



# The Art of Happiness

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## About the Tutorial

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This tutorial aims to enlighten the learners about the secrets of attaining happiness in life. It is based on the studies done by researchers and scholars at ISB and has been part of course-ware.

## Audience

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The tutorial will prove useful for all those people who want to seek happiness in life, without harboring any prejudice.

It is for all those who have resolved to be happy in life, irrespective of age, educational status and financial stature.

## Prerequisites

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There are no prerequisites for this tutorial. The learner must only be ready to pursue happiness and shed all kinds of prejudices. However, there is no barrier of language or ethnicity for this tutorial.

## Copyright and Disclaimer

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# 1. Happiness — Introduction

Being happy is one of the most fundamental requirements of a living being. Since the beginning of the human civilization, man has also been trying to develop new technologies, make new tools and improve his lifestyle for the sole purpose of attaining happiness. However, in its race of scientific endeavor and pursuit of money and luxuries, man is hardly aware of what exactly constitutes happiness.

Happiness is defined as the state in which a living being expresses pleasure and contentment. It is the state in which negative stress levels are at the lowest, even if not zero and positive stress boosts the person's positive emotions.

## Importance of Happiness for a Nation

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Happiness is the purpose behind the functioning of nations and societies at large. Happy individuals are found to be more successful in their jobs and tend to pass on positive vibes to the people around them.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was used to measure the development status of nations. However, these days **Happiness Index** is catching up as the preferred parameter for judging the success of a nation. On this scale of Happiness Index, many nations which ranked higher in GDP, scored low on Happiness Index. This shows that all institutions of mankind are driven by the purpose of achieving happiness in life; schools impart education for us to be literate and get a job, meditation centers promise happiness through meditation and hospitals make people happy through successful treatments and so on.

## Happiness is a non-tangible entity

Happiness is a non-tangible entity that cannot be found in luxuries and riches. Although materialistic entities can boost our happiness levels, but only for a short-term. It is the state of mind and our perceptions that shape our idea about happiness and determines our contentment level too.

Before proceeding with this tutorial, it is very important for the reader to understand that there will be tips and techniques which may sound absurd or which may sound conflicting to your goals. However, to attain happiness, the steps mentioned will be necessary.

The reader is also expected to find an answer to what he/she wants in life. The tutorial nowhere discourages the readers to renounce the world or not to earn money, but lays down a plan to focus on the more important aspects in life and to train the mind to focus on them. The tutorial emphasis on changing the common habits developed in one's life.

Here, we will look into all that constitutes real happiness. The chapters will also delve into the mistakes are committed by people in their attempt to attain happiness and the myths that surround the concept of happiness. The tutorial will cover the steps to be happier in life and will also cover various techniques to measure progress.

## 2. Happiness — Definition

Happiness is generally defined as the state of mind in which a living being feels pleasure and contentment. However, there is no specific definition for happiness. **Happiness is a subjective concept** and hence, its definition changes from individual to individual. For some, happiness is all about money. For others, it may be just listening to Beethoven's sonata. For you, it may be reading this tutorial. Hence, everyone has a different definition of happiness. However, the state of the feeling that one experiences is the same. And hence, the ways to achieve it are more or less common.

### What Happiness is Not

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Before learning what happiness is, it is required to know what it is not. **Happiness is certainly not the following things:**

#### Materialistic pleasure

It is always good to cry sitting inside a BMW car, rather than on a cheap bicycle. However, money cannot always buy you happiness. Although money is an elixir for survival in today's modern world, yet it can buy things but not emotions. What matters is what an individual does with the wealth he/she has. The pursuit of money leaves an individual with little time to enjoy the material pleasures.

#### Feeling Good all the Time

Happy people do not always feel good. It is a misconception that being happy is an eternal state of mind. Stress, tensions and setbacks are part of life. However, what defines happiness is how the individual responds to such situations. The capacity to absorb the setbacks, work on them and improve the condition is what determines happiness levels in the long-term.

#### One-Stop Solution

Psychologists and counselors advise keeping a diary to boost happiness. Cultivating a hobby wherein, you enter your experiences of each day into your diary or, going for trips or spending quality time with close ones are some of the recommended steps to lead a healthy and happy life. However, most of these habits fade away over time. It is necessary for an individual to keep adapting to life and keep looking for new ways to be happy.

### How to Define Happiness

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The definition of happiness depends on the individual. However, **all kinds of happiness stem from the feeling of satisfaction**. In the wake of dissatisfaction, an individual is possessed by the thoughts of the discontent and is occupied by anxiety. Hence, happiness is the state of mind that sets people to have a feeling of positive well-being.

The most important task at hand for a person who wants to be happy is to define what happiness means to him or her. Here is an exercise for you.

## Exercise

Take a piece of paper and write down your definition of happiness.

Now, if you have written down your definition of happiness, compare it with the definitions given over the Internet. You will find a hundred definitions, all differing from one another in some or the other way. However, each definition is correct and is based on the perception of the writer.

For you, happiness may be the feeling of eternal bliss. For others, it can be as simple as playing a violin or going for a walk. For some, it can be doing workout, for others it can be watching one's favorite movie with friends or alone. This is an important task and must be done prior to taking any step to be happy.

Defining happiness helps one to measure happiness. Please note, we are not talking of monitoring happiness. It is just about measuring happiness, and we will know more about the ways of measurement in the later chapters. There are primarily **five ways** in which **people define happiness**. They are as follows:

- Sensory pleasure
- Hubristic pride
- Authentic pride
- Love or Connection
- Abundance

## Sensory Pleasure

In the first category, people define happiness as moments of sensory pleasure. Going to parties or watching movies or having a night in the arms of one's love, going on vacations or having a good food are all included in this category.

## Hubristic pride

Hubristic pride is the emotion that one feels when one has a feeling of being superior to someone else. For example, winning a contest or a race, winning over an argument, or being promoted in office are examples of hubristic pride.

## Authentic pride

Authentic pride is the one that we feel when we find we are at a better position than before. Happiness equals progressing towards mastery of something. We compare to how we were earlier and how we are now.

## Love or Connection

The fourth category is the emotion felt when we feel in love with something. This 'something' can be a person or a pet or even an activity or scenery.



## **Abundance**

The last one is the state when a person feels that he/she is happy with what life is like. Abundance is felt when we find life as interesting and not threatening.

The best definitions are the ones which have elements of authentic pride, love or abundance. Hubristic pride does not last longer and is also not a good quality to possess. Sensory pleasure is also distracting and transient.

The best definition of happiness is the one which is based on abundance. The reason being that abundance is found to last longer than all others. Happiness can be believed as joy. Happiness can be also defined as a feeling of serenity. It can be also defined as a feeling of interest or curiosity. Another way to see happiness is to see it as a feeling of amusement or laughter.

# 3. Happiness — Measuring Happiness

## Measuring Happiness – On the Subjective Well-being Scale

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It is very important to measure one's happiness. Without proper measurement, it is almost impossible to determine if one is getting happier in life or not. Everyone has a different way to measure happiness. However, in this tutorial, we will delve into the Subjective Well-being Scale devised by Ed Diener, an American psychologist, professor and an author.

Before looking into the subjective well-being scale, it is important to understand what subjective well-being means. **Subjective well-being** refers to how people experience the quality of their lives. It includes **cognitive judgments** and **emotional reactions** to situations. A number of psychologists have defined happiness as the combination of life satisfaction and the relative frequency of positive and negative effects. The cognitive aspects involve evaluations of one's life, satisfaction etc.

## Subjective Well-being Questions

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**Subjective well-being questions are not entirely subjective** as the questions are self-reported. However, the questions ask the respondents to rate their feelings, rather than recall factual information and this is what makes the questions somewhat subjective. Objective indicators instead use parameters like educational level, health standards and employment condition to determine happiness. However, objective questions do not take into account the human perception. But human perception is regarded as the central figure in the well-being of an individual. The reason is that the only person who knows whether an individual is feeling low or high is the individual himself.

There are three approaches to determine subjective well-being of a person:

- Evaluative
- Experience
- Eudemonic

### Evaluative

In the evaluative approach, a person is required to make a cognitive reflection of his life. The respondents are asked to appraise their life on the parameters of health, job, educational qualifications, relationships etc. In addition to this, **Cantril Ladder** is also used. The respondents are asked to rate their life on a scale of 0 to 10.

### Experience

The approach of experience aims to assess the emotional quality of a person's experience. The factors like frequency, intensity and the kind of effect at any moment is used in this approach. The methods like **Day Reconstruction Method (DRM)** and **Experience**

**Sampling Method (ESM)** are also used to record the mood and well-being of a person throughout the day across various activities.

## Eudemonic

The eudemonic approach has its foundation in the belief that each individual has underlying psychological needs to add meaning to one's life. The factors included in this approach include autonomy, relationships, engagement, control, competence, purpose and achievement among many others.

The **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLWS)** is the scale we will use at the beginning of this tutorial. Here is a small exercise. Ask yourself the following questions and rate on the scale of 1-7.

- 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 turn back on time, I would change almost nothing.

The scores that you provide would mean the following:

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

Add all the scores and tally the sum with the explanations given for each score below.

- 31 – 35: Extremely satisfied
- 26 – 30: Satisfied

- 21 – 25: Slightly satisfied
- 20: Neutral
- 15 – 19: Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 – 14: Dissatisfied
- 5 – 9 Extremely dissatisfied

This is how subjective well-being is measured. It helps you to determine how happy you are in life and helps the psychologists to measure others' happiness levels. Although not a foolproof method, yet this scale is widely used these days.

## 4. Happiness — Misconceptions

Happiness is so much wanted by everyone that it is natural for people to develop misconceptions about it. Happiness is not always what we think of what it is because our perceptions and experiences with the world mold our opinion of happiness and at times, we develop delusions regarding happiness. Let us now go through the common fallacies that man has with regards to the concept of happiness.

