

TAKING HAPPINESS SERIOUSLY

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INTRODUCTION TO ALAN & THIS SESSION

- **Who am I?**
 - **Why am I talking about this?**
 - **What am I trying to argue & how will I do this?**
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HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

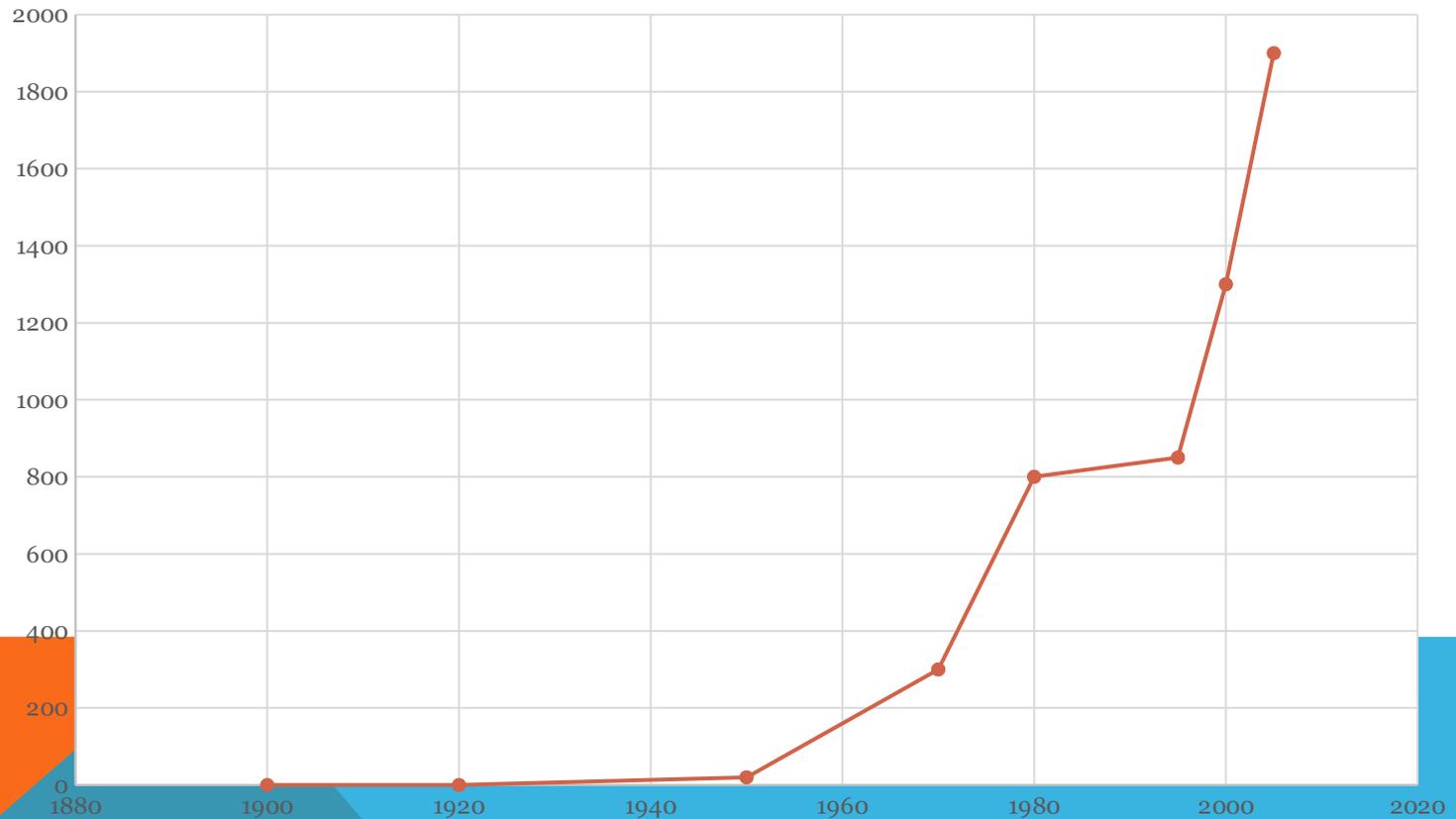
- **“...happiness is used in at least two ways – the first as an emotion (“Were you happy yesterday?”) and the second as an evaluation (“Are you happy with your life as a whole?”).”**

