition, our degree of happiness can change, but changes will generally be slow unless there are strong negative or positive external events. With this definition, our degree of happiness does not change with each temporary change in our emotional state. There is something reassuring about using a definition of happiness that provides this relative stability.

Argument 4

Liking the life one leads is a definition of happiness that each of us can easily appropriate and use in our lives.

First of all, it is a short definition, five words. It is easier for our memory to remember a short definition than a long one, and researchers know how to produce long definitions.

Then, it is a definition with simple words, words from everyday life.

Finally, appropriating the definition of happiness liking the life one leads can be done through two simple questions. If you are happy, then the question to ask yourself to be happier is: what can I do to like my life more? If you are unhappy, then the question to ask yourself to be happy is: what can I do to like the life I lead?

The definition liking the life one leads is more beautiful in French than in English. The French translation is 'aimer la vie que l'on mène'. The verb like is replaced by the verb love. The beauty of words is certainly subjective, but you can use the definition loving the life one leads rather than liking the life one leads if you prefer. As a native speaker of French, I would be inclined to choose the verb love rather than the verb like when defining happiness for my personal life, however, my knowledge of English is not sufficient to make an enlightened choice.

A long definition of happiness behind the short definition

I learned the definition of happiness liking the life we lead from Professor Ruut Veenhoven[1] who is one of the fathers of scientific research on happiness and who is for me my mentor and

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[1] Veenhoven, R. (1984). *Conditions of happiness*. D. Reidel

a very great man who has done a lot for mankind through his research and the creation of the world database of happiness[1].

The reason I consider Professor Ruut Veenhoven to be the greatest researcher humanity has ever known in the science of happiness, and that no one in the future will surpass him, is that he succeeded in creating a simple, relevant, and coherent system to study and understand happiness. He aimed to develop knowledge of happiness that would enable everyone to make the most enlightened decisions and devote their lives to it.

In the way I perceive Professor Ruut Veenhoven's writings, the definition of liking the life one leads is a short version of a much longer definition that I have not presented so far because it is much too long to be appropriated and used in everyday life, however, it is worth reading to gain a better understanding of the short definition.

The definition is as follows. Happiness is "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably"[2]. This definition does not stop there. Ruut Veenhoven then takes the 8 characteristics of happiness presented in this sentence and defines each of them.

Characteristic 1. Happiness is a degree. We can be more or less happy, more or less unhappy.

Characteristic 2. Happiness is individual. The word 'happiness' applies to an individual, not to a society or organization. It cannot be said that a country is happy, but it can be said that the majority of people in a country are happy.

Characteristic 3. Happiness is subjective. If a person thinks they are happy, then they are happy. No objective criteria can be used to say otherwise.

Characteristic 4: Happiness is a judgment. If a person is unable to make a judgment, then they cannot say whether they are happy or not.

Characteristic 5: Happiness is a global judgment. This means that the judgement takes into account all the criteria of appreciation that are in the mind of the evaluator. It can take into account emotions, sensory pleasures, aspirations, expectations, evaluations.

Characteristic 6. Happiness takes into account life as a whole. Happiness can cover the past, the present and how the future is anticipated. It is not a judgement on a particular aspect of life such as work or love life.

Characteristic 7: Happiness is about our own life, not life in general.

Characteristic 8. Happiness is something that tells us how favourable or unfavourable our life experience is. In other words, it means that the appreciation of our life can range from extremely favourable to extremely unfavourable.

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[1] https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/
[2] Veenhoven, R. (1984). *Conditions of happiness*. D. Reidel

Other definitions of happiness

Now that I have given you what I think is the best definition of happiness and why I think it is the best definition of happiness, I propose to continue our journey to see other definitions used in scientific research.

It is interesting to know different definitions of happiness from scientific research, because you may well come across a definition of happiness that you like better than the one I have put forward, liking the life one leads, or you may build your own definition from the definitions you have seen and your life experience. As long as you can validly argue why a definition seems more relevant to you than the one I have put forward, then the definition you have chosen is better. You should then understand the content of the book in terms of the definition you have chosen, not the one I have suggested.

The fact that I did not choose the definitions I am going to present to you does not mean that these definitions are bad. In fact, some of them are very good, but the one I have presented, liking the life one leads, is, in my opinion, better. Some other definitions have a strong reputation in the scientific world, but I consider them bad and I will explain why.

In the end, seeing different definitions and developing your ability to argue for one choice of definition over another will enhance your ability to judge the quality of a definition of happiness and increase your intellectual independence in understanding and applying the science of happiness to improve your life.

Hedonic definitions of happiness

Research in psychology is influenced by two approaches to happiness from philosophy: the hedonic approach and the eudemonic approach. The hedonic approach definitions focus on the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the life one leads. The definition of happiness liking the life one leads is a hedonic definition. Eudemonic definitions of happiness are focused on the notion of optimal functioning. In this approach, the more optimally a person functions, the happier they can be considered.

I will present three definitions of happiness in the hedonic approach, Diener's subjective well-being, Kahneman's objective happiness and Chekola's happiness. These three definitions are good definitions of happiness. After presenting each of them, I will explain why, however, I consider that the definition of happiness liking the life one leads is a better definition. It is up to you to see if you can find arguments to prove me wrong.

Professor Ed Diener's subjective well-being

The model of subjective well-being was emphasized by Professor Ed Diener in his 1984 article entitled "Subjective Well-Being" [1] [2]. The most common definition of subjective well-being is that it is composed of three dimensions: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect. Defining happiness as subjective well-being means that happiness is composed of these three dimensions: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect.

Life satisfaction is the cognitive evaluation of one's own life. Life satisfaction and liking the life one leads are the same thing.

While life satisfaction forms the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, positive and negative affect form the affective dimension of subjective well-being. Affect is a term that encompasses emotions and moods. What distinguishes emotions from moods is that emotions are linked to specific causes, whereas moods have more vague causes. Emotions are also shorter in time than moods. Affects can be positive or negative. A positive affect is a pleasant affect while a negative affect is an unpleasant affect. An emotion such as joy is a positive affect while an emotion such as fear is a negative affect. Similarly, being in a good mood means that we are in a positive affect, while being in a bad mood means that we are in a negative affect.

Using the subjective well-being model as a definition of happiness is a good idea, but for me it is not the best one. The reason is the fact that happiness defined as subjective well-being has three dimensions and not only one. I consider that a definition of happiness that has only one dimension is a better definition, if it is relevant, because it is more encompassing.

This problem is reinforced when we know that there is a definition of subjective well-being where there is a fourth dimension that is added to the first three: this dimension is satisfaction with life domains. It is a cognitive dimension where we list certain domains of life such as the couple, children, work and where, for each domain of life, we ask ourselves to what extent we are satisfied or not in this domain. The very fact that the question of adding a fourth dimension may be raised is evidence of the problematic nature of the concept of subjective well-being in defining its limits and thus in the fact that it is not sufficiently encompassing.

This problem is also reinforced by the fact that positive and negative affects are thought of as lists of affects and not as a whole. The problem with lists is that it is often difficult to justify the fact that some items, in this case affects, are in the list and others, still affects, are not.

Given the information I have given so far, one might imagine that the fact that emotions and more broadly affects do not appear in the definition of happiness liking the life one leads is a problem and gives an advantage to the subjective well-being model, however, we will see in the second chapter of the book how emotions and more broadly affects fit into the definition of happiness liking the life one leads.

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[1] In some of his scientific articles, Professor Ed Diener uses the concepts of happiness and subjective well-being indiscriminately. I write "some" because I have not read the whole of Professor Ed Diener's scientific work, which includes hundreds of scientific articles.

[2] Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being, *Psychological Bulletin*, *95*(3), 542-575.

Professor Daniel Kahneman's objective happiness

Professor Kahneman defines objective happiness as the average utility over a given period of time[1] . At each moment, there is a balance between positive and negative affects that makes the moment experienced more or less pleasant, more or less unpleasant, or neutral. This balance is called instant utility. Objective happiness is the average of these instant utilities. This average can be calculated over any length of time, for example an hour, a day, a month, a year or a lifetime. The objective happiness model is in line with the work of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, for whom utility is a flow of pleasures and pains.

The objective happiness model, like the subjective well-being model, is a very good model. For several years, it was even the model I used to define happiness. I used it when I gave a TEDx talk in French on happiness and public policy. Even though the definition of objective happiness is a bit complicated, the objective happiness model is easy to use, since all you have to do is try to increase the positive emotions you experience and reduce the negative ones to be happier.

There is a reason why I think the definition liking the life you lead is better : objective happiness provides an unstable definition of happiness. This is because our degree of happiness tends to change with each temporary change in our emotional state. At a given moment, we are in positive emotions, then an external or internal stimulus leads us to experience negative emotions or, conversely, at a given moment we are in negative emotions then an external or internal stimulus leads us to experience positive emotions. This instability is problematic: it is not a source of serenity and promotes the idea that happiness is not something lasting.

Happiness according to Professor Mark Chekola

Professor Mark Chekola wrote what is certainly the first doctoral thesis in philosophy on happiness in 1974. His thesis is entitled "The concept of happiness" [2].

I was lucky enough to have a conversation with him during one of his trips to the Erasmus University Rotterdam where I was doing my thesis. In one of our conversations, which I hope will not be misrepresented, he explained to me that one of the things that distinguishes philosophy from psychology is that philosophy tries to define concepts as best as possible, whereas psychology has to find a balance between defining a concept as best as possible and being able to measure that concept as best as possible.

In his doctoral thesis, Professor Mark Chekola explains that happiness is :

- The realization of a life plan

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[1] Kahneman, D. (1999). Objective happiness. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 3 -25). Russell Sage Foundation.
[2] Chekola, M. G. (1974). *The concept of happiness*. University of Michigan.

- Associated with the absence of both significant dissatisfaction and an attitude of dissatisfaction with our lives
- And associated with a readiness to experience pleasant feelings and attitudes in relation to the realization of the life plan

These three conditions are necessary and, together, are sufficient for happiness. The main condition is the realization of a life plan. A life plan is the set of major goals that a person sets for himself. These plans can be about the person you want to become, the life you want to have, the job you want to do, etc. These life plans are not detailed, partly because we do not know all the situations that may arise and to which we will have to react.

The definition of happiness from Professor Mark Chekola is a very nice definition and a very thoughtful one, however, there are three reasons why I prefer the definition liking the life one leads. The first reason is the complexity of Professor Chekola's definition: I am attached to the idea of a definition of a few words and simple words. The second reason is the centrality of the concept of life plan in Professor Chekola's definition. If there is no life plan, there is no happiness. But there are times in life when we think about what we want to do. There are also uncertain life plans and situations in which the fortunes of life shape the life plan in which we live and enjoy. The last reason is that it is possible to think of a life plan, to give ourselves the means to realize this life plan and to realize that this life plan was not made for us.

Eudemonic and hybrid definitions of happiness in psychology

Eudemonic definitions of happiness focus on the notion of optimal functioning. Hybrid definitions of happiness are definitions that mix hedonic aspects, i.e. focusing on the pleasant and unpleasant, with eudemonic aspects.

I will present a definition of happiness from the eudemonic approach, Professor Carol Ryff's psychological well-being, and a hybrid definition, Professor Martin Seligman's authentic happiness. I consider that eudemonic and hybrid definitions of happiness are generally bad definitions and I will explain why through the two definitions I will present. It is up to you to see if you can find arguments to prove me wrong.

Psychological well-being by Professor Carol Ryff

Professor Carol Ryff gives six dimensions to his model of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth[1].

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[1] Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*(6), 1069-1081.

A person who has a high level of self-acceptance is a person who has a positive attitude towards himself or herself, a person who recognizes the many aspects of his or her self, which includes both faults and qualities, a person who feels positively about his or her past life.

A person who has positive relations with others is a person who has warm, rewarding and trusting relationships. He or she cares about the well-being of others, is capable of strong empathy, a high level of affection and intimacy. He or she understands the need for both giving and receiving in relationships.

A person with a high level of autonomy is a person who makes decisions for himself or herself, is independent, able to resist social pressures to think and act, a person who evaluates himself or herself according to personal standards.

A person who has a high level of master over his or her environment, is able to carry out everyday and complex activities, is able to use the opportunities presented to him or her in his or her environment, is able to choose or create contexts that are conducive to his or her personal needs and values.

A person who has a high level of purpose in life has goals in life, a direction, they feel that there is meaning in their present life and their past life.

A person who has a high level of personal growth has a sense of continuous self-development, is open to new experiences, has a sense of realizing his or her potential, sees improvements in himself or herself and in his or her behaviours, changes as he or she learns about himself or herself, and becomes more effective.

I think there are two reasons why Professor Carol Ryff's model does not give a good definition of happiness.

The first reason is that the model does not define the state of happiness, but some of the conditions that promote it. In other words, having a high level of self-acceptance is not happiness, it is something that can promote being happy. Having positive relations with others is not happiness, it is a condition that can promote happiness. Having a high level of autonomy is not happiness, it is a condition that can favour being happy. And I have the same reasoning for the last three dimensions of the model: environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

This reason is essential, because there are many implicit theories in which there is a confusion between the causes of happiness and the state of happiness. For example, a person who explains that "happiness is having a family" would be confusing the state of happiness with what he or she believes causes happiness, in this case having a family. Unfortunately, this confusion is not only found in implicit theories, but also in some scientific theories, especially in eudemonic definitions of happiness.

The second reason is that Professor Ryff's model imposes an idea of what a happy life should be. In the model, being happy means accepting oneself, having positive relations with others, being autonomous, mastering one's environment, having a purpose in life, developing one's self, however, it is possible to find people who declare themselves very happy and at the same

time do not have a high level in some of the dimensions of the model. For example, there are people who are very happy when they have little contact with others, because these people prefer to focus on things that are more important to them than the quality of the relations they can have with other people. For example, the highest level of autonomy is not necessarily the best for our happiness. We may prefer to have less responsibility for decision-making. For example, the highest level of personal growth is not necessarily the most conducive to happiness. When we seek to realize our full potential, we may have to make such efforts that they may jeopardize our health, particularly through the realization of the risk of burnout.

In the end, Professor Ryff's model can still be interesting if you want to be happier. While it does not give a good definition of happiness, it does provide a grid for analysing six possible levers for being happier, levers that, if activated, can give good results. Ryff's model, from my point of view, does not define what happiness is or what psychological well-being would be, it defines potential determinants of happiness that may be important.

Professor Martin Seligman's authentic happiness

Professor Martin Seligman's authentic happiness is composed of three dimensions: positive emotions, engagement and meaning[1] . It is therefore a hybrid model that mixes a hedonistic dimension, positive emotions, and two eudemonic dimensions, commitment and meaning.

As seen above, positive emotions are emotions marked by their pleasantness.

Engagement is marked by experiencing states of flow. We will come back to the state of flow in more detail in the chapter on happiness and work, because the state of flow is a positive state that we find more in work than in leisure. For the moment, I just explain that the state of flow is a pleasant state where we are highly engaged in activities, where we deploy our greatest strengths and talents, where time passes quickly, where attention is captured by activities and where we lose self-awareness.

Meaning in life is about participating in something that is bigger than oneself. Love, family, religion, politics, work, helping others, doing certain projects can be ways to give meaning to one's life. We will return to the meaning in life in the chapter on happiness and decision-making.

There are three reasons why I don't like Professor Martin Seligman's authentic happiness as a definition of happiness. The first reason is the mixing of state of happiness and potential determinants of happiness. This is the problem with any eudemonic or hybrid definition of happiness. Here, meaning in life is a possible determinant of happiness, not a characteristic of the state of happiness. Because we feel that our life has meaning, we can feel happier, experience more positive emotions, but meaning in life is not a defining element of the state

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[1] Seligman, M. E. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. Simon and Schuster

of happiness and there are situations where greater meaning in life can be linked to less happiness. This can sometimes occur, for instance, in the context of parenthood.

The second reason is that the model of authentic happiness does not take into account negative emotions. All other things being equal, two people who experience the same level of positive emotions, but not the same level of negative emotions, will not have the same level of happiness. The person who experiences more negative emotions will be less happy.

The last reason is the problem of lists. Professor Seligman makes a list of 3 items, but it might be possible to add more items or take some out. In fact, this is what happened. Professor Seligman later evolved on the issue and proposed a new model with more dimensions, but this model, which does not use the term happiness in its name, has the same problems as the authentic happiness model.

The three times of happiness

I would like to conclude this first chapter on the definition of happiness with a personal reflection on the definition of happiness. My first university studies were in history and the central concept of history is time. A very great historian by the name of Fernand Braudel conceived that history could be reflected in three times in his doctoral thesis:

- Firstly, the time of "an almost immobile history, that of human beings in their relationship with the environment that surrounds them; a history that is slow to flow, to transform itself, often made up of insistent returns, of cycles that are constantly restarted";
- Secondly, the time of "a slowly paced history: one would say willingly if the expression had not been diverted from its full meaning: a social history, that of groups and groupings";
- Finally, the time "of traditional history [...], of history on the scale [...] of the individual, event history [...]: a surface agitation, the waves that the tides raise on their powerful movement. A history of brief, rapid, nervous oscillations. Ultra-sensitive by definition, the slightest step puts all its measuring instruments on alert."[1]

I think that thinking about the happiness of a human being in terms of time makes sense and I propose to distinguish three times in the way we think about happiness:

- The long time of happiness
- The short time of happiness
- The immediate time of happiness

The long time of happiness is the time of happiness of a whole life. It is the time that can serve as a reference when, as a teenager, we want to think about how to *build* our life. It is also the time in which we can sacrifice a few months or years of happiness in the hope of building a

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[1] My translation

greater and more solid happiness for the rest of our lives. Finally, it is the time when we can look back and evaluate how much we liked or disliked the life we led over the course of our lives.

The short time of happiness is the time of happiness over a few weeks or months. It is the time of happiness as it is conceived in the definition of "liking the life one leads" when we are asked to measure how happy we are. Indeed, when we ask ourselves how much we like the life we lead, our time frame is generally the short time of happiness, that of a few weeks or months.

The immediate time of happiness is the time of emotions and their tumult which can make us go quickly from pleasant to unpleasant emotions or from unpleasant to pleasant emotions. It is the time when we manage our emotions, particularly our negative emotions. This immediate time of happiness is also the time of the effective construction of happiness, because our capacity for action exists only in the immediate time, the present moment. The past is gone, we can only use the present moment to see our past in a new light. The future has not yet arrived and we can only use the present moment to prepare the future. Only the immediate time allows action, action on itself and action on past time and future time.

These three times of happiness can lead, in practice, to the use of not one but two definitions of happiness: for the long time and the short time of happiness, the definition of liking the life one leads, as found in the work of Professor Ruut Veenhoven; and for the immediate time of happiness, happiness as the result of positive and negative emotions, which is the definition found in Professor Daniel Kahneman's work, but which also fits into Professor Veenhoven's model of happiness, as we will see in the next chapter, through the concept of the hedonic level of affect.

Quiz

1. What definition of happiness is highlighted in this first chapter?
2. Give two of the four arguments that are suggested in support of this definition.
3. What is the hedonic approach to happiness?
4. What is the eudemonic approach to happiness?
5. What is Diener's subjective well-being?
6. What is Kahneman's objective happiness?
7. What definition of happiness does Chekola propose?
8. Name 3 of Ryff's 6 dimensions of psychological well-being.
9. What is the problem with eudemonic and hybrid definitions of happiness?
10. What are the three times of happiness?

Answers

1. Liking the life one leads

2. Argument 1: it is a definition that represents well what happiness can be. Argument 2: it is a definition that respects the freedom of each person by not imposing an idea of what a happy life should be. Argument 3: it is a stable definition of happiness. Argument 4: it is a definition of happiness that each of us can easily appropriate to use it in our lives

3. An approach to happiness that focuses on the pleasantness or unpleasantness of life

4. An approach to happiness centred on the idea of optimal functioning

5. Diener's subjective well-being has three dimensions: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect

6. Kahneman's objective happiness is defined as the average utility over a given period

7. Chekola defines happiness as the realization of a life plan, associated with the absence of both significant dissatisfaction and an attitude of dissatisfaction with our life and associated with a readiness to experience pleasant feelings and attitudes in relation to the realization of the life plan

8. Ryff's 6 dimensions of psychological well-being are self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth

9. Eudemonic and hybrid definitions are problematic not least because they do not distinguish the state of happiness from its possible determinants

10. The three times of happiness can be: the long time of happiness, the short time of happiness and the immediate time of happiness. The long time of happiness is the happiness experienced over a lifetime. The short time of happiness is the happiness experienced over a few weeks or months. The immediate time of happiness is the time of emotions and their turmoil. These three times of happiness can lead in practice to the use of not one single definition of happiness, but two definitions: liking the life one leads, and happiness as the result of the flow of positive and negative emotions

CHAPTER 2: THE TWO ESSENTIAL SOURCES OF HAPPINESS AND HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THEM

We saw in the previous chapter that the best definition of happiness is liking the life one leads. What makes a person think that he or she likes the life he or she is living? While there are a multitude of possible determinants, there are two that are more important to understand than the others.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Introduce you to the two major sources of happiness
- Give you 6 effective strategies to regulate your negative emotions
- Give you 4 strategies to experience more positive emotions
- Explain to you how to reduce the distance between the life we have and the life we would like to have

The gist of the chapter

Happiness, defined as the fact of liking the life one leads, has two essential sources according to Professor Ruut Veenhoven: the hedonic level of affects and contentment.

The hedonic level of affect is the degree to which the affects we experience are pleasant.

Contentment is the difference between the life we have and the life we would like to have.

There are 6 effective strategies for regulating negative emotions
- The first is to avoid situations that generate these emotions. This is not always possible, nor is it always desirable, as temporary avoidance can have negative consequences or prevent changes that may be positive.
- Refocus on planning is thinking about how to resolve a situation that generates negative emotions and implementing what has been thought through.
- Putting the negative experience into perspective is minimizing the negative experience or emphasizing its relativity to other experiences, experiences one has had in the past or experiences that other people have had or are having.
- Positive refocusing is thinking about pleasant things rather than being in the present negative emotions. It is a method that should be used sparingly.
- Positive reappraisal is giving negative experience a positive meaning in terms of personal development.

> - Acceptance is the acceptance that the events that generated the negative emotions happened as they did.
>
> There are at least 4 different strategies for experiencing more positive emotions
> - Schedule more events that can bring positive emotions
> - Doing good
> - Expressing gratitude
> - Being sociable
>
> There are two ways to reduce the distance between the life we have and the life we would like to have
> - Build a life close to our ideal life using our intelligence and perseverance
> - Lowering our expectations by accepting that our energy is limited and that the world has constraints that we cannot all overcome

How we assess how much we like the life we lead

I learnt the definition of happiness that I have been emphasizing, liking the life we lead, from Professor Ruut Veenhoven. In this definition, happiness is a cognitive evaluation: we ask ourselves how much we like the life we lead. According to Professor Veenhoven, to make this assessment, we mainly use two main sources of information: our affects and our thoughts. More precisely, we use the hedonic level of our affects and our contentment.

The *hedonic level of affect* is the degree to which the affects we experience are pleasant. Recall that affect is a generic term that includes emotions and moods. Emotions are short-lived and have a clear origin, while moods are long-lasting and have a vague origin. Affects can be pleasant or unpleasant. When affects are pleasant, they are called positive affects and when they are unpleasant, they are called negative affects. One can be in a good mood, a positive affect, or in a bad mood, a negative affect. Joy is a positive emotion, while anxiety is a negative emotion.

To be happier, or less unhappy, we need to experience more positive affect and/or less negative affect. Since negative affects are more powerful than positive affects, reducing the negative affects we experience may have more influence on increasing our happiness than increasing the positive affects in our lives. At the same time, positive affects can have a buffering effect on negative affects: negative affects are experienced less severely if positive affects are experienced at the same time.

Contentment is the difference between the life one has and the life one would like to have. To be happier, one should either build a life closer to the life one would like to have, or reduce one's expectations.

The hedonic level of affect is generally a more powerful source of happiness than contentment, but contentment should not be neglected, especially since the two sources are not independent of each other. When we build a life closer to the life we would really like to have, it generates more positive affects and reduces negative affects. The affects we experience tend to validate or invalidate whether the life we are living is close to our ideal life, however, the hedonic level of affect and contentment may not be in the same direction. It is possible to feel generally well while considering that the life we have is far from the life we wish to have. It is also possible to feel generally bad while the life we have is close to the life we want.

The hedonic level of affects and contentment can also be thought of as emotional happiness, on the one hand, and cognitive happiness on the other. Emotional happiness is related to the emotions we experience and more generally the affects. Cognitive happiness is related to the thoughts we have. Happiness defined as liking the life one leads is then conceived as a global evaluation which is based on both emotional happiness, i.e. the hedonic level of affects, and cognitive happiness, i.e. contentment.

Let us now consider how to improve the hedonic level of our affects and our contentment.

Six effective strategies for regulating negative emotions over time

Before I talk about regulating negative emotions, I would like to write two warnings. Firstly, it is easy to talk about negative emotions when we are not experiencing them, especially when these negative emotions are powerful. It is the nature of powerful negative emotions to make us suffer a lot and to make us lose control of ourselves. Secondly, no one is really competent to teach another person how to regulate their negative emotions, because no one can really be in the other person's shoes.

This being said, it is still interesting to know the most effective strategies to try to regulate one's negative emotions and this with the idea of trying to become a little less bad in the regulation of one's negative emotions.

Emotions are an essential part of affect and, unlike moods, are the consequence of clear stimuli, i.e. clear situations.

The first strategy to reduce the negative emotions one experiences is to avoid the situations that generate these emotions. This is not always possible, nor is it always desirable, as temporary avoidance can have negative consequences or prevent changes that may be positive, however, it is worthwhile to identify and question the situations that encourage negative emotions. We can create situations that come back and bring us negative emotions without anything good in return. It can then be interesting to understand why we create these situations that are clearly harmful to us and how to avoid them.

In cases where it is neither desirable nor feasible to avoid situations that cause us to experience negative emotions, there are five effective strategies for regulating our negative

emotions over time: refocus on planning, putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal and acceptance[1]. My advice is to know these five strategies by heart so that you can mobilize them when you experience negative emotions.

Refocus on planning is the act of thinking about how to resolve a situation that generates negative emotions and then implementing what has been thought about. Thinking and then acting reduces the intensity and frequency of negative emotions experienced both by focusing our attention on creating and implementing the plan and by the positive consequences that implementing the plan may have. Note that seeking emotional support is one of the solutions that can be planned: we plan to contact a person or persons to talk about a problem, we call them and we benefit from their listening.

Putting into perspective is the act of minimizing the negative experience or emphasizing its relativity to other experiences, experiences that we have had in the past or experiences that other people have had or are having. The more negative experiences we have had in life, the more life events we have had that allow us to minimize the negative experience we are having. In other words, suffering in the past can be useful in reducing the impact of suffering in the present. When one has experienced few such events, it is possible to use the lives of other people, whether one knew them personally or not.

Positive refocusing is thinking about pleasant things rather than being in the present negative emotions. It is a method that can help, but should be used sparingly. It can be useful to manage strong negative emotions step by step by allowing time to rest, time to forget the strong negative emotions we are experiencing, which allows us to regain strength to face these negative emotions later. For example, going to play sports to clear the mind is a positive refocusing if the fact of playing sports allows us to momentarily abstain from the negative emotions we are in.

Positive reappraisal is giving negative experience a positive meaning in terms of personal development. For example, one can list the benefits of a negative experience to see not only what one has lost and makes us suffering, but also what one has gained. Beware: this method can become caricatured when used systematically or on strong negative events. It should also be kept in mind that one does not need to have a negative experience to experience personal development. Positive emotions can promote personal development, that is one of their major functions.

Acceptance is the acceptance that the events that generated the negative emotions happened as they did. It is both the most effective and the most difficult strategy. We are accepting when we sincerely say things like 'that's just the way it is' or 'that's life'. Having a regular meditation practice, where we take a step back to observe our emotions, can increase the capacity for acceptance. Thus, when an event marked by negative emotions appears, we may have a greater probability of being able to accept what is happening.

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[1] Garnefski, N., Kraaij, V., & Spinhoven, P. (2001). Negative life events, cognitive emotion regulation and emotional problems. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *30*(8), 1311-1327.

Four effective strategies for experiencing more positive emotions

Even though negative emotions are more powerful than positive emotions, it is worthwhile not only to try to reduce the intensity and frequency of the negative emotions we experience, but also to increase the frequency and intensity of the positive ones.

Positive emotions are good in themselves for the pleasure they bring and for improving the quality of our mental and physical functioning. They are also good for generating a buffer effect against negative emotions and their negative consequences. Note that it is more interesting to increase the frequency of the positive emotions we experience than their intensity.

