

Samantha French

Happiness consultancy report

CST228, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”

Autumn session, 2014

Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

Subject coordinators: Chris Barker and Brian Martin

Assignment

The consultancy is a continuation of your reflective journal.

- You continue with the activity you used for your journal, or a different one, and/or an additional one.
- You recruit two or more individuals — called clients — to undertake an activity known to increase happiness, either the same activity as your own or a different one.
- You introduce your clients to the activity, for example through a presentation, talk, workshop and/or handout.
- You monitor their engagement with the activity on a regular basis (at least weekly) through observations, interviews, survey and/or other means.
- You evaluate the effect of the activity on yourself and your clients using questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and/or other techniques.

For more details see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/CST_14outline.pdf

Samantha French's consultancy report starts on the next page.

This document is located at <http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/happiness-consultancy-tops/>.

Happiness Consultancy – ‘Running as exercise and its effect on happiness’

Exercise and its Impact on Happiness

The wellbeing of individuals is multifactorial. Physical activity in the form of exercise has been significantly connected to the ability for the mind or body to heal, positive physical and mental health and therefore happiness (Myrna-Bekas et al. 2012). Exercise is physical activity that involves a level of effort and is organised or part of an individual's routine (Hays 1999). Exercise has clearly been linked to the achievement of quality of life both overall and health associated as well as an improvement in moods and an increase in the ability of an individual to function (Penedo & Dahn 2005, p.189).

A vital component of this is that exercise can increase the intensity of a positive mood on all individuals no matter their state of physical fitness. Those who are not fit and those who regularly exercise both have a positive mood shift after physical activity (Moses et al. 1989). This is encouraging for those who wish to improve their health but are hesitant as there is an instant feel good or mood lift after exercise no matter the intensity supporting those who are unfit to continue exercising.

Exercise is linked to the increase of “serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine” (Graves 2012, p.1) these are neurochemicals that are a significant component of a high level of wellbeing. An important factor of exercise is that the stress related hormones of cortisol and adrenaline are decreased reducing the possibility of an individual suffering from anxiety and depression (Graves 2012).

My research focus was determined by the evidence above orientating my emphasis to be on ‘Running as exercise and its effect on happiness’.

Introduction

The first step to start the happiness consultancy was to recruit individuals that were available to volunteer their time for two to three times a week for four weeks to participate in running as a happiness activity. I chose to ask three individuals if they would donate their time in the happiness consultancy as they lived in a geographical area that ensured all participants and myself had ease of contact and this research would not place excessive demands on their time and goodwill. I spoke with each person informally to see if they were interested and then formally contacted each

individual by email to clarify the research purpose, process and procedure and the manner in which the research would be conducted, this method ensured accuracy of information was provided. Questions about the activity could be easily addressed through the contact details provided in a timely and professional manner. Only two individuals agreed to participate in the activity as the third individual had a busy work schedule and didn't want to commit to a research activity, and not be able to follow through with it.

The participants who volunteered their time were Jennifer and Blake. Jennifer is a high school teacher and Blake is a lineworker, both work Monday to Friday but their work hours are different. Participants chose when and what times during the week they were to exercise to ensure that the time for exercise was tailored to fit into their work and daily routine. As the participants worked different jobs and their work hours are different Jennifer decided to exercise Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the mornings before work on a treadmill inside. Blake decided to exercise outside Friday afternoon and Saturday and Sunday in the mornings as Blake works early in the mornings during the week and at times could have been called in to work overtime at nights.

Data Collection

The collection method of information was achieved through interviews, observations and a survey which utilised a mood table.

Each participant was interviewed both at the beginning and end of the 4 weeks of exercise. Questions were both closed and open ended (Appendix 1).

A mood table that was utilised by Steinberg et al. (1998, p. 275) that consisted of positive and negative adjectives was provided to both participants to complete before and after each session of exercise. The participants were given instructions to circle the adjectives that applied to their mood just before beginning to run and directly after they had finished. They were provided with enough of these mood tables so that they could be filled in whether I was there or not (Appendix 2).

Observations were completed by myself once per week over the course of four weeks. Each week I observed the speed of the participants running, the location for exercise – inside or outside, the time that they ran for, whether they appeared to be

excited, happy or motivated, were they listening to music, watching TV or any other activity at the same time (Appendix 3).