### Misconception 1: Suppressing negative emotions

Happiness is certainly not about suppressing one's emotions, especially the negative ones. **Happier people on the earth are as vulnerable to sad moments** and moments of dejection and grief as anyone else in the world is. However, what matters is what a person does with those moments and how he or she responds to them that defines happiness levels.

Happier people have been found to focus more on the solutions, rather than the problem and this is what makes them happier than others. If an individual tries to suppress his negative emotions, those emotions will keep eating him and hollowing him from inside. The happier people allow themselves to feel sad at times, so that all the negative feelings can be let out. It is also okay to cry at times. However, once the negative phase has passed, the happier people focus on the next steps to be taken to address the situation, rather than just lamenting over what has happened.

### Misconception 2: Happiness is all about goals

It is a common adage that the 'journey matters more than the destination'. It is important to have goals in life. However, goals are not the only things that make us happy. **End is important, but means are even more important.** Only accomplishment of goals does not make an individual happy.

Most of the people in the world think that once goals are achieved, they will be happy. However, it is the struggle in the accomplishment that makes the human being happy. One needs to understand that goals and struggle are both important and necessary, but happiness comes from the journey and not from the attainment of tangible goals.

### Misconception 3: Happiness is about getting big things right

Many people in the world indulge themselves in the race for wealth, fame and materialistic things. It is their belief that such big things will make their life happier. However, such things in life increase the greed and discontentment levels, forcing the individual to involve oneself even more for such a pursuit. What matters in cultivating happiness is the cultivation of habits like gratitude, kindness, empathy, and compassion. Such attributes of humans make them happier and also spread happiness around them.

### Misconception 4: Happiness is all about selfishness

Happiness is not about being self-centered. Happy people acknowledge that their emotions are a result of the relationships they have with other people in their circle. Having a healthy relationship with friends, relatives and family members and helping others — all these raise

our happiness levels. The happy people don't let other priorities come in the way of their relationships.

### **Misconception 5: The best times are over for us**

It is not a rarity to find people who believe that their best times were when they were a child. Every one of us may be in a belief that childhood was the most fun-filled time of our lives. However, we don't realize that happiness does not compulsorily decline with age. In fact, there is no relation of age with happiness. It has been found that at times, older people are happier than the young dynamic people. It is important for each person to realize that the best times of life are created by us and they can be created anytime.

### **Misconception 6: I cannot recreate happiness**

There come situations in life which leave us dejected; it becomes quite difficult for most of us to stand up again and smile. The lack of resilience is what most people suffer from. It is crucial for each one of us to realize that our happiness is our creation and we can create it whenever we want to. Even if sad times have just gone by, we can still reclaim happiness in our lives. Sad moments come not to stay but to pass by.

## 5. Happiness — The Seven Impediments

The happiness of each individual depends on many extraneous factors. The factors could be the attitude of other people towards them, the incidents taking place in the surroundings and many such things. However, this is what most believe is true.

What if you were told that the real obstruction to happiness comes from within? What if you knew that there are seven obstacles to happiness, and you can control all of them? In the chapter, we will discuss the seven main obstructions to happiness.

### **Impediment 1: Devaluation of happiness**

Most people devalue happiness a lot. Happiness becomes their second priority while acquisition of materialistic things takes precedence. People many a time sacrifice happiness for other materialistic things and end up being sad.

### **Impediment 2: Pursuit of superiority**

Most people believe that being superior will provide happiness. This is a flawed logic and being superior actually kills happiness. The race for being most attractive, richest etc. leads to unhappiness.

### **Impediment 3: Craving for love and attention**

Greed is perhaps one of the hallmarks of human civilization. However, this attribute of humans takes them away from happiness. The unhealthy ways of expressing one's needs lead to reduction in happiness levels.

### **Impediment 4: Authoritative nature**

Being authoritative apparently gives the feeling of being higher than the others. However, an authoritative nature is disliked by everyone around and is observed to fuel animosities between people. This leads to damage in relationships, which lead to unhappiness. One must not be looking for ways to control others.

### **Impediment 5: Distrust**

The loss or lack of trust is another factor why humans feel unhappy. Fostering trust is a must for fostering happiness.

### **Impediment 6: Distrusting life**

Losing trust on life and blaming one's fate for every bad incident leads to a lot of unhappiness for oneself and for others around us. We need to focus on the positive aspects of life.

### **Impediment 7: Ignoring the source within**

Each and every person has a capacity to create happiness within. This is called 'mindfulness'. Mindfulness helps to be happy even during unpleasant incidents. Mindfulness is believed to be the most important determinant of happiness.



## Happiness – Impediment 1

## 6. Happiness — Devaluation

**Devaluation of happiness** is the first impediment to happiness. We tend to sacrifice happiness for the sake of other things. We don't look into the fact that in the pursuit of materialistic things, we tend to sacrifice happiness, the thing for which we are ironically pursuing the materialistic things. **A survey shows that happiness is the most important goal for most individuals.**

### Exercise 1

People routinely sacrifice their happiness for other things. Imagine a genie stands in front of you to grant you three wishes. Just close your eyes and think for a while, what all you will ask for?

If you have asked for happiness in any of the three things, then it's fine. But what are the other two things that you have asked for. If you have asked for money, fame or relationships, there are high chances that you will face the impediment of devaluing happiness. These are the things for which people sacrifice happiness. The items include money, fame, relationships etc.

### Exercise 2

Let us now carry out a small exercise to understand this impediment even better. Suppose you went to a shop to buy a piece of furniture. A wooden sofa along with two wooden chairs will satisfy your needs. You have 8000 bucks to spend. Now, as soon as you go to the shop, you find that you have a sofa and two chairs which you can buy for 8000 bucks. However, you also find that you can purchase a single chair made of iron for 8000 bucks. Now, wooden chairs and sofa can satisfy your needs and can make you happy. However, the iron chair looks elegant and can apparently enhance your status. Which one will you go for?

A large number of people tend to go for the iron chair for its elegance. They realize that for the same price, they will get more in wood and less in iron. Yet, they go and buy the iron furniture. This is how **they sacrifice their happiness for the sake of value for money.** Many people would recommend going for happiness. However, only a few go and practice it themselves.

The sacrifice of one's happiness for value for money is quite prevalent. Similar kind of thing happens even in the job scenarios. This is something usual in job interviews, people tend to sacrifice their happiness. Suppose you have two options with you at the time of job interview.

- The first option allows you to enjoy your hobbies and interests, but the salary will be less.
- The second option allows you to earn higher but you will be busy for 18 hours in a day.

Which one will you choose? Most people recommend choosing the first option but in real life scenarios end up choosing the second one. This example shows how people sacrifice happiness for other goals and materialistic things.

## Happiness – The Happiness Paradox

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The **Fundamental Happiness Paradox** is another term for devaluation of happiness. The observation that people want happiness and recommend others to choose the path that lead to happiness, yet they themselves end up choosing the path for themselves which gives them higher material reward. This is known as “The Fundamental Happiness Paradox”.

People don’t easily admit that they will go behind money, fame or power at the cost of happiness. Yet, a lot of them do so. On one hand, we know that happiness is one important requirement for us. Yet, on the other hand, we devalue it a lot. So, what is the main reason behind this?

Let us now discuss the reasons behind this paradox:

### Reason 1

The reason is that humans have negative beliefs about happiness. The first negative belief is that **happiness will make us lazier**. However, it is untrue. Research has proved that happier salesmen sell more and earn more. Happier employees have been found to be more productive. Moreover, happier CEOs are found to be more motivating and inspiring than others and also receive higher ratings by agencies for themselves and their companies.

The **Broadening Effect of Happiness**, a concept formulated by Barbara Fredrickson from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, says that individuals come up with more creative ideas if they are happy.

### Reason 2

Another negative belief about happiness is that **happiness makes us selfish**. However, it is false. People are found to be less selfish and more altruistic when they are happy. Happier people are more charitable and benevolent. Happier people volunteer more and this leads to more happiness.

Happier people are found to be having longer life span and have less chances of suffering from cardio-vascular diseases. Hence, happiness does not lead to laziness and selfishness. It rather has a positive effect.

### Reason 3

The third negative belief about happiness is that **happiness is ephemeral**. People believe that it is fleeting and does not last longer. So, why should we care for happiness? However, this is a fallacy. It depends on people whether they can make their happiness last longer. Happiness makes us more altruistic and makes us more productive, which makes us work more and better and this brings us closer to happiness.

### Reason 4

Another reason why we devalue happiness is because **we don’t define happiness concretely**. The reason why most people follow money and fame is because they are more clearly defined. The fluency effect shows that people are generally inclined to prefer things that are clear and concretely defined. An average person will generally buy a juice bottle

that has a clear label pasted on it, rather than another bottle – which may be of higher quality – but has an unclear label.

It is important to have a concrete definition of happiness. The fifth reason why we devalue happiness is **medium maximization**. Media like money, gold, property etc. gives us power to attain other materialistic things. And this is why, people run behind such things, rather than define what happiness is for them. It is far more important to define happiness, rather than just pursuing materialistic things.

## 7. Happiness — Prioritizing Happiness

One of the main mistakes that people commit is that they try to follow happiness. What is required is to **prioritize happiness**. This is what people don't realize quite often.

Let us go through the findings shown in the paper Happiness in the Workplace: Employees who focus on Maximizing Happiness Become Happier by Kelly Goldsmith, David Gal, Raj Raghunathan and Lauren Cheatham. They had conducted a study on 'happiness in workplace'. In their research, a set of people in a company were sent mails asking them to make happiness enhancing decisions for a week. Another set of people were not sent any such email. It was found that the set of people that received the mails was far happier after a week than the others who did not receive any such mail.