There are many ways to experience more positive emotions. Here are four of them.

One way is to experience more events that generate positive emotions. There are a wide variety of life events that generate many more positive emotions than negative ones. Some are accidental, such as falling in love, but many are partly or fully programmable. It is therefore possible to programme more events that generate more positive emotions and thus increase one's level of happiness.

A second way is to do good. Helping others generates positive emotions. In addition, helping others promotes positive relations with them, which generates further positive emotions, however, care must be taken to ensure that there is a certain degree of reciprocity in the long term, i.e. that we do not build a relationship where it is systematically or almost systematically the same person who helps.

A third way is to express gratitude. Gratitude is related to doing good, except that here we are in the position of the person for whom another person has done something good. Expressing gratitude in such a situation helps to generate positive emotions in oneself and in the other person and to improve the quality of the relations with the other person.

A fourth way is to be sociable. Some people may find it easier to relate to people, however, sociability can also be learned. Not waiting for the other person to make the first move, because there is a risk that no one will make the first move, talking about the rain and the weather, not just talking about the rain and the weather, and also talking about personal things to develop an intimate bond with the other person are essential ways to develop our sociability.

Reducing the distance between the life we have and the life we would like to have

Narrowing the difference between the life we have and the life we would like to have points to the second source of happiness, contentment.

There are two ways to reduce the distance between the life we have and the life we would like to have. The first is to build a life close to our ideal life. The second is to reduce our expectations. We generally use both strategies, but the importance of each varies from person to person depending on their personality and the environment in which they live.

Building a life close to our ideal requires three conditions: having a correct vision of what is good for us, being intelligent in how we build it and being persistent.

It is complicated to have a correct vision of our ideal life. We can struggle to build a life we think will be ideal, get that life and be disappointed. To reduce the likelihood of experiencing this problem, we can look at our past experiences to better understand what is right for us, i.e. use what we have experienced to refine our perception of our ideal life. We can also try to visualize in detail what our life would really be like if we managed to build the life we think is ideal, including what the days would look like in their details and length. It is a very interesting exercise in terms of happiness to ask ourselves what our ideal day, our ideal year, our ideal life would be like. We can finally re-evaluate what our ideal life would be like by using the emotions we experience when we get some of the things that bring us closer to that ideal life. What seems to us to be an ideal life may not be tomorrow, and what did not seem ideal to us may become so.

In building a better life, there are strengths that support our ability to achieve results despite obstacles. Perhaps the best known of these strengths is intelligence, the ability to think things through to find the best path. The more complicated a path is to find, the more important intelligence is. But it is not the only strength needed. Another essential strength is perseverance. Perseverance is the ability to keep building despite obstacles. Building can take time and may require making certain sacrifices in the present for uncertain benefits in the future.

Reducing our expectations is an adaptation to the fact that it can be complicated to achieve everything we want to achieve. It is an adaptation to the fact that our energy is limited and the world around us is full of constraints that we cannot overcome.

Quiz

1. What are the two main sources of happiness according to Professor Ruut Veenhoven?
2. What is the hedonic level of affect?
3. What is contentment?
4. What is the difference between affect, emotion and mood?
5. Name 3 effective strategies for regulating negative emotions. Preferably choose the ones that seem to be most suitable for you.
6. Name 2 strategies for experiencing more positive emotions.
7. What are the two strategies for increasing contentment?
8. What other name can be given to the hedonic level of affects? To contentment?

Answers

1. The hedonic level of affect and contentment
2. The hedonic level of affect is the degree to which the affects we experience are pleasant
3. Contentment is the difference between the life we have and the life we would like to have
4. The term affect is a generic term that encompasses emotions and moods. Emotions are short and have a clear origin, while moods last and have a vague origin.
5. The 6 strategies for regulating negative emotions are avoidance, focus on planning, putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal and acceptance
6. The 4 strategies for experiencing more positive emotions are: scheduling more events that can bring positive emotions, doing good, expressing gratitude and being sociable
7. The two strategies are: 1) building a life close to our ideal life using our intelligence and perseverance and lowering our expectations by accepting that our energy is limited and 2) that the world has constraints that we cannot all overcome
8. Emotional happiness for hedonic level of affects and cognitive happiness for contentment

CHAPTER 3: HOW TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT THEM BETTER

The future is by nature uncertain. We make our decisions without knowing what the consequences will actually be and what the consequences would have been if the decisions we had made had been different. Furthermore, a decision that will turn out to be good in the short term may turn out to be bad in the long term, and vice versa.

Thus, we can just try to reduce the uncertainty of the future when we make decisions that have consequences for happiness, but we can't be sure that we will succeed. There are three main ways of trying to reduce this uncertainty: learning more about the science of happiness, learning more about ourselves and learning from others.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Explain how to best use the results of the science of happiness in your life
- Give you elements that will allow you to know yourself better so that you can make better decisions about your happiness
- Provide you with tools to learn more from others about happiness
- Give you the best strategies to change a habit when you have made the decision to change something in your life to be happier

The gist of the chapter

It is important to note that scientific research evolves and what is true for research in general is true for happiness research. A theory that seemed wrong can become a theory that seems valid and a theory that seemed valid can become a theory that seems wrong.

If you come across a relevant study on happiness, whether qualitative or quantitative, the right way to use it is to ask yourself whether some of the ideas that come out of the study and have been validated by it might be interesting for improving your life.

To find out how happy you are, all you have to do is to take the definition you have chosen, formulate a question with it and answer that question. If I take the definition I put forward, liking the life one leads, then the question to ask is: how much do I like the life I lead?

There are different ways of using life experience to deepen our self-awareness and even happiness. One way is to learn from the decisions we have already made and how they affect our own happiness.

A second way is to use the ideas and emotions that run through us every day and which we do not take the time to dwell on. These ideas and emotions are a source of considerable information about ourselves. Surprising ideas and surprising emotions open up an understanding of ourselves that we do not have, since we find these ideas and emotions coming from ourselves surprising. Unpleasant ideas and unpleasant emotions have the same function and in addition they open up elements of ourselves that we often do not want to know.

Using experience to learn more about ourselves helps us to set self-concordant goals, i.e. goals that are in line with who we are.

We can reflect on our happiness in a holistic way. We can also reflect on it by looking at life domains that we feel are important for our happiness. A life domain can be our love life, our children if we have any, our friends, our work, our health, our leisure activities, etc.

There are links in both directions between satisfaction in one life domain and happiness. If we are happy overall, then we will tend to be more satisfied in our life domains. This is the *top-down* effect. Similarly, if we are satisfied in important life domains, then we will feel happier. This is the *bottom-up* effect.

A meaningful life is one in which a stable conception has been established that remains in the midst of constant change. In practical terms, making sense of one's life can mean meeting four needs

- Have a goal or goals
- Follow our values
- Feel that we are effective in pursuing our goals
- Feel that we have value in our own eyes

Meaning in life can be derived from different sources: love, family, religion, work, personal projects. It is preferable to give more than one meaning to one's life, as this reduces the risk of loss of meaning in certain situations.

It is difficult to predict the consequences of our decisions on our future happiness correctly, not least because we do not have all the information and because the quality of predictions can be diminished by various errors in the cognitive processes of our brain. These errors, called cognitive biases, can relate to the prediction of future events resulting from our decisions and to the emotions that these events may generate.

Habits are recurrent behaviours, activated by specific contexts, requiring a low level of awareness, acquired through repetition and requiring little energy, as they no longer need to be thought through and decided upon.

Changing a habit is complicated. Cognitive strategies are the first major type of strategy for changing a habit. The best known cognitive strategies are reminders and rewards. These strategies often lack effectiveness. The second main type of strategy for changing a habit is the strategies for changing our environment. This type of strategy, when possible, is more effective.

Learn more about the science of happiness

That is what you are doing!

The first way to make better decisions about happiness is to learn more about the science of happiness. It helps to choose a definition of happiness after real reflection, it helps not to confuse the state of happiness with the (possible) determinants of happiness, it helps to understand that not all determinants of happiness have the same weight and that it is better to put your energy on the determinants that are most important to you and over which you really have power. If you have followed the order of the chapters, you have already worked on the definition of happiness, then on improving the hedonic level of affects, i.e. your emotional happiness, and on improving contentment, i.e. your cognitive happiness.

It is important to note that scientific research evolves and what is true for research in general is true for happiness research. Thus, a theory that seemed wrong can become a theory that seems valid, and a theory that seemed valid can become a theory that seems wrong. These movements are not only related to a deepening of research, they can also be related to the fact that human societies and human beings change. The science of happiness does not therefore provide indisputable answers, but it allows us to feed our imagination with answers that are generally better than those we could have without taking an interest in it.

Understanding scientific studies on happiness to improve your own happiness

There is a higher stage than reading this book or any book on the science of happiness, and that is to go and read scientific studies on happiness directly.

Going to see what scientific studies say on a given question to make a decision in one's life is a researcher's reflex. When you do a doctorate, which is the research training degree, you get into the habit of reading all or part of the scientific studies that have been written on the question you are interested in as part of your doctorate, and it is possible to develop an inclination to do the same to answer personal questions.

One of the ideas of the book is to make it easier for you to find out for yourself what the scientific studies say about happiness, however, you may want to go and read for yourself what some of the scientific studies say, particularly on the issues that are most important to you from a personal perspective. That is why it may be interesting to have a researcher specializing in the science of happiness who gives you the essential keys to understanding the scientific studies that are coming out on happiness.

There are two main types of studies, qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative studies either do not use statistics or use simple, descriptive statistics such as the mean or median. Quantitative studies use more elaborate statistics. Even though the way of understanding qualitative and quantitative studies on happiness differs partly depending on whether the study is qualitative or quantitative, we will see at the end of these paragraphs that the way of using them for our happiness is the same.

The first element to look at in a scientific study of happiness is how happiness is defined. Is the definition of happiness relevant? In some scientific studies, what is called happiness is simply a momentary increase in positive affect. In other studies, what is called happiness is not the state of happiness itself, but a list of possible determinants of happiness. Some researchers even use definitions that mix state of happiness and determinants of happiness.

If the definition of happiness is relevant and happiness is measured, then the second element to look at is how happiness is measured. The way happiness is measured in a scientific study may be different from the way it is defined in this study. In other words, the definition may be good, but the measurement may not. But the most important thing about happiness being measured is that the measurement is good. It is also possible that happiness is measured in an imprecise way. For example, instead of asking the participants in the study how much they like the life they lead, they will be asked if they are happy. The problem with using the word happy is that the question becomes imprecise, as participants may have different understandings of the adjective 'happy'.

Quantitative studies are probabilistic studies. They will show that if you have such and such a characteristic or do such and such a thing, then there is a certain probability that you will get an increase or decrease in your level of happiness by such and such a level, however, what is true at the level of a sample or a population is not necessarily true for an individual. Furthermore, what is true in one study will not necessarily be true in another, especially because the sample will not be the same.

If you come across a relevant study on happiness, whether qualitative or quantitative, the right way to use it is to ask yourself whether some of the ideas that come out of the study and have been validated by it might be interesting for improving your life. In other words, it's about selecting the ideas that will enrich your imagination, the imagination that you rely on when you try to improve your happiness.

Getting to know oneself better

Knowing how to assess your degree of happiness

To find out how happy you are, all you have to do is to take the definition of happiness you have chosen, formulate a question with it and answer that question. If I take the definition I put forward, liking the life one leads, then the question to ask is: how much do I like the life I lead?

It is possible to answer this question with words: a little, quite a lot, very much, totally, not at all. It is also possible, even if it is a digression, to say "I would like the life I lead more if..." or "I would hate the life I lead less if...", because this clearly gives the trail of problems to be solved.

Finally, it is possible to answer the question "How much do I like the life I lead?" with numbers. I neither advise nor discourage this. It may seem strange to measure happiness with numbers, but this is what is done in scientific research, because we like to measure to get out of endless debates. Different scales are used: 1 to 7, 0 to 10, etc. Personally, I prefer the 1 to 10 scale because the human brain is generally used to the decimal system, because it gives neither too many nor too few response options, and because the 1, unlike the 0, allows for statistical treatments that I appreciate as a researcher. If you want to measure your happiness using the definition I have highlighted, you can ask yourself the following question: on a scale from 1 to 10, how much do I like the life I lead? One means that you totally hate your life and 10 means that you totally love your life. Reading this numerical measure of happiness has an advantage: it clearly shows that we can be more or less happy or more or less unhappy, that the question of happiness is not limited to two alternatives, 'I am happy' and 'I am unhappy'.

We have seen that happiness, defined as liking the life one leads, has two main sources: the hedonic level of affects (or emotional happiness) and contentment (or cognitive happiness). It is possible to measure these two sources and this can be interesting, as it is possible to have a good degree for one and a bad one for the other.

To measure the hedonic level of affect, it is possible to ask "How good do I feel emotionally?" and one can answer either with words or by using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning one feels extremely bad emotionally and 10 extremely good emotionally.

To measure contentment, i.e. the distance between the life we have and the life we would like to have, we can ask ourselves "How close is my life to my ideal life?" and we can answer using either words or a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing the fact that our current life is extremely far from our ideal life and 10 that our current life is our ideal life.

Using one's life experience

The older you are, the more life experience you have accumulated, however, the younger people may have more life experience than the older people, if they have experienced more different situations or may have used their experiences to learn more about themselves.

There are different ways of using life experience to deepen self-knowledge and happiness.

A first way is to learn from the decisions we have already made and how they affect our own happiness. This can help us to better direct our present and future lives by understanding what works for us, what doesn't work for us, what errors in judgement we may have made, what good judgements we may have made.

A second way is to make use of the ideas and emotions that run through us every day and which we do not take the time to dwell on. These ideas and emotions are a source of considerable information about ourselves. Of course, if we wanted to dwell on all of them, we wouldn't have time, but we can dwell on some of them, especially those that are the most surprising and those that are unpleasant. The surprising ideas and surprising emotions open up an understanding of ourselves that we do not have, since we find these ideas and emotions coming from ourselves surprising, we did not think we could have them. Unpleasant ideas and unpleasant emotions have the same function and in addition they open up elements of ourselves that we often do not want to know. Generally, when we talk about self-knowledge, we stop at what is not unpleasant, however, the deepest knowledge that we can have of ourselves is in fact based on the discovery of what is unpleasant for us and that we do not wish to know about ourselves.

Using our experience to get to know ourselves better helps us to set self-concordant goals, i.e. goals that are in line with who we are. Self-concordant goals are both decisions that we make (we make the decision to achieve a particular goal that seems self-concordant) and elements that structure the decisions we make (we make a decision on a subject taking into account our self-concordant goals).

Understanding the relationship between life domains and happiness: bottom-up and top-down effects

We can reflect on our happiness in a holistic way. This is what we have done so far. We can also reflect on it by looking at life domains that we feel are important to our happiness. A life domain can be our love life, our children if we have any, our friends, our work, our health, our leisure activities, etc.

There are links in both directions between our satisfaction in one life domain and our happiness. If we are happy overall, then we will tend to be more satisfied in our life domains. Our overall happiness will tend to colour these domains more positively than they are. This is the *top-down* effect. Similarly, if we are satisfied in important life domains, then we will feel happier. This is the *bottom-up* effect.

In the perspective of improving our overall happiness, it is therefore interesting to look at the satisfaction that the important life domains bring us and how to improve it. For each of these domains, it is possible to apply the reasoning seen at the global level, in particular to consider the hedonic level of affects in each life domain and the contentment with that domain. At the

same time, for each domain, specific rationales can be applied that are even more relevant to improve satisfaction or reduce dissatisfaction.

We will look at some important life domains in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The meaning in life

Making sense of life gives structure to our decision-making. Life is marked by constant change. A meaningful life is a life in which a stable conception has been established that remains in the midst of these incessant changes. The essence of meaning in life is therefore in the linking of different realities.

In practical terms, making sense of one's life can be seen as meeting four needs. The first need is the need to have a goal or goals. The second need is the need to follow our values. Our values are the benchmarks by which we can tell whether our actions are right or wrong. They can justify certain actions and give us a sense of goodness. Our goals must be self-concordant, i.e. in line with our values. The third need is a need to feel that we are effective in pursuing our goals. The fourth need is a need to feel that we have value in our own eyes. It is therefore a matter of how we look at ourselves, not how others look at us. This value is given by the way we look at our goals and how we achieve them[1] .

The meaning in life can be drawn from different sources: love, family, religion, work, personal projects. Loving someone, having a family, being religious, building a career, doing a work, striving to surpass oneself are some of the goals that one can give to oneself to give meaning to one's life, whether for a given moment or for the rest of one's life.

It is preferable to give more than one meaning to one's life, as this reduces the risk of losing meaning in certain situations. For example, if the only meaning you have given to your life is your life as a couple, then you lose all meaning if your couple breaks up. Giving different meanings to one's life, having different goals, protects against the loss of meaning.

Meaning in life can be a way of protecting ourselves from suffering. When we suffer, it increases our need for meaning and we can reduce the suffering we experience by giving it meaning. Giving meaning to one's life then brings a form of control over suffering.

Meaning in life and happiness are not systematically linked. For example, having children can both decrease the parents' degree of happiness and increase their sense of meaning in life. We may also have found a very strong purpose for our lives and put too much energy into achieving that purpose, which reduces our happiness, however, giving meaning to one's life generally makes one a little happier.

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[1] Baumeister, R.F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. Guilford

Understanding our cognitive limitations and how they reduce our future happiness

It is difficult to predict the consequences of our decisions on our future happiness correctly, not least because we do not have all the information and because the quality of predictions can be diminished by various errors in the cognitive processes of our brain. These errors, which are called cognitive biases, can relate to the prediction of future events resulting from our decisions and to the emotions that these events may generate. Let's look at some of these errors, which are probably the most important ones[1] . Being aware of these errors is one way to reduce their impact somewhat.

A first error comes from the way we learn about the data from which we are going to make a decision. This is called framing effects. For example, if we have a choice to make between two possibilities, we will pay more attention to the elements that distinguish these two possibilities than to the elements they share. It is possible that the elements shared by the two possibilities have more influence on our future happiness than the elements that distinguish them and that, as a result, the two possibilities are both favourable for our future happiness or both unfavourable. Framing effects increase the quality of predictions if they draw attention to factors that actually influence our future happiness and are detrimental if they draw attention to factors that have little or no effect on our future happiness. Therefore, when we are faced with several alternatives, the right question is which characteristics of the alternatives will strongly influence our future happiness.

A second error concerns the consequences we imagine for the decision we make. We have to make our decisions in a situation of imperfect information, i.e. we do not know all the ins and outs of our decisions. When the decision seems important to us, our imagination tries to capture as best it can what the consequences of our decision might be, but the lack of information, too much information to take into account, the difficulty of knowing which information is the most relevant, chance, all combine to reduce the quality of our prediction about the future events that our decision will trigger.

A third error can occur when we have experienced an event and we think we will experience a similar event again. In this case, the easiest way to assess the influence of the new event on our future happiness is to remember how we felt during the first event. This strategy can be subject to two difficulties. The first is that our memory is of poor quality when it comes to recalling past emotional experiences. The way we remember emotional experiences is systematically biased: we give more weight to recent and emotionally strong events and neglect the rest of what we have experienced. These biases can lead us to make errors in our predictions about our future emotions. The second difficulty is that the circumstances of past events are almost always different from the circumstances of future events, even if they seem similar to us, and we tend to underestimate these differences. This tendency is called the projection bias and it can lead to errors in predicting our future emotional states.

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[1] Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2003). Affective forecasting. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology,* Vol. 35 (pp. 345-411). Elsevier Academic

A fourth error is that our expectations about the consequences of a decision can influence how we will experience the consequences of that decision. In some cases, these expectations can increase the accuracy of predictions in a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism: we want to experience the emotions we expect to experience so much that we end up experiencing them. In other cases, these expectations can reduce the accuracy of predictions. This happens when we recognize a difference between the experience and the expectation. The impression of this difference reinforces the difference.

A fifth error is that we often fail to anticipate the extent to which future events that seem unrelated to our future happiness may influence them. This lack of anticipation leads us to underestimate the influence of some future events on our happiness and to overestimate the impact of other future events on which we pay too much attention.

A sixth error is that our present emotional state can reduce the quality of our predictions. When we are in a hot, strong emotional state and we have to predict how we will feel in a cold, calm emotional state, we will tend to overestimate the intensity of what we will experience. If we are in a cold emotional state and we have to predict how we will feel in a warm emotional state, we will tend to underestimate the intensity of what we will experience.

A seventh error is that, even though we know that the negative emotions and positive emotions that events produce decrease over time, we tend to overestimate the duration of the emotions that these events generate. This is particularly true for negative emotions. We have difficulty anticipating the extent to which our psychological immune system accelerates our ability to recover from a difficult event.

Learning from others

A third way to make better decisions is to learn from others. Beware: there is a catch to this. There may be a difference between what we see or hear from others and what they actually experience, however, listening to others gives access to other experiences and ideas that can enrich our thinking.

In particular, there are two kinds of people who are interesting when we make decisions about our happiness. First, there are the people who have been in what we perceive to be a similar situation to us, who have made a choice in that situation and who have experienced the consequences of that choice. Then there are the people we perceive as very happy, not the ones who post on social networks, but the ones we see regularly . It is preferable that these people do not have exceptionally good living conditions so that what they have to share is the quality of their connection to themselves and the world.

Changing our habits to habits that make us happier

Habits are recurrent behaviours, activated by specific contexts, requiring a low level of awareness, acquired through repetition and requiring little energy, as they no longer need to be thought through and decided upon.

Changing a habit is complicated. Changing our beliefs - which you are doing by reading this book - is not enough to change a habit we want to change. We also need to put a strategy in place.

Cognitive strategies are the first major type of strategy for changing a habit. The best known cognitive strategies are reminders and rewards. Reminder is regularly reminding oneself or being reminded regularly to initiate a certain behaviour. Rewarding is giving yourself something pleasant because you have performed the desired behaviour.

Another cognitive strategy is the implementation of intention. This strategy consists of two steps. The first is to identify the behavioural response that will achieve the chosen goal. The second is to anticipate the opportunity to initiate this behavioural response, i.e. the context that favours the triggering of the identified behavioural response.

Cognitive strategies may have an influence in the short term, but this influence may decrease significantly in the long term. In other words, cognitive strategies often lack efficiency.

Strategies for changing our environment are the second major type of strategy for changing a habit. When our environment changes, the signals that activate our habits also change, which can force us to change our habits or create new ones. This is why habit changes are most effective during life changes, such as having a new home, a new job or a child.

It is not necessary to wait for major life changes, intended or not, to use the fact that changes in our living environments are conducive to being able to change our habits. It is possible to consciously modify more or less important elements of our environment to change some of our habits. For example, it is easier to eat healthily if the food we buy is mainly healthy food. Similarly, it is easier to stop wasting time in front of a television if you no longer have a television set at home.

When you want to change a habit because you consider that this change of habit will increase your happiness, the first question to ask yourself is: can I change something in my environment to promote this change of habit? If the answer to the question is no, or if you do not want to make the imagined change in the environment, then the strategy of changing the environment is not possible and only the cognitive strategies remain: reminder, reward, implementation of intention.

Quiz

1. In scientific research on happiness, is what is true today true tomorrow?
2. What do you look for in a scientific study on happiness to check that it is relevant?
3. What can we learn from a scientific study?

4. What are the most interesting ideas and emotions that one can have in order to discover oneself?
5. What is a self-concordant goal?
6. Name some life domains.
7. What are the *top-down* and *bottom-up effects*?
8. What can give meaning to life?
9. Why is it difficult to correctly predict the consequences of our decisions on our future happiness?
10. What are the two main types of strategies for changing habits? Which is more effective?

Answers

1. Not necessarily. A theory that seemed wrong can become a theory that seems valid and a theory that seemed valid can become a theory that seems wrong
2. How happiness is defined and, if measured, how it is measured
3. Validated ideas that can improve our lives
4. The most interesting ideas and emotions for getting to know oneself are surprising ideas and surprising emotions and unpleasant ideas and unpleasant emotions
5. A self-concordant goal is a goal that is consistent with who we are
6. Here are some life domains: love life, children if we have them, friends, work, health, our hobbies, etc.
7. *Top-down* effect: if we are happy overall, then we will tend to be more satisfied in our life domains. *Bottom-up* effect: if we are satisfied in an important life domain, then we will be happier
8. The meaning in life can be drawn from different sources: love, family, religion, work, personal projects
9. It is difficult to predict the consequences of our decisions on our future happiness correctly because we do not have all the information and because the quality of predictions can be diminished by various errors in the cognitive processes of our brain
10. The two main types of strategies for changing a habit are cognitive strategies and environmental change strategies. Environmental change strategies are more effective

CHAPTER 4: LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES AND HAPPINESS

I begin this chapter with similar caveats to those written when I discussed the six effective strategies for regulating negative emotions in Chapter 2. Firstly, it is easy to talk about life's difficulties when we are not experiencing them, especially when those difficulties have significant consequences. Life's difficulties have the potential to make us suffer and thus lose control of ourselves. Secondly, no one is really competent to teach another person how to react to a difficulty in life, because no one can really be in the other person's shoes.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Warn you that it is impossible to be happy all the time
- Make you think about the value of approaching happiness by reducing the importance of periods of unhappiness
- Give you an overview of the personal resources you can activate in life's difficulties
- Introduce the concept of post-traumatic growth and the strong limitations of this concept

The gist of the chapter

Even the happiest people have usually experienced more or less long periods of unhappiness.

Negative emotions are much more powerful than positive emotions. A person who experiences as many negative emotions as positive emotions is not a person who is neither happy nor unhappy, but an unhappy person, probably even a depressed one.

To be happy, you need to experience many more positive emotions than negative ones. This can be done by experiencing more positive emotions, less negative emotions, or both.

This does not mean, however, that negative emotions are useless and should be suppressed. Some of the negative emotions we experience have a protective function by alerting us to dangers that may threaten our very lives. It is also possible to experience too few negative emotions, i.e. to reach a degree of negative emotions that is so low that it would put us in difficulty if we were to experience a difficult situation.

It is probably better to seek to reduce the intensity, duration and frequency of unhappy periods first, rather than expend energy indeterminately.

In addition to the strategies for regulating negative emotions that we saw in Chapter 2, we have several personal resources for coping with life's difficulties

- Hedonic adaptation, which is a process by which we become accustomed to stimuli that have emotional consequences
- Resilience, which can be defined as a set of positive adaptations in the face of significant adversity and risk
- Coping strategies, which are cognitive and behavioural strategies for dealing with difficulties in life, some of which are problem-focused and others emotion-focused
- Hope, which is a positive orientation towards the future and can be divided into three components: goals, imagined paths to achieving those goals, and motivation
- Sharing negative emotional experiences, whether with others or with oneself
- Finding meaning in suffering

Experiencing trauma can generate a lot of negative emotions, these emotions can last over time and it is possible to develop psychiatric disorders as a result of the trauma, however, it is possible to be happy after a trauma and in some cases it is even possible to be happier after a trauma than before. This is called post-traumatic growth. This does not mean that you have to experience trauma in order to be happy or happier, but that it is possible to be happy after a trauma and in some cases it is even possible to be happier.

We can't be happy all the time

We cannot always be happy. There are many events that can cause great suffering, suffering that results, at least momentarily, in no longer feeling happy. These events may include the death of parents, grandparents, a child, a spouse, a friend, a person important to us; a break-up of a relationship, a divorce, a break-up of a friendship, a break-up with a family or a member of the family; a difficult financial situation, a difficult material situation; an assault, a rape; a serious illness; the loss of a job, a job in which one experiences difficult situations such as harassment; etc.

Even the happiest people have usually experienced periods of unhappiness for varying lengths of time.

Therefore, if you ever meet a person or an organization that tells you that it is possible to be happy all the time, run away. Really, run away. You are dealing with a person or an organization that may seek to use your suffering for its own benefit. Similarly, if a person or organization tells you that they can relieve your suffering, but in return they ask you for large sums of money or large services, often asking for little at first so as not to be detected, run away. You may think to yourself as you read this that what I am writing is obvious, but what may be obvious when you are in a pleasant or neutral emotional state may be much less so

when you are in pain. I refer you to what we have just seen about our cognitive limits in Chapter 3.

Maximizing our happiness or reducing the importance of the times when we are unhappy?

The periods when we are unhappy have three major characteristics: their duration, their intensity and their frequency. The periods can be longer or shorter, the degree of unhappiness can be greater or lesser, and these periods can recur more or less often. Reducing the importance of these periods therefore means reducing their intensity, duration and/or frequency.