Results

Jennifer's pre and post interviews (appendix 4) indicated that she was an inexperienced runner who enjoyed exercise but was inconsistent in her commitment due to work demands. She also has a very demanding job that has high levels of stress. She indicated that she was not as healthy as she would like to be and had concerns in regards to lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease. She understood the importance of exercise and was keen to commit to this research to see if it truly could make a difference.

The results of Jennifer's surveys (appendix 5) through the mood tables clearly indicated that her commitment was there but she struggled at the beginning to enjoy this form of exercise, however as time went on her health and fitness improved as did her sense of achievement.

Observations (appendix 6) provided insight into Jennifer's commitment to running inside and the fact that she varied her running style and technique to enhance her happiness and commitment to the project, she did not use any device such as radio or TV to prevent boredom, indicating she was happy to run without a distraction.

Jennifer preferred running inside on the treadmill so that she could complete the exercise in all weather conditions and track her distance and effort, this strategy had a positive and negative impact as it allowed her to develop a sense of achievement and she could notice physical improvements however it was a boring way to exercise and she began to have negative thoughts in regards to completing this experience, until she started to mix up the pace and style including long constant paced running and interval running.

Pre and post interviews (appendix 7) for Blake indicated that he enjoys exercise and is fit due to his age and the level of physical activities he completes at work. Running is an exercise that he does but not do a lot of, and he has indicated that he is interested to see if regular exercise will have any impact on him. The post exercise interview did find that Blake's sleep quality improved.

The surveys in the form of a mood table (appendix 8) indicated that Blake found exercising a positive experience from the beginning, however this positive experience increased as he commitment to running and regular exercise continued.

Observations (appendix 9) assisted to conclude that Blake enjoyed running outside. Blake introduced music to his exercising and this helped to keep him occupied, relaxed and focussed. He downloaded an app onto his phone that provided the benefits of tracking his distance and improvement; this provided the same benefit as using a treadmill and he was engaged and happier as through instant feedback he could see the direct benefits of his exercise.

Both participants agreed that running for the past 4 weeks has really increased their wellbeing and overall mood. Participants both agreed that setting the goal to complete the four weeks encouraged them to continue with the activity when they weren't motivated.

Overall from both participates after the 2 weeks of completing the activity they were more motivated each day to complete the activity. Blake decided to run just on the weekend as he found he was too tired to exercise on Fridays.

Difficulties that emerged whilst conducting the research

Whilst the consultancy progressed at a steady rate and produced results there were difficulties that emerged such as the observations were easy to achieve for Jennifer as she was using a treadmill however it was difficult to observe Blake as he was outside and covering considerable distance on his runs which meant I was only able to observe him at the beginning and end of his run and could not make a valid judgement at any other stage as he was not in my line of sight.

Even though I completed all of the observations it was also difficult to organise and complete due to busy and changing work schedules of the participants involved. Blake was very keen and committed to this consultancy however his unforeseen work commitments had on impact on the frequency of exercise.

Conclusion

I provided Blake and Jennifer with a copy of the final consultancy report, and asked for feedback, conditions or information that would like me not to include or change

for privacy or personal reasons. Both participants were happy with the report and changes were not necessary.

Jennifer expressed that being 46 and with a heavy and stressful workload that being in control of her health and seeing herself get better at running as well as the perseverance and commitment she developed through exercise was an extremely positive experience which correlates with the research by Lyubomirsky (2010, p. 256). By exercising in the morning Jennifer could identify with Harte et al. which stated “physical activity is like meditation, identical effects reduced anxiety and increased mood lifting hormones” (1995, p.253) as after exercising she felt more centred and in control of the day ahead.

Jennifer found that through increased good health there was a direct correlation to an increase in her happiness. Jennifer was happy that exercise is linked to improved physical health as it reduces the incidence of coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and its associated risks. Exercise assists in reducing body fat and therefore the incidence of diabetes and other associated diseases linked to being overweight or obese (Hays 1999). Blake also felt that he had achieved personal growth by reaching exercise goals that he could relate too. This was supported by research that connects goal achievement to mood enhancement. He also felt happy that he was reducing the impact of lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity and arthritis through exercise (Lyubomirsky 2001).