### Don't monitor

It is important and necessary to remind oneself constantly to make happiness enhancing decisions, but not monitor it all the time. **Monitoring actively is equivalent to chasing happiness. This reduces happiness levels.** The reason is that when we pursue happiness too intently, we begin to compare our happiness levels with our dream happiness levels. That makes us unhappy and makes us less productive. One should not keep monitoring happiness all the time but must remind oneself to make happiness enhancing decisions.

### Analogy with sleep

It is equivalent to getting into sleep. If one keeps on reminding oneself about sleeping during night time, it become almost impossible to get a good sleep. Or if someone is diabetic and is faced by a bowl of sweets, it is very likely that the diabetic person will feel more and more tempted to eat a sweet, which is forbidden for him, if he keeps on monitoring his gaze towards and away from the sweet. The more important and better way to address this issue is to follow a proper routine or lifestyle. If not eating sweets or going to sleep at a particular time becomes a part of the lifestyle, then it becomes an easy task to keep oneself on track.

The same philosophy applies for happiness. One should give higher priority to happiness. But monitoring it unnecessarily is a sin. Happiness should be at the top of a person's wish list. That is the only way to attain happiness. If happiness follows things like money, fame, power, superiority etc., then an individual will always end up being unhappy. Thus, being happy requires an individual to not compromise his happiness with any other tangible and material benefit.

Let us now take part in a small exercise. List down all the things that make you happy. It can be a sport, a hobby or a memory. Try to play that sport or pursue that hobby or recall that memory every day once or multiple times. Don't monitor if you are growing happier or not. We will discuss the tools for measurement of happiness in the later chapters. Don't force your mind to be happy. Just follow it and make it a part of your lifestyle. This will prioritize happiness in your life.

## 8. Happiness — Pursuing Happiness

The 'Pursuit of Happiness' may have been a quite famous movie, but in real life, the pursuit of happiness does not help. **Thinking too explicitly about happiness may prove to be counterproductive.** The individual involved in a mad and conscious race for happiness may end up not being happy at all. One study found that people who listened to good music experienced far more happiness than those people who were deliberately asked to feel happy after listening to the same music. Goals are achieved by prioritizing them. Similarly, if happiness is one's goal, it should be achieved by assigning it a priority.

Happiness can be associated to sensory pleasure, which is felt during parties or night-outs or camping. Some people also see happiness as a feeling that gives them a feeling of being superior to someone else in their life. The feeling of abundance is also equated to happiness by many people. It is a condition when life feels perfect with all its imperfections. It is important to define happiness. A person who aims to be happier must not be obsessed with happiness.

### No Pursuit of Mediums

The pursuit of happiness leads a person to indulge in the pursuit of mediums to attain happiness. A person finds earning money, power and fame as the ways to attain happiness and this is what leads to the path of destruction. The moment a person becomes physically and mentally comfortable and is no longer obsessed with the attainment of happiness that is the moment one becomes happy.

A study by researchers at University of California, Berkeley, has found that **those who seek happiness not by prioritizing it, but by pursuing it, are the ones who feel lonelier and more depressed.** The tendency to monitor one's happiness leads one to compare one's state of mind to the ideal state of happiness which one has created for himself or herself. This is the reason why pursuing happiness blindly does not help much.

Hence, it is far more important to **prioritize and not pursue happiness.**

## Happiness – Impediment 2

## 9. Happiness — Chasing Superiority

**The second impediment to being happy is to chase superiority.** It is in human nature to get attracted to other people's status and develop adoration for what others have. Humans have a tendency to follow their dreams, and many a times; these dreams are made of what they see of others.

If your friend has a bungalow and you don't, there are chances that you will try to get a bungalow by some means – be it by earning money through part-time job, or by switching your organization or may be even by some crooked means. This is so inherent in human nature that most of the times, we don't even realize that we are committing this mistake. Knowingly or unknowingly, each human tries to outperform his superiors and in this process, turns out to be unhappier every day.

### Common Traits that Lead to Unhappiness

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The following are the common traits in the superiors that make the inferiors feel unhappy:

- Wealth
- Beauty
- Professional success
- Power
- Smartness

Wanting to be better than everyone else is the root cause of unhappiness. To understand this impediment, let us consider an example.

In a workplace, every employee works up to his full potential. In corporate world, it is necessary to do so or else you will lose out in the race. Moreover, giving an award to one employee makes that employee happy. However, it makes other employees jealous or even if not jealous, it does increase their competitive spirit. To bag the award in the next quarter, each employee works harder and longer in the office. Longer hours don't guarantee better work. However, the desire to gain the superior status leads them to ignore their family and their interests.

Instead of being happier, they grow more morose as days pass by and as their health deteriorates, unhappiness reaches new levels. This is how chasing superiority leads to unhappiness. Another example to help us understand this problem is the common problem faced by teenagers in the colleges. A student may be good in studies, but due to peer pressure, the goals of the student changes. The pressure to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend just because his friends also have theirs leads to chasing superiority in life.



## Peer Pressure

Our human culture is such that if one achieves something, the entire world comes around to pat on his/her back. Appreciations, laurels and applauses are showered on the person, making him feel good but also making him realize that one will be admired only after doing something superior. This instills a thought in everyone's mind since childhood that in order to be admired, one has to reach to a level of someone superior.

## Hubristic Pride and Expertise

The reason why humans seek superiority is that they feel happy when they win or achieve something by defeating others. The happiness that one feels by getting ahead of others makes one seek superiority. The third reason why we pursue superiority is the desire for mastering skills. When someone finds another person superior to oneself, the person is compelled to realize that he/she is not perfect at that thing. And that is the reason why humans follow superiority.

## Autonomy

Moreover, we also feel a lot of autonomy and freedom when we find ourselves superior to others. That is the reason why managers feel that they have more freedom than their subordinates and this is also the reason, why subordinates try to get promoted to the post of manager.

Unnecessary and relentless pursuit of superiority takes us away from other important things in life. This is the reason why pursuit of superiority leads to unhappiness.

## Impact of Pursuing Superiority on Happiness

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In the previous section, we have understood how pursuit of superiority is prevalent in human culture. In this section, we will understand how this habit impacts our happiness levels.

### Social Comparisons

The need for superiority can incite us to work more and better. It can inspire us to be better than others. However, it also leads us to compare ourselves with others. The problems arise when social comparisons start happening in our mind. For example, to know how well we play guitar, we will perhaps compare ourselves with acclaimed guitar players or those who have won awards in music contests. Such social comparisons make us envious of others and this is one reason why it makes us unhappy. Such social comparisons have much more negative impact if the benchmarks are the ones who are closer to us.

### Materialism

Materialism is another reason why pursuing superiority leads to unhappiness. **To compare one with others, the parameters often used are materialistic.** The parameters for comparison can be who has won more awards, or who has more money or who has more fan following. Such things like money, awards and fan following are materialistic things. Comparison on materialistic dimensions leads to unhappiness, because materialistic things

separate us from our older friends and relatives, making us lonely. Moreover, desire for materialistic things never ends. Whenever one gets more wealth, the mind cries for even more. That is why the desire never ends and hence, the happiness level that we seek from materialistic things is never attained.

### **Self-centered Approach**

Moreover, by seeking superiority, we become more self-centered. This is one reason why people around us begin disliking us. As a result, we lose our influence over others and relationship with them, which nullifies the attainment of superiority. This again leads to unhappiness.

### **Control the Need for Superiority**

Superiority is not a necessary factor for being happy. The need of superiority is not a necessity to motivate oneself. Sometimes, it may develop a killer instinct and may even spur us to take risks. But in the longer term, the desire of superiority impacts us negatively.

Daniel H. Pink and his colleagues from Duke University found through their study in Massachusetts Institute of Technology that in mechanical work, students performed better when bigger reward was given for better work. However, for the tasks that required cognitive skills, the performance of the students lowered for the tasks that had higher reward. The pressure to ace at the more difficult tasks to gain more money made their performance decline in quality. The results were similar in an experiment conducted in India too. Higher incentives led to worse performance in both the studies.

Hence, in tasks requiring cognitive thinking, higher incentive leads to worse performance. This is because the desire for incentives occupies a part of your brain and it decreases your productivity.

The result of decrease in productivity, growth in loneliness and the habit of social comparison is killing happiness levels. Although we may feel more motivated to work, but it may actually worsen our performance regardless of our motivation levels.

# 10. Happiness — Pursuing Flow

Pursuing superiority leads to worse performance and mental fatigue. It does inspire us to achieve much more in life but it can also push us to do unethical things in life to attain superiority.

## Pursue the Meaning of Life

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Instead of pursuing superiority, man must pursue the meaning of his life. Man cannot be happy unless he finds meaning of his life and derives meaning from his experiences. To be happy, life needs to have meaning.

The **experience sampling method** used by Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi studied participants of a study where they were asked when they found themselves to be most creative or when did they feel good. 40 such dimensions of experience were supposed to be rated from 0-9 by the participants. 6 signals were derived and that helped to map a person's life. This helped Dr. Mihaly to find what experiences make people happy or sad. He found that **people find themselves happy when they were doing something meaningful**. Dr. Mihaly termed such experiences as **flow**.

## Concept of Flow

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So, what is 'flow'? **Flow experiences are the ones that the person finds meaningful**. Flow experiences are the ones in which there is not much of turbulence or disturbance in the form of obstacles in work.

## Features of Flow

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Let us now understand the features of flow:

### Distorted nature of time

The first feature of flow is the distorted nature of time. Such experiences are the ones in which time seems to slow down when you are busy in work. But once the experience is over, it feels that the time went off faster. The way one works is flow experiences. It is on the individual to make it enjoyable.