Imagine that in the future you have to live through two periods of equal length, one where your degree of happiness is 3 on a scale of 1 to 10 (period when you are unhappy) and the other where your degree of happiness is 8 (period when you are happy). Imagine that you could magically add 1 degree of happiness to either of these two periods. Which of the following three options would you choose?

- Option 1: Add 1 degree of happiness to the period when your degree of happiness is 3 and therefore increase to 4 for that period and remain at 8 for the other period
- Option 2: Add 1 degree of happiness to the period when your degree of happiness is 8 and therefore increase to 9 for that period and remain at 3 for the other period
- Option 3: Add 0.5 degree of happiness to each of the periods, making it 3.5 for the unhappy period and 8.5 for the happy period

Take time to respond.

Now imagine that in the future you have two periods of one month each, one where you are very unhappy and one where you are very happy. Which of the following three options would you choose?

- Option 1: Reduce the period of great unhappiness by 1 month
- Option 2: Increase the period of great happiness by 1 month
- Option 3: Reduce the period of great unhappiness by 15 days and increase the period of great happiness by 15 days

Take time to respond. It is perhaps more difficult here to choose, as I have not given precise degrees of happiness and unhappiness. I have just used the phrases "very unhappy" and "very happy" in the hope that you would consider them as perfect opposites.

Finally, imagine that in your future you experience a period of great unhappiness three times a year and a period of great happiness three times a year. Which of the following three options would you choose?

- Option 1: Experience one less period of great unhappiness each year

- Option 2: Experience one more period of happiness each year
- Option 3: Experience half a period of great unhappiness less and half a period of great happiness more each year

Take time to respond. Again, it may be more difficult to choose, as I have not given precise degrees of happiness and unhappiness, nor have I given the duration of the periods. Consider that "great unhappiness" and "great happiness" are perfect opposites in terms of mental states.

Let us now analyse the different possible responses. The first idea to state is that the emotional state you are in when you respond is important. If you are currently in a pleasant or neutral emotional state, then you can have a detachment from the suffering.

Options 1 show an inclination towards a conception of happiness where the reduction of suffering is privileged. Options 2 show an inclination towards a conception of happiness where the reduction of suffering is neglected. Options 3 show an in-between.

There are two main philosophies of happiness: utilitarianism with its principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number and negative utilitarianism where priority is given to reducing unhappiness over increasing the happiness of the people already happy.

These two philosophies can be applied at the level of an individual. In the *negative* utilitarianist perspective, the person will put more energy into reducing the importance of the unhappy periods, whereas in the utilitarianist perspective, the same level of energy will be given to all periods.

From a scientific point of view, there is a power of the negative over the positive. We see this power of the negative especially when we look at emotions and compare negative and positive emotions. Negative emotions are much more powerful than positive emotions. A person who experiences as many negative emotions as positive emotions would not be a person who is neither happy nor unhappy, but an unhappy person, probably even depressed.

In order to be happy, we need to experience many more positive emotions than negative ones. This can be done by experiencing more positive emotions, less negative emotions, or both. This does not mean that negative emotions are useless and should be eliminated. Some of the negative emotions we experience have a protective function by alerting us to dangers that may be life-threatening. Furthermore, it is possible to experience too few negative emotions, i.e. to reach a degree of negative emotions that is too low, which would put us in difficulty if we were to experience a difficult situation, because our psychological immune system would not have been sufficiently solicited.

In the end, following the scientific perspective, it is probably better to seek to reduce the intensity, duration and frequency of unhappy periods first rather than to spend energy indeterminately, however, this does not mean that we should spend our energy with the sole aim of reducing the intensity, duration and frequency of periods when we are unhappy, because experiencing happy periods can also have a protective effect by providing us with resources to better live through unhappy periods. Unhappiness prepares us for unhappiness, happiness can also prepare us for unhappiness.

Our personal resources in life's difficulties

In the second chapter, we saw six effective strategies for reducing the negative emotions one experiences. These strategies are personal resources for dealing with life's difficulties. Here we will look at other resources that can help us cope with life's difficulties. Some are automatic or almost automatic and it is the very fact of knowing them that can bring us some hope in a difficult situation, others can be activated to try to reduce suffering.

Hedonic adaptation

Hedonic adaptation is a process by which we become accustomed to stimuli that have emotional consequences.

Imagine that you are told great news for yourself. You will experience a positive, pleasant emotional peak, however, more or less quickly, the positive emotions generated by the announcement decrease until they disappear. This phenomenon of the decrease and disappearance of the positive emotions generated by a stimulus is hedonic adaptation. It has two functions: to protect by reducing the consequences of stimuli and to facilitate the perception of novelty.

What is true for pleasant emotions is also true for unpleasant emotions. If we are given very bad news, we will experience a negative emotional peak, however, more or less quickly, the negative emotions generated decrease until they disappear or almost disappear. When we experience certain negative life events, hedonic adaptation usually makes the passage of time our ally by allowing us to feel better in some time. This is an idea to keep in mind when experiencing a negative event: time is usually our ally.

Resilience

In the 1960s, psychologists and psychiatrists took an ongoing interest in children who they thought were at risk of developing mental disorders because of their genetic inheritance, perinatal difficulties or their environment. They were struck by the fact that children they thought were at high risk ended up developing quite well. The words used to describe these children were 'invulnerable', 'stress resistant', 'resilient'. It was this last word that stood out.

Resilience can be defined as a set of positive adaptations in the context of significant adversity and risk. For resilience to exist, therefore, two elements are needed: circumstances that are

potentially threatening and a person who is doing well or even better than could have been expected[1] .

What makes a child, or more generally a person, resilient? We can distinguish three categories of resources that protect in adversity: the child's or person's own characteristics, the characteristics of the family environment and, more generally, of the emotional environment, and the characteristics of society.

At the individual level, resources include flexible coping strategies[2] , humour, problem-solving skills, learning skills, social skills, and the ability to find support in family and non-family surroundings.

At the family level, resources include warm family relationships, strong family support, good parent-child communication, positive sibling relationships.

Finally, resources at the society level include extra-familial support, for example from friends and neighbours, and policies that allow universal access to resources that facilitate positive adaptation (housing, food, health, education). For children in particular, other resources at the society level are support from teachers, quality education, adult role models.

There are three broad types of strategies for promoting resilience: risk-focused strategies, where the aim is to limit exposure to risk; resource-focused strategies, where the aim is to increase resources; and process-focused strategies, where the aim is to mobilize people's protective coping systems.

Knowing the factors that promote our resilience allows us to reflect on the resources we have power over to promote our resilience in difficult times. It allows us to work ahead on these resources. Most of these resources also support being a little happier, or a little less unhappy. Fostering resilience not only prepares us for difficult times, it also improves our degree of happiness now.

Coping strategies

When we face difficulties in life, we respond by using cognitive and behavioural strategies called coping.

There are two main coping strategies: problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies.

Problem-focused strategies are characterized by efforts to reduce or eliminate the problem that is causing the suffering. This can be done through two types of action: preventive actions and ex-post actions.

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[1] Masten, A.S. & Reed, M.-G.J. (2005). Resilience in development. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez, *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 74-88). Oxford University Press
[2] Coping strategies are the cognitive and behavioural strategies we use to deal with life's challenges.

Emotion-focused strategies are characterized by the desire to regulate the emotional responses generated by the difficulties encountered. Emotion-focused strategies are useful in situations where it is not possible to eliminate the difficulty one is experiencing. They do not solve the difficulty, but they make one feel better.

We have already seen in the second chapter some of these strategies such as putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal and acceptance. These are some of the most effective strategies for regulating negative emotions. There are also physiological strategies, such as relaxation.

There are many elements that influence whether a coping strategy is good or bad. There are the characteristics of the person, the characteristics of the difficulty encountered, the consequences which may be different in the short and long term.

Note that avoidance strategies can be seen as a third type of coping strategy, a coping strategy where... one chooses not to cope. Avoidance strategies can be dangerous when they result in the growth of a problem.

Hope

Hope is a positive orientation towards the future. Believing that our wishes will come true and acting in a way that makes their fulfilment more likely are signs of hope. Hope is useful in life's difficulties and beyond.

Hope can be divided into three components: goals, imagined paths to achieving those goals, and motivation[1]. Goals can be long-term or short-term, and they must be valuable enough to be present in our conscious thoughts. In order to achieve these goals, paths must be imagined. The ability to imagine various paths is important because it opens up favourable prospects even when one path ultimately proves to be blocked. People who have a high degree of hope are often people who are able to imagine alternative paths. The third component is motivation. It is marked both by the fact of starting to move forward on a path and the fact of continuing to progress. Motivation takes on particular importance when difficulties are encountered.

The benefit of sharing negative emotional experiences

Sharing negative emotional experiences is a very common human characteristic. At the same time, some negative emotional experiences are kept quiet.

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[1] Snyder, C.R. (1994). The psychology of hope: You can get there from here. Free Press

The simple act of putting negative emotional experiences on paper, without another person knowing about them, is in itself beneficial. Pennebaker[1] conducted a study in which students were invited to participate in a laboratory experiment on writing and psychology. They were asked to write for fifteen minutes a day on four consecutive days with the guarantee that their writing would be anonymous and that they would receive no feedback. During these fifteen minutes a day, their writing was not to be stopped, they were not to pay attention to grammar, spelling or organization of their text. The students were randomly divided into two groups. The first group was the experimental group: the students in this group had to write about one or more traumatic experiences in their lives. The second group was the control group: the students in this group were asked to write about a topic without any emotional characteristics, for example, they were asked to describe the laboratory they were in.

The participants in the experimental group were satisfied with the experience, finding it valuable and meaningful, 98% were willing to repeat the study. These results can be seen in relation to the content of the texts: rape, domestic violence, attempted suicide and drug addiction among other topics. The students had talked about very personal and hard topics and at the same time had been satisfied to do so, even though in the short term many had reported being upset by the experience and had cried. This satisfaction, which is subjective, was consistent with the objective data. For example, participants in the experimental group significantly reduced the number of visits to the doctor in the year following the experiment compared to participants in the control group.

Pennebaker and Francis (1999) developed a text analysis programme that analysed the texts collected in various studies, including the one I have just written about. One of the major findings of the text analysis was that the people whose health improved the most were those who used the most words expressing causality and insight. In other words, people who were able to construct a story, who had sufficient cognitive maturation through the use of causal links and discerning words, were those whose health improved the most.

Sharing negative emotional experiences with one or more other people is also of great benefit. The people who are usually the most competent to listen and share are those who have experienced a similar situation to the one experienced. A person who has experienced the death of a spouse will be better able to listen and share with a person whose spouse has just died. In particular, they are more likely to be supportive beyond the early stages of grief, more tolerant of the fact that the grief is ongoing, and will not rush to move on to another romantic relationship.

Finding meaning in suffering

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[1] Pennebaker, J.W. (1989). Confession, inhibition, and disease. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 22, 211-244.

Viktor Frankl, who was a psychiatrist, had one of the most terrible experiences a human being can have. He was deported to a concentration camp and then to an extermination camp during the Second World War.

He drew from his own terrible experience as a deportee and survivor and from the experience of the deportees he met that the ability to find meaning in suffering was essential for survivors[1] .

Finding meaning in suffering is what some people do when they experience terrible situations. For example, some parents who have the misfortune to lose a child may find meaning in suffering by committing themselves to a cause that, if better considered, could have prevented the death of their child. They could not prevent the loss of their child, so they become involved in trying to prevent the death of other parents' children so that those parents do not experience the same suffering as they did.

Preparing for unhappiness

This section proposes ideas that are difficult to fit into our lives, but just because they are difficult to fit into our lives does not mean they should not be written down.

In the future, we may experience situations that favour our happiness to varying degrees and others that favour our unhappiness to varying degrees, however, these two main types of situations are not equally important, because it is much easier to adapt to a situation which favours our happiness than to a situation which favours our unhappiness, even if we have means to adapt to situations which favour our unhappiness and we tend to underestimate their effectiveness.

It is possible to wait for situations that make us unhappy to occur in order to adapt to them, but it is also possible to try to anticipate them in order to try to reduce their effects preventively if they do occur.

Anticipation here means having the capacity to cause oneself pain now with the hope that this will reduce the pain that may be experienced later.

There are situations that can be anticipated, as they have a high probability of happening, or even a certainty of happening, and others that are much less so. While it is possible to anticipate that certain situations may occur in the future, it can be much more complicated to anticipate these situations in detail.

It is possible to prepare for unhappiness without a link to a specific possible future situation or with a link to a specific possible future situation.

In terms of general preparation, one possibility is to learn to meditate. Meditation tends to develop the ability to accept and distance oneself from one's emotions, especially negative

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[1] Frankl, V.E. (1963). Man's search for meaning. Washington Square Press

ones, however, the stronger the emotions, the more difficult it is to regulate them. It is also possible to develop resilience by reducing exposure to risks where one can reduce exposure or by developing resources, e.g. developing flexibility in coping strategies, developing good family and non-family relationships.

As far as specific preparation is concerned, it is possible to try to imagine what it would be like, to imagine the negative emotions that one might experience. There is an exercise in psychology which is to ask a person to write about a personal or imagined traumatic event. In this case, it would be to write about a traumatic event that is imagined, but which is likely to happen to us.

Can you be happy after a trauma?

Experiencing trauma can generate a lot of negative emotions, these emotions can last over time and it is possible to develop psychiatric disorders as a result of the trauma.

There are mechanisms that can reduce the pain of trauma, such as hedonic adaptation and finding benefits in the trauma even if the negative consequences largely dominate. As we have seen, hedonic adaptation is the mechanism by which our emotions in relation to an event, whether negative or positive, normally decrease over time. It is a mechanism that we are generally aware of, but underestimate its effectiveness. Finding benefits in the trauma is a selective assessment: the person who has experienced a difficult event may minimize the negative aspects and focus on the positive consequences of the trauma.

There are people who experience a traumatic event and come away with significant positive changes in their happiness, but also in their beliefs, values or behaviours. These changes arise from the trauma, but occur as a result of cognitive work that takes place after the trauma. This is called post-traumatic growth[1] . Post-traumatic growth differs from simply finding benefits in the trauma in that it is not a simple selective evaluation, i.e. an evaluation that prioritizes what is comforting, but a deep transformation that results in outcomes that are seen as positive by the person who has changed.

The changes experienced may include the following: a greater taste for life; a new vision of life that opens up new opportunities; a stronger awareness of one's strengths; a greater ease with intimacy; a greater sense of compassion, especially towards those who have suffered the same trauma; improved human relationships; spiritual, even religious, development that results in the development of a philosophy of life that is felt to be more fulfilling, meaningful, satisfying; a refocusing of one's priorities, especially for those who have been confronted with their own or others' deaths. One can feel both more vulnerable, because one was not able to prevent or control the situation, and stronger, because one's sense of one's own ability to survive and fight has been affirmed.

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[1] Tedeschi, R.G. & Calhoun, L.G. (2004). A clinical approach to posttraumatic growth. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive Psychology in Practice* (pp. 405-419). Wiley

It is possible to be happy after a trauma and in some cases, although this is not common and may depend on the nature of the trauma, it is possible to be even happier after a trauma than before. This does not mean that you have to experience trauma in order to be happy or happier, but that it is possible to be happy after a trauma and in some cases it is even possible to be happier.

Quiz

1. Give an example that shows that negative emotions are more powerful than positive emotions
2. To be happier, what should we do from an emotional point of view?
3. Give two functions that negative emotions have
4. Name 3 types of personal resources that we can call upon in times of adversity
5. What is hedonic adaptation?
6. What is resilience?
7. What are the two main coping strategies?
8. What are the three components of hope?
9. What is post-traumatic growth? Is it desirable to be in a situation where one can experience post-traumatic growth?

Answers

1. A person who experiences as many negative emotions as positive ones is not a person who is neither happy nor unhappy, but an unhappy person, probably even a depressed one
2. In order to be happy, we need to experience many more positive emotions than negative ones. This can be done by experiencing more positive emotions, less negative emotions, or both
3. Some of the negative emotions we experience have a protective function by alerting us to dangers that may be life-threatening. Negative emotions also feed a psychic immune system. It is indeed possible to experience too few negative emotions, i.e. to reach a degree of negative emotions that is too low, which would put us in difficulty if we were to experience a difficult situation
4. Resources that can be called upon in adversity include hedonic adaptation, resilience, coping strategies, sharing negative emotional experiences and finding meaning in suffering
5. Hedonic adaptation is a process by which we become accustomed to stimuli that have emotional consequences
6. Resilience can be defined as a set of positive adaptations in the context of significant adversity and risk

7. The 2 main coping strategies are problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies

8. Hope can be divided into three components: goals, imagined paths to achieving those goals, and motivation

9. Post-traumatic growth is the ability to transform a trauma positively to the point that one is happier after the trauma than before. In no case is it desirable to be in a situation of traumatic growth, as this means that one has to experience trauma in order to be in this situation. It is better to grow as a person without trauma

CHAPTER 5: TIME USE AND HAPPINESS

Time is an essential resource for all of us. The way we use our time has a major impact on our happiness. It is also a limited resource. Each of us only has 24 hours in a day and we are not immortal. We are going to see how we can make better use of our time to be happier.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Introduce a technique for modifying your constrained time and enhancing the pleasure or reducing the displeasure associated with it
- Enable you to make a better selection of your leisure activities based on your motivations
- Get you to think about what your best ordinary day and your best life are

The gist of the chapter

We can distinguish between two forms of time: constrained, which we do not choose how to use, and free, which we do choose how to use.

When we are in a constrained time, we lose some of our ability to organize what we do with our time, however, not all constrained times are of the same level, and it is possible to improve the quality of these constrained times in terms of happiness. Life crafting is the process of redesigning our constrained time in any aspect of our lives. For example, putting on music when we are cleaning.

Free time is only good for our happiness if we know how to use it. This can be seen when a person becomes a pensioner. Going from a situation where we have little time and decide for ourselves what to do to a situation where we decide what to do for most of the day can be complicated for some of us.

There are different motivations for leisure activities. For example, pleasure, the development of self-esteem, fulfilment, the need for solitude or the need to socialize, relaxation or excitement, and so on.

There are different forms of leisure and different typologies of leisure. There are active leisure and passive leisure. There are also serious leisure, casual leisure and project-based leisure.

What would your best day be like? Do not think of an extraordinary day in which you experience an exceptional event, but of an ordinary day that could be repeated many times and still satisfy you completely. Take a few minutes to imagine what that day would be like.

We can use time frames longer than the day to think about our relationship between time use and happiness. The time frame of life as a whole is the most important of these time frames. We can ask ourselves what the ultimate goals we wish to achieve in our life are and then mentally imagine what our life would be like if we wished to achieve the ultimate goals we have set for ourselves.

Not all the goals we set are equal. Ultimate goals are central goals, in small numbers, that answer the question: "What is really important to me in my life?"

Liking the life we lead may be an ultimate goal, or even the only ultimate goal, but it is possible to decide to sacrifice part of our happiness to achieve other ultimate goals.

Constrained time and life crafting

We can distinguish between two forms of time: constrained, which we do not choose how to use, and free, which we do choose how to use. There are, of course, nuances between these two forms. For example, we may have domestic chores to do, which are a constraint on our time, but we can choose when we do them.

Unless we are rich enough to have an annuity or to be retired, a large part of our lives is made up of constrained time.

When we are in unconstrained time, free time, we can choose how we are going to use that free time. We can use our free time as we wish within the limits of our wealth and what technology allows, and we can use it, if we wish, to promote our happiness, our present happiness or what we hope will be the construction of our future happiness.

When we are in a constrained time, we lose some of our ability to organize what we do with our time, however, not all constrained times are of the same level, and it is possible to improve the quality of these constrained times in terms of happiness. In the context of work, job crafting means redesigning our constrained time so that it is more conducive to our happiness. That is why I call life crafting redesigning our constrained time in any aspect of our lives.

What tricks can we put in place during our constrained time to enjoy it more? Here are two examples. Imagine someone doing their housework and listening to music to make doing the housework more pleasant/less unpleasant. This is life crafting. Imagine a couple discussing the sharing of chores, so as to divide them up according to each person's likes and dislikes. This is also life crafting. Imagine a person who, in their work, finds elements in a task that they don't initially like that make them appreciate the task in the end. This is life crafting and, more precisely, this is job crafting. We will look at job crafting in the chapter on happiness and work.

Free time and leisure

Free time only makes us happier if we know how to use it. This can be seen when a person becomes a pensioner. For some of us, the transition from a situation where we have little time to decide for ourselves what to do to a situation where we decide what to do for most of the day can be complicated.

So, when we have free time, what activities and leisure activities should we choose?

There are many different motivations for choosing leisure activities and we generally have several motivations for the same leisure. Here is a list that gives a good overview of these motivations. Even if it is not exhaustive, this list can help you better understand what you expect from a leisure activity and what you do not. It can also help you understand why you enjoy certain leisure.

- The pleasure and satisfaction we derive from leisure activities
- Physical pleasures, for example the physical pleasures of sport
- Development of self-esteem
- A sense of freedom
- The challenge
- Achieving something
- Using knowledge and skills
- Learning knowledge and skills
- Self-expression
- Intellectual stimulation
- The need for solitude
- Stress reduction
- Relaxation
- Excitement
- A sense of belonging to a group
- Close friendships
- Cooperation
- Competition

Some motivations are opposites, for example relaxation and excitement, and the same person can satisfy two opposing motivations at different times.

There are different forms of leisure and different typologies of leisure. We distinguish between active leisure, such as playing sport or volunteering, and passive leisure, such as relaxing or watching television.

Another typology distinguishes between serious leisure, project-based leisure and casual leisure[1]. Serious leisure differs from casual leisure. Casual leisure is either unchallenging or less

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[1] Stebbins, R. A. (2008). Right leisure: Serious, casual, or project-based?. *NeuroRehabilitation*, *23*(4), 335-341.

challenging. They are simpler and require less commitment. The same leisure can be considered by one person as a serious leisure and by another as a casual leisure. For example, running may be a casual leisure for one person, but another person may become so involved in that leisure that it becomes a serious leisure. A project-based leisure is a project that you carry out in your spare time. Writing a book, building a fence or volunteering at a festival in your spare time are project hobbies.

Leisure activities generally lead to a momentary increase in positive emotions and a momentary decrease in negative emotions. The frequency of leisure activities is more important than their intensity. Imagine someone who dances salsa and bachata. It will be more beneficial for them to dance a hundred hours spread over the year than concentrated in one month.

Some leisure activities are real passions. In some cases, these can be an obsessive passion, meaning that the person is so caught up in their passion that they would do nothing else if they could, leading them to pursue their leisure activity even when it is bad for them. Their passion can thus damage their feelings of self-esteem and social acceptance. More often than not, passions are harmonious passions, meaning that the person can choose when to pursue their passion and when not to.

Our best day

Now that we have seen the differences between constrained time and free time, let us ask ourselves the following question: what would your best day be like? I am not talking about an extraordinary day in which you experience an exceptional event such as a wedding, the birth of a child or the achievement of a major life goal, but an ordinary day that could be repeated many times and still satisfy you completely.

Take a few minutes to imagine what your best day would be like and, if you would like to get some ideas on how to answer this question, read the next paragraph.

What time would you get up? How would you feel physically and mentally? What would you do during the day? How would these activities be organized? How would the relationship between constrained time and free time be structured? What time would you go to bed? What physical and psychological state would you be in when you went to sleep? These questions are only indicative.

I will give you a personal example of my best day. This is not a model, but an example adapted to who I am at the time of writing.

For me, the best ordinary day is a day when I wake up from a restful sleep, full of energy and in a positive mood at around 7a.m., a day when in the morning I work on subjects that are important to me, such as the book you are reading, and when I make good progress in my work, I am then in a time that is both eudaimonic - I fulfil myself - and hedonic - I experience mainly positive emotions - then I eat in such a way that I do not feel much like sleeping after

eating and I do hedonic activities in the afternoon and evening. I fall asleep easily around 11p.m. and get a restorative night's sleep that allows me to wake up full of energy and in a positive mood in the morning.

What constitutes the best ordinary day has changed for me over time. When I was working on my PhD in happiness studies, a very good day was a day when in the morning and also in the afternoon I was working on a project with both eudaimonic and hedonic consequences, my PhD, and I relaxed and had hedonic activities only in the evening.

Note that our emotions and our commitment to work or leisure tend to evolve as the day goes on.

From our best day to our best life

We can use longer time frames than the day to think about our relationship between time use and happiness: for example, the week, the month, the year, a set of years or our whole life. We can then choose some of these time frames according to what seems relevant to us and ask ourselves what our best week, our best month, our best year, our best set of years, our best life would be like.

The last question - what would our best life be like - is undoubtedly the most important because the answer we give, which can change over time, can help us structure our whole life. We can ask ourselves what the ultimate goals we wish to achieve in this life are and then mentally imagine what our life would be like if we wished to achieve these ultimate goals, if we wished to achieve the ultimate goals we have set for ourselves.

Not all the goals we set are equal. Some goals are much more important than others, they are central, while others are milestones. These central goals are the ultimate goals. They are few, otherwise they lose their value, and they answer the question: "What is really important for me in my life?

Liking the life we lead may be an ultimate goal, or even the only ultimate goal, but it is possible to decide to sacrifice part of our happiness to achieve other ultimate goals, for example sacrificing part of our happiness for the happiness of our children or building something that gives meaning to our life but costs so much emotionally that it reduces our degree of happiness.

Thinking about our lives over the long term of our entire lives opens up the question of the trade-off between immediacy and building for the future and, as far as happiness is concerned, between our present happiness and our future happiness, which is a hoped-for happiness, not a fulfilled happiness. For example, we can sacrifice part of our present happiness to build our future happiness in the hope that our present sacrifices will have positive consequences on our future happiness.

The only time when we can build something is the present, which in itself is infinitely short, but the succession of present times means that we can build things over decades on the scale

of a human lifetime. We can therefore make a trade-off at any given moment between the favour we give to enjoying immediacy and the favour we give to building something for the future, which may be in a few moments or in a few decades, however, it is possible to link present and future happiness. This is what happens when we take pleasure in the journey that takes us to the destination we want.

Note that thinking about our life in its entirety requires us to take into account something we do not know: the length of our life. Generally, when we think about our life as a whole, we can use an estimate of our life expectancy, an estimate that depends on the average life expectancy in the country where we live and on taking into account our specific characteristics: our current age, whether we are male or female, our health, our professional background, etc. We can also take into account whether an accident brings our life to a premature end.

Quiz

1. What is life crafting?
2. What is the difference between life crafting and job crafting?
3. Give an example, if possible a personal one, of life crafting
4. What does life crafting bring in terms of happiness?
5. What are your most important motivations when enjoying leisure activities?
6. Name two typologies of leisure activity
7. What is a harmonious passion? An obsessive passion?
8. What is an ultimate goal?

Answers

1. Life crafting is about redesigning our constrained time in any aspect of our lives.
2. Job crafting is a form of life crafting that differs from life crafting in that it involves redesigning our constrained time at work and not in any other aspect of our lives.
3. Personal response. An example given in the chapter is doing the housework while listening to music to make the activity of cleaning more pleasant/less unpleasant.
4. Life crafting makes it easier to cope with constrained time.
5. Personal response
6. There are two typologies of leisure: 1) active leisure and passive leisure; 2) serious leisure, project-based leisure and casual leisure.
7. A passion is said to be harmonious when we choose when we do our passionate activity and when we do not do it. A passion is said to be obsessive in the opposite case, when we are so caught up in our passion that we would do nothing else if we could, which leads us to carry out the passionate activity even when it is bad for us.
8. Ultimate goals are goals that are much more important than the others. They are central, in small numbers, otherwise they lose their value, and answer the question: "What is really important to me for my life?"
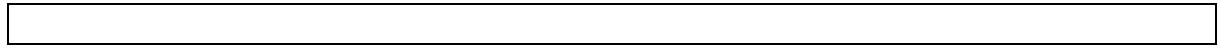
CHAPTER 6: MONEY AND HAPPINESS

"Money doesn't make you happy, but it does contribute to it". This French proverb is correct, although it is possible in some situations to be poor and happy, however, research into the relationship between money and happiness allows us to say much more precise things than this proverb states.

The educational objectives of this chapter are:

- Give you the definitive answer to the question of the relationship between money and happiness
- Give you the secret of people who are both poor and happy
- Give you personal finance elements to promote your happiness
- Explain how to direct your consumption to be happier

The gist of the chapter

The relationship between income and happiness is generally curvilinear. When income is low, an increase in income results in an increase in happiness. From a threshold that varies according to scientific studies, an increase in income hardly or no longer leads to an increase in happiness.

As a result, poverty decreases a person's degree of happiness more than wealth increases it.