After exercise Jennifer could relate to Steinberg et al. who stated exercise provided “an increase in positive and decrease in negative mood” (1998, p. 278), she felt physically well, confident and optimistic in regards to her day ahead. The quote that brings the research together and Jennifer’s positive experience with exercise is “I would suggest that a strong case can be made that exercise is a basic aspect of wellbeing” (Hays 1999, p.7). Exercise is linked to positive wellbeing which in turn was related to an increase in Jennifer’s personal happiness even though the work day ahead was going to be stressful, long and at times complicated Jennifer still felt a sense of wellbeing.

Jennifer may find that to maintain this positive habit of exercise and to sustain the benefits related to happiness long term she may need to utilise both indoor and outdoor venues for exercise as supported by Myrna-Bekas et al. (2012) whose

research indicated that there were further positive effects that could be gained from exercising in an outdoor environment or environment that had natural light and surroundings.

Music was a strategy that assisted Blake to increase his happiness to participate in running, as Myrna-Bekas et al. states “an additional factor that can have a positive impact on mental health is music” (2012, p. 170). This was necessary to combat being bored and added to the experience as he felt more relaxed with the music but could also utilise music to increase health outcomes and therefore happiness through running to songs that had a fast beat.

Blake’s sleep routines, as a person who regularly has to pick up night shifts, was positively affected in the short term, which was very helpful and increased his happiness. Research indicates sleep improves and increases with quality due to exercise. Blake’s happiness did increase as did his sleep quality which is supported by Myrna-Bekas et al. (2012).

As the weeks increased it was evident that Blake and Jennifer’s experience supported that “there is clear scientific evidence that shows a link between physical activity and improved mood and wellbeing” (Myrna-Bekas et al. 2012, p.170) as they were clearly making a commitment to participate in the exercise and reflecting on its positive impact on their happiness with friends and family.

Reference List

Graves, G 2012, 'Why Exercise Will Make You Happy', *Condé Nast Publications*, vol. 34, no.5, pp. 1-6.

Harte, JL, Eifert, GH & Smith, R 1995, 'The Effects of Running and Meditation on Beta-endorphin, Corticotrophin Releasing Hormone and Cortisol in Plasma, and Mood', *Biological Psychology*, vol. 40, pp.251-256.

Hays, KF 1999, *Working it out: Using exercise in psychotherapy*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 3-10.

Lyubomirsky, S 2001, 'Why are some people happier than others? The role of cognitive and motivational processes in well-being', *The American psychologist*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 239-249.

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: a practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, London.

Moses, J, Steptoe, A, Mathews & Edwards, S 1989, 'The effects of exercise training on mental well-being in the normal population: A Controlled Trial', *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, vol.33, pp. 47-61.

Myrna-Bekas, R, Kałwa, M, Stefaniak, T & Kulmatycki, L 2012, 'Mood Changes in Individuals Who Regularly Participate in Various Forms of Physical Activity', *Human Movement*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 170-177.

Penedo, FJ & Dahn, JR 2005, 'Exercise and Well-being: A Review of Mental and Physical Health Benefits Associated with Physical Activity', *Current Opinion Psychiatry*, vol.18, pp.189-193.

Steinberg, H, Nicholls, BR, Sykes, EA, LeBoutillier, N, Ramlakhan, N, Moss, TP & Dewey, A 1998, 'Weekly Exercise Consistently Reinstates Positive Mood', *European Psychologist*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 271-280.

Appendix

1 - Interview Questions

Start of Consultancy

- Are you motivated to exercise 2 to 3 times a week for the next four weeks?
- How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy
- Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?
- What types of exercise do you enjoy?
- How do you feel about running?
- Could you tell me if you have any expectations of running as an exercise?
- Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?
- What days of the week are you going to exercise?

End of Consultancy

- Are you motivated to continue exercising?
- How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy
- Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?
- How do you feel about running? Have you noticed any benefits to exercising since you started?
- Have you noticed an increase in your happiness since exercising 2-3 times a week?
- Since exercising 2-3 times a week have you experienced any difficulty fitting it into your weekly routine?
- Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?
- Did you change your exercise routine? Why?