- (World Happiness Report, 2013, p3)



GROWING SCIENTIFIC INTEREST IN HAPPINESS

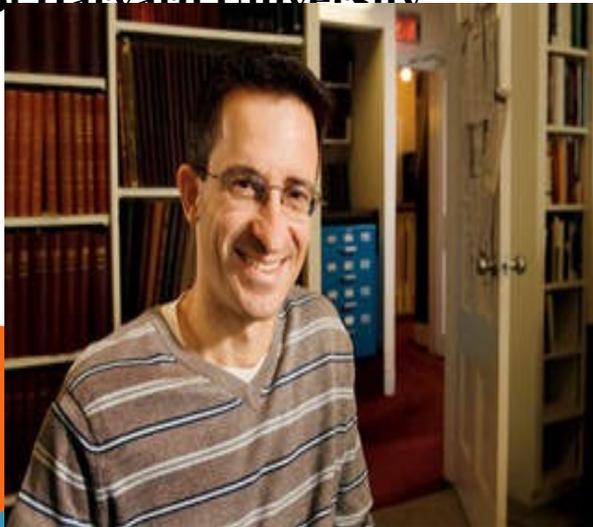
Approx number of scientific publications on happiness
(based on Veenhoven, 2014b)



HAPPINESS IS A SERIOUS ACADEMIC & RESEARCH SUBJECT!

Harvard University

Harvard's Positive Psychology 1504, taught by Professor Tal Ben-Shahar (PhD), will enter the history books as the most popular course in the history of Harvard University



Centre for the Scientific Study of Well-being

The Well-being Institute (WBI) is a cross-disciplinary initiative at the

University of Cambridge



Professor Felicia A. Huppert
Emeritus Professor of Psychology,
Department of Psychology
Fellow of the British Psychological Society
Fellow of Darwin College, Cambridge

WE NOW KNOW A GOOD DEAL ABOUT HOW TO ACHIEVE IT & THE BENEFITS OF HAPPINESS

Sonja Lyubomirsky is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the [University of California, Riverside](#) and author of the bestseller *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*, a book of strategies backed by scientific research that can be used to increase happiness



Example: gratitude journal

GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Keep a gratitude journal in which you write 3 to 5 things for which you are currently thankful from the mundane to the magnificent. Do this once a week e.g. on a Sunday night. Keep it fresh by varying your entries as much as possible.

Research findings (Emmons):

Physical

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

Psychological

- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness

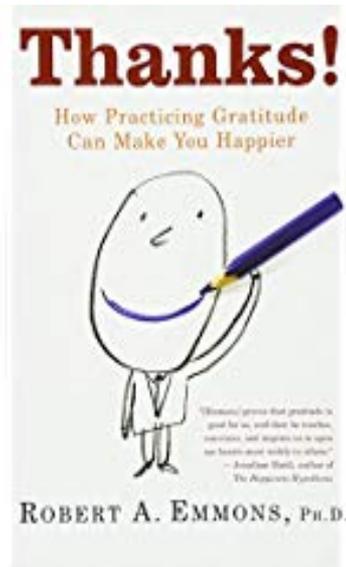
Social

- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated.



THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON GRATITUDE

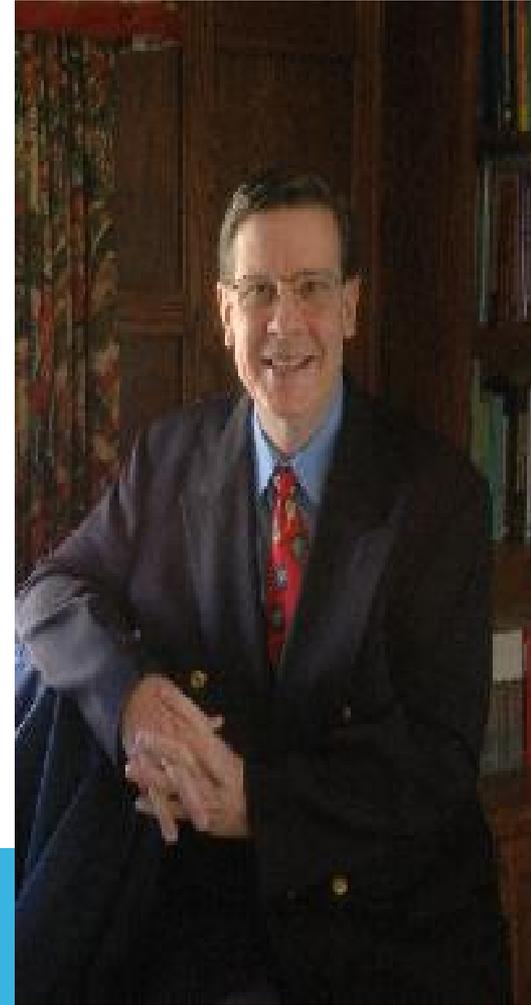
Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Davis where he has taught since 1988.