The influence of wealth on happiness is at least equal to and often greater than the influence of income on happiness.

A simple model provides a definitive answer to the question of the relationship between money and happiness, and that answer is that money promotes happiness, but there is one condition for money to maximize happiness: being able to make the best decisions. But we are not able to make the best possible decisions to maximize our happiness. We can only try to reduce the gap between the quality of the decisions we make and the best decisions.

Poor people are on average less happy.

There are two conditions for being both poor and happy:
- Have a high degree in the determinants of happiness that are not related to money

- Having a financial level that qualifies us as poor, but which does not reach a level that significantly, negatively influences our happiness

There are at least two principles for reducing suffering in relation to money:
- Have precautionary savings to protect against the unexpected
- To own the goods that provide us with material comfort so that we can, at least in part, be disconnected from financial fluctuations and the risks of supply chain breakdowns

Does money make you happy?

The question of money and happiness can be divided into two questions. The most studied in research is the question of income and money, but the question of the influence of wealth on happiness could be at least as important.

Income and happiness

The relationship between income and happiness is generally curvilinear. When income is low, an increase in income results in an increase in happiness. From a threshold that varies according to scientific studies, an increase in income hardly or no longer leads to an increase in the degree of happiness. This so-called curvilinear relationship between income and happiness appears within countries, when we compare income and happiness of people living within the same country. It also appears when income and happiness are compared between different countries in the world.

These results tend to show that poverty decreases a person's degree of happiness more than wealth increases it. There are, however, some important nuances. It appears that, all else being equal, materialistic people are generally less happy than non-materialistic people. Similarly, all else being equal, people driven by extrinsic motivation - money, status, power - are generally less happy than people driven by intrinsic motivation - self-development, intimacy, community involvement. Simple material living conditions can also be accompanied by happiness. Thus, people who choose voluntary simplicity generally increase their degree of happiness in wealthy societies, and societies with a traditionally simple material life may also have a high degree of happiness.

Among the reasons for these important nuances to the main model of the curvilinear relationship between income and happiness, there is one major one. The most important

psychological function of money in terms of its role in happiness is to provide a buffer against negative events. When this function is provided, then money loses its value[1] .

Wealth and happiness

When we talk about money and happiness, we tend to focus on income. But wealth is more important than income for at least four reasons. Firstly, wealth is less volatile than income. Secondly, wealth is a better indicator of long-term consumption potential and the ability to maintain a standard of living. Thirdly, wealth is a better indicator of social class. Finally, wealth inequality is much more important than income inequality.

The little research that exists on the relationship between wealth and happiness shows that the influence of wealth on happiness is at least equal to and often greater than the influence of income on happiness.

The reasons why the influence of wealth on happiness is generally stronger are that wealth is a better protection than income against negative shocks in life. Wealth can stabilize consumption during periods of economic insecurity, such as unemployment or illness, and this is especially true when the social security system is weak or non-existent. Having assets can also provide a sense of self-fulfilment. Finally, wealth can be constituted in particular by the fact of owning one's home. Owning one's home can in itself have a positive impact on happiness[2] .

The definitive answer to the question of the relationship between money and happiness

The answers we have just seen to the question of whether money makes people happy are answers from statistical studies. A key limitation of statistical studies is that they attempt to show what is, but cannot necessarily show what could be.

I am going to put an end to the debate between money and happiness with the help of a simple, but very meaningful model.

Imagine two people who are able to perfectly predict their future happiness based on the decisions they make or don't make and are therefore able to maximize their future happiness through their decisions. Imagine that the only thing that distinguishes these two people is that one does not need to work for a living because of a sufficient endowment of wealth, while the other does. The first person will therefore have no constraints and will be able to maximize his or her future happiness by using both his or her ability to make decisions that maximize his or her future happiness and his or her freedom to use all of his or her time to the best

[1] Gaucher, R. (2012). Happiness and public policy. L'Harmattan
[2] Brulé, G., & Suter, C. (2019). Why wealth matters more than income for subjective well-being? In G. Brûlé & C. Sutter (Eds.), *Wealth (s) and subjective well-being* (pp. 1-13). Springer

advantage. The second person will also be able to maximize, but this maximization will be under constraint, the constraint of not being able to use all of his or her time to the best advantage, which will reduce the happiness he or she will obtain throughout his or her life. In the end, in this model, wealth buys the freedom to use all of one's time, which allows individuals maximize happiness without constraints.

In reality, no one can make decisions that they are sure will maximize future happiness, however, the little model I have just presented shows you one thing. Money promotes happiness, but only on one condition: one must be able to make the best possible decisions to maximize one's happiness.

We do not have the capacity to make the best possible decisions to maximize our happiness. Our only capacity is to make the decisions that seem best at the time we make them. We can only try to reduce the gap between the quality of the decisions we make and the best decisions that exist, which we may sometimes make, but which we will never know are the best.

One of the ways to reduce this gap is to develop your knowledge of the science of happiness, which is what you are doing here.

If you are not wealthy, wealth being defined here as having enough money to use all your time as you wish, the question to ask yourself is: is making efforts to increase my level of wealth one of the most effective ways to increase my degree of happiness or are there other ways that are more effective in my case?

The consequences in terms of public policy

It should be noted that better organized human societies could allow the vast majority of us to have a sufficient level of material wealth with much less effort and without seeking to exploit the labour of others.

This would involve an economy in which we seek to increase capital productivity. Capital, in economics, is all the goods intended for the production of new goods. For example, the machines in a factory are capital. Capital productivity is the ratio of the quantity produced to the capital needed to produce that quantity. Capital productivity generally increases with the use of machinery and energy.

Capital is not the only factor of production. There is also labour, which is done by human beings, and land, which is often forgotten as a factor of production by traditional economists and is today a dangerously overexploited factor of production. Labour productivity is the ratio between the quantity produced and the human labour required to produce that quantity. It is possible to increase labour productivity, but this increase is marginal compared to the increase in capital productivity. Moreover, the increase in labour productivity, which is materialized by an intensification of work, can generate a lot of suffering at work, including burnout.

The difficulty with a policy of increasing capital productivity in a competitive economy, which is how the economy works today, is that it results in a small handful of people having a lot and

the majority having very little. Indeed, if firms are encouraged to automate their production processes to reduce the amount of human labour required to achieve the same level of output, then there will be less work for those without capital and more wealth for those who are already rich because they have capital.

This is why an economy that serves the happiness of everyone is not an economy of competition, but an economy of cooperation and mutual aid, where this cooperation and mutual aid are characterized in particular by the sharing of access to capital, a sharing that can only be slightly unequal if it is relevant in terms of financial incentives, but no more.

The secret of people who are both poor and happy

What does it mean to be poor?

There are different approaches to defining poverty. The best known approach is the monetary approach. In this approach, a person is poor if their income is below a certain threshold. This threshold can be defined in absolute terms - a sum of money - or in relative terms - a percentage of median or average income. The poverty criterion chosen is not always income, it can also be consumption. Consumption gives a more reliable picture of the monetary reality of poverty, but because of the widespread availability of income data, income is often the preferred measure in studies.

The monetary approach to poverty is a unidimensional approach: it takes into account only one dimension to define poverty and this dimension is the monetary dimension. Today, the preferred approaches to defining and understanding poverty are multidimensional. Poverty cannot be reduced to a monetary or even a material phenomenon. The multidimensional approaches to poverty make it possible to take into account its social dimension, which can be expressed through characteristics such as autonomy, respect, self-esteem or dignity.

However, as this chapter focuses on money and happiness, then I will use the most familiar approach to poverty here, monetary poverty. Moreover, it is the approach that is most prevalent in people's minds and the approach that is most studied in relation to happiness by researchers.

Poor people are on average less happy

The image of the poor person in a poor country who is nevertheless happy, or even happier than a person living in a rich country, is generally false. I don't want to take specific examples so as not to single out any country, but if you look at the data on the World Database of Happiness founded by Professor Ruut Veenhoven (https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/) you will see that generally the degree of happiness in rich countries is higher and even much

higher than the degree of happiness in poor countries. There are countries where the degree of happiness on a scale of 0-10 is about 4 and countries where it is 8. It is better to be born in a country where the population has an average happiness endowment of 8 than an average endowment of 4. Moreover, in addition to inequalities in happiness, there are other inequalities, notably in the length of life.

The conditions for being poor and happy

It is possible to be poor and happy, poverty being defined here in monetary terms. To understand this possibility, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of determinants of happiness: those determinants of happiness that are related to money and those that are not.

In this perspective, to be happy while poor, two conditions must be met. The first is to have a high degree in the determinants of happiness that are not related to money, whether they are determinants at a personal level or determinants at the level of the functioning of the society to which one belongs.

The second is to have a financial level that qualifies us as poor, but which does not reach a level that significantly, negatively influences our happiness. This is what can happen when basic needs are met, their future satisfaction is not threatened and the life we lead is in line with the life we want.

Personal finance and happiness

I will only discuss the relationship between personal finance and happiness from the perspective of suffering and the reduction of suffering.

Lack of money and financial difficulties are a major source of suffering. This can be seen very clearly in the fact that people in poor countries are on average less happy than people in rich countries and that in rich countries poor people[1] are on average less happy than rich people.

A first principle of personal finance is to have precautionary savings to protect against the unexpected. This principle implies either being able to keep savings safely at home or being able to keep them safely elsewhere, which is usually the case when you have access to a bank account.

A second principle is to own the assets that provide us with material comfort so that we can, at least in part, be disconnected from financial fluctuations, including the risk of hyperinflation, and from the risks of disruption in supply chains. This can therefore go well

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[1] Beware: the notion of poverty does not mean the same thing in the poorest and richest countries. Some poor people in rich countries would not be considered and counted as poor in poor countries.

beyond owning one's own home and mean having a home that is self-sufficient in water, heat and electricity, food and non-food reserves, and even owning some land to produce part of one's own food and having the skills and tools necessary for this type of living, however, this principle can have two disadvantages: a reduction in the comfort in which it is possible to live, as the benefits of what economists call the division of labour are reduced, and a reduction in mobility.

The interest of the two principles mentioned is to protect oneself against difficult situations and the negative emotions that these situations could generate. These two principles also provide peace of mind in normal times.

How to direct your consumption to be happier

In a world where most of humanity is in survival, there is something indecent about talking about ways to direct one's consumption to be happier. I write a section on this point, however, because the idea of this book is to give an overview of questions about happiness.

Dunn, Gilbert and Wilson (2011) wrote a scientific paper entitled "If money doesn't make you happy, you're probably spending it wrong"[1]. In this article, the three researchers highlight eight principles for how money spent by consumers promotes their happiness.

Before I introduce these eight principles, I want to warn you about one thing: Dunn, Gilbert and Wilson do not define happiness as liking the life one leads. They consider that a momentary increase in positive emotions, repeated or not, can be considered happiness., however, most of the moments we experience are irrelevant to our degree of happiness defined as liking the life one leads, and liking the life one leads is a deeper phenomenon than a momentary increase in positive emotions, even if these momentary emotions are momentarily pleasant.

Let us now look at the eight principles.

The first principle is to buy experiences rather than objects. There are two reasons for this. The first is that we adapt to things very quickly. The new house will not stay new for long. The same goes for the new car or the new dress. The second reason is that we think more before and after the purchase about the experiences we have than about the objects we own.

The second principle is to help others rather than yourself. We humans are the most social animals on the planet and the quality of our social relationships is a major determinant of our happiness. Spending money on another person improves the relationship with the other person. For example, giving a gift to a partner significantly increases the feeling that the relationship will last a long time and lead to marriage. Spending money on another person also improves one's self-image. However, be careful not to be the one who systematically or

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[1] Dunn, E. W., Gilbert, D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2011). If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *21*(2), 115-125.

almost systematically offers something in a relationship. You don't need perfect reciprocity to have a good relationship, but you do need some reciprocity.

The third principle is to buy many small pleasures rather than one big one. There are two reasons for this principle. Firstly, we adapt emotionally faster to large, rare and expensive pleasures than to frequent small pleasures. The temporal discontinuity between small pleasures reduces the influence of hedonic adaptation. Secondly, we prefer pleasures that are spread out over time rather than concentrated in a single moment. For example, if we like chocolate, we will generally prefer to eat one square of chocolate every day of the week rather than seven squares on the same day.

The fourth principle is to buy less insurance. Dunn, Gilbert and Wilson propose this principle partly because we tend to underestimate our ability to adapt to difficult situations, however, I would like to make an important caveat. In my view, the issue of insurance is not a question of happiness, but a question of legal and economic protection. When it comes to protecting people or the risk of losing something that represents a significant investment given our financial capabilities, such as losing one's home in a fire, then having insurance is essential.

The fifth principle is to pay now and consume later. This is the opposite of what is proposed in the consumer society, where it is proposed to consume now and pay later. By consuming later, we anticipate consumption, which brings us a free source of pleasure. Imagine that tomorrow you are going to eat a wonderful meal, you are going to think about this meal before it takes place and these moments of anticipation are going to bring you pleasure, a surplus of pleasure that you would not have had if you had eaten this wonderful meal now.

The sixth principle is to think about what you don't think about. Happiness can be in the details and a good idea can turn out to be a bad idea because we didn't think about the details beforehand. When we buy something, it is interesting to think about how our purchase will influence the way we spend our time. Let's take buying a house as an example. A large house may seem like a better purchase than a small house, but the large house will require more maintenance, which means more time maintaining it and less time doing things that are likely to be more enjoyable.

The seventh principle is to be aware of the biases that comparison shopping can produce. Comparison shopping is the act of buying a product by comparing different products available. This type of shopping is facilitated by the multitude of websites available, however, this way of buying has a cost: it can take the consumer away from the product attributes that can promote their emotional state by making them focus their attention on the attributes that differentiate the products from each other. In other words, two products can be different, but have the same emotional impact, because what counts is not what distinguishes them, but their similarities.

The eighth and final principle presented by Dunn, Gilbert and Wilson (2011) is to follow the crowd rather than follow your head. The best way to predict how positive our consumer experience will be is to look at how positive others' consumer experiences have been.

To these eight principles I would like to add a ninth principle: consider the value of products that promote our time abundance. There are activities that give pleasure in themselves, others that we would like to avoid. Any good that reduces the time spent on an activity we dislike and thus frees up time for an activity we enjoy is a product that promotes, at least momentarily, an increase in our positive emotions.

Quiz

1. What is the general relationship between income and happiness? What does this mean for poverty and money?
2. What about the relationship between wealth and happiness?
3. What does the small model presented in the chapter tell us to conclude the debate on money and happiness?
4. What are the two conditions for being both poor and happy?
5. What are the two principles for reducing suffering in relation to money?

Answers

1. The relationship between income and happiness is generally curvilinear. Consequently, poverty decreases a person's degree of happiness more than wealth increases it
2. The influence of wealth on happiness is at least equal to and often greater than the influence of income on happiness
3. Money promotes happiness, but there is one condition for money to maximize happiness: that we are able to make the best decisions
4. There are two conditions for being both poor and happy: having a high degree in the determinants of happiness that are not related to money and having a financial level that qualifies us as poor, but that does not reach a level that significantly, negatively influences our happiness
5. There are at least two principles for reducing suffering in relation to money: having precautionary savings to protect against the unexpected, and owning the things that give us material comfort so that we can be at least partly disconnected from financial fluctuations and the risks of supply chain breakdowns

CHAPTER 7: CHANGING YOUR PERSONALITY TO BE HAPPIER

If our happiness depends on our environment, it also depends on who we are, on our personality. Certain personality traits, in particular, tend to promote happiness, whereas others tend to promote unhappiness. Although it is difficult to change one's personality, especially in adulthood, it is not impossible and it is possible to develop personality traits that will enhance our future happiness.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Give you the basic elements that promote emotional stability
- Give you the basic elements that promote self-esteem
- Make you think about the value of understanding extraversion and introversion as strategies rather than personality traits
- Make you think about the value of understanding optimism and pessimism as strategies rather than personality traits
- Help you discover the basic elements of the unconscious and its discovering

The gist of the chapter

Personality is a set of psychological tendencies that a human being exhibits on a relatively regular basis across a wide variety of situations and contexts. A personality trait is used to describe one of these tendencies.

Certain personality traits promote happiness, including emotional stability, self-esteem, extraversion and optimism.

Emotional stability is a personality trait characterized by the tendency to experience few negative emotions or to regulate them well in contexts that favour the emergence of negative emotions.

Self-esteem can be defined as an evaluation of ourselves that takes into account how much we value ourselves. Self-esteem reflects a perception, not a reality. It is not necessarily related to an objective evaluation.

Extroverts are people who prefer to be outward looking and seek social contact and new situations, while introverts are people who prefer to be inward looking.

The idea is not to try to favour extroversion over introversion, or the other way round, but to be able to switch from one attitude to another: to be able to be extroverted when you want to be and to be able to be introverted when you want to be.

When we make decisions, we cannot do so knowing all the ins and outs of the decision. The optimistic person tends to think more that difficult situations will be resolved in a positive way in the future, while the pessimistic person tends to think more that situations will be resolved in a negative way.

It is possible to consider optimism and pessimism as strategies. It is then a question of choosing the most effective strategy in a given situation, i.e. being optimistic in situations where optimism favours the best consequences and being pessimistic in situations where pessimism favours the best consequences.

To evolve one's personality, especially when some of its elements are a pain, may require digging deep within oneself. Most of the psychic phenomena that animate us are unconscious and these unconscious psychic phenomena have a great importance in our life and our happiness when it comes to the influence we have on our happiness.

It is possible to make part of our unconscious conscious. This is done through an accompanied journey that can be called psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. It is a difficult journey.

Travelling into one's unconscious means accepting suffering now in the hope of suffering less later, or even being happier. Emotions play a major role in uncovering the unconscious: they inspire the subjects to be delved into during the journey and they generally allow us to validate or invalidate the ideas that come to us about our buried past.

Personality traits that promote happiness

Personality is a set of psychological tendencies that a human being exhibits on a relatively regular basis across a wide variety of situations and contexts. A personality trait is used to describe one of these tendencies. The concepts of personality and personality traits can be used to describe, analyse or predict a person's behaviour. While each person is different, the same personality trait can be a common tendency for many people.

Certain personality traits seem to be more conducive to being happy. These include emotional stability, self-esteem, extraversion and optimism[1] .

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[1] Gaucher, R. (2010). *Positive psychology or the scientific study of the best of ourselves*. L'Harmattan

Personality traits tend to be very stable, however, these traits can change under the influence of external conditions and it is also possible to voluntarily change these traits. Coaching or psychotherapy are useful ways of changing one's personality with the help of a third party, the coach or psychotherapist. It is also possible to evolve these personality traits with the help of exercises that could be advised by a coach or psychotherapist. For example, an introvert who suffers from introversion can reduce their introversion by participating in and enjoying social events. The repetition and increase in the frequency and duration of such participation and enjoyment will gradually change the personality towards less introversion and more extroversion. A person who suffers from feeling emotionally unstable can find a way to reduce this suffering and instability through meditation.

Although a lasting way to be happier is to change certain personality traits, it should not be assumed that just because a personality trait is not conducive to happiness, it should necessarily be changed. Traits like pessimism and introversion have their advantages. Pessimistic people tend to take fewer risks, which protects them better in certain situations. Introverts tend to have a richer personal world and are more creative. Seeking to change one's personality makes more sense when one suffers from a personality characteristic than when one is already happy and seeking to be happier.

Let us look at how to develop some of the personality traits that make it easier to be a little happier, or a little less unhappy. These traits are emotional stability, self-esteem, extraversion and optimism.

Developing emotional stability

Emotional stability is a personality trait characterized by the tendency to experience few negative emotions or to regulate them well in contexts that favour the emergence of negative emotions.

We have seen several ways in which emotional stability can be promoted. The effective emotional regulation strategies seen in Chapter 2 promote emotional stability. Meditation, seen in Chapters 2 and 4, promotes emotional stability. The resource-based strategies seen in Chapter 4 in the context of improving resilience promote emotional stability. Coping strategies, also seen in Chapter 4, whether problem-focused or emotion-focused, promote emotional stability. All of these strategies will help you develop emotional stability and reduce emotional instability, if that is your goal. However, it is important to consider which ones are most relevant to your situation.

Developing self-esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as an evaluation we make of ourselves that takes into consideration how much we value ourselves, how valuable we consider ourselves to be. Thus, having high self-esteem means that we have a very positive perception of ourselves.

Self-esteem is not necessarily linked to objective reality and objective evaluation. It is possible to have low self-esteem while being a good person with high achievements in a difficult context. It is also possible to have high self-esteem, while being a bad person with no achievements, while the context in which one grew up and lives is favourable. Self-esteem reflects a perception, not a reality.

Having a good self-esteem has a buffering effect against certain negative experiences such as social rejection or failure in a project.

Describing the characteristics of people with high and low self-esteem provides a basis for working on developing self-esteem.

In general, people with high self-esteem prioritize self-improvement goals over self-preservation. Following a threat to their self-esteem, people with high self-esteem seek to boost their self-esteem, while people with low self-esteem seek to protect themselves from further loss of self-esteem.

People with high self-esteem have a different way of regulating their sense of security in response to a threat to their self-esteem. They seek positive consequences such as experiencing positive emotions or obtaining social rewards rather than trying to avoid negative consequences such as rejection and loss of self-esteem. They are quicker to use their strengths, are more likely to reject the validity of negative feedback, are more likely to use the self-indulgence bias, which is a bias where we take credit for our successes but not for our failures and which is a bias that facilitates maintaining higher self-esteem.

People with low self-esteem tend to lack the resources and confidence to deal with threats to their self-esteem. They tend to try less to improve their mood after a failure in everyday life. They are more likely to generalize a failure in one area to other areas. There are fewer positive aspects to the image they have from themselves. They have difficulties to have positive ideas about themselves[1] .

We have talked here about self-esteem in general, but for the same person self-esteem can vary from one life domain to another. One can have high self-esteem in one domain and low self-esteem in another. The strategies implemented in the first domain will not be those implemented in the other domain. It can be interesting to build on domains of high self-esteem to strengthen self-esteem in domains of low self-esteem. If we can have good self-esteem in one domain, perhaps we can also have good self-esteem in a domain where self-esteem is low.

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[1] Park, L. E., & Crocker, J. (2013). Pursuing self-esteem: Implications for self-regulation and relationships. In V. Zeigler-Hill (Ed.), *Self-esteem* (pp. 43-59). Psychology Press

Should one be extrovert?

Extroverts are people who prefer to be outward looking and seek social contact and new situations, while introverts are people who prefer to be inward looking. The extrovert is sociable and talkative while the introvert is quiet and emotionally reserved.

Extraversion and introversion are therefore two opposite attitudes, but they belong to the same continuum. The fact that we talk about extroverts and introverts should not make us forget that the situation is not binary. One can be more or less extroverted or more or less introverted. One can also be extroverted in some contexts and introverted in other contexts.

Extroverts tend to be happier and this is one of the reasons why extroversion as a personality trait is emphasized when talking about happiness. Social skills are a fundamental factor in understanding why extroverts are on average happier than introverts[1] . People who are strong in verbal and non-verbal communication and people who are rewarding are more accepted. Fortunately, as we will see in Chapter 7, and more specifically in its section on friendship, social skills can be learned.

Introversion also has its advantages. It allows us to develop a richer inner world and makes it easier to carry out certain projects. For example, to write the book you are reading now, you need an introverted attitude, because the book is the result of thousands of hours of study, which are solitary hours of reading and reflection.

In order to benefit from the advantages of both extroversion and introversion, the idea is not to try to favour one attitude over another, but to be able to switch from one attitude to another: to be able to be extroverted when you want to be and to be able to be introverted when you want to be. Of course, some people will prefer to spend more time in an extroverted attitude and others more time in an introverted attitude, but what is important is to be able, if you want, to have the best of both worlds. For introverts, this involves developing social skills and enjoying relationships with others. For extroverts, it involves enjoying solitude and developing personal projects.

Should one be optimistic?

Let us imagine that two people are experiencing exactly the same uncertain situations. The optimistic person will tend to think more that the situations will be resolved positively in the future, while the pessimistic person will tend to think more that the situations will be resolved negatively.

When we make decisions, we cannot do so knowing all the ins and outs of the decision. Even for the most carefully considered decisions, we take shortcuts and uncertainties remain.

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[1] Argyle, M., & Lu, L. (1990). The happiness of extraverts. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *11*(10), 1011-1017.

Optimism colours the decisions of optimistic people by giving them a sense of confidence in the future.

Optimism and pessimism are therefore two opposing attitudes, but they belong to the same continuum. The fact that we talk about optimistic and pessimistic people should not make us forget that the situation is not binary. One can be more or less optimistic, one can be more or less pessimistic. We can be optimistic in some contexts because of our personal history and pessimistic in other contexts because of our personal history.

Being optimistic has various advantages. Optimists are on average happier than pessimists. Optimists generally experience fewer moments of distress after a negative event than pessimists. Optimists are more comfortable with bad news, negative feedback and difficulties in social and intimate relationships. In addition, optimists and pessimists have different coping strategies. Optimists are more focused on problems. When this strategy is not possible, optimists opt for acceptance strategies, humour and try to give a positive view of the situation. Pessimists prefer denial and disengagement, or even drug use. Another feature of optimists is that they are much more stable in the use of their coping strategies than pessimists. This can be explained by the fact that optimists' coping strategies work better, so they are less likely to need to change them.

Optimism has, however, important disadvantages. Firstly, being pessimistic can in some situations reduce the likelihood of experiencing certain negative events. For example, being pessimistic when driving can reduce the risk of having an accident, because you are both more careful about your driving and the driving of others. Optimism can foster a sense of invulnerability that can be dangerous. Secondly, an optimistic person may be more vulnerable to the negative consequences of an event when they thought it would go well[1] .

One possibility is to consider optimism and pessimism as strategies. This involves choosing the most effective strategy in a given situation, i.e. being optimistic in situations where optimism favours the best consequences and being pessimistic in situations where pessimism favours the best consequences. Put another way, the default strategy should be optimism, as this is the strategy that is generally best, but it should always be asked whether a pessimistic strategy might be better. In some situations, a mixture of the two might even be best. For example, fighting for something to succeed as an optimist, but thinking as a pessimist that it will not succeed in order to protect oneself emotionally from possible failure.

Unconscious and happiness

Changing one's personality, especially when some of its elements are a pain, may require digging deep within oneself.

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[1] Tennen, H. & Affleck, G. (1987). The costs and benefits of optimistic explanations and dispositional optimism. *Journal of Personality*, 55, 377-393.

The unconscious is the inaccessible part of the psychic functioning of every human being, whether this inaccessibility is permanent or temporary. Most of the psychic phenomena that animate us are unconscious and these unconscious psychic phenomena have a great importance in our life and happiness when it comes to the influence we have on our happiness.

It is possible to make part of our unconscious conscious. This is done through an accompanied journey that can be called psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. It is a difficult journey. A reason is that our unconscious is made up of elements of our life that we have repressed, i.e. elements that we have voluntarily tried to forget and to hide from ourselves, in particular when we were little children. Another reason is that we generally make the journey because these repressed elements act on our lives and make us suffer without us knowing what they are and why they are the cause of this suffering. One has to be very strong to make such a journey or one has to suffer so much that the journey and its success become obligatory or almost obligatory. Travelling into one's unconscious means accepting suffering now in the hope of suffering less later, or even being happier.

When one makes such a journey, what is perhaps most astonishing is to become aware of the smallness of consciousness compared to the immensity of the unconscious. Consciousness seems like a frail skiff on an almost infinite ocean. This discovery can also be a point of support for continuing the journey despite its difficulty.

Emotions play a major role in uncovering the unconscious. Firstly, it is generally our emotions that inspire us to dig into the subjects of the journey. Secondly, it is the emotions that generally allow us to validate or invalidate the ideas that come to us about our buried past.

Self-analysis is travelling unaccompanied in the discovery of one's unconscious. Normally, this is not recommended, as travelling accompanied with a therapist has significant benefits, including the therapist's guidance, their ability to take a step back, the fact that we project our past relationships onto the therapist, and that the therapist can use these projections to help us. In addition, when the therapist is a psychiatrist, they can also prescribe medication and inform us that in some cases psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy is not recommended because it is dangerous.

Psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy are services that only wealthy people can afford or that only wealthy countries can provide to their populations. That is why, when psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy is not financially possible and there are no contraindications, it may still be worthwhile to embark on self-analysis rather than doing nothing. Books can help with this, both theoretical books and books that talk about the experience of the journey itself.

