

Katie Corbett

Happiness reflective journal

CST228, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”

Autumn session, 2015

Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

Subject coordinators: Chris Barker and Brian Martin

Assignment

Choose an activity that research says increases personal happiness, such as expressing gratitude, helping others, being optimistic or practising mindfulness. (See Lyubomirsky for ideas.) Undertake this activity for at least 5 weeks, keeping a personal diary of your observations about your experience, with entries once a week or more. You can keep the diary on a blog or as typed or handwritten notes.

During the time you undertake the activity, you should also read academic writing. In your diary, you can comment on the connection between what researchers say about the activity and your experience of it.

Your submission is in two parts:

1. A 1000-word reflective journal
2. Your diary.

In the reflective journal, you should report on 5 or more pieces of academic research (e.g. journal articles) that recommend your activity as enhancing happiness.

For more details see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/CST_15outline.pdf

Katie Corbett's reflective journal starts on the next page.

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

CST288: Happiness Investigating its Cause and Condition

Assessment 2: Reflective Journal Exercise & Mindfulness

Student Number: 4078287

Tutorial Wednesday 2:30

CST288: Happiness: Investigating its cause and condition Assessment 2: Reflective Journal

Diary Entries:

Week One:

- Daily swim
- 15 minutes average
- First few times felt strenuous
- Easier each day
- Avoiding task when anxious
- Sense of obligation takes away some pleasure

Week Two:

- Swam with friends
- Social connection, motivation
- Fun, distraction from mood, share experience
- Enjoyed sunshine

Week Three/Four:

- Continued swimming each day alone
- Paying attention to surrounding things that I enjoy
- Practiced mindfulness with swim
- Short walk – time to self and mindfulness
- Sunshine, warmth and Vitamin D
- Fresh air
- Activity surrounding me, people, birds, ocean.

Week Five:

- Hike up Mt Keira twice.
- With friends, and practicing mindfulness of nature and body sensations
- Sense of achievement, definitive end
- Feeling fitter, second time
- Confidence boost.
- Tired after but mentally content (if with no other commitments)

Word count 155

rated highly in the 'Life Joy Attention' category and decided to incorporate mindfulness into my activity. I focused on sensations of sunshine on my skin, grass beneath my feet on the walk to the pool. This increased enjoyment of the experience rather than considering it a chore and curbed my tendency to worry about other commitments. I learnt to focus on and enjoy the moment. Research suggests that long-term use of mindfulness meditation can rewire the connections in your brain, this is called neuroplasticity. My experience demonstrates that mindfulness does have short-term benefits of relaxation, pleasure and calmness. I am now motivated to keep practicing mindfulness for the potential positive long-term effects on the brain to perform more to my potential.⁶

In the last week I increased exercising by fully hiking up mount Keira. I wanted to experience the effects of vigorous exercise as research suggests is optimal for reaping the benefits to mental health.⁷ The sense of accomplishment on reaching the top had the most profound sense of happiness. Additionally research suggests that neurotransmitters, endorphins, including dopamine,⁸ produced as a result of exercise can contribute to feelings of euphoria. These neurotransmitters may have contributed to the overall satisfaction that lasted the rest of the day.⁹ Having friends to share the experience enhanced the positive attitude to pushing up the mountain, especially in steep sections, when physical exertion becomes unpleasant, and I wanted to stop and rest, a friend providing words of encouragement kept me motivated.

Some researchers have concluded it is best to keep social interaction and exercise separate, however my experience is contradictory.¹⁰ Lyubomirsky (2010) highlights the importance of choosing the right or combination of activities to match personal characteristics. For me the combination of mindfulness, exercise and social interaction proved ideal to approach a day when I feel depressed or have anxiety attacks. On good days gentle exercise, focus on mindfulness and savoring the positive mood to maintain and reinforce positive thinking habits is sufficient.¹¹

Practicing mindfulness whilst climbing Mount Keira was challenging. I was able to observe physical sensations and thought including deep breathing, increased heart rate and thoughts of wanting to quit. Using theory of mindfulness to notice but not act on these observations, allow them just to be present.¹² This helped with encouragement from friends helped to keep going. This experience made me appreciate how the long-term practice of mindfulness in Zen and martial arts benefits performance.¹³

⁶Andersen, M B & Harahan, S J 2015, 'Beginning and basics of exercise (and Sports) Psychology', *Human Kinetics*, pp. 4-16. Google books. Accessed 14 April.

https://books.google.com.au/books?id=bzPVBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA17&lpg=PA17&dq=Maddux,+J+E+1997,+%E2%80%98Habit,+health+and+happiness%E2%80%99,+Journal+of+Sport+and+Exercise+Psychology,+vol.+19,+pp.+331%E2%80%90346.&source=bl&ots=gJcLGJHLzC&sig=92syirVaO63dLHb81PFE-m7UCxE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XT02VcPVJqPGmQWY_4HwBA&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁷ 2012, 'Pakistan: Exercise brightens the moods of people', Right Vision News, Lahore, ProQuest, <http://ezproxy.uow.edu.au/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/docview/1002349848?accountid=15112>

⁸ Lemonick, M, D & Cray, D, 2005, 'The Biology of Joy', *Time*, Vol. 165 Issue 3, accessed online March 29, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/ehost/detail/detail?sid=10404fcb-4dc0-4912-b240-44b77ef8e741%40sessionmgr4004&vid=0&hid=4106&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=15599340>

⁹ Hills, P & Argyle, M 1997, 'Positive moods derived from leisure and their relationship to happiness and personality', *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 25, pp. 523-535.

Maddux, J E 1997, 'Habit, health and happiness', *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 19, pp. 331-346.

¹⁰ Maddux, J E 1997, 'Habit, health and happiness', *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 19, pp. 331-346.

¹¹ Lyubomirsky S, 2010, 'The How of Happiness: A Practical Guide to Getting the Life You Want', Piatkus, Great Britain.

¹² Perez De Albeniz A, 2000, 'Meditation: Concepts, effects and uses in therapy', *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 5, no. 1, p.49 ProQuest

¹³ Andersen, M B & Harahan, S J 2015, 'Beginning and basics of exercise (and Sports) Psychology', *Human Kinetics*, pp. 4-16. Google books. Accessed 14 April.

https://books.google.com.au/books?id=bzPVBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA17&lpg=PA17&dq=Maddux,+J+E+1997,+%E2%80%98Habit,+health+and+happiness%E2%80%99,+Journal+of+Sport+and+Exercise+Psychology,+vol.+19,+pp.+331%E2%80%90346.&source=bl&ots=gJcLGJHLzC&sig=92syirVaO63dLHb81PFE-m7UCxE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XT02VcPVJqPGmQWY_4HwBA&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false

I have found it beneficial to practice mindfulness and to increase exercise time per week. Achieving my goals improved my confidence and facilitated happiness proportional to the size of the goal.¹⁴ I now plan to balance study and eventually work with activities that combine what I have learnt. My personal experience and research have shown clear benefits to happiness and wellbeing. I intend to make this a long-term habit with the intention to rewire my brain permanently.

Word Count: 928 (journal Reflection only) 1083 (Journal & Diary dot points)

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¹⁴ Lemonick, M, D & Cray, D, 2005, 'The Biology of Joy', Time, Vol. 165 Issue 3, accessed online March 29, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/ehost/detail/detail?sid=10404fcb-4dc0-4912-b240-44b77ef8e741%40sessionmgr4004&vid=0&hid=4106&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=15599340>

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