BENEFITS OF HAPPINESS

Ed Diener is the Joseph R. Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois.

Professor Ed Diener on the consequences of happiness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdxbmVbr3NY>



HAPPINESS AND HEALTH

Research from Harvard Medical School (2016):

Positive emotions have been linked with better health, longer life, and greater well-being in numerous scientific studies. On the other hand, chronic anger, worry, and hostility increase the risk of developing heart disease, as people react to these feelings with raised blood pressure and stiffening of blood vessels.



<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/positive-psychology-harnessing-the-power-of-happiness-mindfulness-and-inner-strength>

HAPPINESS IN EDUCATION

**Penn Resilience Programme basis of
resilience training for schools**

<http://www.howtothrive.org/> (1 min 36



US MILITARY ARE USING THE RESEARCH ON HAPPINESS



Soldiers who received ...resilience training reported higher levels of resilience and psychological health over time than Soldiers who did not receive the training...units that received training at the company level had 60 percent fewer diagnoses of drug & alcohol abuse and 13 percent fewer diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder compared to units that did not receive training at the company level.

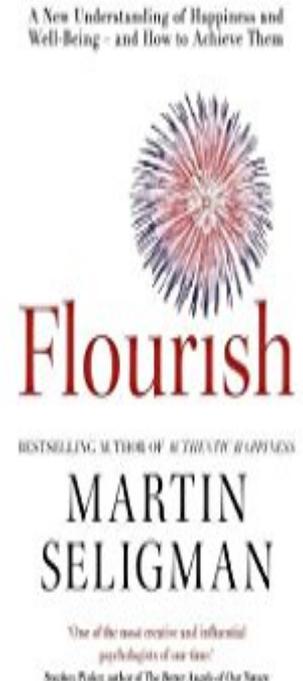
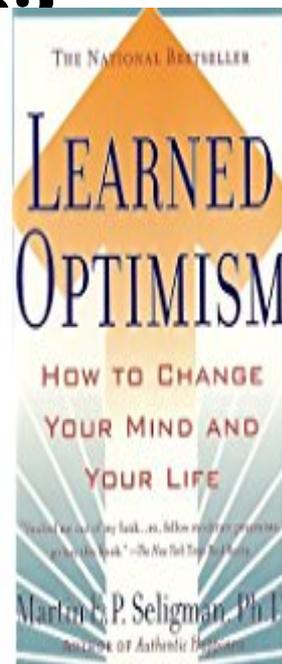
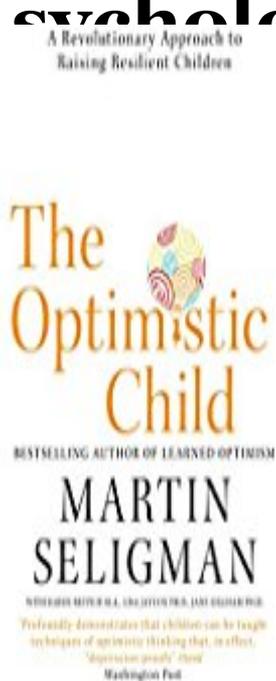


Prof Martin Seligman is the Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology in the University of Pennsylvania

SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE THINKING OF THE FOUNDER OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

**The new era of Positive psychology
(20 mins TED talk):**

https://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology#t-135162



TEST YOUR HAPPINESS!