Quiz

1. Name 2 personality traits that tend to promote happiness?
2. What is emotional stability?

3. What is self-esteem?
4. What is the major difference between extroverts and introverts?
5. Is it better to be extroverted or introverted?
6. What is the major difference between optimists and pessimists?
7. Is it better to be optimistic or pessimistic?
8. What is the nature of most psychic phenomena?
9. What is the role of emotions in the discovery of the unconscious?

Answers

1. Certain personality traits promote happiness, including emotional stability, self-esteem, extraversion and optimism
2. Emotional stability is a personality trait characterized by the tendency to experience few negative emotions or to regulate them well in contexts that favour the emergence of negative emotions
3. Self-esteem can be defined as an evaluation of ourselves that takes into account how much we value ourselves. Self-esteem reflects a perception, not a reality. It is not necessarily related to an objective evaluation
4. Extroverts are people who prefer to be outward looking, while introverts are people who prefer to be inward looking
5. Both. Being able to be extroverted when you want to be and being able to be introverted when you want to be
6. When we make decisions, we cannot do so knowing all the ins and outs of the decision. The optimistic person tends to think more that difficult situations will be resolved positively in the future, while the pessimistic person tends to think more that situations will be resolved negatively
7. It is possible to consider optimism and pessimism as strategies. It is then a matter of choosing the most effective strategy in a given situation, i.e. being optimistic in situations where optimism favours the best consequences and being pessimistic in situations where pessimism favours the best consequences
8. They are unconscious
9. Emotions inspire subjects to dig deeper during discovery and generally validate or invalidate ideas that come to us about our buried past

CHAPTER 8: FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, CHILDREN AND HAPPINESS

This chapter is about close relationships – friendships, loves, relationship to children – in relation to happiness. The connection between children and happiness can be seen from two angles. The first angle is the influence of children on the happiness of parents. The second is what parents can do to help their children be happy.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Give you a foundation for developing strong and lasting friendships
- Give you a foundation for developing a happy and lasting love relationship
- Explain how children can influence parents' happiness, which is useful to know especially if one is thinking about having a child
- Explain how parents can influence their children's happiness

The gist of the chapter

Friendships are often made in the context of pleasant activities, with the aim of having a good time, laughing and being together. There are no constraints on friends living together, unlike what usually happens in families.

Making friends means not waiting for the other person to make the first move, not just talking about the weather, talking about personal things, sharing good and bad times, being trustworthy, tolerant, supportive, developing a relationship of reciprocity.

Women are more likely than men to look for a partner who has characteristics that signal good resource capacity, while men are more likely than women to look for a partner who has characteristics that signal good reproductive capacity.

Among the factors that make a love happy are
- Certain personality traits such as agreeableness, emotional stability, awareness and openness to experience
- The fact that the partners have similar personality traits
- Attribution. Happy couples are often couples where each tends to see the other's positive behaviours as being due to the other's qualities and the negative behaviours as being due to the situation
- Positive illusions. Seeing the relationship in pink helps the relationship to be really pink

- The quality of communication. The happiest couples in their relationship are those who help each other more, laugh more together, avoid negative remarks and agree best on a wide variety of issues
- The quality of non-verbal communication. Partners circle each other more and make more small gestures towards each other

Gottman and Levenson (2000) followed couples for fourteen years, asking them to complete questionnaires and observing them in discussions. Their longitudinal study found that the level of marital satisfaction, the presence of negative affect during conflict, the lack of positive affect in daily life, the number of times they thought about divorce, the number of unpleasant memories, and a particular mode of communication, where one asks the other to change and the other refuses to do so, predicted future divorce by more than 90%.

Factors that make a love relationship last include
- Friendship in love
- Seeing one's partner as the ideal partner
- Quality in conflict management
- Self-development through relationship development

Having children can reduce the level of happiness of parents. There is usually a peak of happiness with the birth of a child, but soon the stresses that the arrival of a child creates reduce this happiness and people who do not have children are on average a little happier than people who have children.

If there is a decline in parental happiness, it does not affect all parents. This is particularly the case when parents continue to show each other affection and to give their couple attention despite the demands of the child. The financial cost of having children could be a major reason why having children does not improve and often decreases parental happiness.

Parents have a strong influence on the happiness of their children. Beyond material security, they can promote their child's happiness through the development of secure attachment, authoritative parenting (parenting style marked by a high level of control and a high level of affection), positive control, accommodation of their child's growing desires for independence and introducing them to the science of happiness.

Friendship

Friendships are often made in the context of pleasant activities, with the aim of having a good time, laughing and being together. There are no constraints on friends living together, unlike in families.

Rules for building a strong friendship exist. Argyle and Henderson[1] have studied these rules. A friend is supportive, trustworthy, a source of fun and humour, and tolerant. Supportive means being helpful in times of need, expressing emotional support, standing up for one's friend in their absence. Being trustworthy means respecting the other person's privacy, trusting them, keeping their confidences, not criticizing them in public. Being a source of fun and humour means striving to make them happy, joking, sharing good news. Being tolerant means not being jealous or critical of their relationships, being tolerant of their other relationships, accepting their faults.

Peterson and Steen conducted a study reported by Peterson[2] . The two researchers obtained responses from 289 people via the Internet to a series of questions about the characteristics of the best friend they had in their lives. For men, this friend is often a man; for women, often a woman. This friend is often close in age. The qualities recognized in this friend are most often reliability, honesty, loyalty, commitment, kindness, tenderness, fun and playfulness. The idea that this friend brings out the best in you is also often cited. Status, physical attractiveness, health, skills, ambitions and achievements are not generally considered important.

Some friends can turn out to be bad friends. What characterizes bad friends is that they violate the principle of reciprocity that characterizes most friendships. This brings us back to the theory of equity, which, applied to close relationships, states that close relationships between two people, whether friendship or love, last if each believes that what they get out of the relationship is equivalent to what they give.

There are differences between women and men in friendship. Women are more open to confidence, affection and moral support. Men are more oriented towards sharing common activities such as sports.

Friendships evolve with age. The word 'friend' enters children's vocabulary at around three or four years of age, when their peers begin to take up some space in their lives. At this age, friendships are concrete, based on shared activities. Teenagers often distinguish between different levels of friendship. Adolescent friendships are marked by shared activities, but also by moral support and sharing of confidences. Adolescent friendships take time, a time that is greatly reduced in adulthood. As we grow older, the moral support that friendships can provide becomes increasingly important.

Extraversion and social skills make friendships easier and more numerous. The extraverts' non-verbal communication is better: they smile more, look more, touch more and speak in friendlier voices. Their social skills are better, they are more cooperative. Their activities are also more oriented towards fun and meeting people. When we compare the behaviour of a

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[1] Argyle, M., & Henderson, M. (1984). The rules of friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1*(2), 211-237.

[2] Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. Oxford University Press.

pair of extroverts who do not know each other and who are placed next to each other and a pair of introverts in the same situation, it appears that extroverts talk a lot to each other while introverts do not talk or talk little[1] .

It is possible to have many friends, spend a lot of time with them and still feel lonely[2] . This is usually the result of conversations that only focus on impersonal topics such as music, clothes or sports instead of also including one's experiences, joys and problems. This is why close friends, those with whom one talks about personal things, are important.

In the end, making friends means not waiting for the other person to make the first move, not just talking about the weather, talking about personal things, sharing good and bad times, being trustworthy, tolerant, supportive, developing a relationship of reciprocity.

Love and relationship

The love encounter

Professor David Buss wrote a scientific paper that is still a reference in the study of male and female preferences for romantic partners[3] . The article investigates the situation in 37 different cultures. The study shows that women are more likely than men to look for a partner who has characteristics that indicate good resource capacity, while men are more likely than women to look for a partner who has characteristics that indicate good reproductive capacity. Characteristics that indicate an ability to acquire resources include existing financial capacity, ambition and diligence at work. Characteristics that indicate good reproductive capacity are essentially youth and physical attractiveness.

These differences in love partner preferences have consequences for each gender. Men compete more for resources and women compete more on their physical attractiveness. These differences are probably the consequence of different constraints for women and men in the evolutionary perspective.

Beyond this evolutionary perspective, love stories are fostered by certain factors: proximity, physical attraction, attitudinal similarity and the exchange of positive evaluations and reciprocity. Proximity means that the two people spend a lot of time next to each other. Physical attraction is not as important a factor as one might think, but at first, when one does not know much about the other, its importance is greater. The similarity of attitudes attracts

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[1] Thorne, A. (1987). The press of personality: a study of conversation between introverts and extroverts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 718-726.

[2] Wheeler, L., Reis, H., & Nezlek, J. (1983). Loneliness, social interaction and social roles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 943- 953.

[3] Buss, D. M. (1989). Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypotheses tested in 37 cultures. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *12*(1), 1-14.

and tends to persist in the lives of couples. Reciprocity here is the fact that we attract and are attracted to those who show us that they like us.

What makes love happy

What makes a love relationship happy? This question is interesting both for building a happy relationship and for trying to make a relationship that is not or no longer happy.

Personality traits influence the quality of the relationship. When men and women are asked to name the most desirable traits, the most cited are trust, integrity, warmth, kindness, intelligence, reliability, emotional stability, loyalty, humour and tenderness. When looking at studies on the subject, traits such as agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness and openness to experience appear. Furthermore, the fact that partners have similar personality traits is a good predictor of couple satisfaction.

Attribution is the tendency to attribute behaviours and events to a particular cause. In a romantic relationship, attribution is the way in which we give causes to the behaviours of our partner. Happy couples are often couples where each tends to see the other's positive behaviours as being due to the other's qualities and the negative behaviours as being due to the situation[1] . Attributing the good to the other and the bad to the situation helps to strengthen the couple, but it is usually unintentional reinforcement. Attribution processes are usually automatic thinking processes.

It is said that "love is blind". This saying means that lovers have positive illusions about each other and that these positive illusions fade over time. In fact, positive illusions promote the success of a relationship: seeing the relationship as pink promotes the fact that the relationship will really be pink. Furthermore, some illusions can be linked to higher self-esteem. People with high self-esteem tend to be more optimistic and positive and subsequently tend to see their partner in a more favourable light, which promotes their relationship and validates their optimism[2] .

The quality of communication is an essential factor in the quality of a relationship. The happiest couples in their relationship are those who help each other more, laugh more together, avoid negative remarks and agree best on a wide variety of issues. Expressing gratitude to each other is also beneficial to the couple. The happiest couples also have a special kind of non-verbal communication. Partners circle each other more and have more small gestures towards each other. Love is expressed through these frequent little things rather than through extraordinary acts.

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[1] Bradbury, T.N. & Fincham, F.D. (1990) Attributions in marriage: Review and critique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 3-33.

[2] Murray, S.L. & Holmes, J.G. (1997). A leap of faith? Positive illusions in romantic relationships, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 586-604.

What makes a relationship last

A relationship that lasts is not necessarily a happy relationship. Economic conditions, social norms or having children can make a relationship that both partners find very unsatisfying last. So how does one keep a happy relationship happy and lasting?

When listening to long-lasting couples, there are certain ideas that come to the fore: "my partner is my best friend"; "I value my partner as a person"; "I think marriage is a long-term commitment"; "we agree on the goals"; "my partner has become more and more interesting over the years"; "I want the relationship to succeed"; "marriage is a sacred institution". The relationships of long-lasting couples have experienced difficulties, but the spouses have accepted that there are ups and downs and differences between them[1] .

When we study couples that last, we find that friendship in love is essential to the satisfaction and durability of the couple. This friendship is expressed through affection, tenderness, admiration and interest in the life of the other. Seeing one's partner as one's ideal partner is also conducive to the continuity of the couple. A positive attributional style, attributing the positive to the other and not attributing the negative to him or her, is also a good predictor of success for the couple.

Gottman and Levenson[2] followed couples for fourteen years, asking them to complete questionnaires and observing them in discussions. Their longitudinal study found that the level of marital satisfaction, the presence of negative affect during conflict, the lack of positive affect in daily life, the number of times they thought about divorce, the number of unpleasant memories, and a particular mode of communication, where one asks the other to change and the other refuses, predicted future divorce by more than 90%.

A love relationship does not exist without some conflict. The number of conflicts is less important than the way they are managed, but when they are poorly managed, the repercussions can be devastating. Indeed, negative behaviours are more important to the satisfaction and stability of a couple than positive behaviours. Gottman (1994)[3] estimates that one destructive act can negate the effect of five acts of kindness.

Self-development through the development of the love relationship can lead to the sustainability of the relationship. A romantic relationship can bring about self-development: it can lead to self-exploration, emotional risk-taking, and a better understanding of oneself and the other. Difficulties can be the source of these changes. The birth of a child, difficulties at work, one's own desires, all these and many other things can be a challenge that leads to personal development. Through their thoughts, emotions and way of being, the other person can also improve us without us going through difficulties.

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[1] Lauer, R.H., Lauer, J.C. & Kerr, S.T. (1990). The long-term marriage: Perceptions of stability and satisfaction, *International Journal of Aging and Human Development,* 31, 189-195
[2] Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14-year period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *62*(3), 737-745.
[3] Gottman, J. (1994). Why marriages succeed or fail. Simon & Schuster.

Children

The issue of children and happiness can be seen from two angles: the influence of children on the happiness of parents and what parents can do to make their child happy.

Does having children make parents happy?

The impact of children on their parents' happiness tends to depend on the age of the children. There is generally a peak in happiness when a child is born, but the constraints that come with having a child quickly reduce this happiness, and people without children are on average slightly happier than those with children. Parents' happiness tends to decline until their children reach adolescence, and then rises again when the children leave home to start their own lives.

While there may be a decline in parental happiness, this decline does not affect all parents. This is particularly the case when parents continue to show affection for each other and pay attention to their relationship despite the demands of their child. Furthermore, while having children may reduce parental happiness, it can also give their lives greater meaning.

In everyday life, having children comes with a great deal of responsibility and the stress that goes with it. A life with children is also an emotionally less stable life. Having children usually results in experiencing both more negative and more positive emotions. The child puts the adult on an emotional rollercoaster. Thus, adults with children tend to experience more depression[1] . This is why it makes sense to provide emotional and technical support to parents.

Children are a major financial cost for parents. This financial cost has consequences for the parents' happiness. It could also explain to a large extent why having children does not improve and often decreases parental happiness. When financial conditions are favourable, having children even tends to increase parents' happiness[2] .

In the end, having a child or not having a child is a choice between two different lives, two lives where time is occupied differently and the emotions experienced are different. Adults who have chosen not to have a child generally have more time, freedom and money to fulfil themselves and be happier. Adults who choose to have a child or children generally have a more meaningful life and experience more emotions, both positive and negative.

[1] Evenson, R. J., & Simon, R. W. (2005). Clarifying the relationship between parenthood and depression. *Journal of health and Social Behavior*, *46*(4), 341-358.
[2] Blanchflower, D. G., & Clark, A. E. (2021). Children, unhappiness and family finances. *Journal of Population Economics*, *34*(2), 625-653.

Promoting your child's happiness

Parents have a strong influence on their children's happiness. Beyond material security, which is a key element, they can promote their child's happiness through the development of secure attachment in their child, authoritative parenting[1] , positive control, accommodation of their child's growing desire for independence and introducing them to the science of happiness.

The first year

A child's needs for happiness change as the child develops. The first year is the period when the child is most dependent on the parents for survival. Emotionally, the main objective is for the child to develop a secure attachment[2] . The quality of the attachment figures' responses to the child's needs, their promptness, reliability and predictability are crucial to the development of secure attachment. Parents' confidence in their competence towards their child increases their search for positive interaction with their child.

Between 1 and 5 years (approximately)

Approximately between the ages of 1 and 5, children have to accomplish six primary tasks: increasing autonomy in daily life; developing a self-concept, a representation of oneself; regulating emotions; identifying with a gender; bonding socially and developing empathy[3] .

Parents may have different parenting styles, i.e. ways of raising their children. Baumrind[4] identified four parenting styles: the authoritarian style marked by high levels of control and low levels of affection, the permissive style characterized by low levels of control and high levels of affection, the authoritative style[5] in which levels of control and affection are high and the neglectful style in which levels of control and affection are low. Children whose parents have a more authoritative style are happier, more adaptable, independent and cooperative. The authoritative style is the parenting style most conducive to children's happiness from infancy to adolescence.

Parents can use different discipline strategies: positive control or negative control. Positive control is characterized by setting a framework and providing gentle, caring guidance;

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[1] An authoritative parenting style is marked by both a high level of control and a high level of affection.
[2] Lamb, M.E. & Lewis, C. (2005). The role of parent-child relationships in child development. In M.H. Bornstein & M.E. Lamb (Eds.), *Developmental psychology: An advanced textbook* (pp. 429-468). Erlbaum
[3] Edwards, C.P. & Liu, W. (2002). Parenting toddlers. In M.H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (pp. 45-71). Erlbaum
[4] Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental psychology*, *4*(1, Pt.2), 1-103.
[5] Baumrind created a neologism to name this third style, which mixes authority and affectivity. It is also known as the demanding-chalureous style.

negative control is marked by threats and physical violence. Positive control promotes greater obedience[1] .

Between 5 and 12 years (approximately)

When children are approximately 5-12 years old, parenting responsibilities change from the previous period. Discipline gradually shifts to a greater use of reasoning and putting into perspective. The learning of responsibility is promoted by prosocial behaviour of the parents, reflection with the child on moral issues and the child's participation in domestic tasks. Parental affection and discouragement of aggressive behaviour help to develop social skills.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a period that leads to much greater autonomy. For the adolescent, it is marked in particular by the biological and psychological changes of puberty. Parents have to adjust to the growing desire for independence and the choices their children envisage for their future. These choices may resonate with parents who reflect on their own choices and outcomes. As children become teenagers and move towards independence, parents may also reflect on their own mortality.

If you are a parent and your child is a teenager and you want to help build his or her future life, you can share this book with him or her so that he or she can learn about the science of happiness.

Quiz

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1. Name some of the rules for making friends.
2. What are the differences between men and women in their choice of a romantic partner?
3. Name 3 factors that make it easier to have a happy romantic relationship.
4. Name 4 factors that predict divorce according to the study by Gottman and Levenson.
5. Name 2 factors that make a relationship last.
6. Name two conditions that may prevent parents from being less happy on average than childless adults.
7. Name 3 ways that parents can promote their child's happiness.

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[1] Karreman, A., Van Tuijl, C., Van Aken, M.A.G. & DEKOVIC, M. (2006). Parenting and self-regulation in preschoolers: A meta-analysis. *Infant and Child Development, 15*, 561-579.

Answers

1. Making friends means not waiting for the other person to make the first move, not just talking about the weather, talking about personal things, sharing good and bad times, being trustworthy, tolerant, supportive, developing a reciprocal relationship

2. Women are more likely than men to look for a partner who has characteristics that signal good resource capacity, while men are more likely than women to look for a partner who has characteristics that signal good reproductive capacity

3. Factors that make love happy include: personality traits such as agreeableness, emotional stability, awareness and openness to experience, partners having similar personality traits, seeing positive behaviours as being due to the qualities of the other and negative behaviours as being due to the situation, positive illusions, quality of communication and quality of non-verbal communication

4. Factors that predicted divorce in Gottman and Levenson's (2000) study were: the level of marital satisfaction, the presence of negative affect during conflict, the lack of positive affect in daily life, the number of times the partners thought about divorce, the number of unpleasant memories, and a particular mode of communication, where one asks the other, who refuses, to change

5. Factors that make a relationship last include friendship in love, seeing one's partner as the ideal partner, quality in conflict management and self-development through the development of the romantic relationship

6. The two conditions that can prevent the parents' happiness from being lessened are the fact that the parents continue to show affection and to always give attention to their couple despite the child's demands and the fact that they have significant financial resources

7. The ways in which parents promote their child's happiness are: material security, developing secure attachment in their child, authoritative parenting style, positive control, accommodating their child's growing desire for independence and introducing children to the science of happiness

CHAPTER 9: HOW TO BE HAPPIER - OR LESS UNHAPPY - AT WORK

Work is an obligation for most of humanity. Without work, there is no survival. And those who do not need to work do not work, because they live off the work of others. On another note, for a large part of humanity, the benefits of work end economically at mere survival. This is why it may be indecent to talk about happiness in the context of work, however, to speak of happiness at work is also to speak of suffering at work. Happiness at work is a continuum between the greatest suffering at work and the greatest happiness at work.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Explain how to adapt what has been seen for happiness to the work context
- Give you the basics to reduce the degree of stress at work and the risk of burnout
- Give you the basic elements for dealing with situations of psychological harassment at work and sexual harassment at work
- Help you discover techniques to modify your work and take more pleasure or less displeasure in it
- Help you discover the state of flow, a positive psychological state that is experienced more at work than outside of it

The gist of the chapter

Defining happiness at work, and unhappiness at work, is easy when you have chosen a definition of happiness. Simply take the definition of happiness that fits best and adapt it to the context of work. If that definition is liking the life one leads, then the best definition of happiness at work is liking the life one leads... at work.

Stress is a response of our body to the aggression of a stressor (internal or external) in order to resist, adapt and restore its internal balance. It is important to differentiate between the stressor (the factor of stress), the stress (the body's reaction) and its consequences (work-related suffering, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, addictive behaviour, etc.).

The best scientific model for understanding occupational (and non-occupational) stress is the job demands-resources model. The central idea of this model is that, whatever our job, the factors that influence our degree of occupational stress can be divided into two categories: job demands and job resources.

In this model, when we want to reduce our degree of occupational stress and our risk of burnout, we have two possible complementary strategies:
- Increasing job resources (and non-job resources)
- Reducing job demands

To identify situations of harassment at work, read the *Generalized Workplace Harassment Questionnaire* that you will find in this chapter. If you think you have been a victim of harassment at work, you will be able to characterize precisely the type(s) of harassment you have experienced.

To identify situations of sexual harassment at work, read the questionnaire in the Lipari and Lancaster report for the US military that you will find in this chapter.

When we are not in control of our present moment, it may be possible to redesign our constrained time so that it is more conducive to our happiness. At work, this can be done without the approval of a boss or superior and this is called *job crafting*. The central feature of *job crafting* is that employees change their work on their own initiative.

There are three main forms of *job crafting*: task modification, relationship modification and perception modification.

Flow is a pleasant psychic state characterized by, among other things, intense concentration on the task at hand, a distortion of temporal experience that makes us forget about time, the experience that the task itself is the reward, a certain sense of loss of self-awareness, the feeling that awareness and action are merging, and a sense of control.

Flow has a very important characteristic from a professional point of view. It is a psychological state that is easier/less complicated to experience at work than outside work.

There are at least two main strategies to support the experience of flow. The first is to develop a knowledge of flow. The second is to have a job that gives us pleasure (intrinsic motivation) and that makes us want to succeed for ourselves (achievement motivation).

The framework for managing emotions and performance at work is simple. With positive emotions, it is difficult to find reasons to avoid generating positive emotions in employees. In the case of negative emotions, there must be a very good and solid reason to make an employee experience negative emotions. This reason, if it exists, must generally be found in the answer to the following question: will the negative emotions I am going to make my employee(s) experience have a positive influence on the performance of the organization?

An organization needs to take two actions to support the fact that its employees are happy in their working lives: measure the degree of happiness at work and develop an organizational culture of happiness at work.

What does it mean to be happy, or unhappy, at work?

Defining happiness at work, and unhappiness at work, is easy when you have chosen a definition of happiness. You just need to take the definition of happiness that suits you best and adapt it to the context of work.

As I think the best definition of happiness is liking the life one leads, then the best definition of happiness at work is liking the life one leads... at work. The more we like the life we lead at work, the happier we are at work. The more we hate the life we lead at work, the more unhappy we are at work.

From this perspective, if we adapt Professor Ruut Veenhoven's work to the context of work, then happiness at work can have two main sources: the hedonic level of affect related to our work and contentment with our work. The hedonic level of affect in relation to our work is the degree to which the affects we experience as a result of our work are pleasant or not. To be happier at work, or less unhappy at work, the idea is to experience more positive work-related affects and fewer negative work-related affects.

Contentment with work is the difference between the life we have at work and the life we would like to have. To be happier at work, we should either build a work life that is closer to the life we would like to have at work, or reduce our expectations of our work life.

In general, what we have seen in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 is generally directly usable in the work context. Therefore, in this chapter we will focus on only the elements that have not generally been seen before.

It is important to note that, as life at work is only one part of life in general for working people, the difference between how happy we are at work and how happy we are outside of work can influence our relationship with our work. Thus, if we are happier at work than outside of work, we may tend to lock ourselves into our work. On the contrary, if we are happier outside of work than at work, we may tend to want to escape from our work[1] .

Our working hours can also influence how much we like or dislike our work. For example, if we work a lot, we may not like our working life, whereas we might like our working life if we could work less.

Reducing work-related suffering

We have already seen different ways to reduce suffering in Chapters 2 and 4. These means can be used in the context of work-related suffering. Here, we will look at three new issues:

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[1] Gaucher, R., Burger, M., & Veenhoven, R. (2020). Difference in mood at work and home. An additional indicator of job satisfaction. *Journal of Well-Being Assessment*, *4*(3), 347-367.

reducing occupational stress and the risk of burnout, recognizing situations of moral harassment at work and ways out, recognizing situations of sexual harassment at work and ways out.

Reduce your degree of occupational stress and risk of occupational burnout

What are stress and burnout?

Stress is a response of our body to the aggression of a stressor (internal or external) in order to resist, adapt and restore its internal balance.

It is important to differentiate between the stressor (the stressor), the stress (the body's reaction) and its consequences (work-related suffering, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, addictive behaviour, etc.).

In the biomedical understanding of stress, the focus is on physiological and biochemical processes. A whole series of indicators has made it possible to objectify the notion of stress.

Among the possible consequences of stress is burnout. Burnout is a psychological disorder that results from an accumulation of stress and is marked by at least two characteristics: exhaustion and disengagement.

Our degree of stress change throughout the day, from one day to the next, from one week to the next, etc.

Stress and burnout can be found outside work. For example, a stay-at-home mother can be stressed and even burnout. Here we will talk about occupational stress and occupational burnout, but what is written about occupational stress and burnout is valid for stress and burnout in general. We just need to adapt the ideas to the context.

The best scientific model for understanding occupational (and non-occupational) stress and burnout is the job demands-resources model. The central idea of this model is that, whatever our job, the factors that influence our level of occupational stress can be divided into two categories: job demands and job resources[1] .

In this model, when we want to reduce our degree of occupational stress and our risk of burnout, we have two possible complementary strategies:

- Increasing our job resources
- Reducing our job demands

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[1] Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(3), 499-512.

Increasing our job resources

There are different types of resources: there are resources outside of work, but which help to reduce occupational stress, resources at the level of the tasks performed at work, resources at the level of the work organization, resources at the level of social relations and resources at the level of the organization.

Here is a list of these resources. Its purpose is to give you ideas on how to increase your resources to better cope with occupational stress. This list is not exhaustive and some resources may not be relevant to your situation.

Resources outside of work :

- Quality of sleep
- Quality of food
- Better organization of life
- Sport and exercise

Resources at the level of the tasks performed in the job

- Variety of tasks (there may be too little or too much variety in tasks)
- Meaning of tasks (tasks that give meaning to work are generally better)
- Autonomy in carrying out tasks

Resources at the work organization level

- Participation in decision-making
- Knowledge of the major objectives given to you
- Major objectives that are not antagonistic
- Absence of demands-obstacles that prevent the achievement of major objectives

Resources at the social relations level

- Support for managers
- Support from colleagues
- HR support
- Working climate

Resources at the organizational level

- Job security
- Career opportunities
- Salary
- Daycare for young children

Reduce the demands of our work

When you are an employee, reducing job demands can be complicated, as you usually have little control over these demands. Therefore, the main way is to ask for a reduction in job demands by showing that the level of job demands is too high. You have probably also noticed that certain job resources can become job demands depending on the situation. For example, having sufficient autonomy is a job resource, more specifically a resource at the level of the tasks performed in the job, but when you do not have sufficient autonomy, it becomes a job demand and you can ask your employer for more autonomy at work.

It is also possible to reduce some demands without asking. This is one of the purposes of *job crafting*, which we will look at in more detail in a dedicated section of this chapter. For example, it is possible to reduce interactions with clients or colleagues who are too demanding. It is also possible to distinguish between important goals and demands that hinder you in achieving these important goals.

Recognizing and dealing with moral harassment at work situations

To identify moral harassment at work, I suggest you read the *Generalized Workplace Harassment Questionnaire* by Professors Kathleen Rospenda and Judith Richman[1] .

To facilitate the reading and use of the questionnaire, the questions are classified by type of moral harassment at work.

If you believe that you have been the victim of moral harassment at work, you will be able to characterize precisely the type(s) of moral harassment at work of which you have been the victim. Warning: moral harassment at work requires repetition. On another note, it is not necessary for the same behaviour to be repeated; it can be a succession of different behaviours.