2 -Mood Table (survey)

Positive	Negative
Active	Angry
Alert	Annoyed
Carefree	Anxious
Cheerful	Apathetic
Clear Headed	Apprehensive
Confident	Bored
Contented	Detached
Elated	Downhearted
Energetic	Drowsy
Enthusiastic	Exhausted
Euphoric	Fearful
Friendly	Frustrated
Calm	Irritable
Happy	Lonely
Kindly	Regretful
Lively	Sad
Pleased	Spiteful
Quick-Witted	Tense
Relaxed	Weary
Satisfied	
Sociable	
Stimulated	
Sympathetic	
Trusting	

(Steinberg et al. 1998, p. 275)

3 – Observation Table

Participants Name

Location (inside or outside)	
Music, TV, other	
Motivation	
Speed (slow, medium, fast)	
Mood (1-10)	
Time spent running	

4 - Interview Questions Jennifer

Start of Consultancy

- **Are you motivated to exercise 2 to 3 times a week for the next four weeks?**
Yes
- **How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy**
6
- **Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?**
I think exercise is a great thing to do as it keeps me feeling healthy, fit and active. I would love to exercise more than what I currently do, but with my work demands I find it hard to fit it in. Hopefully by committing to complete this running activity I will find time to exercise when I normally thought I couldn't or didn't have time but I really do.
- **What types of exercise do you enjoy?**
I enjoy walking anything really that keeps me activity.
- **How do you feel about running?**
I am looking forward to start an activity like running something I wouldn't normally do. I don't run a lot so it will be interesting to see if it will be something I will continue after the consultancy.
- **Could you tell me if you have any expectations of running as an exercise?**
I am not as healthy as I would like to be and lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease worry me. Hopefully by running as a form of exercise I will feel healthier, happy and energised as being healthy and fit can improve my health and wellbeing.
- **Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?**
I prefer running inside as I can track my distance and speed etc. also I will most likely be running in the mornings before work and it will be dark outside.
- **What days of the week are you going to exercise?**
I am going to exercise Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the mornings before work.

End of Consultancy (Jennifer)

- **Are you motivated to continue exercising?**
Yes, I feel great after exercising over the past 4 weeks!
- **How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy**
9
- **Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?**
After exercising the past 4 weeks I have really seen a difference in my motivate to exercise, if I don't exercise I get angry and upset with myself as I have really enjoyed running as it lets me clear my mind. Setting the goal to complete the four weeks encouraged me to continue the running activity.
- **How do you feel about running? Have you noticed any benefits to exercising since you started?**
My body is toned and I am looking healthy!
I have defiantly seen improvements in my overall wellbeing, I am happier, motivated and energised.
- **Have you noticed an increase in your happiness since exercising 2-3 times a week?**
Yes, defiantly!
I feel great about myself; have seen improvements in my body as I am more toned and healthy.
- **Since exercising 2-3 times a week have you experienced any difficulty fitting it into your weekly routine?**
At first it was hard as I wasn't very motivated, but as days went on my motivation increased and I was looking forward to exercise as I began to enjoy it and it made me overall happier with myself as I was doing something for me and in the end improving my health and therefore wellbeing.
- **Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?**
I still prefer running inside, as it is easy and convenient for me as it is dark when I exercise and it works well with my busy work demands.
- **Did you change your exercise routine? Why?**
No

5 -Mood Table Jennifer (Summary over the 4 weeks)

Positive	Tally	Negative	Tally
Active	xx	Angry	x
Alert	x	Annoyed	x
Carefree		Anxious	xx
Cheerful		Apathetic	
Clear Headed	xxxx	Apprehensive	
Confident	x	Bored	x
Contented		Detached	
Elated		Downhearted	
Energetic	xxxx	Drowsy	
Enthusiastic	xxx	Exhausted	xx
Euphoric		Fearful	
Friendly	x	Frustrated	x
Calm	xxx	Irritable	
Happy	xxxx	Lonely	
Kindly		Regretful	
Lively	xx	Sad	
Pleased	xxxx	Spiteful	
Quick-Witted		Tense	
Relaxed	x	Weary	
Satisfied	xxx		
Sociable			
Stimulated	x		
Sympathetic			
Trusting			

6 – Observation Table Jennifer (Summary over the 4 weeks)

Participants NameJennifer.....