### Lack of self-consciousness

The second feature is lack of self-consciousness. A worker experiencing flow will not judge himself. He is so immersed in the flow that all the mental faculties will be busy in the work. Once the work is over, then the man will judge himself.

### Acute focus of the present

The third feature is acute focus on the present moment. For instance, while rafting, the goal in mind beforehand is to win the trophy. But if a person has a flow moment while rafting, the rower will not think of the trophy at all while rafting. The only thing that will concern him is the onslaught of waves and the way to tackle them. This is another feature of flow experience.

### Clarity of goals

The fourth feature of flow experience is clarity of goals and immediate feedback. A person who is active in sports knows exactly what is required in order to win a game. The rules are clear and thus, the goals are clear too. In every action, success or failure is immediately perceived.

### High concentration

The fifth feature is a high level of concentration on the activity at hand. Other distractions seem not to exist.

### Comparable skills

The sixth feature says that in order for the work to be a flow experience, the worker's skills must be comparable to the difficulty level of the work.

### Control

The seventh feature states that the worker must find the work in his/her control. Control, here, means the absence of worry in mind and complete relaxation while doing the work.

### Flexibility

The eighth, and the last feature, says that flow involves flexibility and ease. No strain must be experienced by the worker in a flow state. The activity must run smoothly, directed by an inner logic.

## Conditions to Experience Flow

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The flow state is the optimal experience in which everything seems out of context, except the work at hand. The **conditions to experience flow** at work and hence, be happier at work are as follows, as given by **Schaffer**.

- Knowledge of what has to be done
- Knowledge of how the work has to be done
- Knowledge of how good one is at that work
- Knowledge of the direction to head to.

- Perception of high challenges.
- High perception of skills.
- Absence of distractions. The Art of Happiness — When, Why and How of Flow

So, now we have learnt about flow experience. But when does a flow experience happen? **The flow experience happens when your opponent is neither far better nor far worse.** The flow experience cannot happen when your opponent is far superior or far inferior to you. If the opponent is far better, then you will end up being anxious. If the opponent is far worse, then you will end up being bored. Moreover, if you and your opponent are well matched, still flow experience won't occur. The flow experience happens when your opponent is very slightly better than you. That is when the optimal experience can be enjoyed.

When your opponent is in a higher position than you, then you will have to raise your level and skills to outperform him. Or else, you cannot win. This will not make you too anxious but will help you grow. Hence, to be happy and to experience flow, try to be better than someone who is just slightly better than you are. But **don't follow quite superior people.**

## How Flow Works?

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So, how does flow amplify our happiness? Flow makes us happy because **flow moments are meaningful for us** and when we find meaning in something, the experience becomes enjoyable. This leads to happiness. During flow, people get so involved in the experience that they forget to judge themselves and their surroundings. Such activities help the person to grow and learn and develop. Flow also makes a person feel charismatic and look charismatic to people, because flow experiences raise our happiness and confidence and enhance our self-confidence.

**Flow is contagious.** Like an infinite resource, it spreads from one person to another. That is the reason why the happiness spreads from one person to the other. This makes the person who experiences flow as likeable.

Research shows that **if a person spends 10,000 flow-like hours into a domain, the person becomes an expert in that domain.** Flow experiences help us to be involved completely into an activity. This helps to learn the activity in a much better way. This leads the person to be an expert in that field. Hence, flow experiences help us to gain mastery over our fields of interest.

## How to Develop Flow?

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So, how do we develop flow in our lives? And especially, how to develop flow in our work life? A survey shows that two-thirds of the people in the world hate their jobs. A lot of people are discontented with their lives.

To develop flow, get involved in a few activities such as the following:

### **Get a hobby**

The first way to develop flow in life is to develop a hobby. Hobbies do not need a particular age to be developed. However, the hobby must challenge us. Flow happens only when we challenge ourselves. For developing flow in workplace, one needs to ask what your work is all about. Ask yourself what you are good at. Once you get the answer, then switch to that job or try to bring in that aspect into your own job.

### **Identify strengths**

The second thing to do is to look around oneself and see what is going on in the world. Identify your strengths and nurture them. Find what is happening in your society, and the challenges being faced by it. Flow can be experienced by a person when he does something for the society by doing something what he is good at.

The transition to the new job or the new skill must be gradual and not sudden. Don't burn your bridges for the sake of switching to your interests. If it turns out later that the work seems no longer interesting to you, then it can be a problem. **Hence, the transition has to appropriately paced and gradual in nature.**

# 11. Happiness — Self-compassion & Gratitude

Another way to find more happiness in your life is to get rid of desire for superiority by **nurturing self-compassion and gratitude**. Self-compassion works when things in life are going miserable. Gratitude works when things in life are going very well.

During bad times, an individual becomes harsher to oneself. It is a general belief in people that being harsh to oneself is a good way to push oneself harder. But research shows that it has the opposite effect. **Being overly self-critical depresses and demoralizes us.** Perfectionists often suffer from this problem. Perfectionists have an illusionary view of life. If they are not able to follow it, they punish themselves. This has a negative impact on their psychology instead of motivating them. This leads to depression in perfectionists.

## Need for Self-compassion

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This is where self-compassion comes into picture. It is not only being kind to one but also being kind to humanity. Being harsh to oneself makes one feel isolation and this leads to dejection. You have to **open your heart for yourself**. The things required for self-compassion are being kind to one, have an understanding of common humanity and have mindfulness.

## Self-kindness

This forms part of self-compassion. One must be nice to one own self. This is called self-kindness. Think of yourself as a friend of yours. Try to understand yourself as you would understand a friend. This way, you will ask yourself the questions that you will ask your friend in times of need. Moreover, another way of self-compassion is to write a letter to yourself. **Self-compassion leads to mitigation of the need of superiority.**

## Gratitude

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The next strategy for happiness is gratitude. This works well when things are going well for us. After achievements, we feel happy and experience hubristic pride at times. But in the long-term, it raises our desire for superiority. This leads to unhappiness in the long-term. It is important to bring this tendency down. The best way to do so is to show gratitude to all those people who have helped you to achieve something.

Those who showed gratitude experienced a transformation of emotions from hubristic pride to bonding and relationships. The people who show gratitude initiate a reciprocal mechanism of showing appreciation. This leads to strengthening of bonds between people and hence, leads to happiness.

## How to Express Gratitude?

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Here is an exercise. Take out a piece of paper and a pen. Write your thoughts about the person whom you would like to thank in your life. Write it in the form of a letter. Don't write anything negative in the letter. It must always convey positive and happy feelings. No

sarcasm, please! No criticism, please! Send that letter to that person. This is one of the best ways to express gratitude to someone who has always meant a lot to you in your life.

Expressing gratitude is very important. This helps us to spread positive and happy vibes all around us. **Self-compassion and gratitude are a must for happiness in life.**



## Happiness – Impediment 3

## 12. Happiness — Craving for Love & Attention

Here comes the third impediment on the road to happiness. The impediment is the need to be loved by people. Another counterpart of this impediment is the need to be alone. These needs make us unhappy. Humans are the most social animal. Humans have a deep seated need to be loved and to be desired by others. We form bonds with others just for the sake of being liked by others whom we know.

It has been observed that humans try to mimic others, to look similar to them. For instance, if you are walking on a road and you suddenly start looking up towards the trees or towards the sky, it is quite natural that the people behind you will also begin looking up towards the trees or towards the sky.

### Harlow's Experiment

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Harry Harlow conducted an experiment with monkeys. His experiment showed that monkeys were drawn to warmth and love. Since monkeys are quite similar to humans, it could be very well concluded that humans also have the desire to be loved and the need of warmth. This need starts from the time we are born to the time we die. **The need for social connections is one of the fundamental necessities of human beings for survival in the society.**

When we find people have tastes similar to ours; they love doing things like us; it becomes an enriching experience for us too. Suppose a person loves a walk in the park, but his fiancé does not enjoy so. Therefore, the happiness level of the former lowers down because of the latter's reaction. However, if the fiancé enjoys the walk equally, the experience becomes enjoyable. This shows the need of getting a reaction from others similar to our reaction. This further shows how our emotions are connected to others' emotions.

### Pain of Rejection

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Research has established that when a person is socially rejected, the brain cells that get active are the same ones that get activated when a person feels physical pain. This means, being socially rejected is as painful and gives the same feeling as that of physical pain. Hence, the people who are socially ostracized are the ones who face a lot of psychological problems. They also suffer from cardiac problems, diabetes and high blood pressure.

**Why the need of belongingness lowers our happiness level?** Feeling the need to be loved all the time does not help. Being needy makes us lose our self-respect. Needy people also tend to attract a lot of people who like to stay alone. The needy people get attracted to avoidant people. However, avoidant people don't complement these needy people. However, being opposites does not help either. It never helps to be a loner and be an avoidant kind of a person.

In the next chapter, we will see how being a recluse also acts detrimental for us. The need to be loved and to love others is one of the prime reason why we lose happiness out of our life.

# 13. Happiness — Secure Attachment

Here we will discuss the problem with being alone and the solution for it. Avoidance is a repellent for happiness. **The need for autonomy and freedom can lure us into being avoidant.** However, human beings are always dependent on each other. This counters the desire to be alone. The only ones who don't need company in this world are the sociopaths.

Human beings are social animals. To be happy, they need to bond socially. Having company is not a luxury, but a necessity. Moreover, recluse people hardly find favor from others. Moreover, during the times when our health condition goes down, we need people to be by our side.

Avoidant people are also the ones who feel lonely a lot. **Loneliness leads to depression.** And depression is just the opposite of happiness. The solution is to find a middle path. This middle path is called the secure attachment.