The researchers ask respondents to answer by giving frequencies (never, once, more than once). For simplicity, I have transformed the questions so that the answer is "yes" or "no". If you think you have been morally harassed at work, you will be able to characterize precisely the type(s) of moral harassment you have experienced. You can add the frequencies if you wish. As said before, in the original questionnaire the frequencies are: never, once, more than once.

During the last 12 months at your workplace, have you been in a situation where someone in your work setting…

(Verbal hostility)

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[1] Rospenda, K. M., & Richman, J. A. (2004). The factor structure of generalized workplace harassment. *Violence and Victims*, *19*(2), 221-238.

- Yelled or screamed at you?
- Gossiped about you and/or spread rumors about you behind your back?
- Made negative comments to you about your intelligence, competence, or productivity?
- Pressured you to change your beliefs or opinions at work?
- Made hostile or offensive gestures at you?
- Labelled you a "troublemaker" if you expressed a difference of opinion?
- Humiliated or belittled you in front of others?
- Swore at you?
- Made negative comments to you about your personality?
- Talked down to you (e.g., treated you like a child or as inferior to them)?
- Treated you or evaluated you as though you were less good at your work than you really are
- Blamed you personally for things that other people did, or that weren't your fault?

(Covert hostility)

- Took credit for your work or ideas?
- Ignored you or your work contributions?
- Prevented you from expressing yourself by interrupting you?
- Treated you unfairly compared to others in your same position (e.g., in terms of tasks or assignments, salary, promotions, resources, reprimands)?
- Asked you to do work which really wasn't part of your job?
- Excluded you from important work activities or meetings?

(Manipulation)

- Turned others in your work environment against you?
- Offered you a subtle or obvious bribe to do something that you did not agree with?
- Left notes, signs, or other materials which were meant to embarrass you?
- Threatened that they would "get back at you" if you resisted doing something that you thought was wrong, or if you challenged things about the workplace?

(Physical hostility)

- Pushed you or grabbed you?
- Threw something at you?
- Hit you physically?

What to do if you are being morally harassed at work? The basic idea is that what matters is you, your emotions, your happiness. It is therefore important to seek psychological support,

either from friends or from a professional. It is also important to see if it is possible to stop the bullying.

One action you can take is to catalogue physical evidence such as emails and keep a notebook of the moral harassment at work you have experienced. Here is an example of what such a notebook might look like. The questionnaire above will help you to complete this notebook.

	Day and time	Description of the facts	Type of harassment	People present	Emotional consequences and other consequences
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

The notebook can serve as legal evidence of what you have experienced.

It should be noted that there may be differences between what researchers consider to be moral harassment at work in their questionnaire and what the courts may consider to be moral harassment at work, either because the courts do not consider certain behaviours to be moral harassment at work, or because these behaviours are understood in a specific context or situation.

Recognizing and dealing with sexual harassment at work

To identify situations of sexual harassment at work, I suggest you read the questionnaire from the report by Rachel Lipari, PhD, and Anita Lancaster[1] for the US Army. If you think you have been a victim of sexual harassment at work, you will be able to precisely characterize the type(s) of sexual harassment you have experienced.

To make the questionnaire easier to read and use, the questions are classified by category, whereas in the original presentation they are mixed together. There is a gradation in the severity of the categories. Sexist behaviour and sexual assault are not the same level of

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[1] Lipari, R. N., & Lancaster, A. R. (2003). *Armed forces 2002 sexual harassment survey*.

severity. Even within the same category, there may be differences in the severity of the sexual harassment behaviour.

The researchers ask respondents to answer by giving frequencies (never, once or twice, sometimes, often, very often). For simplicity, I have transformed the questions so that the answer is "yes" or "no". If you think you have been sexually harassed at work, you will be able to characterize precisely the type(s) of sexual harassment you have experienced. You can add frequencies if you wish. As said before, in the original questionnaire, the frequencies are: never, once or twice, sometimes, often, very often.

During the past 12 months have you been in situations at work where one or more of individuals:

(Sexist behaviour)

- Referred to people of your gender in insulting or offensive terms?
- Treated you "differently" because of your gender (for example, mistreated, slighted, or ignored you)?
- Made offensive sexist remarks (for example, suggesting that people of your gender are not suited for the kind of work you do)?
- Put you down or was condescending to you because of your gender?

(Crude/offensive behaviours)

- Repeatedly told sexual stories or joke that were offensive to you?
- Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters (for example, attempted to comment or discuss on your sex life)?
- Made offensive remarks about your appearance, body or sexual activities?
- Made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature that embarrassed or offended you?

(Unwanted sexual attention)

- Made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it?
- Continued to ask for dates, drinks, diners, etc., even though you said "No"?
- Touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
- Made unwanted attempts to stroke, fondle, or kiss you?

(Sexual coercion)

- Made you feel like you were being bribed with some sort of reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior?

- Made you feel threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative (for example, by mentioning an upcoming review)?
- Treated you badly for refusing to have sex?
- Implied faster promotions or better treatment if you were sexually cooperative?

(Sexual assault)

- Attempted to have sex with you without your consent or against your will, but was not successful ?
- Had sex with you without your consent or against your will?

What should you do if you experience sexual harassment? As with moral harassment, the basic idea is that what matters is you, your emotions, your happiness. It is therefore important to seek psychological support, either from friends or from a professional. It is also important to see if it is possible to stop the sexual harassment.

Having said this, there are various possible actions that depend on your situation. One of these actions is to keep a record of the sexual harassment you experience. Here is an example of what such a notebook might look like. The questionnaire above will help you to complete the notebook.

	Day and time	Description of the facts	Type of sexual harassment	People present	Emotional consequences and other consequences
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

The notebook can serve as evidence of what you have experienced.

Please note that there may be differences between what researchers consider to be sexual harassment at work in their questionnaire and what the courts may consider to be sexual harassment at work.

Feeling better about our life at work

It is interesting to experience more positive emotions at work as it is in life in general. The frequency of positive emotions experienced at work is more important than their intensity. Some of the methods for experiencing more positive emotions in life also work with work. Here we will look at two new ways to feel better at work: job crafting and flow. Let us see what is behind each of these words.

Job crafting or how to change our job to be happier, or less unhappy, at work

Life at work has characteristics that life in general does not have. One of the main differences between life in general and life at work is that people who work are likely to be less autonomous at work than in the rest of their lives, as they have to satisfy a boss and/or the users of the good or service they produce.

When we are not in control of our present moment, it may be possible to redesign our constrained time so that it is more conducive to our happiness. At work, this can be done without the approval of a boss or superior and this is called job crafting. The central feature of job crafting is that employees change their work on their own initiative[1] .

There are people who see their work as something that cannot be changed. The belief needed to be able to redesign one's work, to do job crafting, is to consider that it is possible, to consider that one can, in part, be the architect of one's work. To do this, it is necessary to be attentive to opportunities to make small changes and to focus on finding small victories.

Job crafting also works best when it aligns with goals that are important to us, when it allows us to use our strengths and talents, and when we use it to follow our passions or more broadly subjects in which we have a great interest.

There are three main forms of job crafting: task modification, relationship modification and perception modification.

There are three ways to modify tasks through job crafting. It is possible to :

- Redesigning tasks
- Giving more time and energy to certain tasks
- Add a new task

Redesigning tasks means doing the same tasks, but differently, so that the new way of doing things brings us more pleasure, or less displeasure. This is probably the most useful technique, because it is the technique that is adapted to the greatest number of situations.

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[1] Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, *26*(2), 179-201.

It is also possible to give more time and energy to certain tasks, because we enjoy them more. In order not to increase occupational stress and the risk of burnout, this usually means giving less time and energy to other tasks, the ones we don't like.

If your degree of stress is low, you can add one or more tasks to your work. The characteristic of the task(s) should be that you enjoy doing it.

There are three ways to change human relations at work through job crafting. These three ways are :

- Helping and supporting (hoping to be helped and supported in return)
- Giving a new purpose to an existing relationship
- Building a new relationship

It is possible to give others help and support in their work and thus encourage them to give help and support in return. It is best to choose people who are thought to show a strong need to reciprocate, to give back.

An existing relationship can be given a different purpose or a new purpose can be added to it.

You can go to people you find interesting in the organization and try to build a friendly relationship with them.

There are three ways to change perceptions at work through job crafting. These three ways are :

- Broadening perceptions
- Refocusing perceptions
- Linking perceptions

Broadening perceptions means thinking of one's work as a whole rather than as a series of separate tasks and looking at the benefits of one's work for others.

Refocusing perceptions is the opposite of the previous technique. It involves narrowing the focus of the work to specific tasks and/or relationships. This technique can be useful especially if you dislike some of the tasks in your job while enjoying others.

Linking perceptions means making connections between tasks (or relationships) and interests or passions you have outside of work.

Flow, a positive emotional state that work promotes

Flow is a psychic state that has been defined by Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. It was while studying painters in the 1960s that he began to define this state. When these artists were in the process of creating, they no longer took into account thirst, hunger and fatigue, they were caught up in their work. When their painting was finished, it lost its interest for them and they

moved on to another painting. Flow was then studied in different contexts, including professional contexts: chess players, dancers, mountain climbers, surgeons, policemen, etc.

Have you ever experienced moments when you simultaneously felt good, didn't see the time passing, were on a task that was challenging for you and you were performing well? If so, you have experienced moments of flow.

More precisely, flow is a state marked by the following characteristics

- Intense concentration on the task at hand
- A distortion of the temporal experience that makes you forget time
- The experience that the task itself is the reward and that the goal of completing the task may only be a pretext for being in a state of flow
- Some sense of loss of self-awareness
- The feeling that consciousness and action merge
- A sense of control[1] .

Flow has a very important characteristic from a professional point of view. It is a pleasant psychological state that is easier/less complicated to experience at work than outside of work.

There are at least two main strategies to promote the experience of flow. The first is to develop a metacognition of flow, i.e. to develop your capacity to think about flow. This is what you are doing by reading these lines and by trying to relate my words to your past and future experiences.

A second strategy is to try to have a job that gives you pleasure (intrinsic motivation) and that makes you want to succeed for yourself (achievement motivation).

Two conditions must be met for the state of flow to arise and last at a given moment: a challenge or opportunity to act that is in line with your skills, and precise and close objectives with immediate feedback. Flow is indeed a fragile balance. If tasks are felt to be too complicated in relation to abilities, then there is a risk of anxiety. If the abilities are felt to be too great in relation to the tasks being performed, then there is a risk of boredom.

When we are in flow but heading towards anxiety, it can be useful to fragment tasks to make them less complex. It is also possible to let some time pass, as our brain tends to work on our problems even when we are not aware of them. When we are in flow but heading towards boredom, we should add tasks or make tasks more complex.

How a manager can make employees happier, or less unhappy, at work

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[1] Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005). The concept of flow. In Snyder & Lopez, Handbook of Positive Psychology, Oxford University Press, pp. 89-105.

Amongst those reading this book, there are likely to be managers and they may be interested in understanding how they can help their staff to enjoy the life they lead at work. An employee may also appreciate knowing what their manager could do.

Work when it occurs within organizations is always organized in a hierarchical way. These hierarchies may vary in intensity, they may or may not be stated, but there is always a hierarchy and these hierarchies imply the existence of management.

In a competitive economy, performance is at the heart of work and, consequently, thinking about management in terms of happiness at work essentially means thinking about the relationship between emotion and performance. The reason is that performance, like emotions, is played out moment by moment.

We have seen that there are two main types of emotion when we talk about happiness and therefore happiness at work: positive emotions, which are pleasant emotions, and negative emotions, which are unpleasant emotions.

The framework for managing emotions and performance at work is simple. When it comes to positive emotions, it is difficult to find reasons to avoid generating positive emotions in employees. In the case of negative emotions, there must be a very good and solid reason to make an employee experience negative emotions . This reason, if it exists, must generally be found in the answer to the following question: will the negative emotions that I am going to make my employee(s) experience have a positive influence on the performance of the organization?

In a cooperative economy, there is no need to do better than others, but the economy should be efficient enough to meet people's needs. Just as in a competitive economy, it is difficult to find reasons to avoid generating positive emotions in employees . In the same way as in a competitive economy, it takes a very good and solid reason to make an employee experience negative emotions, however, if the reason exists, a slightly different question needs to be asked than in a competitive economy. That question is: Are the negative emotions I am going to make my employee(s) experience necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the cooperative economy in meeting the needs of the members of society?

Note that I have talked here about how managers can make employees feel good about their work, but the reciprocal, i.e. how an employee can make his/her manager(s) feel good about their work, is important. When it comes to positive emotions, it is difficult to find reasons to avoid generating positive emotions in your manager(s). When it comes to negative emotions, you need a very good and solid reason to make a manager experience negative emotions. This reason is the defence of our own happiness and more precisely the defence of the central elements of our happiness.

How an organization can make its employees happier, or less unhappy, at work

An organization needs to do two things to support the fact that its employees are happy in their working lives: measure happiness at work and develop an organizational culture of happiness at work.

Measuring means, first of all, measuring psychic states, in particular the degree of happiness at work, the hedonic level of affect at work, contentment with work, but also occupational stress, burnout, harassment at work and sexual harassment at work. In order to understand the results, it is interesting both to measure possible determinants to complete the statistical analysis and to conduct interviews.

Developing an organizational culture means that top management demonstrates the importance of the subject in their actions, decisions and behaviour, that measurements are made regularly, that results are shared and that everyone is trained on the subject. This book is also free to share, whether it is done by an individual or an organization. If you work in an organization and your employer agrees, you can share this book for free.

Quiz

1. How can we define the concept of happiness at work?
2. What is stress?
3. How to reduce occupational stress using the scientific job demands-resources model?
4. Which tools does this book give you to understand if you are being harassed or sexually harassed at work?
5. What is job crafting?
6. What are the 3 forms of job crafting?
7. What is flow?
8. What are the two main strategies to promote flow at work?
9. What are the rules for managing emotions and performance at work?

Answers

1. To define the concept of happiness at work, simply take the definition of happiness that best suits you and adapt it to the context of work. If that definition is liking the life one leads, then the best definition of happiness at work is liking the life one leads... at work
2. Stress is a response of our body to the aggression of a stressor (internal or external) in order to resist, adapt and restore its internal balance. It is important to differentiate between the stressor (the stressor), the stress (the body's reaction) and its consequences (work-related suffering, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, addictive behaviour, etc.).

3. In the job demands-resources model, there are two possible complementary strategies for reducing stress: increasing job resources and reducing job demands
4. The translation of two questionnaires
5. Job crafting is when employees modify their work on their own initiative
6. There are three main forms of job crafting: task modification, relationship modification and perception modification
7. Flow is a pleasant psychic state characterized by, among other things, intense concentration on the task being performed, a distortion of temporal experience that makes us forget about time, the experience that the task itself is the reward, a certain sense of loss of self-awareness, the feeling that consciousness and action are merging and a feeling of control.
8. The two main strategies are to develop a knowledge of flow and to have a job that gives us pleasure (intrinsic motivation) and that makes us want to succeed for ourselves (achievement motivation)
9. When it comes to positive emotions, it is difficult to find reasons to avoid generating positive emotions in employees. In the case of negative emotions, there has to be a very good and solid reason to make a staff member experience negative emotions. This reason, if it exists, must generally be found in the answer to the following question: will the negative emotions I am going to make my employee(s) experience have a positive influence on the performance of the organization?

CHAPTER 10: COLLECTIVE DETERMINANTS OF OUR INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS

I have written the first 9 chapters of this book hoping that you will also read this tenth and final chapter. This book is intended to help both happy and unhappy people to increase their degree of happiness a little bit, however, I am not interested in helping people who are already happy to become happier. I am interested in helping unhappy people to be happy. Now, the majority of people who have a low degree of happiness are unhappy for reasons over which they have little power, political reasons. Indeed, as I will show in the following lines, the collective determinants of our individual happiness are more important than the individual determinants.

The educational objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Help you understand why the collective determinants of happiness are more important than the individual determinants you have been working on throughout the book
- Show you that it is possible to implement simple, non-partisan techniques at the political level to improve the collective determinants of happiness and build a better world for everyone

The gist of the chapter

We tend to focus on the individual determinants of our happiness and forget the collective determinants. This is normal, because the individual determinants are those over which we have by far the most power, however, these individual determinants are not the most important determinants of happiness and what makes this clear is the impact of the birth lottery on our happiness. Indeed, some of us are born in countries where the average degree of happiness is 4 on a scale of 0-10, while others are born in countries where the average degree of happiness is 8.

There are different philosophies of happiness in public policy. The best known is utilitarianism, which is represented by the formula "the greatest happiness for the greatest number". This is an attractive formula, but in a world of limited resources, choices have to be made and the most ethical choice is to focus the use of resources on reducing unhappiness rather than increasing the happiness of the already happy. This is a philosophy called not utilitarianism, but *negative* utilitarianism.

Politicians usually develop political programmes that they more or less implement. From a scientific point of view, the right way to think when one wants to improve the degree of happiness of the inhabitants of a country or any other territory is not to develop a political programme, but to apply the following method.

1. Measuring happiness of the population on a regular basis, e.g. once a year
2. Analyse the data each time to assess past policy decisions and guide future policy decisions
3. Start the process again so that it becomes continuous loop of adaptation and improvement

To think of a policy programme without using this method is to encourage wet-finger decisions and personal whims.

Happiness is considered in this book as an ultimate goal and in this chapter as an ultimate goal of public policy. It is perhaps not the only ultimate goal that one can give to public policy or to oneself.

There is a simple technique for clarifying public policy decisions that can also be used in one's personal life. It is the ultimate goals technique. Ultimate goals are goals that are valuable for their own sake, not because they achieve another goal, they are goals that are essential, central, goals that are few in number otherwise they would lose their importance. To find these ultimate goals, we need to ask ourselves a simple question: What is really important for me as an individual?

It is possible to construct from the answer we would give together to the question "What is really important for me as an individual?" a central indicator for public policy, that is, an indicator that is the most important of all indicators, because it is constructed to measure the level of achievement of the ultimate goals.

Such an indicator would make decision-making, policy debates and political communication less complicated, simpler, because it would say what should ultimately be improved or, when the situation is very good, kept.

The ultimate goals that could be chosen would not necessarily be concordant: favouring one ultimate goal could mean disadvantaging another. Hence the interest in developing optimization methods between the ultimate goals. For example, in the world of scarcity in which we live, not all consumption of natural resources is equally effective in terms of happiness. It is therefore preferable to favour the natural resource consumptions that have the greatest impact on happiness, especially that of the less happy.

The notion of meaning in life is usually associated with the life of a person. It could also be associated with the life of humanity. In this perspective, it might be possible to give one or more meanings to the life of humanity.

We could be much happier if our societies were better organized

We tend to focus on the individual determinants of our happiness and forget the collective determinants. This is normal, because the individual determinants are those over which we have by far the most power, however, these individual determinants are not the most important determinants of happiness and what makes this clear to us is the impact of birth lottery on our happiness.

We do not choose the family, the country and the time in which we are born, and when we look at the average degrees of happiness of the countries of the world, we can see that the simple fact of being born in one country or another means that we can be born in countries where the average degree of happiness is low, for example 4 on a scale of 0 to 10[1] , or in countries where the average degree of happiness is high, for example 8 on a scale of 0 to 10. The chance of being born in one country or another, the birth lottery, can bring us a good endowment of happiness or a very bad endowment.

This randomness and the resulting consequences for happiness also exist within countries. Inequalities in terms of happiness can be as great within the population of certain countries as between the populations of the world's countries. For example, there are homeless people in rich countries who are even more unhappy than homeless people in poor countries, while people in rich countries are on average much happier than people in poor countries[2] .

Thus, even if our choices have an influence on our happiness, this influence is generally not so strong as to move us from a degree of happiness of 4 to a degree of happiness of 8 on a scale of 0 to 10. Inequalities in happiness are primarily the result of inequalities over which we as individuals have little influence, but which are the result of political decisions. Inequalities in happiness are indeed the consequence of other inequalities, notably inequalities in wealth, security and freedom.

We now live in a world where between 638 million and 720 million people, or 7.8% and 8.8% of the global population respectively, suffer from hunger[3]; where 45% of deaths among children under the age of 5 are due to malnutrition, representing more than 2 million children under the age of 5 dying each year[4]; where 1.4 million people die each year because they do not have access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities or adequate hygiene; where, of

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[1] I have taken figures from the World Happiness Database (https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/) and these figures are given on a scale of 0 to 10.
[2] Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). Material wealth and subjective well-being. In M. Eid & R.J. Larsen, *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 307-322), Guilford Press.
[3] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO (2025). The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2025. Addressing high food price inflation for food security and nutrition.
[4] UNICEF (2024). When it Matters Most: Improving nutrition and survival for the youngest and most vulnerable children.

these 1.4 million people, 395,000 are children under the age of five[1]. At the same time, the 10 richest people in the world own more than the 3.1 billion poorest people combined[2].

If I consider the country in which the birth lottery placed me, France, there are around 350,000 homeless people[3], and those who die on the streets are on average around 50 years old, which is about 30 years younger than the national average[4]. At the same time, the five richest French people own as much as the 27 million poorest French people, representing 40% of the country's population[5].

There is a failure of social progress, even if some things have improved over time.

There is a failure, because we have a situation where states are investing huge sums of money in the development of a military arsenal[6] and where a few people own more than the bulk of humanity. There is a failure, because there are many resources that could have been mobilized to make life happier, or less unhappy, and which have been mobilized in other ways, for example in luxury and wars.

There is also a failure, because the conditions of abundance that have been created in some countries or for some categories of people and that are the basis of the good average happiness endowment of these countries and these categories of people could disappear due to climate change, the fall of biodiversity, the scarcity of natural resources, the pollution of ecosystems and the political and military conflicts that could be inherent in a world of diminishing resources. Put another way, those who benefit from economic conditions that promote their happiness could lose favourable economic conditions with the predictable consequences of a fall in average happiness endowment.

So how do we make those who capture and waste resources want to use those resources to build a better world?

There are two types of strategy that are not revolutionary: the carrot and the stick. This book is the carrot, but what is different is that this book proposes a carrot that is different from the others, much tastier, in fact: the tastiest carrot.

Indeed, who would not dream of a society focused on the happiness of all, in a lasting way, with the social, local and international appeasement that such a situation would induce?

Focusing public policy on the issue of happiness is a way to focus public policy on what is most important to most human beings, it is also a way to provide a soothing and reassuring

[1] Wolf, J., Johnston, R. B., Ambelu, A., Arnold, B. F., Bain, R., Brauer, M., … & Cumming, O. (2023). Burden of disease attributable to unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in domestic settings: a global analysis for selected adverse health outcomes. *The Lancet, 401*(10393), 2060-2071.

[2] Oxfam (2022). Inequality kills. The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19.

[3] Fondation pour le Logement (2025). L'état du mal-logement en France. Rapport annuel 2025.

[4] Collectif Les Morts de la Rue (2023). Dénombrer & Décrire : 11ᵉ édition.

[5] Oxfam (2022). Les inégalités tuent. Face aux inégalités record engendrées par la COVID-19, l'urgence de mesures sans précédent.

[6] Liang, X., Tian, N., Lopes da Silva, D., Scarazzato, L., Karim, Z. A., & Guiberteau Ricard, J. (2025). *Trends in world military expenditure, 2024*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

perspective for everyone, including those, states or individuals, who seek to protect themselves behind mountains of weapons or money, it is a way to change representations and behaviour. Using scientific research on happiness guarantees that the work will be done as seriously as possible and adds to the reassuring character of the approach.

Focusing public policy on the issue of happiness is a way of ensuring that from generation to generation happiness will remain a central element of public policy. It means that the soothing and reassuring perspective that happiness brings will endure over time. It is possible for a family to live in conditions that promote great happiness today, but there is no guarantee that this will be the case in a few generations. Focusing public policy on happiness greatly reduces the risk that this will not be the case in the future by discovering the benefits of happiness-focused policies today.

In this chapter, the idea is not to propose a political programme, but to present methods for evaluating the quality of decisions made and for making better ones. These methods allow decisions to be validated or invalidated. When these decisions emanate from political programmes, the methods we shall see allow us to validate or invalidate the elements of the political programmes from which they emanate.

The methods are above any political agenda, because what counts is only the results achieved.

An ethical framework for public policies aimed at fostering the social conditions for happiness

Talking about happiness in public policy can be frightening for some people. Moreover, there have been cases in history in which political regimes have claimed to want to promote people's happiness, but have in fact acted against it. This is why it is important to propose an ethical framework for policies that aim to foster the social conditions for happiness, in other words, happiness policies. Here is what such a framework might look like[1]:

1. Happiness is private and personal.
2. Everyone has the right to be unhappy and to have one's unhappiness respected.
3. The goal of happiness policies is not to make us happy or happier, but to build a more favourable environment so that we can build happy or happier lives.
4. Happiness policies cannot be developed against the will of the people for whom they are designed.

Negative utilitarianism

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[1] Gaucher, R. (2022). How to optimize the relationship between public spending and happiness. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, 1-21.

There are different philosophies of happiness in public policy. The best known is utilitarianism, which is represented by the formula "the greatest happiness for the greatest number". This is an attractive formula, but in a world of limited resources, choices have to be made and the most ethical choice is to focus the use of resources on reducing suffering rather than increasing the happiness of the already happy[1] . In short, it is a matter of being in a philosophy that is not called utilitarianism, but *negative* utilitarianism.

Furthermore, utilitarianist researchers, when explaining how to apply utilitarianism in public policy, usually propose to follow policies that improve the degree of happiness of the least happy/most unhappy people. In other words, they are utilitarianist in theory, but negative utilitarianist in practice.

There are different definitions of negative utilitarianism. I will specify here the one I will use in the presentation of methods to put happiness at the heart of public policy. Negative utilitarianism, for me, aims to focus public policy more on reducing suffering than on increasing happiness.

Reducing suffering does not mean eliminating it. There will always be sources of suffering, and experiencing negative emotions from time to time allows us to maintain a kind of immune system that protects us, at least partially, from future suffering. Imagine that you experience only positive emotions for years and years and that you have a life that is your ideal life. If an event of great suffering occurred, it is very likely that this event would be much more difficult to bear than if you had kept the habit of experiencing moments of suffering from time to time.

Reducing suffering does not mean either that all resources are directed towards reducing suffering, only that a significant part of the resources are directed towards this reduction. One of the reasons for this choice is that one of the roles of positive emotions is to have a buffer effect, a protective effect, against negative emotions. Furthermore, directing all resources towards the reduction of suffering could make the reduction of suffering an obsession and not an achievable policy goal.

Let us look at some of the key methods for assessing the quality of decisions made and making better decisions about happiness and public policy.

Measuring happiness to improve the quality of public policies

Politicians usually develop political programmes that they more or less implement. From a scientific point of view, the right way to think when one wants to improve the degree of happiness of the inhabitants of a country or any other territory is not to develop a political programme, but to apply the following method[2] .

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[1] Popper, K. R. (1952). *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[2] I am simply systematizing something that was presented in the article 'Happiness in Rotterdam' by Piet Ouweneel and Ruut Veenhoven (Ouweneel, P. P., & Veenhoven, R. (2018). Happiness in Rotterdam: Analysis of 7 city surveys. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, *6*(2), 82-100).

1. Measuring happiness at the population level on a regular basis, e.g. once a year
2. Analyse the data each time to assess past policy decisions and guide future policy decisions
3. Start the process again so that it is a continuous loop of adaptation and improvement

Thinking about a policy programme without using this method is to encourage wet-finger decisions and the personal whims of politicians on either side, or the whims of a researcher writing a book on happiness. Measuring is a way out of wet-finger decisions and whims. The measurement of happiness is the judge of reality, because it is the best judge of reality that we have at the scientific level and consequently at any level.

In a negative utilitarianist philosophy, which is the philosophy I recommend, the more unhappy people are, the more their response should be taken into account in the evaluation of past public policies and the orientation of future public policies. Creating an environment that allows a one-point increase in the happiness of an unhappy person is more valuable than creating an environment that allows a one-point increase in the happiness of an already happy person. And it is usually easier/less complicated to do so.

Looking at the process I am proposing, we might think that it does not give room for the long term since decisions are dependent on annual data. In fact, there are analyses that will come back almost every year and that will form a basis for long-term decisions. There is also a scientific research on the relationship between conditions for human happiness and public policy, and this research can be used as a first basis for building a policy agenda, even if there are disagreements among researchers. The database of Erasmus University Rotterdam, which was created by Professor Ruut Veenhoven, collects and classifies at the time of writing 17,607 scientific studies related to happiness.