Location (inside or outside)	Inside
Music, TV, other	no music, tv etc.
Motivation	yes
Speed (slow, medium, fast)	At the start of the consultancy the speed that Jennifer was running at was slow (jogging). Towards the end of the four weeks the speed of which Jennifer was running at had increase to a medium pace.
Mood (1-10)	Mood increased over the weeks. Most times an 8.
Time spent running	30 minutes- 40 minutes depending on the day ahead

7 - Interview Questions Blake

Start of Consultancy

- **Are you motivated to exercise 2 to 3 times a week for the next four weeks?**
Yes
- **How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy**
7
- **Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?**
I enjoy exercising when I can but sometimes I am not motivated to exercise.
- **What types of exercise do you enjoy?**
I like to weights, running, surfing and swimming.
- **How do you feel about running?**
I enjoy running as it is an activity that I can do in my free time
- **Could you tell me if you have any expectations of running as an exercise?**
I am looking forward to increasing my speed and distance, it should increase my cardiovascular health which would make me fitter and then have a good effect on my stamina when I surf.
- **Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?**
I prefer running outside as I can choose the type of environment e.g. beach, bike track etc. always a different environment never the same. I don't like to get bored and while I run I can check out the surf.
- **What days of the week are you going to exercise?**
I am going to run Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday mornings. As with work I find it hard to exercise during the week as I start early and sometimes finish later.

End of Consultancy (Blake)

- **Are you motivated to continue exercising?**
Yes I am, I have really enjoyed exercising but I think I will just run on the weekends as it is easier for me with my work hours.
- **How would you rate the way you feel after exercising? Between 1-10, 1 being unhappy, 10 being very happy**
8
- **Could you tell me how you feel about exercise?**
Over the past 4 weeks I have really enjoyed running even if it was only for 20-30 minutes.
- **How do you feel about running? Have you noticed any benefits to exercising since you started?**
Yes, my sleep quality has improved since I started running on a regular basis and my overall fitness is better than when I started, I can run further and faster, the app on my phone challenged me to improve.
- **Have you noticed an increase in your happiness since exercising 2-3 times a week?**
Yes, after every time I went for a run I felt happy with myself and body as I was doing something to benefit my overall health and wellbeing.
- **Since exercising 2-3 times a week have you experienced any difficulty fitting it into your weekly routine?**
Yes, as work during the week can be unpredictable I have found it easier to just run on the weekends. I have found that setting the goal to complete the four weeks really encouraged and motivated me to complete the activity.
- **Do you prefer running inside or outside? Why?**
I enjoy running outside in different environments but it can be difficult when it rains to motivate myself and most times I like to wait to the rain stops to go for a run, but I do make sure I can fit a run in.
- **Did you change your exercise routine? Why?**
Yes, because it became very difficult to exercise during the week because of work so I had to cut out Friday afternoons and just run on the weekends.

8 -Mood Table Blake (Summary over the 4 weeks)

Positive	Tally	Negative	Tally
Active	xxxx	Angry	
Alert	xxx	Annoyed	
Carefree	xx	Anxious	x
Cheerful		Apathetic	
Clear Headed	xxxx	Apprehensive	
Confident	x	Bored	
Contented	x	Detached	
Elated		Downhearted	
Energetic	xxxx	Drowsy	
Enthusiastic	xxxx	Exhausted	x
Euphoric		Fearful	
Friendly		Frustrated	x
Calm	xxx	Irritable	
Happy	xxxx	Lonely	
Kindly		Regretful	
Lively	xx	Sad	
Pleased	xxxx	Spiteful	
Quick-Witted		Tense	
Relaxed	x	Weary	
Satisfied	xxxx		
Sociable			
Stimulated	xxx		
Sympathetic			
Trusting			

9 – Observation Table Blake (Summary over the 4 weeks)

Participants NameBlake.....

Location (inside or outside)	Outside-beach, bike track, local footpath around where he lived.
Music, TV, other	Music-iphone App on his i-phone that provided the benefits of tracking his distance and improvement.
Motivation	Yes
Speed (slow, medium, fast)	Medium to fast
Mood (1-10)	8 most days
Time spent running	20-30 minutes