## What is Secure Attachment?

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**Secure attachment lies between being avoidant and being desirous of feeling loved.** To find out more about secure attachment, ask yourself a lot of questions on how much do you want to be loved by your partner or how much you can withstand your best friend to drift towards other person. Ask yourself how much do you fear being lonely or how much do you want to be lonely. Ask yourself how much romance you need in life. The answer to these questions will help you decide how much desirous you are for love and relationships.

It is vital to maintain a middle path between desire for love and attention and total avoidance. This is where secure attachment comes into place. The extent to be needy and desire love and attention is normally not in our control. To an extent, it is dependent on the upbringing we have had. Those who don't get enough love during childhood are more prone to be avoidant or desirous of love and attention. This tendency can however be overcome with constant efforts.

This can be done by grooming the people accordingly. Telling them about stories that have a positive moral attached to it is one way to do so. Our attachment style is deeply influenced by our childhood experiences, yet it can be changed in the later years.

## Practicing Self-compassion

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The tendency of each human being can be changed by experiencing positive experiences. One of the other ways is to practice self-compassion. Self-compassion is required when we experience failure or when we feel unworthy of love and attention. Hence, self-compassion can help us find a way to counter desire for love and attention. Being self-compassionate helps to reverse the need for love.

The main reason for being needy or avoidant is the negative experiences that the people have had in their childhood. Those who have self-compassion find it easier to add more value to their relationships and hence make them more meaningful. This helps them to be happier than others. **Self-compassion helps to deal with the insecurity that one has in life.**

## Show Gratitude

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Showing gratitude also helps in improving happiness at many levels. Gratitude helps people to connect more easily with others. This improves the quality of relationships, making us happier. There is one more thing that can help in this regard, which we will look into in the next chapters. The strategy is called **creative altruism**. Research shows that being charitable increases our happiness levels and positively impacts our relationship with others around us.

# 14. Happiness — To Love and To Give

In the last chapter, we found that **being charitable and generous makes us happier**. Every person in this world should have this desire to love and to give. It is not the desire to impress others and show that you are a good person that motivates us to be generous.

Studies show that those who are benevolent on day to day basis are happier than others who do not do charity or generosity too frequently. People around the world differ in terms of ethnicity, creed, food, love for sports, material wealth etc. Yet people feel across the world feel happy when they do charity. A study was conducted with kids and it was found that even **kids become happy when they are generous to other people**.

The study was conducted on kids because kids are sometimes quite self-centered in their own ways. They generally don't like to share their belongings easily with others. But when kids were studied after they shared their belongings with others, it was found that the kids were happier. This shows that we all have the need to love and give.

## Social Conditions Matter

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We also need to know how much generous one should be, when one should be generous and how one should show generosity. If a person is brought up by his parents with the lessons to be generous and kind and if the society around the kid also encourages this belief of being kind to everyone, then the kid will grow up to be kind and benevolent. However, if the parents teach him to be self-centered all the time and if the society around the kid also discourage being kind and generous, then the kid will certainly not be kind to anyone around him.

**Why does being generous help us to be happy?** The prime reason behind this is that if we help others, it gives us a feeling that we are capable of bringing in a change in others' lives and we have some competency within us. This boosts our confidence levels and leads to happiness. Moreover, when we help someone, the recipient becomes bound to help us the next time we need help. This is the reason why being helpful helps us in the long run too.

## Draw the Line

It is important to understand that **being too generous is also not good** for us. We need to maintain balance. Draining all your money for charity and having nothing for oneself is not going to help us either. It is important for us not to burn a hole in our pockets while doing charity.

Those who are highly successful entrepreneurs or businessmen also do charity but they do not exhaust their resources just for the sake of doing charity. There must be a limit for everything that we do and at any cost, we should not exceed that level wherein, we burn out our own resources and don't have enough resources for our own survival.

## 15. Happiness — Creative Altruism

It is important that we see the impact of our generosity and benevolence. We need to include ourselves in the act of generosity as well. It is vital to have fun while doing the acts of benevolence. We need to have **creative altruism** in our lives — the need to be creative while doing an act of generosity. However, the recipient of our acts must also enjoy it.

In case the recipient appreciates your efforts of generosity, it would imply that both you and the recipient are fond of kindness. The creative act of altruism can be of various types. The following can be a few **ideas for creative generosity**:

- Leaving a box of gifts at the reception of an old-age home or an orphanage, without telling your identity. This will take the kids by a surprise but will also be an act of kindness towards them.
- Gifting something valuable to one's employee. An employee can be asked to check the working of a brand new car by test driving it. Once the work is done, say "The one, who drives the car, owns it". This will be a kind of a prank but will also be an act of generosity. However, there are **certain guidelines** to be followed for executing this strategy.
- One must be cautious of what all resources one is spending. One must not burn his or her pockets for the acts of generosity.
- The act of kindness must be enjoyable for the doer as well as the recipient of the act. Either of the sides must not feel perturbed by the efforts being put in.
- Make a record of what impact the act created on the recipient. If we don't monitor what our efforts of kindness are leading to, it can then become a problem, as it will be difficult for us to register the impact. One must be physically present to witness the impact. For instance, if you are gifting a car to your employee, then see yourself how happy the employee is with your gift.

Last but not the least; make a note of how the act of generosity impacted you. If it turns out that the act did not make you happy, then it is imperative to change the acts. The acts of kindness must make both the parties, viz. you and the recipient, happy.

One must, however, not suffer burnout while being generous. You must include yourself in the acts of generosity and must enjoy the experience yourself too.

## Happiness – Impediment 4

# 16. Happiness — Authoritative Nature

**The fourth impediment in the way of happiness is the authoritative nature** that we tend to possess. This tends to be a big obstacle in the path to happiness. Authoritative nature refers to the tendency to have control over the things around you. As parents, we tend to control our kids' behavior. As employees, we tend to control our subordinates. And in life, we tend to control our closed ones.

## Why the Love for Authority?

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The main reason behind the tendency to be authoritative behavior is that we tend to feel superior when we can control things. This temporary feeling of superiority makes us happy for some time. The **sense of freedom and autonomy makes us happy for short-term**. The emotional health and longevity of an average person depends a lot on the sense of autonomy.

The people who have more control over the things around them are found to live longer. This is the reason why humans have an inherent desire to control everything around them. However, there is a certain limit to what all we can control. Being overly controlling makes us unhappy as well. The excessive **authoritative behavior can prove to be deleterious** to our happiness levels.

## Psychological Reactance

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Psychologists call this desire to do something that we are forbidden to do as 'psychological reactance'. This term explains that when we seek to control others, the others exhibit the same kind of psychological reactance from them. Our attempts to control people may be reciprocated with resentment. For instance, the attempt to control your employee may result in complacency and negative attitude of the employee in the workplace. Or the attempts to control the life of our spouse may result in estrangement or divorce as well. Hence, being overly controlling reduces love between people and hence, lowers happiness.

When people don't behave the way we want them to do, it leads to **power stress**. For instance, when playing video games, if the character in the game does not perform as expected, we tend to grow angry. Anger leads to heightening of anxiety and it leads to unhappiness. Power stress can make us unhappy and hence, can lead to depression.

Moreover, the **absence of diversity around us also leads to gloom**. Being overly authoritative repels people with diverse skills and thoughts. Only the submissive people will stay with us and their opinions are not going to add value to your life. Without meaning, any experience is futile and can lead to unhappiness.

It does not mean that we should become submissive. A **little degree of control is good**, but too much of **authoritative nature is detrimental** for us.



## 17. Happiness — Maximizer Scale

Another tendency of humans is to be **overly controlling of outcomes**. We humans tend to control results of incidents in life. It is fine to be expectant of certain events in life. For instance, it is required to have expectations from marriage, school, life, office etc. But one must not become obsessive with the results.

### Why Overly Controlling?

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The prime reason why being overly controlling of results lead to unhappiness is that life is uncertain and one cannot accurately predict what life has in store for one person. This is why having too much of expectations from life plays a spoilsport for us. It is difficult to control what life throws at us. Life and time can be uncertain and will never give us control. But what matters is what we make out of it.

The people who do not agree to this are the ones who grow unhappy with life. It is perfectly okay to have expectations, but it is not good to be authoritative and seek control of everything. Research shows that even people **who have high desire for control but have a perception of low levels of control suffer from depression**.

### Risk-takers and Superstitions

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Moreover, the people **who seek more control tend to take more risks in life and have more superstitions**. These people tend to take decisions that involve unnecessary levels of high risk and believe in superstitions as well. The reason behind why such people are more superstitious is that superstitions make these people feel good about situations and makes them apparently have an illusion of control over situations. The harmonious way of following passion is to pursue it along with a balance in other things in life.

Being too much authoritative of the results of life's situations makes us feel frustrated when outcomes are not according to our expectations. They also tend to make us more risk-taking in decisions and make us sacrifice other important things in life by losing balance between them.

So, how do we find how much of authority is fine and how much is not? For measuring the optimal amount of authority required in life, we use a tool called 'Maximizer Scale'. Seeking some degree of control is healthy. Those who seek to control at an optimal level are poised to achieve more.

### The DC Scale

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The method to find out if the amount of control is right or not is to do a self-assessment. A tool developed by Jerry Burger, called the Desirability of Control (DC) scale helps in this regard. It has 20 questions in all, which are related to you as a person. Get hold of a sample DC scale and assess your desirability of control.

## Maximizer Scale

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The second tool is the maximizer scale. This tool is based on the belief that those who seek control over things are also perfectionists. This tool contains 10 questions related to your attitudes towards perfectionism. Get hold of a sample maximizer scale and assess yourself. If your score in Desirability of Control scale is above 120 or in Maximizer scale is above 50, then you are certainly over controlling in nature. If the score in Desirability of Control tool is less than 80 or the score in Maximizer scale is less than 25, then you have low control seeking tendencies.

These tools will certainly help to find out how much authoritative you are as a person.

# 18. Happiness — Personal Responsibility

The solution for authoritative attitude is to take personal responsibility for one's own happiness. This is the sure shot solution for authoritative attitude, which is an impediment for happiness.

The meaning of personal responsibility for one's own happiness is that one should not blame others or the life's circumstances for one's happiness. We, many a times, have too many expectations from our lives. Our imaginations have larger impact on our emotions than reality has. We often imagine a lot about how we will celebrate a birthday and the scenes we imagine are always too rosy. The actual experience may not be that exhilarating.

## Control Internal Environment

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This leads to the fact that we can turn our thoughts by regulating our imagination and thus, regulate our emotions. Taking control over your feelings is not same as controlling people and outcomes. Taking control of people and outcomes means controlling external circumstances. Controlling one's emotions is like controlling the internal environment.

John Milton had said that "The mind in itself can make a hell out of heaven and a heaven out of hell." It is not an easy task to develop the ability to gain control over one's emotions. It takes a lot of time and requires overcoming internal obstacles for this. However, it is possible with practice.

## Pessimism

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Pessimism is a factor that influences the internal environment. It makes no sense to us that we must be happy after losing a job. But this way, one can never be happy. It is not required to be happy in extremely bad or depressing situations. What is required from us is the ability to retain happiness in the simplest of situations, like being stuck in traffic, listening to manager's scolding etc. Resilience is required in our emotions.

Each one of us needs to stretch a little beyond our current levels of resilience. Another obstacle is the misconception that people will take advantage of our good behavior. However, being personally responsible for happiness does not mean that we should not blame others for their deliberate mistakes. However, we should not impact our happiness by shouting at them or fighting with them.

## Be in Charge of Yourself

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Being personally responsible for happiness does not make you a ragdoll of people. You need to have an attitude where you feel the need to control your emotions for happiness and not unnecessarily blame others for your unhappiness. Self-control helps in better adjustment with people, less abuse of alcohol and drugs, higher self-esteem, better relationships with other people, secure attachment and better emotional responses.

In the next chapter, we will learn how taking personal responsibility does help us as an antidote to the authoritative behavior we possess and what are the strategies to regulate our emotions to enhance happiness.

# 19. Happiness — Compensatory Forces

**The solution for authoritative attitude is to have regulation of emotions and feelings.** By being personally responsible for one's own happiness, we tend to develop an internal control. When we develop internal control, we will find that no external control. We seek external control only when we don't have internal control. If internal control exists, there is no need to control people and outcomes in life.

**Internal control and external control are compensatory forces.** Thus, when internal control exists, external control is no longer required. This is why people, who have control over their emotions and feelings, don't usually tend to control people and feelings. People's tendency to seek control over their surroundings increases when they are anxious. When we lack control over external environment, we tend to seek control over internal environment.

## Being Spiritual Helps

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Spiritual people are generally happier with life than non-spiritual people. It is because their belief in God teaches them they must not try to control the external circumstances. They think a divine force will take care of it. This is the reason why spiritual people are happier than their non-spiritual counterparts.

Most people have a desire to get control of the external environment because they know they don't have internal control, i.e., control over their emotions and feelings. However, this does not mean that if a person has internal control, then the person will not try to influence other people. A person having internal control can still influence others. But that desperation is not there. The attempts of influencing will be mixed with love and care, rather than dread and authority.

Hence, taking personal responsibility for one's own happiness leads to development of internal control, which eliminates the need and tendency to have external control and thus, makes us less authoritative and control-seeking person. This makes us likeable and more welcoming to people. This impacts our decision making capability and hence, improves our relationships with other people. This further leads to enhancement of happiness levels.

## Internal Control Improves Relationships

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In one of the earlier chapters, we studied that better relationships help to increase our happiness levels. If we try to control other people, they will start resenting us and this will lead to ruining of relationships. Moreover, trying to control outcomes in life will be futile because one cannot control time and luck. This is the prime reason why those people who try to control outcomes of life get frustrated easily and quickly because life often does not give them what they want out of it. As a result, depression sets in and the authoritative person becomes avoidant. This leads to severing of relationships, and hence leads to greater unhappiness.

Hence, **if a person has internal control, it compensates for the need of external control.** As a result, we need to develop internal control to ward off the need for external

control. This leads to happiness and satisfaction. This is the concept behind the desire for external control and the need for internal control acting as compensatory forces for each other.

## 20. Happiness — Emotion Regulation Techniques

In the last chapter, we studied how keeping a check on our emotions can help us mitigate authoritative behavior and keep us happy. However, it is imperative to understand what the techniques are to regulate one's emotion to stay happy in life.

Let us look into the following strategies to regulate our emotions for happiness:

### **Strategy 1: Regulate Emotions**

The first technique to regulate emotions is to eliminate the problems at their initial state as well. For example, if you feel that an investment has high risks of failing and can result in huge losses for you, then it is better not to make that investment. Try not to give rise to situations that can land you in problems. "Nip the evil in the bud" must be the mantra of life. Such incidents can only make you depressed.

### **Strategy 2: Label Emotions**

The second technique is to label your emotions. Tell yourself what emotions you are going through is a good idea. When you feel angry, say to yourself "I am feeling angry". When you are feeling happy, say that "I am feeling happy". Don't analyze the emotion; just name it and move on. Like if you have failed in an interview, say to yourself, "This is demoralizing". This helps to control your emotion as well.

### **Strategy 3: Direct Mind towards Happiness**

The third technique is to direct your mind towards the things that make you happy and away from the things that are saddening. This is what kids do and that is why they are happier than us. Don't take credit for your success and don't blame others for your loss. You are the one responsible for whatever happens to you. So, make yourself happy by thinking about things that elate you.

Blaming others ruins our relationships and this is why it leads to unhappiness. Excessive optimism and despising people can lead to unhappiness. One way of trying this technique is to think of things that bring about authentic pride and not hubristic pride. In a pressing situation, you can think of an incident where you stood against the odds and tackled all the obstacles successfully.

### **Strategy 4: Re-interpret**

The fourth technique to regulate emotions is to re-interpret the events of life. Perhaps, what appeared to be a big problem may turn out to be a small problem if you analyze it well. Your failure in a soccer match may seem to be a huge problem and can sadden you. But on revisiting the situation, you will find that the result of your next soccer match does not depend on the lost match. This will cheer you up and you will not feel the same level of gloom after the reappraisal of the situation that happened in your life.

# 21. Happiness — Appreciating Uncertainty

In this chapter, we will learn how to appreciate uncertainty in life. Appreciating uncertainty makes us free from worrying about the outcomes of life. In an earlier chapter, we learnt that having expectations from life makes our life unhappier as we grow authoritative in attitude. But, one who appreciates the fact that life is full of uncertainties and outcomes should not be predicted, are the ones who are happy.

## No Uncertainty = No Excitement

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This forms the essence of this chapter, in which we will learn how to appreciate the uncertain nature of life. If there was no uncertainty in life, there would be no thrill in life. The excitement in life comes from the uncertainties of life. You would not feel happy while playing chess, if you already knew what the next move of your opponent was. Or the life which you are living would certainly be dull if you already knew what the next thing was coming ahead. Having no uncertainty in life makes your life dull, boring and useless to live.

This is the reason many people experience happiness in gambling or in casino or in solving Sudoku. Hence, uncertainty is a vital element for enjoying life. And this is why we must start appreciating uncertainty for that is what brings in happiness. You are not supposed to feel anxious for the uncertainties of life but you should certainly feel excited. The positive side of uncertainty of life needs to be looked into by everyone.

## Flow in Uncertainties

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You need to experience the flow moment with uncertainties in life. We must not forget that life today is too fast. It changes in hours. This is why it is futile to fear uncertainties in life. If something negative has happened in life, the next moment can bring you happiness as well. Try to analyze the lifestyle that you are leading and try to fix the problems that you face in day to day life.

- Ask yourself the following questions to understand this chapter better.
- What will you choose- a game of cards with predicted outcomes or unpredicted ones?
- Would you enjoy participating in a contest which has its results fixed in your favor?
- Would you be fine if you knew the odds against you or in your favor before a job interview itself?
- How much would you love to watch a re-telecast of soccer match which you have already watched earlier?
- How much would you like watching a movie the second time, compared to the first time you watched it?

If your answers show that you will love when uncertainties exist in each of the instances, then it proves that happiness will come in your life only if you begin to appreciate uncertainties in life. Otherwise, life will become too predictable for you and there will be not even an iota of thrill left in life. Hence, to be happy, it is required to appreciate the uncertainties in life.

## 22. Happiness — Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle

The concept of happiness is inalienable from a healthy lifestyle. **A healthy mind resides in a healthy body** is an age old adage. Good health leads to a sound body and a happier life. Let's see in this chapter what all constitute to be a healthy lifestyle.

### Eat Healthy

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There are three main things to be had in a healthy lifestyle. The first one is to have healthy food. The second one is to have proper movement of body. The third one is to sleep properly and **have an adequate sleep**. So, how do we eat better?

First thing is to avoid meals that have a lot of fats, trans-fats, saturated fats, sugar content, and carbohydrates. Lower energy level and higher weight leads to higher anxiety levels in an average individual. Things like soft drinks, hard drinks and artificial drinks damage our body a lot. Cigarettes and pipes are also deleterious for us. One must eat a lot of vegetables and fruits. Having a lot of trans-fats and saturated fats leads to anger and depression. High sugar content leads to cancer as well. Now, depression, aggression and frustration lead to damage to our relationships, and hence, lead to unhappiness.

### Sleep Well

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Getting **less than 7 hours of sleep is detrimental** to health. Ideally, 8 hours of sleep is required. Only 2.5% of the people in the world, a study says, need less than 7 hours of sleep. A vast majority of people around the world need between 7-9 hours of sleep. Less sleep reduces our daytime alertness, makes us more impulsive and makes us less attractive to people.

Moreover, a lot of wear and tear of the body parts happens during the sleep. Moreover, adequate sleep helps us to be more focused after we wake up. Poor sleep leads to dissatisfaction with life. The immune system also gets impacted.

### Move Your Body

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Physical activity is required for a healthy body. Sitting at a stretch for more than 6 hours a day leads to accelerated death. It is mandatory for each one of us to have a lot of mobility. Not having physical activity leads to obesity. Going to gym for workout for 2 hours a day is not enough. One needs to have physical activity to be able to live longer.

A study says that each hour we keep sitting in front of the TV, we lose 22 minutes of our life, and i.e. our lifespan reduces by 22 minutes for each hour of TV viewing.

### Attention Deficit Trait

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Having an unhealthy lifestyle can make a person impatient, frustrated, distracted from normal life and restless. These are the symptoms of '**Attention Deficit Trait**', a term



mentioned **by Edward M. Hallowell** in his paper '**Overloaded Circuits**'. This trait gives us a feeling that our life is too complex and cannot be handled well.

Attention Deficit Trait can be tackled by eating well, moving well and sleeping well. A person having a better decision making capacity will be able to lead a happier lifestyle. To develop good habits, we can do some simple activities that can go on to make huge difference in our lifestyle.

- Try to take the road to office that does not have any fast food eating joints.
- Set up alarm in your clock and keep the clock a little farther from your bed, so that you have to necessarily stand on your feet to silence the alarm.
- Try avoiding those markets which have unhealthy food.
- Keep your cooking area close to the washing sink, so that you always wash your vegetables and fruits before eating them.
- Keep your skipping ropes and track suit near to your alarm clock, so that the first thing you see after silencing the alarm is the outfit and equipment for workout.
- Keep an alarm or reminder that reminds you to sleep on time.

Such small habits can go a long way in inculcating a good habit within us. This is a way to increase happiness level in life.

## Happiness — Impediment 5

## 23. Happiness — Feeling of Distrust

**The fifth impediment on the way to happiness is the feeling of distrust.** Lack of trust in any relationship can lead to estrangement and loss of vigor and hence, unhappiness. Hence, distrust constitutes to be the fifth impediment to happiness.

Distrusting others is a big problem. A lot of people in the world distrust a lot of people until the people prove themselves trustworthy. At times, it is necessary to distrust others to protect one from being cheated. However, there must be a limit to the amount of distrust we have for others. We need to maximize our benefits from trusting others and at the same time we need to protect ourselves from being hurt.

John Helliwell from Vancouver School of Economics from University of British Columbia found along with his co-authors that the biggest determinant of happiness in countries is the answer that the people give to the question “**Do you think people can be trusted?**” The more the people agree that others can be trusted, the happier the nation is. His study found that Denmark and Norway have the highest number of people who gave ‘Yes’ as the answer to this question and are also the highest ranked countries on Happiness Index. Greece and Russia fared low in the Happiness Index and they also had lower number of people who said ‘Yes’ to the question.

### Trust Levels and Happiness

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The correlation between trust levels and happiness is strong. **The more the confidence amongst the people, the better is the functioning of the economy.** If you cannot trust your friend, then it will lead to distrust between your friends and you can lose your friends as well due to misunderstandings. This leads to damage in relationships, which leads to unhappiness.

### Historical Significance of Trust

Trust is also so much important for us because it played a crucial role in our survival and evolution. During cave period, humans had to trust each other for food and protection. If humans were not trustworthy with each other, then they could have to sacrifice their life.

### How Distrust Affects Us?

A large majority of divorces happen around the world because of lack of trust. The severing of relationships with spouse leads to a mental turmoil inside our heads and this leads to frustration and depression. As a result, we grow more and more unhappy.

However, **trust also comes when people find you trustworthy.** If you betray any of your friends, it is quite natural that the trust factor will be lost forever and the resulting trust deficit will lead to damaged relationships with your close ones and hence, will also lead to unhappiness. Hence, it is important to trust others, stand up to other people’s trust and not take undue advantage of anyone close to us.

## 24. Happiness — Instinctive & Proactive Trust

In this chapter, we will study the concept of instinctive trust and proactive trust. By our instinct, we find it difficult to trust others. We at times, tend to not believe our partners. In business, we always keep a track of the balance sheet and the account records to keep a tab on where the money is being spent and if our business partner is cheating on us or not. However, this kind of trust is vital and is essential for survival. If we don't keep a track of everything that is happening around us, there are high chances that we may be cheated upon. However, one must not go beyond a limit to distrust others.

### The Problem with Human Instinct

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Experiments show that our human instinct prevents us many a times from trusting others. We tend to be suspicious of other people around us. There is, however, a twist to this. **The more we trust the other people, the more trustworthy they become.** It has been found that when we place trust on a person in a visible manner, the other person becomes bound to reciprocate that trust. There is a biological reason for this phenomenon as well. When we trust someone, a hormone called **oxytocin** is released. When this hormone is released in the other person too, it leads to reciprocation of trust from their side as well.

### Hardwired to Distrust

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If we proactively show trust to others, it leads to bonding between the two parties. Moreover, this builds a culture or an atmosphere of mutual trust. Hence, it is a good idea to trust others proactively. However, humans are hardwired to distrust others. The strangers are always looked with an eye of suspicion, especially in the rural parts of a country. Placing trust on others puts us in a dangerous situation where we are vulnerable to be cheated. Getting someone who can be trusted right away is termed to be a fortunate event.

### Need to Trust Others

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Distrusting people beyond a time limit is dangerous for our happiness. It is important to test others' trustworthiness and once we find that the other person is trustworthy, we must begin trusting the person proactively. This shows the person that we trust him or her, and this places a pressure on the person to reciprocate the trust, lest the friendship is broken. Hence, it not only makes us trustful but also elicits trustworthiness from the other person.

Having trust cements the relationship which we have with the other person and this leads to healthier relationships as well. As a result of better relationships, our levels of happiness increase as well.

### Benefits of Proactive Trust

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In the last chapter, we studied that being trustful makes other people trustworthy and reciprocate our trust. Moreover, humans also have an instinctive distrust for the strangers in life.

Trusting others involves a tradeoff between risk and reward. Suppose you have given your friend, who is going to his native place, a thousand bucks to buy you something from his native after 10 days. Now, you may feel suspicious if your friend will come back from his native and give you the article or will he never come back and run away with your money. However, if he does come back, then you will get the reward of your patience. But if, by any chance, the friend betrays you then it will be huge risk gone wrong. Hence, trusting others always involves a tradeoff between risk and reward.

Getting the reward will help in release of oxytocin hormone in your body, which will lead to happiness and stronger bonding between you and your friend. Not trusting your friend will eliminate the risks, but you will also lose the reward. Moreover, the trust level between your friend and you will improve a lot.

Hence, it is essential to realize the importance of showing proactive trust and experience the benefits of proactive trust.

## 25. Happiness — Types of Trust

Proactive trust has its own benefits like we studied in the previous chapter. There are however two types of trust. The types are as follows:

- Perceived trust
- Actual trust

Let us now define the two types of trust for our benefit.

### Perceived Trust

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**Perceived trust is the trust that we feel exists in the society and we feel people will return.** Perceived trust is hence the trust that we place of other people or institutions to perform certain tasks without taking undue advantage of us. Humans have an innate tendency to think that the world is not such a good place and people around us are not too much trustworthy. That is why, house owners insist on seeing identification cards from tenants to verify their identity. Perceived trust is subjective and depends on person to person.

### Actual Trust

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**Actual trust is the trust that actually exists in the society.** It is different from perceived trust and can be higher or lower than perceived trust for each person. Actual trust is not subjective at all.

Our perceived trust tells us that we should not trust people blindly because there is deceit and sham in the world all around. It is highly probable that we may be cheated by people around us. When the perceived trust in a country is very low, then the economy suffers and the population at large becomes unhappy. This is one of the prime reasons behind our unhappiness.

### Which Trust is Higher?

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**The actual trust is generally quite higher than the perceived trust.** This is because we misunderstand the level of trust and goodness that exists in the society. Researchers have found that actual trust is always higher than perceived trust by manifolds. People across the world are far more cynical than is required.

This shows that trustworthy people exist in the world in large numbers. Hence, we need to show more of proactive trust to people so that our chances of getting trustworthy friends gets maximized from all angles and we have more people reciprocating our trust and yet, we have minimal chances of being betrayed and hurt. This is the essence of placing trust on people. Placing trust helps us to build stronger relationships with others and at the same time, also helps us to create a circle of better people around us who are there to help us when we need them. This increases the sense of security and hence, we grow happier in life.

## The Safe Way to Trust

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So, how do we trust people around us without burning our bridges? How do we place trust along with minimizing our chances of getting betrayed by others? There is a safe way to place trust on others. The way to do so is to **trust people to the optimum level**. We will learn not to trust people too much, lest we get hurt.

### How to Trust Safely?

We need to remind ourselves that **actual trust is always higher than perceived trust**. We need to understand that one action of being cheated does not affect our entire life. We won't get ruined in life if the person who we trusted violated our trust. Many a times, violation of trust is just a result of miscommunication.

Researchers have found that more often than not, poor people are kinder than the rich people. Moreover, being forgiving helps us to be kinder and be happier. It is important to empathize with those who betrayed our trust and understand why they did so. This way we find the reasons why people betray others. This removes evil feelings from our life and makes us happier and free to trust others again.

This is the secret behind being more trustful and hence, be happy.

## Happiness — Impediment 6



## 26. Happiness — Distrusting Life

Not trusting others can lead to unhappiness. However, distrusting life is also an impediment to happiness in life. **We need to have resilience in life.** It is important to stand up in life whenever something negative happens.

Life is unpredictable and hence it is full of surprises. It never stays constant. If something negative happens today, tomorrow can be a happier one. Conversely, if something good happens today, it may not stay forever. Negative and positive events in life are entwined.

### Trusting Life

Life's circumstances don't affect us so much as do our perceptions about life and the way we react to it. Many a times, what seems to be a negative incident in life may even turn out to be a harbinger of positive outcomes. Your flight may get missed which may feel like a sad incident. But it may turn out later that the flight crashed in the hills or in a jungle and all passengers have died. Then, it seems to be a positive event for you to miss your flight.



Hence, it is important to not link your entire life with one incident in life. Tomorrow is always a new day. Yesterday ended last night. It is vital to delink happiness with life's outcomes. What we must link happiness to in our life is meaningful experience. If there has been a negative experience in our life, we need to think if we learnt something from it. If the experience added value to us, then we should certainly feel happy that the incident happened so that we could learn something from it.

## 27. Happiness — Preference & Judgmentalism

Delinking happiness to outcomes in life will not make you passive in life. What it means is that once an outcome has occurred, we must not judge it as good or bad. We may be having some expectations from life before some incident happens but we must **suspend judgment once the event is over**. This is like giving an exam with expectations of good marks, but once the scores arrive, we must not delve too much into whether our expectations were correct or not at the first place. We need to move forward from there and not repent about the past. This is because the past cannot be changed and it takes time and effort for judging our expectations, which is not required to be done at all, as it does not add any meaning to us and our life and learning.

### Eliminate Judgmentalism

Judgmentalism is required to be eliminated after the occurrence of an incident in life. It is okay to have a preference before an incident. For instance, if you have to decide on a career choice, and you have to choose between law and medicine, then it is fine to assess all the preferences and the outcomes that each of the disciplines will lead to. However, once the decision has been taken, there should hardly be any looking back on the choices made.

### Avoid Untoward Consequences

We must work to avoid any untoward consequences. Rather, try to add meaning and draw out value from the decision you have taken. There must not be an obsession with one's passion. It is important to take passions and hobbies seriously, but it makes no sense to be so obsessive about them that we lose out on the other important and meaningful aspects of life. We must be indifferent to outcomes. It should not lead to loss of curiosity and interest. **Loss of excitement in life is detrimental to happiness.**

We don't need to be welcoming to any outcome in life. We cannot be welcoming to negative incidents in life. But it is important not to attach too much importance to having positive outcomes at all times in life. Research shows that indifference to outcomes is a symptom of helplessness.

### Be Preferential, Not Judgmental

To gain happiness in life is to have preference for some outcomes in life before they occur, but not to be judgmental for the outcomes after they have occurred. This way, we won't let a part of our mental faculty to be diverted towards a wasteful activity of pondering over the past and we will be able to invest all our energy into meaningful thinking and learning from the events of life. This is the essence behind being not judgmental about these occurrences in life.

## 28. Happiness — Suspending Judgement

In the last chapter, we found out that it is important to suspend judgment to be happy in life. Now, we will learn the techniques or the habits to be inculcated to do so.

### **Habit 1: Introspect**

The first habit is to introspect on the negative incidents of the past. What we are recommending here is not to repent over the past incidents, but to introspect over them and learn from them. It may seem on introspecting that these negative incidents may turn out to be learning experiences for us.

Many a times, we feel very bad after a negative incident happens in our life. But, we tend to forget that there must be a silver lining to whatever has happened. It is only after a few days or after a few weeks that we begin to realize and accept the fact that everything that happened, actually happened for good. A failure in business may actually break your heart in the present, but in the future that may become the highlight of your resume in a business school. Hence, the first habit is to introspect into the past negative events and learn that every incident has a learning curve to it.

### **Habit 2: Look for Positives**

The second habit to be inculcated is to find for ways in which the negative events in your life have paved way for something positive in your life. This positive thing is not supposed to be a lesson, but an incident born out of the negative incident. It is important to be grateful to what all happened in our life earlier. This makes us benevolent and happy in the long run. We will learn patience from it. And it is important to be grateful to the people who made us learn that the hard way. This will make us grateful, forgiving and cheerful and these things will make us happier in life.

### **Habit 3: Record Negative Incidents**

The third habit to be inculcated is to maintain a record of all those negative things that happened in your life and that helped you to learn something new. This will lead you to keep a note of what all you could learn in your life from diverse experiences and will make you far happier than before.

## Happiness — Impediment 7

## 29. Happiness — Ignoring the Source Within

The last impediment to happiness in life is to ignore the course within us. This refers to the concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the state when we are not distracted by something else in life other than the present occurrences of life.

A lot of us don't focus on what the present has brought to us. When we are studying for exams, our mind tends to get diverted to other stuffs like play, soccer match, social media updates, messenger messages and other myriad of things. This is referred to as the state of loss of **mindfulness**. Mindfulness occurs when we are totally focused on what's going on in the immediate present.

Our mind keeps on wandering to all the other things except to the thing that we should be focused on. And this is the reason why we don't experience flow in whatever we do many a times. In the previous chapters, we found that flow experiences are necessary to be happy in life. Unless we experience flow, we cannot find meaning in any of our experiences. Research shows that **people are less happy when their minds are wandering**.

### Wandering Mind is a Problem

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No one likes to work in office when their mind is wandering in the golf arena. Or a student will not experience a flow moment when he is worried about his exams the next day. This is the problem with most of us and this is what makes a lot of us unhappy. Loss of focus from over the present leads us nowhere between experiencing the present, the past and the future. This is why mindfulness is seldom achieved by people. And when mindfulness is not achieved by people, then it leads to a distracted mind, a mind which is overburdened by a lot of thoughts and the mind takes a lot of time to process all of it. This is the reason why our mind feels overworked and over occupied when it wandering a lot and when mindfulness is not there in place.

### Stay Focused to Stay Happy

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It is important to stay focused on one thing at any moment. Mindfulness helps us to be observant and attentive to what all is happening around us in a non-judgmental way. Mindfulness also helps us to find out the emotions or goals that are triggered in our minds at a particular thought.

This is the reason why the loss of mindful state leads to over-burdening of the brain and leads to unhappiness.

### Benefits of Mindfulness

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What are the benefits of mindfulness? It has been observed that **mindfulness makes us more focused towards our work** and helps us **experience the flow moment** while performing any task that we do with mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to be calmer and to respond to situations with a greater presence of mind. The emotional intelligence involved while responding to situations with mindfulness is far greater than when we have a

distracted mind. Mindfulness also helps us to be more acquainted with the present, rather than to dwell in the past or in the tensions regarding the future. Being focused more on the present helps us to develop more curiosity for things happening around us and makes us feel that we are in control of time.

## How does Mindfulness Help us to be Happy?

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Research shows that the changes in external conditions, like changing bank balance, number of cars in the garage or even number of fixed money deposits in life doesn't add much to our happiness. What matters is what is there inside our minds. This is the reason why many opulent people suffer from depression even though begging monks and saints are satisfied and happy with life.

According to Richie Davidson, the structure of our brain can be modified if we train it to be mindful. This is the reason why experts believe that we can increase our concentration levels by meditating and with practice. Meditation helps in strengthening those parts of the brain that are involved in attention, generosity, reflexes, focus and emotional aptitude. As a result, even those who feel depressed in their lives can have the hope of growing happier by improving their brain's structure for mindfulness.



By strengthening these parts of the brain, we can slow down ageing of the brain as well. Moreover, we also feel less stressed out when we do meditation because of the strengthening of those parts of the brain that are related to attention, generosity, reflexes, focus and emotional aptitude. Another benefit of mindfulness is that it improves the health of our cardio-vascular system. The improved health of the heart is beneficial for the



longevity of our life. The benefits of mindfulness also include improved blood pressure and vagal tone.

Moreover, with mindfulness, the health of our body improves and ageing happens slowly. It can slow down the onset of cancer, it makes us less frustrated and it improves our health holistically. Mindfulness reduces stress levels, makes our brain focused because of which we feel less burdened and hence, it reduces our blood pressure levels to normal levels as well. Moreover, in the state of mindfulness, a man is able to find and is also many a times successful in making others find interest in every activity being done. What makes a thing boring is the lack of interest in it. But when the mind is thinking about and is focused on one thing only, then the interest begins to build up for that activity. Hence, it helps us to add and find meaning to the tasks that we are doing. Finding a meaning in the things that we do helps us to be happier in the long run.

**Mindfulness has also been found to make us emotionally intelligent and compassionate.**

## Obstacles to Mindfulness

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The road to mindfulness is not that easy however. There are a lot of cognitive and motivational hindrances to mindfulness. In this chapter, we will study the obstacles that we may face on the road to mindfulness.

### Prime Obstacle: Lack of Belief

The first impediment that people face while being mindful is that they don't grasp or believe in the concept too much. They think that being extremely focused on one task at a time is way too impossible to achieve. This is the prime reason why most of the people give up on becoming mindful even before they can try for it. However, evidences from studies show that with practice, one can train one's mind to be capable of focusing on just one thing. Meditation can help us in this regard.

Many people also think that being mindful is equivalent to being weak and sentimental, which is actually not the case. **Being compassionate does not make us weak** from within. One can be as bold and fearless as ever even with compassion and generosity in heart. Social workers across the globe are benevolent for humanity at large, but they are bold and courageous from their soul and heart. There is hardly anything that can bog them down. Yet, they approach their job with full mind and heart. This is the essence behind being mindful. Even revolutionaries like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela were compassionate yet they were a fierce force against the oppressors.

In the state of mindfulness, a person changes his or her relationship with those thoughts. It's about deciding which thoughts are needed at the moment and which are not, and then accordingly filter them in or out of the mind.