Happiness and the ultimate goals technique

Happiness is considered in this book as an ultimate goal and in this chapter as an ultimate goal of public policy. It is perhaps not the only ultimate goal that one can give to public policy or to oneself.

There is a simple technique for clarifying public policy decisions that can also be used in one's personal life. It is the ultimate goals technique. Ultimate goals are goals that are valuable for their own sake, not because they allow us to achieve another goal, they are goals that are essential, central, goals that are few in number otherwise they would lose their importance. To find these ultimate goals, we need to ask ourselves a simple question: What is really important for me as an individual? [1]

We can use this question to inform our life choices. We can also use it to decide what to put at the heart of public policy and organize policy decisions on the basis of the given answer. In

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[1] Gaucher, R., Dialga, I., & Vennin, C. (2022). The indicator of a happy, long and sustainable life. *Social Indicators Research*, *159*(1), 55-75.

this case, there are two possible approaches: the deductive approach and the inductive approach. In the deductive approach, researchers, political parties or the government answer the question of what is really important and this answer can be approved by a popular vote of support or rejection. In the inductive approach, each person answers the question and the ultimate goals that a society sets for itself can be constructed from the most frequent answers.

To the question " What is really important for me as an individual?", I answer living a happy and long life, and a life that does not prevent the future generations from living a life as happy and long as ours, i.e. a sustainable life.

Happiness, which is the theme of this book, is therefore not, for me, the only ultimate goal. I add two other goals: to live a long life and that my life does not prevent future generations from living a life as happy and long as mine.

With regard to the duration of life and its relationship to happiness, let us imagine two people who have the same degree of happiness throughout their lives. This is an unrealistic assumption, but it helps us to understand the importance of the duration of life in relation to happiness. If one person lives 40 years and the other lives 80 years, then the person who lived 80 years has experienced twice as much happiness as the person who lived 40 years.

As far as happiness, duration of life and sustainability are concerned, it is possible to live a happy and long life and leave a country in environmental conditions that mean that the next generation will not be able to live as happily and long. This is what we see today in many rich countries where on average people are quite happy and have never lived so long and at the same time leave ecologically devastated countries to their children and do not hesitate to devastate other countries for the benefit of their standard of living.

It is possible to construct from the answer we would give together to the question "What is really important for me as an individual?" a central indicator for public policy, that is, an indicator that is the most important of all indicators, because it is constructed to measure the degree of achievement of the ultimate goals.

Such an indicator would make decision-making, policy debates and political communication less complicated, simpler, because it would say what should ultimately be improved or, when the situation is very good, kept.

If I take up the answer I gave, living a happy, long and sustainable life, this would lead to the development of an indicator of happy, long and sustainable life. Such an indicator already exists. With two other researchers[1] , I have developed the indicator of happy, long and sustainable life.

In this indicator, happiness is defined as liking the life one leads and the philosophy is a negative utilitarianist philosophy. The more unhappy a person is (the less happy a person is) the more weight their response has in the indicator. Thus, using the indicator encourages reducing unhappiness rather than increasing happiness.

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[1] Issaka Dialga and Coralie Vennin

The duration of life is measured not by life expectancy or healthy life expectancy, but by premature deaths. From a negative utilitarianist perspective, the more premature a death, the more weight it has in the indicator. Thus, using the indicator provides an incentive to reduce premature deaths rather than to increase the duration of life of the elderly.

Sustainability is measured by the ratio between the capacity of a territory to produce natural resources and the resources that the inhabitants of the territory take from it for themselves and for exchange with the inhabitants of other territories. Thus using the indicator encourages not to endanger the happiness and the duration of life of future generations by overexploiting natural resources.

The indicator is adaptable to social preferences. This means that the weights within the dimensions of happy life and long life can be varied and that the weight given to each dimension of the indicator can be varied relative to the others. The indicator is also adaptable to scientific advances.

The indicator of a happy, long and sustainable life is an example, not a model. What matters is not the indicator I have co-constructed, but the method by which this indicator was constructed, i.e. answering a simple question that guides the choice of ultimate goals: "What is really important for me as an individual?"

Optimizing the relationship between the ultimate goals, including happiness

We live in a world of scarcity. Natural resources are finite: renewable resources are replenished each year in limited quantities and non-renewable resources are depleted each time they are used.

In this world of scarcity, the ultimate goals that we can choose are not necessarily concordant: favouring one ultimate goal may mean disadvantaging another. Thus, until now, promoting happiness and life expectancy has been at the expense of sustainability. Hence the importance of optimizing the relationship between ultimate goals.

In the world of scarcity in which we live, it is possible to optimize the consumption of natural resources. Not all the consumption of natural resources have the same efficiency towards happiness. This is why it is useful to use, among other tools, the consumption-happiness matrix for public policies to think about the relationship between natural resource consumption and happiness. This matrix (see Table 1) allows us to understand the interesting consumptions and the consumptions we want to avoid. I present this matrix here from the negative utilitarianist perspective, i.e. a philosophy focused on reducing suffering.

Table 1: Consumption-happiness matrix for public policies in its negative utilitarianist version

	Little influence on the degree of happiness of the less happy	Strong influence on the degree of happiness of the less happy
Low consumption of natural resources	Neutral situation	What we want to find
High consumption of natural resources	What we want to avoid	Neutral situation

As we live in a world where money flows, which is a social creation, are considered more important than physical flows, it may be interesting to adapt this matrix to better think about the relationship between public expenditure and happiness and thus create the cost-happiness matrix for public policies. Not all public expenditure of a political authority has the same efficiency with regard to the happiness of the inhabitants living on the territory governed by this authority. This is why it is useful to use the cost-happiness matrix for public policies to think about the relationship between public policies and happiness. This matrix (see Table 2) allows us to understand the expenditures we want to find and the expenditures we want to avoid. I present this matrix here from the negative utilitarianist perspective[1] .

Table 2 : Cost-benefit matrix for public policies in its negative utilitarian version

	Little influence on the degree of happiness of the less happy	Strong influence on the degree of happiness of the less happy
Low cost in terms of public expenditure	Neutral situation	What we want to find
High cost in terms of public expenditure	What we want to avoid	Neutral situation

The matrices presented here are only tools among others for thinking about optimization. There are other tools, tools related to accounting methods and tools related to advanced statistical methods.

An accounting method to optimize the relationship between public spending, natural resource consumption and the social conditions for happiness

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[1] Gaucher, R. (2022). How to Optimize the Relationship Between Public Spending and Happiness. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, *5*(1), 81-101.

The first step in this accounting method is to develop one or more public policies that promote the social conditions for happiness. There are four ways of doing this:

- Using existing research
- Utilizing the global database on happiness created by Professor Ruut Veenhoven
- Collecting data
- Using the Delphi method (which we will explain in a few paragraphs)

Existing research is available on academic databases, which are generally accessible through university libraries. It is also possible to access existing research through a private service such as Google Scholar.

The World Database of Happiness is free and available at the following Internet address: https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/. The advantage of this database over previous ones is that it is organized: scientific studies are classified according to the type of happiness measurement and the themes associated with happiness. This database is the best point of entry when you want to study the literature on the relationship between happiness and a specific theme such as education, health, standard of living or ecology.

Collecting data means measuring the happiness of the inhabitants of the area for which public policies are designed and cross-referencing this data with other data to understand how to improve the social conditions for happiness.

The Delphi method is a method in which experts give their opinion on a given question. Normally, the experts do not know who the other experts are. The aim of the method may be to build a consensus through various stages of anonymous exchange, or to obtain a panel of opinions. The name Delphi method comes from the fact that Delphi was an ancient Greek city where the Pythia, a woman chosen by the priests of the temple of Delphi, made predictions.

Note that these four methods can be used alone or in combination.

The second step is to calculate the financial cost and the cost in terms of natural resources consumption (and/or pollution) of existing public policies and public policies designed to promote the social conditions for happiness.

The third step is to compare the costs of the different policies in financial terms and in terms of natural resources consumption (and/or pollution), those existing and those imagined. There are simple trade-offs, such as replacing an existing policy with an imagined public policy that would be more conducive to the social conditions for happiness and would cost less in financial terms and in terms of natural resources consumption. And there are difficult trade-offs where a choice has to be made between an imagined policy that should better promote the social conditions of happiness and an existing policy that is less costly either in financial terms or in terms of natural resources consumption, or both.

Note that it is possible to change an imagined policy to obtain better optimization.

Note also that a happiness analysis can show that certain existing policies are useless or virtually useless, which makes it possible to reduce any costs, or reveal that it is necessary to create a public policy where none existed, which generates costs.

A meaning to the life of humanity

The notion of meaning in life is usually associated with the life of a person. It could also be associated with the life of humanity.

From this perspective, it might be possible to give one or more meanings to the life of humanity. From a negative utilitarianist perspective, the first meaning would be to build a world where every human being can live with dignity and the methods presented in this chapter offer a measure of this dignity through the measure of happiness and other ultimate goals that could be chosen.

Another meaning to humanity's life could be in the relationship with the rest of nature. As I write, the essential relationship is one of almost total submission of nature to human needs.

A third meaning to the life of humanity could be in the discovery of the Earth, its inhabitants and the universe. This third meaning is in fact carried by scientific research and it is a goal that could associate believers and non-believers. For the former, it would be to discover and understand the work of their god or gods. For the latter, simply to discover and understand.

Thank you!

Thank you for having read this last chapter, which may be a bit harsh, but from my perspective it is the most important of all. In this last chapter, I wanted to show how our individual happiness depends mainly on the collective conditions in which we live and that it is possible to use happiness research in public policy in a non-partisan, non-ideological way to improve the collective conditions in which we live in order to build a world where there are far fewer unhappy people for a very long time.

Quiz

1. Give an example that demonstrates the importance of collective determinants of happiness over individual determinants
2. What ethical framework for happiness policies?
3. What is negative utilitarianism?
4. What are the three steps to improve the happiness of the inhabitants of a territory?
5. What is an ultimate goal? How do you find an ultimate goal?
6. What kind of policy indicator can be constructed from the ultimate goals?
7. What ultimate goal(s) would you like to see at the heart of public policy?
8. The ultimate goals are not necessarily aligned. What to do in this case?

9. What are the three steps in the accounting method for optimizing the relationship between public spending, natural resource consumption and the social conditions for human happiness?
10. What meaning would you like to give to the life of humanity?

Response

1. Some people are born in countries where the average degree of happiness is 4 on a scale of 0-10, while others are born in countries where the average degree of happiness is 8.
2. The ethical framework for implementing happiness policies can be as follows: 1) happiness is private and personal, 2) everyone has the right to be unhappy and to have one's unhappiness respected, 3) the goal of happiness policies is not to make us happy or happier, but to build a more favourable environment so that we can build happy or happier lives, and 4) happiness policies cannot be developed against the will of the people for whom they are designed.
3. It is to consider that reducing human suffering is more important than promoting the happiness of already happy people
4. The three steps are: 1) measuring happiness of a population on a regular basis, e.g. once a year; 2) analysing the data each time to assess past policy decisions and guide future policy decisions; and 3) starting the process again so that it is a continuous loop of adaptation and improvement
5. Ultimate goals are goals that are valuable for their own sake, not because they help to achieve another goal, they are goals that are essential, central, goals that are few in number otherwise they would lose their importance. To find these ultimate goals, we need to ask ourselves a simple question: What is really important for me as an individual?
6. A central indicator for public policy, i.e. an indicator that is the most important of all indicators, as it is constructed to measure the level of achievement of ultimate goals
7. Personal response
8. Optimizing the relationship between ultimate goals. For example, in the world of scarcity in which we live, not all natural resource consumptions are equally effective for happiness. It is therefore preferable to focus on those natural resource consumptions that have the greatest impact on happiness, especially that of the less happy
9. The first step in the accounting method for optimizing the relationship between public spending, natural resource consumption and the social conditions of human happiness is to develop one or more public policies that promote the social conditions of happiness. The second step is to calculate the financial cost and the cost in terms of consumption of natural resources of existing public policies and public policies designed to promote the social conditions of happiness. The third

step is to compare the financial and natural resource consumption costs of existing and imagined policies.
10. Personal response

CONCLUSION: WRITE YOUR OWN BOOK OF HAPPINESS

Writing a book not only provides information to those who read the book, but also allows the writer to improve his or her own knowledge of the subject he or she is sharing.

Therefore, a very interesting exercise for anyone reading this book, regardless of their degree of expertise on happiness, is to write their own Book of Happiness using both the content of this book - or even the content of other books and scientific articles related to happiness - and the experiences and reflections of their own life.

Such a book may not be as general and scientific as the one you are reading now, but it will allow those who will do this exercise to go further in understanding and building their own happiness.

Thank you for having read The Book of Happiness. I hope that you find it very useful and that it helps you improve your life and be a little happier.

BONUS: SELF-COACHING "30 DAYS TO BE HAPPIER (OR LESS UNHAPPY)"

Hello,

My name is Renaud Gaucher, and I did a PhD on the science of happiness with one of the world's leading researchers on the subject as my mentor. I am offering you the chance to learn the basics of the science of happiness and put them into practice in your life to be happier, or less unhappy, depending on the situations you are in. It will take you less than 5 minutes a day (sometimes a little more) for 30 days, consecutive or not. Every day, you will have a short text to read and a short exercise to do. I recommend that you keep a small notebook to do the exercises. Some exercises require you to write an answer, and it may also be a good idea to write down your other answers so that you can keep track of them. The first day focuses on having a good definition of happiness.

Let's get started!

Day 1: Having a good definition of happiness

How do you improve something that is not well defined? It is complicated, because it means acting a bit haphazardly. Imagine a computer. The computer breaks down. Are you going to change the components randomly, one by one, until the problem is solved? If the problem is not with the computer, but with the software that is installed, then you will have changed all the parts without having solved the problem. It is the same with happiness. If we do not have a good definition of happiness, then it is more complicated to make the best changes in our lives to be happier.

Here I am going to give what I think is the best definition of happiness and then explain why I think this definition is the best. The best definition of happiness is: liking the life you lead. Put another way, the more we love the life we lead, the happier we are. The more we hate the life we lead, the more... unhappy we are.

Here are 4 arguments to justify this choice:

1. Liking the life one leads is a definition that accurately represents what happiness can be, i.e. a positive, global and lasting psychological state.

2. Liking the life one leads is a definition that respects each person's freedom by not imposing an idea of what a happy life should be. With the definition of happiness as liking the life one leads, two people can have the same high degree of happiness for

completely different reasons. They can have made different choices, lived different lives and still have the same high degree of happiness. Liking the life one leads is a definition of happiness that adapts to our individuality, to what makes us who we are.

3. Liking the life one leads is a stable definition of happiness. With this definition, our degree of happiness does not change with every temporary change in our emotional state.

4. Liking the life one leads is a definition of happiness that each of us can easily appropriate and use in our lives. It is a short definition, with simple words.

There are many other definitions of happiness, some valid, some not. To understand the extent to which a definition of happiness may or may not be valid, we can ask ourselves two questions. The idea here is to give you two tips for spotting many of the bad definitions. One, is there any confusion in this definition between the state of happiness and a possible determinant? Many existing definitions confuse the state of happiness (how I feel) with its possible determinants (why I feel this way). Two, does the definition of happiness proposed to me decide what kind of life I should lead? Some existing definitions explain what kind of life you need to lead to be happy, which goes against everyone's individuality.

Here, we are going to use the definition of "liking the life one leads" as a basis for learning the science of happiness, but this learning is perfectly suited to the major hedonic definitions of happiness, i.e. those centred on the pleasure of living, which form the bulk of valid definitions of happiness.

Exercise: what is the proposed definition of happiness? What are the two tips for spotting a large number of bad definitions of happiness?

Day 2: The two essential sources of happiness

I learnt the definition of happiness that I have highlighted, liking the life one leads, from Professor Ruut Veenhoven. In this definition, happiness is a cognitive evaluation: we ask ourselves how much we like the life we lead. According to Professor Ruut Veenhoven, we use two main sources of information to make this assessment: our affects and our thoughts. More specifically, we use the hedonic level of our affects and our contentment.

The hedonic level of affect is the degree to which the affects we experience are pleasant. Affect is a generic term that encompasses emotions and moods. Emotions are short-lived and have a clear origin, whereas moods are last longer and have a vague origin. Affects can be pleasant or unpleasant. When affects are pleasant, we speak of positive affects and when they are unpleasant, we speak of negative affects. We can be in a good mood, which is a positive affect, or in a bad mood, which is a negative affect. Joy is a positive emotion, while anxiety is

a negative emotion. To be happier, or less unhappy, we need to experience more positive affects and/or fewer negative affects. The ability to distance oneself from negative emotions also has a positive influence on our happiness.

Contentment is the difference between the life we lead and the life we would like to lead. To be happier, we need either to build a life closer to the life we would like to lead, or to reduce our expectations. Generally speaking, we use both strategies.

Exercise: what are the two essential sources of happiness according to Professor Ruut Veenhoven? How can we use them to be happier? Give an example of a positive emotion and an example of a negative emotion.

Day 3: Giving meaning to our lives

Before delving into the details of the two essential sources of happiness, I suggest we take a step back and look at what creates the link in our lives: the meaning in life.

Giving meaning to life gives structure to our decision-making. Life is marked by incessant change, and a meaningful life is one in which a stable concept has been established that endures through these incessant changes. The essence of meaning in life, then, lies in linking different realities.

The meaning in life can be drawn from different sources: love relationships, family, religion, work, personal projects. Loving someone, having a family, being a believer, building a career, achieving something and striving to excel are just some of the goals we can set ourselves to give meaning to our life, whether for a given moment or for the rest of our life.

It is preferable to give more than one meaning to our life, as this reduces the risk of losing meaning in certain situations. For example, if the only meaning we have given to our life is our life as a couple, then we lose all meaning in the event of separation. The same applies if our life is centred on our work. Giving different meanings to our life, having different goals, protects us from losing meaning.

Meaning in life can be a way of protecting ourselves from suffering. When we suffer, our need for meaning increases, and we can reduce the suffering we experience by giving it meaning. Giving meaning to our lives therefore gives us a form of control over suffering.

Meaning in life and happiness are not systematically linked. For example, having children can both reduce the parents' level of happiness and increase their feeling of having given meaning to their lives. We can also have found a very strong objective to give to our life and put too much energy into achieving this objective, which reduces our happiness. However, giving meaning to our life generally makes us a little happier.

Exercise: what meaning(s) do you give or want to give to your life?

Day 4: Narrowing the gap between the life we lead and the life we would like to lead

Narrowing the gap between the life we lead and the life we would like to lead is contentment and the second source of happiness, according to Professor Ruut Veenhoven.

There are two ways of narrowing the gap between the life we have and the life we would like to have. The first is to build a life close to our ideal life. The second is to reduce our expectations. We generally use both strategies, but the importance of each varies from one person to another depending on their personality and the environment in which they live.

Building a life close to our ideal requires three conditions: having a correct vision of what is good for us, being intelligent in how we build it and being persistent.

It is complicated to have the right vision of our ideal life. We can fight to build a life that we think will be ideal, get that life and be disappointed. To reduce the likelihood of experiencing this problem, we can take into account our past experiences to better understand what is good for us, i.e. use what we have experienced to refine our perception of our ideal life. We can also try to visualize in detail what our life would really be like if we managed to build the life we think is ideal, in particular what our days would look like in all their details and lengths. It is a very interesting exercise in terms of happiness to ask ourselves what our ideal day, our ideal year, our ideal decade, our ideal life might look like. We can finally re-evaluate what our ideal life would be in the light of the emotions we experience when we obtain certain elements that bring us closer to or further away from this ideal life. What we think of as our ideal life today may not be our ideal life tomorrow, and what we do not think of as our ideal life today may become our ideal life tomorrow.

In building a better life, there are forces that favour our ability to achieve results despite the obstacles. The best known of these is undoubtedly intelligence, the ability to think things through to find the best path. The more complicated a path is to find, the more important intelligence is. But it is not the only strength needed. Another essential strength is perseverance. Perseverance is the ability to keep building despite the obstacles. Building can take time and may require making certain sacrifices in the present for uncertain benefits in the future.

Reducing our expectations is an adaptation to the fact that it can be complicated to achieve everything we want to achieve. It is an adaptation to the fact that our energy is limited and the world around us is full of constraints that we will not be able to overcome.

Exercise: I would like you to answer 4 questions.

1. What exactly would your best day be like? I'm not talking about an extraordinary day in which you experience an exceptional event such as a wedding, the birth of a child or the achievement of a major life goal, but an ordinary day that could be repeated many times and still satisfy you completely.

2. What exactly would your best life be like?

3. What are the strengths you have to achieve your best day and your best life?

4. What strengths do you not have and how can you change your goals to take this lack into account?

Day 5: Experience more positive emotions by programming events that encourage them

We are now entering a cycle in which we are going to look at how to experience more positive emotions and how to better manage negative emotions. We are going to alternate days when we work on positive emotions and days when we work on negative emotions.

Even if negative emotions are more powerful than positive emotions, it is worthwhile not only to try to reduce the intensity and frequency of the negative emotions we experience, but also to increase the frequency and intensity of positive emotions.

Positive emotions are good for the pleasure they bring and for improving the quality of our mental and physical functioning. They are also good for generating a buffer effect against negative emotions and their consequences. Note that it is more interesting to increase the frequency of positive emotions than their intensity.

There are many ways of experiencing more positive emotions. We'll look at 4 of them during this self-coaching. Here's the first.

The first way to experience more positive emotions is to experience more events that generate positive emotions. There are a wide variety of life events that generate far more positive emotions than negative ones. Some are accidental, such as falling in love, but many are partly or wholly programmable, such as seeing friends or taking up a hobby. Thus, it is possible to programme more events that give rise to more positive emotions and increase our level of happiness. As I said before, the frequency of these events is more important than their emotional intensity.

Exercise: programme two events that usually give you positive emotions in the coming month and take part in them when the time comes.

Day 6: Managing negative emotions – avoiding situations that cause suffering

Before talking about regulating negative emotions, I would like to write two warnings. One, it is easy to talk about negative emotions when you are not experiencing them, especially when these negative emotions are powerful. The very nature of powerful negative emotions is to make us suffer a great deal and to make us lose control of ourselves. Two, no one is really competent to teach another person how to regulate their negative emotions, because no one can really be in the other person's shoes.

With these two warnings in mind, it is still interesting to know the most effective strategies for trying to regulate our negative emotions, and the idea is to try to become a little better at regulating our negative emotions.

Emotions are an essential element of affect and, unlike moods, are the consequence of clear stimuli, i.e. clear situations.

The first strategy for reducing the negative emotions we experience is to avoid the situations that generate these emotions. This is not always possible, nor is it always desirable, as temporary avoidance can have negative consequences or prevent changes that could turn out to be positive. However, it is interesting to identify situations that encourage negative emotions and to reflect on these situations. We can in fact create situations that come back and bring us negative emotions without anything good in return. It can be interesting to understand why we create these situations that are clearly harmful to us and how to avoid creating them.

In cases where it is neither desirable nor feasible to avoid situations that give rise to negative emotions, there are other effective strategies that we will look at in the next few days.

Exercise: think about your past and analyse whether there are similar, redundant situations that have generated negative emotions and in which you have become embroiled. What could you do to avoid getting into these situations again?

Day 7: Experience more positive emotions by doing good

A second way of experiencing more positive emotions is to do good. Helping others generates positive emotions. Helping others also fosters positive relationships with them, which in turn generates more positive emotions. However, it is important to ensure that there is a certain

degree of reciprocity over time, i.e. to be careful not to build a relationship in which it is systematically or almost systematically the same person who does good.

Exercise: do something good for someone now (or in the next 24 hours).

Day 8: Managing negative emotions – refocus on planning

Refocusing on planning is thinking about how to resolve a situation that generates negative emotions and putting into action what has been thought about. Reflection followed by action helps to reduce the intensity and frequency of the negative emotions experienced, because our attention is focused on creating and implementing a plan and because implementing the plan can have positive consequences. It should be noted that seeking emotional support is one of the solutions that can be planned: we plan to contact one or more people to talk about a problem, we call them and we benefit from their listening. When we have power over a situation, then planning can be about how to change the situation. When we have no power over a situation, then planning can only be about how we can help ourselves to reduce the negative emotions experienced.

Exercise:

Option 1: You are experiencing a problem that is generating negative emotions for you. Put a plan in place to resolve this problem and apply it.

Option 2: If you are not currently experiencing a problem that is generating negative emotions or if this problem cannot be the subject of refocusing on planning, then find an example in your past where you have used this technique or where you could have used this technique. In both cases, describe the situation and the refocus on planning, preferably in writing.

Day 9: Experience more positive emotions by expressing gratitude

A third way of experiencing more positive emotions is to express gratitude. Gratitude is linked to doing good, except that here we are in the position of the person for whom another person has done something good. Expressing gratitude in such a situation helps generate positive emotions in ourselves, in the other person and improve the quality of our relationship with the other person.

Exercise:

Option 1: Visit or telephone someone who has done something nice for you and express your gratitude.

Option 2: Write a letter of gratitude to someone and send it to them (or not, if you do not wish to send it).

Day 10: Managing negative emotions – putting into perspective

Putting a negative experience into perspective is the act of minimizing it or emphasizing its relativity in relation to other experiences, experiences we have had in the past or experiences that other people have had or are having. The more negative experiences we have had in life, the more life events we have experienced that enable us to minimize the negative experience we are currently going through. In other words, suffering in the past can be useful in reducing the impact of suffering in the present and future. When we have experienced few such events, it is possible to use the lives of other people, people with whom we have relationships (family, friends) or people with whom we have no relationship.

Exercise:

Option 1: You are experiencing a problem that is generating negative emotions for you. Use the putting into perspective technique. Be careful: it cannot be about an extremely serious problem.

Option 2: If you are not currently experiencing a problem that generates negative emotions or if this problem cannot be put into perspective because of its seriousness, then find an example in the past where you have used this technique or where you could have used this technique.

Day 11: Experience more positive emotions by being sociable

A fourth way to experience more positive emotions is to be sociable. Some people find it easier to relate to people. However, sociability can also be learned. There are a number of interesting principles to be aware of... and to apply, particularly the first.

The first principle is not to wait for the other person to make the first move. Imagine a place where everyone is waiting for someone else to come and talk to them – no one would be talking to anyone.

The second principle is to engage in small talk. This may seem pointless, but what is important goes beyond language: it creates a bond.

The third principle is not only to engage in small talk, but also to talk about personal topics, because talking about personal topics helps to develop an intimate bond with the other person. Some extroverted people are surrounded by people, talk a lot and feel lonely simply because the conversations never become personal, or too rarely.

Exercise: invite one or more friends (or acquaintances) for a drink or a walk in the park.

Day 12: Managing negative emotions - positive reappraisal

Positive reappraisal is to give a negative experience a positive meaning in terms of personal growth. For example, we can list the benefits of a negative experience so that we can see not only what we have lost, but also what we have gained. Warning: this method can become caricatured when used systematically or on strong negative events. It is also worth bearing in mind that you do not have to go through a negative experience to achieve personal growth. One of the major functions of positive emotions is to encourage personal growth.

Exercise: think of an event that gave rise to negative emotions and look at what it did for you in terms of personal growth.

Day 13: Managing negative emotions – acceptance

Acceptance means accepting that the events that generated negative emotions happened as they did. It is saying to ourselves "c'est la vie", "that's life". This strategy is the most effective and the most difficult. It can follow or go alongside other strategies.

Regular meditation can increase our capacity for acceptance. Thus, when an event marked by negative emotions appears, we may have a greater probability of being able to accept what is happening.

Exercise :

Option 1: if you have a meditation practice, use it to think back to an event that has generated moderate to strong negative emotions for you, depending on your meditation experience.

Option 2: If you do not have a meditation practice, think of an event that generated weak negative emotions and repeat "that's life". If you are feeling negative emotions, allow yourself to be at least partially taken over by them and repeat "c'est la vie".

Day 14: Using past experience to improve future happiness

The older you are, the more experience you have accumulated. However, younger people may have more experience than older people, because they have lived through more different situations or may have used their experiences to get to know themselves better.

There are a number of ways in which life experience can be used to deepen self-knowledge and promote happiness.

One way is to learn from the decisions we have already made and their influence on our own happiness. This can help us to better orientate our present and future lives by understanding what works for us, what does not, the errors of judgement we may have made and the good judgements we may have made.

A second way is to use the ideas and emotions that run through us every day and that we do not take the time to dwell on. These ideas and emotions are a considerable source of information about ourselves. Of course, if we wanted to dwell on all of them, we would not have the time, but we can dwell on some of them, particularly those that are the most surprising and those that are unpleasant. Surprising ideas and emotions open us up to an understanding of ourselves that we do not have, because we find these ideas and emotions coming from ourselves surprising. Unpleasant ideas and emotions open us up to elements of ourselves that we often do not want to know. Generally speaking, when we talk about self-knowledge, we stop at what is not unpleasant. However, the most profound knowledge we can have of ourselves is based on discovering what is unpleasant for us and what we do not want to know about ourselves.

Exercise: look at your past and draw 3 lessons about happiness from it.

Day 15: Learn how to change our habits

Habits are recurring behaviours that are activated by specific contexts, require a low level of awareness, are acquired through repetition and require little energy, as they no longer need to be thought through and decided upon.

Changing a habit is complicated. Changing our beliefs – which is what you are doing by taking part in this self-coaching – is not always enough to change a habit. You may need to put a strategy in place.

There are two main types of strategy: cognitive strategies and strategies for changing our environment.

The best known of the cognitive strategies is undoubtedly the strategy of recall and reward. Reminding is the act of regularly reminding ourselves or being regularly reminded that we should initiate a particular behaviour. Reward is the act of granting ourselves something pleasurable because the desired behaviour has been performed.

Cognitive strategies can have an influence in the short term, but this influence can decrease sharply in the long term. In other words, cognitive strategies may lack efficiency.

When our environment changes, the signals that activate our habits also change, which can force us to change our habits or create new ones. This is why habit changes are most effective during life changes, such as having a new home, a new job or a child, and this is the reason why strategies for changing our environment are generally the most effective strategies for changing our behaviour.

We do not have to wait for major changes in our lives, whether we want them or not, to make use of the fact that changes in our environments encourage us to change our habits. It is possible to consciously modify more or less important elements of our environment to change some of our habits. For example, it is easier to eat healthily if the food we buy is essentially healthy food. Similarly, it is easier to stop wasting time in front of the television if we do not have one at home.

Exercise: think about the habits you would like to change. Choose one that can be changed by changing your environment. Make the change in your environment.

Day 16: Become aware of the hedonic adaptation process

Hedonic adaptation is a process by which we become accustomed to stimuli that have pleasant or unpleasant emotional consequences.

Imagine you have been given some excellent news for yourself. You will experience a positive, pleasant emotional peak. However, more or less quickly, the positive emotions generated by the announcement diminish until they disappear. This phenomenon of the decrease and disappearance of the positive emotions generated by a stimulus is called hedonic adaptation. Hedonic adaptation has two functions: to protect by reducing the consequences of stimuli and to facilitate the perception of novelty.

What is true for pleasant emotions is also true for unpleasant ones. If we are given very bad news, we will experience a negative emotional peak. However, the negative emotions generated diminish more or less rapidly until they disappear or almost disappear. When we experience certain negative life events, hedonic adaptation generally makes the passage of time our ally by enabling us to feel better in a more or less near future. This is an idea to bear in mind when we experience a negative event: time is generally our ally because of the process of hedonic adaptation.

Exercise: write a few lines about a positive event in which the hedonic adaptation process took place. Then write a few lines about a negative event in which the hedonic adaptation process took place. You can also do this in your head, but the impact is stronger when you do it in writing.

Day 17: Developing our resilience

In the 1960s, psychologists and psychiatrists took a long-term interest in children whom they thought were at risk of developing mental disorders because of their genetic inheritance, perinatal difficulties or the environment in which they lived. They were struck by the fact that children they thought to be at high risk ended up developing quite well. The words used to describe these children were "invulnerable", "stress resistant" and "resilient". It was this last word that came to the fore.

Resilience can be defined as a set of positive adaptations in a context of significant adversity and risk. We need two elements to talk about resilience: circumstances that are potentially threatening and a person who copes well or even better than we might have expected.

What makes a child, or more generally a person, resilient? There are three categories of resources that protect against adversity: characteristics specific to the child or person, characteristics of the family environment and, more generally, the emotional environment, and characteristics of society.

At the individual level, resources include flexible coping strategies[1], humour, problem-solving skills, learning abilities, social skills, and the ability to find support within and outside the family.

At family level, resources include warm family relationships, solid family support, good parent-child communication and positive relationships with siblings.

At the social level, resources include extra-familial support, from friends and neighbours for example, and policies that allow universal access to resources that facilitate positive

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[1] Coping strategies are the cognitive and behavioural strategies we use to deal with life's difficulties.

adaptation (housing, food, health, education). For children in particular, other social resources include support from teachers, quality education and good adult role models.

Exercise: what are the individual, family and social resources you can call on in the event of a problem? Feel free to use the lists of resources I gave in my presentation of the concept of resilience.

Day 18: The benefits of sharing negative emotional experiences

Sharing negative emotional experiences is a very common human trait. Yet, some negative emotional experiences are kept silent.

The simple act of putting negative emotional experiences down on paper, without another person knowing about them, is beneficial. Pennebaker[1] conducted a study in which students were invited to take part in a laboratory experiment on writing and psychology. They were asked to write for fifteen minutes a day over four consecutive days, with the guarantee that their writing would be anonymous and that they would receive no feedback. During these fifteen minutes a day, their writing was not to be stopped, and they were not to pay any attention to the grammar, spelling or organization of their text. The students were randomly divided into two groups. The first group was the experimental group: the students in this group were asked to write about one or more traumatic experiences in their lives. The second group was the control group: the students in this group were asked to write about a subject with no emotional characteristics, for example, they were asked to describe the laboratory where they were working.

The participants in the experimental group were satisfied with the experiment, finding value and meaning in it, and 98% were ready to repeat the study. These results can be compared with the content of the texts: rape, domestic violence, attempted suicide and drug addiction, among other subjects. The students had spoken about very personal and very difficult subjects, and at the same time had been satisfied to do so, even if, in the short term, many had reported being upset by the experience and had cried. This satisfaction, which is subjective, was corroborated by objective data. Participants in the experimental group significantly reduced the number of their visits to the doctor in the year following the experiment, compared with participants in the control group.

Sharing negative emotional experiences with one or more other people is also of great benefit. The people who are generally the best at listening and sharing are those who have been in a similar situation to the one we have experienced. For example, someone who has experienced the death of a spouse will be better able to listen to and talk with someone whose spouse has

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[1] Pennebaker, J.W. (1989). Confession, inhibition, and disease. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 22, 211-244.

just died. In particular, they are more likely to provide support beyond the initial stages of mourning, to be more tolerant of the fact that mourning lasts and not to rush the other person into another relationship.

Exercise: write for at least 15 minutes about one or more negative emotional experiences you have had. Repeat the experience over several days if you wish.

Day 19: Personal finances and happiness

I am only going to talk about the relationship between personal finance and happiness from the point of view of suffering and the reduction of suffering.

Lack of money and financial difficulties are a major source of suffering. We can see this very clearly from the fact that people living in poor countries are on average less happy than people living in rich countries and that, in rich countries, poor people are on average less happy than rich people.

A first principle of personal finance is to have precautionary savings to protect against the unexpected. This principle implies either being able to keep savings safe at home, or being able to keep them safe elsewhere, which is generally the case when we have access to a bank account.

A second principle is to own the assets that give us material comfort so that we can, at least in part, be disconnected from financial fluctuations, particularly the risk of hyperinflation, and from the risks of supply chains breaking down. This can mean much more than just owning our own home: it can also mean having our own water, heat and electricity supply, food and non-food reserves, and even owning some land to produce part of our own food, as well as having the skills and tools needed for this type of lifestyle. However, this principle can have two disadvantages: a reduction in the comfort in which it is possible to live, as the benefits of what economists call the division of labour are reduced, and a reduction in mobility.

The advantage of these two principles is that they provide protection against difficult situations and the negative emotions that these situations might generate. These two principles also provide peace of mind in normal times.

Exercise: if you do not have any emergency savings and you have a bank account, go to your internet bank account and set up an automatic transfer from your current account to your savings account. This transfer should be made a few days after you receive your salary. The amount of the transfer should be in line with your income and expenditure. If you are in financial difficulty and the transfer is free, just ask for a small transfer.

Another way of doing this is to start each month with a sum that you think is enough to live on, given your monthly expenses, and transfer the rest of your money to a savings account.

Day 20: Time constraints and life crafting

We can distinguish two forms of time: constrained time, i.e. time whose use we do not choose, and free time, i.e. time whose use we choose. There are, of course, nuances between these two forms of time.

When we have free time, we can choose how we are going to use it. Within the limits of our financial means and what technology allows, we can use our free time as we wish, and we can use it, if we wish, to promote our happiness, whether that be our present happiness or what we hope will be the construction of our future happiness.

When we are in a constrained time, we lose some of our ability to organize what we do with our time, however, not all constrained time have the same level of constraint and it is possible to improve constrained time. In the context of work, job crafting means redesigning our constrained time so that it is more conducive to our happiness. That is why I call life crafting redesigning our constrained time in any aspect of our lives.

What tricks can we put in place during our constrained time to enjoy it more? Here are two examples. Imagine a person doing their housework and listening to music to make doing the housework more pleasant/less unpleasant. This is life crafting. Imagine a couple discussing the sharing of chores in the home so as to divide the tasks according to each person's likes and dislikes. This is also life crafting.

Exercise: find a time you need outside of work, ask yourself how you can make this time less unpleasant and apply it.

Day 21: Free time and leisure

Free time only makes us happier if we know how to use it. So, when we have free time, what activities and leisure activities should we choose?

There are various forms of leisure and various typologies. We distinguish between active leisure, such as doing sport or voluntary work, and passive leisure, such as relaxing or watching television.

Another typology distinguishes between casual leisure, serious leisure and project-based leisure. Casual leisure poses no challenge, or a lesser challenge, than serious leisure. Casual leisure activities are simpler and require less commitment. The same leisure activity can be considered by one person as a casual leisure activity and by another as a serious leisure activity. For example, running may be a casual leisure activity for one person, but another person will be so involved in it that running becomes a serious leisure activity. A project-based leisure is a project that we carry out in our spare time. Writing a book, building a fence or volunteering at a festival in our spare time are all project-based leisure.

There are many different motivations for leisure activities. Here is a list that gives a good overview of these motivations, although it is not exhaustive. This list can help you to better understand what you want from a leisure activity and what you do not. It can also help you understand why you enjoy certain leisure activities. We generally have several motivations for the same leisure activity. Here is a list of motivations for leisure activities:

- pleasure and satisfaction derived from leisure activities

- physical pleasures, such as the physical pleasures of sport

- development of self-esteem

- a sense of freedom

- challenge

- achieving something

- learning knowledge and skills

- using knowledge and skills

- self-expression

- intellectual stimulation

- the need for solitude

- stress reduction

- relaxation

- excitement

- a sense of belonging to a group

- close friendships

- cooperation

- competition

Exercise: what do you want from a leisure activity? Which leisure activities do you think are best suited to your motivations?

Day 22: Develop our self-esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as an evaluation we make of ourselves that takes into account how much we appreciate ourselves and how valuable we consider ourselves to be. So having high self-esteem means that we have a very positive perception of ourselves.

Self-esteem is not necessarily linked to objective reality and evaluation. It is possible to have low self-esteem even though we are a good person with significant achievements in a difficult context. It is also possible to have high self-esteem when we are a bad person with no achievements, even though the context in which we grew up and live is favourable. Self-esteem is a perception, not a reality.

Having good self-esteem is a factor of happiness, because it notably creates a buffer against certain negative experiences such as social rejection or failure in a project.

Describing the characteristics of people with high and low self-esteem gives us some clues as to what we can work on to develop self-esteem. People with high self-esteem have a different way of regulating their sense of security in response to a threat to their self-esteem. They seek positive consequences such as experiencing positive emotions or obtaining social rewards rather than trying to avoid negative consequences such as rejection and loss of self-esteem. They are quicker to use their strengths, are more likely to reject the validity of negative feedback, are more likely to use the self-indulgence bias, which is a bias where we attribute the cause of our successes to ourselves, but not our failures, and which is a bias that makes it easier to maintain a higher level of self-esteem.

People with low self-esteem tend to lack the resources and confidence to combat threats to their self-esteem. They tend to try less to improve their mood after a setback in everyday life. They are more likely to generalize a failure in one area to other areas. There are fewer positive aspects in the image they have of themselves. They have difficulty forming positive ideas about themselves.

We have talked here about self-esteem in general terms, but for a same person self-esteem can vary from one life domain to another. You can have high self-esteem in one domain and low self-esteem in another. The strategies implemented in the first area will not be the same as those implemented in the other area. It can be useful to build on domains where self-esteem is high to strengthen self-esteem in domains where it is low. If we manage to have good self-esteem in one domain, perhaps we can also have good self-esteem in a domain where self-esteem is low.

Exercise: Make a list of the domains where you have good self-esteem. Why do you have good self-esteem in these domains? If you lack self-esteem in certain domains, use the domains where you have good self-esteem to gain self-esteem in the domains where you lack it.

Day 23: Encouraging optimism?

Let us imagine that two people are experiencing exactly the same uncertain situations. The optimistic person will tend to think more that the situations will be resolved positively in the future, while the pessimistic person will tend to think more that the situations will be resolved negatively.

When we make decisions, we cannot do so knowing all the ins and outs of the decision. Even for the most carefully considered decisions, we take shortcuts and uncertainties remain. Optimism colours the decisions of optimistic people by giving them a sense of confidence in the future.

Optimism and pessimism are therefore two opposing attitudes, but they belong to the same continuum. The fact that we talk about optimists and pessimists should not blind us to the fact that the situation is not binary. We can be more or less optimistic, or more or less pessimistic, and we can be optimistic in certain contexts and pessimistic in others.

Being optimistic has a number of advantages. Optimists are happier on average than pessimists. Optimists generally experience fewer moments of distress after a negative event than pessimists. Optimists deal more easily with bad news, negative feedback and difficulties in their social and intimate relationships. In addition, optimists and pessimists have different coping strategies. Optimists are more focused on problems. When this strategy is not possible, optimists opt for acceptance strategies, humour and try to present a positive view of the situation. Pessimists prefer denial and disengagement, or even drug use. Another feature of optimists is that they are much more stable in the use of their coping strategies than pessimists. This can be explained by the fact that optimists' coping strategies work better, so it is less useful for them to change them.

However, being an optimist has significant disadvantages. One, being pessimistic can in some situations reduce the likelihood of experiencing certain negative events. For example, being pessimistic when driving can reduce the risk of having an accident, because we pay more attention to our driving and to that of others. Optimism can foster a feeling of invulnerability that can be dangerous. Two, an optimistic person may be more vulnerable to the harmful consequences of an event when they thought it was going to go well.

It is possible to consider optimism and pessimism as strategies. This involves choosing the most effective strategy for a given situation, i.e. being optimistic in situations where optimism favours the best consequences and being pessimistic in situations where pessimism favours the best consequences. Put another way, the default strategy should be optimism, because it

is generally the best strategy, but we should always ask ourselves whether a pessimistic strategy might be better. In certain situations, a mixture of the two might even be best. For example, fighting for something to succeed as an optimist, but thinking as a pessimist that it will not succeed in order to protect ourselves emotionally from possible failure.

Exercise: which of the situations you are experiencing today do you think it would be better to be optimistic about and which do you think it would be better to be pessimistic about? Why or why not?

Day 24: Making friends

Friendships are often formed through enjoyable activities, with the aim of having a good time, laughing and bonding. There is no cohabitation constraint among friends, unlike what generally occurs in families.

There are rules for building a solid friendship. A friend is supportive, trustworthy, tolerant, and a source of fun and humour. Supportive means helping out in times of need, expressing emotional support. Being trustworthy means respecting the other person's privacy, trusting them, keeping their confidences, not criticizing them in public. Being tolerant means not being jealous or critical of their relationships, being tolerant of their other relationships and accepting their faults. Being a source of pleasure and humour means joking with them and sharing good news.

Some friends can turn out to be bad friends. What characterizes bad friends is that they violate the principle of reciprocity that characterizes most friendships.

Extroversion and social skills make friendships easier and more numerous. The extraverts have better non-verbal communication: they smile more, look more, touch more and speak in friendlier voices. Their social skills are better and they are more cooperative. Their activities are also more oriented towards pleasure and meeting people. When we compare the behaviour of a pair of extroverts who do not know each other and who are placed next to each other and the behaviour of a pair of introverts in the same situation, we see that the extroverts talk to each other a lot while the introverts do not talk or talk little.

It is possible to have lots of friends, spend a lot of time with them and still feel lonely. This is usually the result of conversations that focus only on impersonal subjects such as music, clothes or sport, instead of also including the experiences, joys and problems of each person. That is the reason why close friends, those with whom you talk about personal things, are important.

In the end, making friends means not waiting for the other person to make the first move, not just talking about the rain and the fine weather, talking about personal things, sharing the

good times and the bad, being trustworthy, being tolerant, providing support, developing a reciprocal relationship.

Exercise :

Option for people who have few or no friends: invite one or more people to have an activity with you (sport, a drink, etc.).

Option for people who have friends but suffer from a lack of connection with them: talk about a personal subject with one or more friends.

Option for others: no exercise today.

Day 25: What makes love happy and lasting

A relationship that lasts is not necessarily a happy relationship. Economic conditions, social norms or having children can make a relationship that both partners find highly unsatisfying last. So how do we make a relationship happy and long-lasting?

When we listen to couples who last, there are certain ideas that come to the fore: "my partner is my best friend"; "I like my partner as a person"; "I think marriage is a long-term commitment"; "we agree on the goals"; "my partner has become more and more interesting over the years"; "I want the relationship to succeed"; "marriage is a sacred institution". The relationships of couples who last have experienced difficulties, but the spouses have accepted that there will be ups and downs and differences between them.

When we study couples who last, we see that friendship in love is essential to the satisfaction and longevity of the couple. This friendship is expressed through affection, tenderness, admiration and interest in each other's lives. Seeing your partner as your ideal partner also helps your relationship to last. A positive attribution style, attributing the positive to the other person and not attributing the negative to them, is also a good predictor of success in married life.

A loving relationship cannot exist without a few conflicts. The number of conflicts is less important than the way they are managed, but when they are badly managed, their repercussions can be devastating. In fact, negative behaviour is more important to the satisfaction and stability of a couple than positive behaviour.

Personal growth through the development of a loving relationship can help the relationship to last. A loving relationship can lead to personal growth: it can encourage self-exploration, emotional risk-taking, and a better understanding of oneself and others. Difficulties can be the source of these changes. The birth of a child, difficulties at work, individual desires - all these and many other things can be a challenge that leads to personal growth. Through their

thoughts, their emotions and their way of being, other people can also improve us without making things difficult.

Exercise: whether you currently have a partner or not, write down on a piece of paper how you intend to make your relationship happy and lasting.

Day 26: Reducing our stress levels at work and our risk of burnout

Stress is our body's response to the aggression of a stressor (internal or external) to resist, adapt and re-establish its internal balance.

It is important to differentiate between the stressor (the stress factor), stress (the body's reaction) and its consequences (suffering at work, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, addictive behaviour, anxiety, depression, etc.).

One of the possible consequences of stress is burnout. Burnout is a psychological disorder resulting from an accumulation of stress and marked by at least two characteristics: exhaustion and disengagement.

Stress and burnout can occur outside the workplace. For example, a stay-at-home mother can be stressed and even suffer burnout. Here, we are going to talk about work-related stress and burnout, but what is written about work-related stress and burnout is valid for stress and burnout in general. You just need to adapt the ideas to the context.

The best scientific model for understanding work-related (and non-work-related) stress and burnout is the demands-resources model. The central idea of the model is that, whatever our job, the factors that influence our level of work-related stress can be divided into two categories: job demands and resources.

In this model, when we want to reduce our level of work-related stress and our risk of work-related burnout, we have two possible complementary strategies:

- Increasing resources

- Reducing job demands

When we are an employee, reducing job demands can be complicated, because we generally have little power over them. This is why the main way is to ask for a reduction in requirements by showing that the level of requirements is too high. It is also possible to reduce certain requirements without asking, or to distinguish between the important goals and the demands that are hindering us from achieving these important goals, so that we can focus on achieving the important goals and put other demands to one side.

Here is a list of resources. Its aim is to give you ideas for increasing your resources to cope better with work-related stress. This list is not exhaustive and some resources may not be relevant to your situation.

Resources outside work:

- Quality of sleep

- Quality of diet

- Organizing your life well

- Sport and physical exercise

Resources in terms of the tasks performed at work:

- Variety of tasks (tasks can be too varied or not varied enough)

- Meaning of tasks (tasks that give meaning to work are generally better)

- Autonomy in carrying out tasks: neither too little nor too much.

Work organization resources:

- Participation in decision-making

- Knowledge of the major objectives given to you

- Major objectives that do not conflict

- Absence of requirements-obstacles that prevent major objectives from being achieved

Social relations resources:

- Support from managers

- Support from colleagues

- Support from HR

- Work climate

Organizational resources:

- Job security

- Career opportunities

- Salary

- Daycare for young children

When you are an employee, reducing job demands can be complicated, as you usually have little control over these demands. Therefore, the main way is to ask for a reduction in job demands by showing that the level of job demands is too high. You have probably also noticed

that certain job resources can become job demands depending on the situation. For example, having sufficient autonomy is a job resource, more specifically a resource at the level of the tasks performed in the job, but when you do not have sufficient autonomy, it becomes a job demand and you can ask your employer for more autonomy at work.

Exercise: if you wanted to reduce your work-related stress, which of the resources listed above would you mobilize? How would you mobilize them? What would you also say to your manager (if you have one) to reduce the demands on your work?

Day 27: Develop our job crafting skills

Life at work has characteristics that life in general does not. One of the main differences between life at work and life in general is that people who work are likely to be less autonomous at work than in the rest of their lives, since their work has to satisfy a boss and/or the users of the good or service they produce.

As we have already seen, when we do not have control over our present moment, it may nevertheless be possible to redesign our constrained time so that it is more conducive to our happiness. At work, this can be done without the agreement of a boss or superior, within certain limits, and it is called job crafting. The central feature of job crafting is that employees modify their work on their own initiative.

Some people see their work as something that cannot be changed. The belief needed to be able to redesign our work, to engage in job crafting, is to consider that it is possible, to consider that we can, in part, be the architect of our work. To do this, we need to be alert to opportunities to make small changes and concentrate on achieving small victories.

Job crafting also works best when it aligns with goals that are important to us, when it allows us to use our strengths and talents and when we use it to follow our passions or, more broadly, subjects in which we have a great interest.

There are three main forms of job crafting: modifying tasks, modifying relationships and modifying perceptions. We are going to focus on the first major form: modifying tasks.

There are three ways of modifying tasks through job crafting. You can :

- Redesigning tasks

- Give more time and energy to certain tasks

- Add a new task

Redesigning tasks means doing the same tasks, but differently, so that the new way of doing them brings us more pleasure, or less displeasure. This is undoubtedly the most useful technique, as it is the one that is adapted to the greatest number of situations.

It is also possible to give more time and energy to certain tasks, because we enjoy them more. To avoid increasing work-related stress and the risk of work-related burnout, this generally means giving less time and energy to other tasks, the ones we do not like.

If we are bored with our job, we can add one or more tasks. The characteristic of this task or these tasks must be that their accomplishment gives us pleasure.

Exercise: apply the job crafting principle to your tasks at work. Which tasks could you redesign? How could you do it? Could you give a little more energy to certain tasks that you prefer and less to others that you like less?

Day 28: Recognize the state of flow and try to experience more moments in a state of flow

Flow is a psychological state defined by Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. He began to define this state while studying painters in the 1960s. When these artists were busy creating, they no longer took into account thirst, hunger or fatigue; they were only absorbed by their work. When their painting was finished, they lost interest in it and moved on to another painting. Flow was then studied in different contexts, including professional contexts: chess players, dancers, mountaineers, surgeons, police officers, etc.

Have you ever experienced moments when, simultaneously, you felt good, you did not see the time passing, you were on a task that represented a certain challenge for you and you were performing well? If so, you have already experienced moments of flow.

More precisely, flow is a state marked by the following characteristics:

- intense concentration on the task in hand

- a distortion of temporal experience that makes you forget time

- the experience that the task itself is the reward and that the goal of completing it is perhaps just a pretext for being in a state of flow

- a sense of loss of self-awareness

- the feeling that awareness and action are merging

- a feeling of control.

Flow has a very important characteristic from a professional point of view. It is a pleasant psychological state easier/less complicated to experience at work than outside work.

There are at least two main strategies for encouraging moments of flow. The first is to develop a metacognition of flow, i.e. to develop our ability to think about flow. This is what you are doing as you read these lines and try to relate my words to your past and future experiences.

A second strategy is to try to have a job that gives us pleasure (intrinsic motivation) and that makes us want to succeed in it for ourselves (achievement motivation).

Two conditions need to be met for the state of flow to emerge and endure at a given moment: a challenge or opportunities to act that are in line with our skills, and precise and close objectives with immediate feedback. Flow is a fragile balance. If we perceived our task as too complicated in relation to our abilities, then there is a risk of anxiety. If we perceived our abilities as being too great in relation to the task being performed, then there is a risk of boredom.

When we are in flow but heading towards anxiety, it can be useful to fragment tasks to make them less complex. It is also possible to let a little time pass, as our brains tend to work on our problems even when we are not aware of it. When we are in flow but heading towards boredom, it is a good idea to add tasks or do more complex tasks.

Exercise: try to recognize whether you have experienced states of flow in the past, whether at work or outside work. What could you do to experience more states of flow?

Penultimate day: The collective determinants of your happiness

We tend to focus on the individual determinants of our happiness and forget about the collective determinants. This is normal, because the individual determinants are those over which we have by far the most power. However, these individual determinants are not the most important determinants of happiness, and what allows us to see this clearly are the consequences for our happiness of the birth lottery.

We do not choose the family, the country or the era in which we are born, and when we look at the average degrees of happiness of the countries of the world, we can see that the simple fact of being born in one country or another means that we can be born in countries where the average degree of happiness is low, for example 4 on a scale of 0 to 10, or in countries where the average degree of happiness is high, for example 8 on a scale of 0 to 10 (these figures are not imaginary, they come from the World Database on Happiness). The chance of being born in such and such a country, the birth lottery, can bring us a good endowment in terms of happiness, or a very bad one. This chance and the resulting consequences in terms of happiness also exist within countries. Inequalities in terms of happiness can be just as

important within the population of certain countries as between the populations of other countries on the planet.

So, even if our choices have an influence on our happiness, this influence is generally not so strong as to take us from a happiness level of 4 to a happiness level of 8 on a scale of 0 to 10. Inequalities in happiness are primarily the result of the birth lottery and, more specifically, inequalities over which we have little individual influence, but which are the result of political decisions. Inequalities in terms of happiness are in fact the consequence of other inequalities, in particular inequalities in terms of wealth, security and freedom.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO CHANGE THIS.

There is research on happiness in public policy. We can:

- measure happiness in order to guide public policies to reduce the number of people living in suffering;

- optimize the relationship between consumption of natural resources, public spending and the social conditions of human happiness.

Personally, I am not interested in the science of happiness to be happier (I would have been happier if I had not made all the efforts I have made in my life), but because I think that using the science of happiness in public policy is one of the keys to building a less ugly world.

There is no exercise for this penultimate day. I just wanted to share this information with you.

Last day: Savouring

Well done!

Your final exercise is to take a few minutes to savour the efforts you have made to be a little happier (or a little less unhappy). Taking the time to savour life's successes and good moments is a way of experiencing more positive emotions and, when it comes to savouring efforts, of valuing those efforts.

As memory fades, do not hesitate in the future to redo certain exercises that you found particularly useful, or the whole self-coaching!

Once again, well done!

Renaud Gaucher

PhD in happiness studies[1]

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[1] The title of my doctoral thesis is 'Innovation in Measuring Well-being'. As there was no specific field listed on my degree and my supervisors belonged to different fields and university departments, I asked them what field I had obtained my PhD in. One of them said 'happiness studies'.

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IF YOU WANT TO CONTACT ME AND HELP THE BOOK OF HAPPINESS PROJECT

If you want to help The Book of Happiness Book project, then there is one simple and free thing you can do: share the book in its digital format with your loved ones and on social networks.

I hope that the dissemination of The Book of Happiness Book will inspire policy-makers to use the methods that are presented in Chapter 9. I am at their disposal if they wish to go further. I continue to do research on the optimization of the relationship between public spending and happiness and on the optimization of the relationship between natural resource consumption and happiness, all from a negative utilitarianist perspective.

If you wish to contact me, you can do so through a form on The Book of Happiness website

      https://thebookofhappiness.org/contact/

Thank you for taking the time to read a little (or a lot) of The Book of Happiness and I hope it has brought you a few small useful things for your life.

Renaud Gaucher

PhD in Happiness Studies