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

7 - Strongly agree

6 - Agree

5 - Slightly agree

4 - Neither agree nor disagree

3 - Slightly disagree

2 - Disagree

1 - Strongly disagree

_____ **In most ways my life is close to my ideal.**

_____ **The conditions of my life are excellent.**

_____ **I am satisfied with my life.**

_____ **So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.**

_____ **If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.**

SCORING HAPPINESS

30-35: very high score: highly satisfied

25-29: high score: people like their lives & things are going well

20-24: average score in economically developed nations. People are generally satisfied but have some areas where they would like some improvement.

15-19: slightly below average: people usually have small but significant problems in several areas of their lives or one area that's a substantial problem

10-14: dissatisfied: people are substantially dissatisfied with their lives

5-9: extremely dissatisfied: people are usually extremely unhappy with their current life

MENTAL HEALTH IN UK: HOW ARE WE DOING?

- **One in four** people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year.

Mental health problems are one of the main causes of the burden of disease worldwide. In the UK, they are responsible for the **largest burden of disease** - 28% of the burden, compared to 16% each for cancer and heart disease.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2015?gclid=CNPAjq7q59ICFesWowod6gAOcA>

- **In the 2013 UK Wellbeing Survey, nearly 1 in 5 people in the UK aged 16 and older showed symptoms of anxiety or depression. This percentage was higher for females (21.5%) than for males (14.8%).**

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/fundamental-facts-15.pdf>

UCL, IOE & LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY STUDY, 2017

Almost one in four teenage girls suffer from depression, a new study shows, in what experts have described as an “alarming” discovery.

Researchers found that nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of 14-year-old girls and nine per cent of boys the same age are depressed.

Commenting on the finding, Dr Marc Bush, chief policy adviser at the charity YoungMinds, said:

“As a society, we also need to do far more to prevent mental health problems from developing in the first place. ...we need to rebalance our education system, so that schools are able to prioritise wellbeing and not just exam results.”

Claire Murdoch, national mental health director at NHS England, said:
“NHS services for children and young people are expanding at their fastest rate in a decade.”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/depression-girls-teenagers-quarter-stats-figures-research-a7956031.html>

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

The [NHS](#) prescribed a record number of antidepressants last year, fuelling an upward trend that has seen the number of pills given to patients more than double over the last decade.

The figures raised questions over whether the rise shows doctors are handing out the drugs out too freely or whether it means more people are getting help to tackle their anxiety, depression and panic attacks.

Prescriptions for 64.7m items of antidepressants – an all-time high – were dispensed in England in 2016...it also represents a massive 108.5% increase on the 31m antidepressants which pharmacies dispensed in 2006.

Guardian, 29 June, 2017



OUR CULTURE ISN'T GREAT FOR HAPPINESS?

Professor Tim Kasser on materialism and wellbeing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGab38pKscw>

(6 mins)

“the studies document that strong materialistic values are associated with a pervasive undermining of people’s wellbeing, from low life satisfaction and happiness, to depression and anxiety, to physical problems such as headaches, and to personality disorders, narcissism and anti-social behaviour.”

(Tim Kasser, *The High Price of Materialism*, 2002, p22)



CAN WE LEARN FROM COMPARATIVE RESEARCH?



10 UK 7.29

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	8.37
2	Finland	8.08
3	Sweden	8.03
4	Luxembourg	7.79
24	Latvia	6.24
25	Greece	6.16
26	Hungary	5.77
27	Bulgaria	5.55

Eurofound (2013) Quality of life in Europe:
Subjective well-being. Luxembourg:
Publications Office of the European Union

Q30 All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days? Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

CONCLUSION?

It's time to take happiness much more seriously across our whole society!

Here are some comments from participants in a study of happiness in Slough:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMN_8JdELBc

SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, (2008) Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth . London: Wiley-Blackwell

Eurofound (2013) Quality of life in Europe: Subjective well-being. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

Helliwell, J., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. (2017). World Happiness Report 2017. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Kasser, T. (2003). The High Price of Materialism. Mass: MIT Press

Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). The myths of happiness: What should make you happy, but doesn't, what shouldn't make you happy, but does. New York: Penguin Press

Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want. New York: Penguin Press

Useful websites:

Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing:

<http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/>

Authentic Happiness at Penn State University:

<https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

BBC series on happiness: