

NEIL DIAMOND

Sweet Caroline
*Brother Lovel's Travelling
Salvation Show*
Glory Road
*And the Grass Won't Pay
No Mind*

COMPACT
DISC

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Evidence-Based Happiness: An Experiential Approach

Offered through the University of Montana Osher
Lifelong Learning Institute (aka MOLLI)

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FOR INFO – CHECK THE MOLLI FOLDER AND
[HTTPS://JOHNSOMMERSFLANAGAN.COM/](https://JOHNSOMMERSFLANAGAN.COM/)
[HTTPS://MONTANAHAPPINESSPROJECT.COM/](https://MONTANAHAPPINESSPROJECT.COM/)

welcome to
happiness

Gratitude

- Thanks to Teri, Karen, Royce, the MOLLI team, and my Group Counseling class
- Introductions – JSF – and the MHP team
- My political platform – Education is transformative



Welcome

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happiness

- Welcome to **the hardest MOLLI class ever.**
- Evidence-Based Happiness
- If you think happiness is easy, you might be in the wrong class
- Sorry, you will not be getting an “A” every day . . . And it won’t be because I’m a hard grader

This is my
Brother-
in-law's
reaction
when I
told him I
was
teaching a
course on
happiness



What Makes Happiness Hard

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- It involves monitoring and managing the content of our thoughts – which is never easy



- It involves monitoring and managing our emotions – which is even more difficult

Ground Rules

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- Openness to learning
- Respectful communication
- To talk or not talk
- To volunteer or not volunteer
- Track your reactions; use what fits for you (because . . .)



The Plan for Today



- ▶ **NOT** toxic positivity
- ▶ Let's . . .
 - ▶ Think together about **the science of** positive psych/happiness
 - ▶ Learn about **5+ PPIs**
 - ▶ Get ready for **five more weeks of happiness**

In the Beginning

- Psychology spent 100+ years mostly studying:
What's WRONG with YOU?
 - Psychopathology and mental disorders
 - Anxiety, depression, suicide, OCD, ADHD, ODD, PTSD, etc.
 - Freud: “Neurotic misery” to “common unhappiness”
 - Goals: Shrink symptoms (which we're not very good at)

Articles about....

David Myers
1967-2000
Review



Depression:
54,040



Anxiety:
41,416



Anger: 5,584



Life
Satisfaction:
2,582



Happiness:
1,710



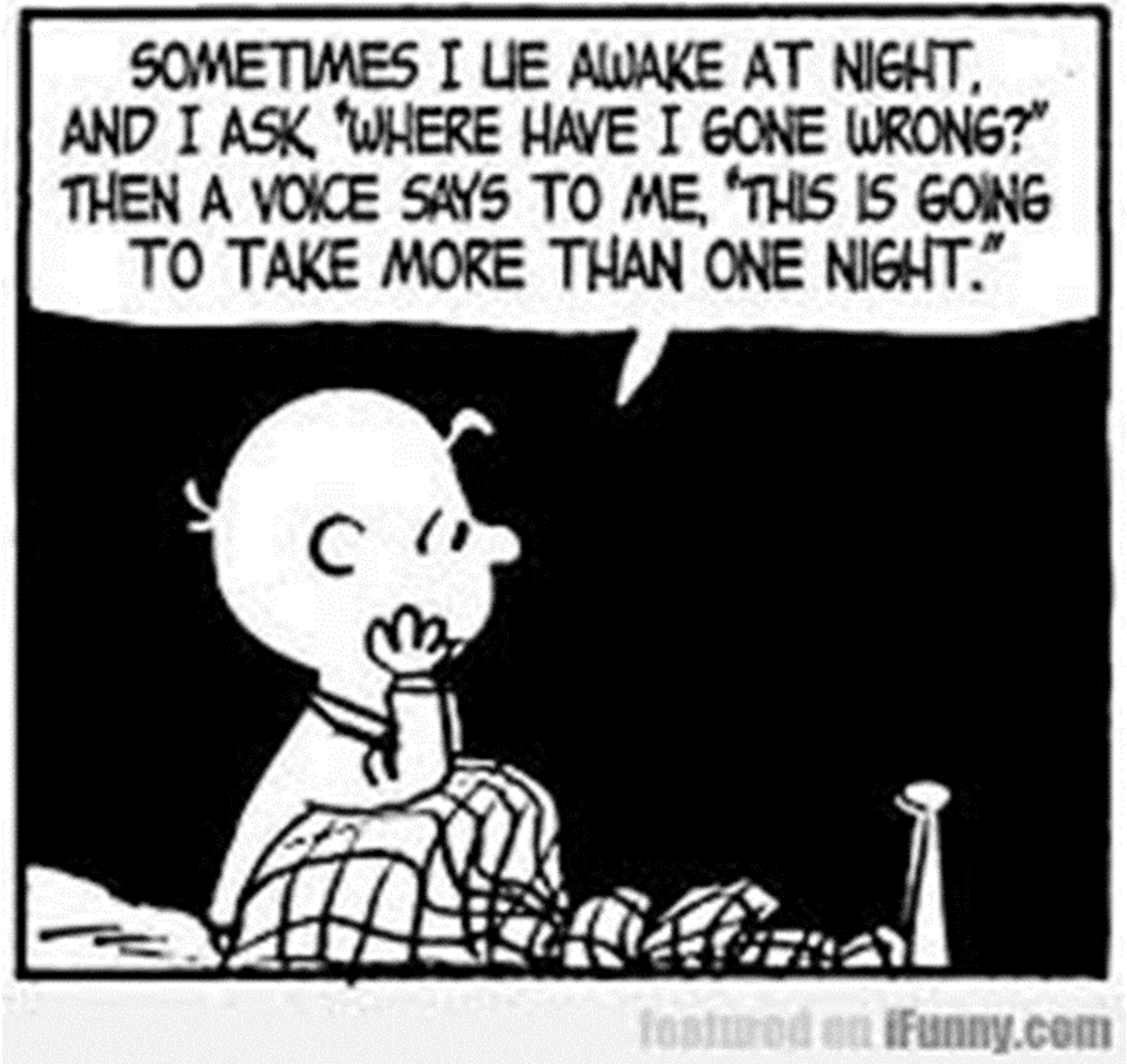
Joy: 415

**Overall Ratio: 21/1 – Why?
How could this be?**

Why?

This seems to be the way most of our brains are built

But what happens when we do that?



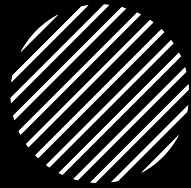
Enter:
Positive
Psychology

Martin Seligman – 1998 – San Francisco – Positive psychology

Let's study joy, happiness, what strengthens people, and what makes people emotionally healthy and well?

Seligman and others created evidence-based happiness/well-being interventions or activities

But First: Are
You Happy?



- What happens when you reflect too much on this question?
 - Self-consciousness and self-awareness increase
 - Feel a little fake, maybe more depressed
 - Preoccupation with whether you're happy will, in most cases, make you feel worse



Are You **HAPPY** Or **SAD?**

What ever you decide to do, make sure it makes you *happy*



It isn't what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about.
Dale Carnegie
THELAWOFATTRACTION.COM™

NO ONE CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY UNTIL YOU'RE HAPPY WITH YOURSELF FIRST.
- ANONYMOUS



DO WHAT MAKES YOU **HAPPY**

NOTHING IS WORTH IT IF YOU AREN'T HAPPY.

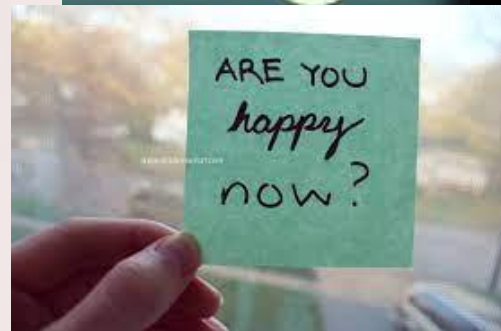
I'M SO HAPPY YOU'RE HAPPY!

I hope you're happy now.

May you be happy always.
Honoré de Balzac

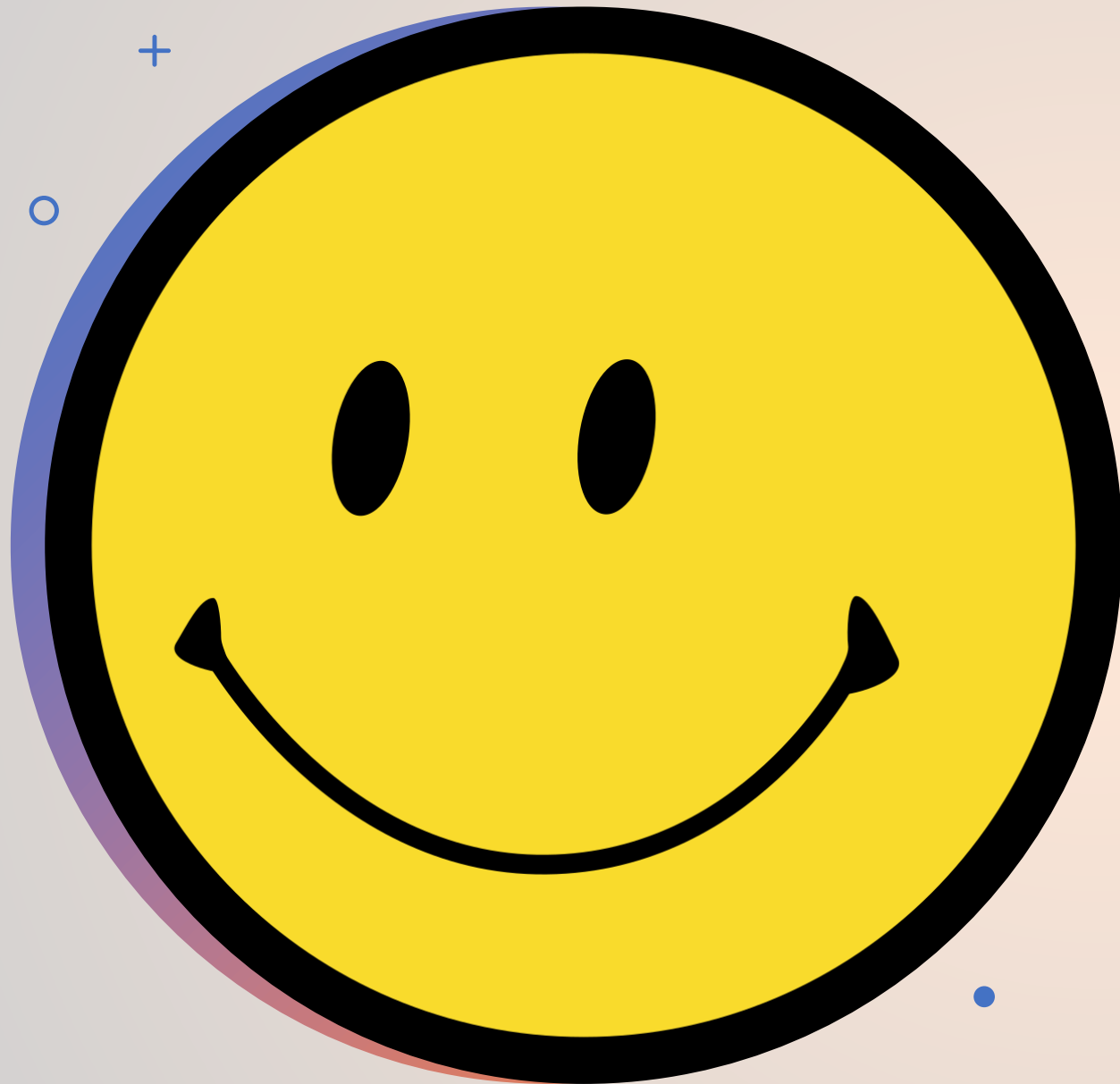


Are you happy?



“
The only thing that will make you happy is being happy with who you are, and not who people think you are.
— GOLDIE HAWN
GRACIOUSQUOTES.COM





Defining Happiness

True confessions: We're not talking about smiley hedonistic (material) happiness . . .

That won't last because of **hedonic adaptation**



Defining Happiness

We're talking about **eudaimonic happiness** that involves living well . . . physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and more

The Best Definition?

That place where the flowering of your greatest (and unique) virtues, gifts, skills, and talents intersect (over time) with the needs of the world and your community.





The Best Definition and You

How do you match your
gifts with the needs of your
friends, family, and the
world?

JSF – Biking story

An Awkward Reflection



In breakout rooms or with a neighbor

- **Share nice stories about your unique strengths (gifts, skills, talents, virtues) that manifest in your relationships**
- **This can feel awkward . . . but,**
- **Listen to each other and highlight the positives with summaries and paraphrases**

Principles of Happiness Practice

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happiness

1. Nothing works for everyone (even EBTs)
2. Pick a tool or two and practice with an experimental mindset
3. **The secret:** Build on your strengths and past successes [Don't try to remediate your weaknesses; **grow your strengths**]

**Now . . . Let's
Explore
Evidence-Based
Happiness* Tools**



The Three-Step Emotional Change Technique

[We do not do toxic positivity]

Step One: Honor the emotion

The Three-Step Emotional Change Technique

[We do not do toxic positivity]

Step Two: Think a new thought or do something different

The Three-Step Emotional Change Technique

[We do not do toxic positivity]

Step Three: Share the good mood

The Three-Step Emotional Change Technique

[We do not do toxic positivity]

Step Four: Teach someone the 3 steps

All the Tools that Follow are Step Two

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Return to honoring and expressing your feelings as needed

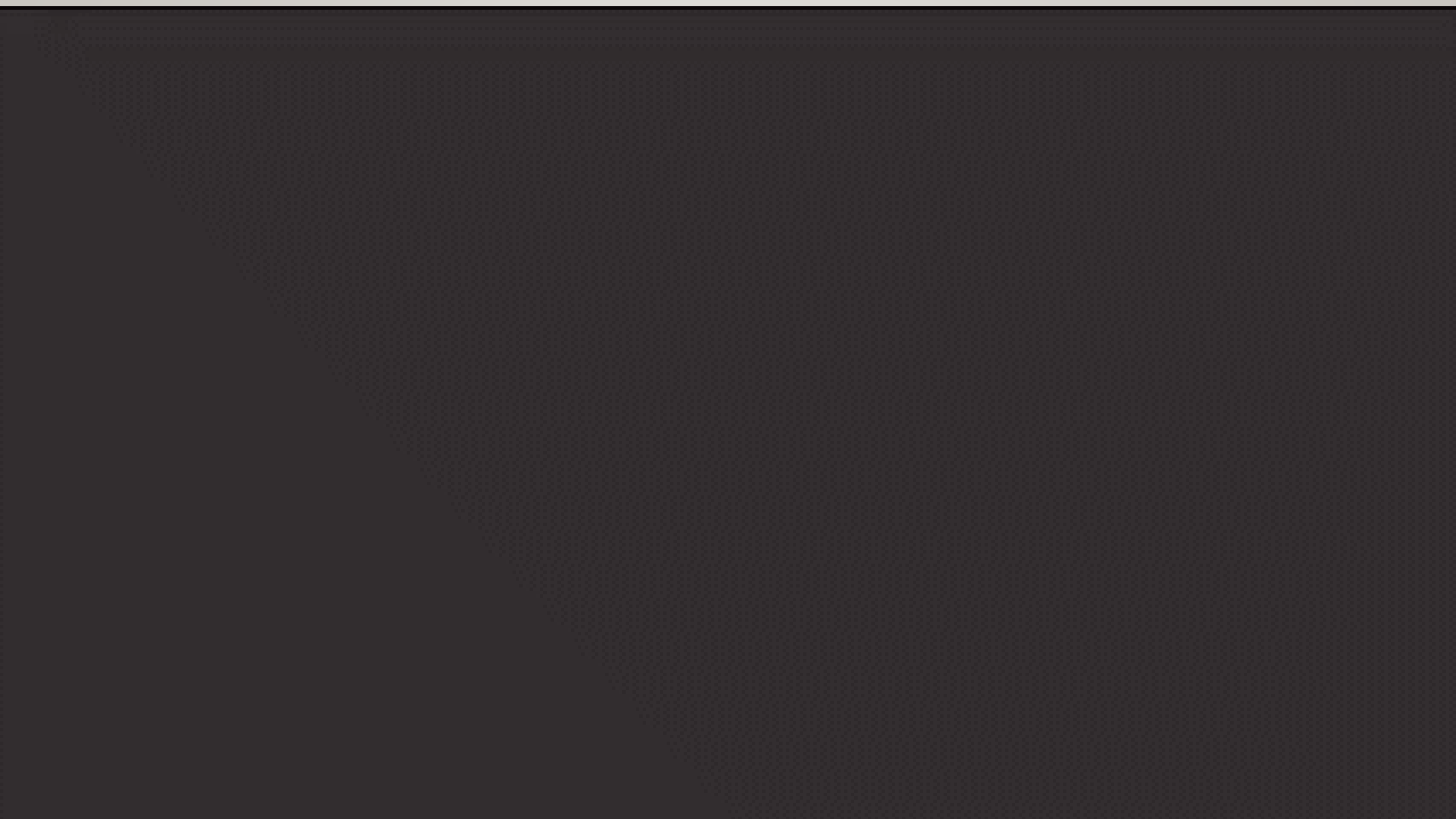
Step Two: Think a new thought or do something different

Other people matter

Tool #2: Three Good Things

- Survey
- Rumination is **all-natural**, but not helpful





Three Good Things



- ▶ Seligman's signature technique
 - ▶ Before you go to sleep (or right now)
 - ▶ Write down (or think about) three good things that happened during the day (or last 24 hours)
 - ▶ Then track down in your mind **“Why” those things happened**
 - ▶ Seligman: After a week, you'll want to keep doing it (JSF: Maybe)
 - ▶ **Volunteer?**

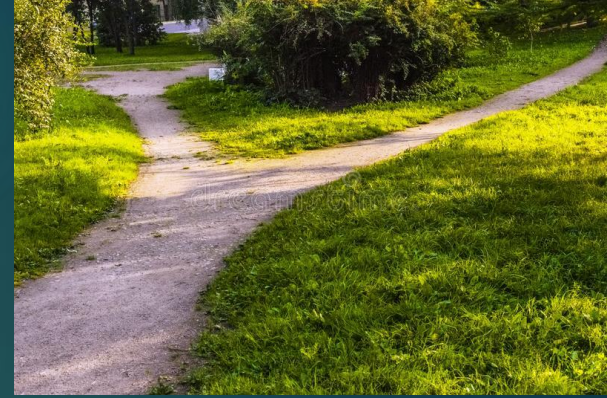
Understanding Sleep Problems [and 3 Good Things]

- ▶ Advice is cheap; but **knowledge is POWER**
- ▶ What disrupts sleep? – The insomnias
- ▶ What disrupts sleep? – Awakenings (nightmares)
- ▶ What disrupts sleep? – Cognitions and behaviors [Expectations and poor sleep hygiene]



Many Paths to Almost Sleep (aka Relaxation)

- ▶ Soccer consultation
- ▶ Measure your calmness-tension 0-100
- ▶ Deep breathing
- ▶ Progressive muscle relaxation
- ▶ Visual imagery
- ▶ Autogenic training
- ▶ Yoga, weight-lifting, or cardio, followed by one or more of the preceding
- ▶ **Find YOUR calming stimulus**



Sleep Hygiene (Not just showering)



- 1. Routines**
- 2. Daily exercise**
- 3. Caffeine curfews**
- 4. Light and dark and sound and comfort**
- 5. Beds are for sleeping**
- 6. Limit naps to less than 30 min [coffee naps]**
- 7. Avoid certain foods**
- 8. The temperature decline (Bath or shower)**
- 9. Screen light exposure and Tech in the bedroom?**
- 10. You will be awake anyway: Make a plan for dealing with troubling thoughts and dreams [3 Good Things; mindfulness meditation]**

Tool #3: Savoring

- ▶ What is savoring?
- ▶ Deliberate effort to extend and expand positive experiences [**improves mood; increases satisfaction**]
 - ▶ Track/review fun
 - ▶ Track/review meaning
 - ▶ Your next run/walk/shopping/conversation
 - ▶ Chocolate kisses at Frenchtown HS (imagine something now)



What we do . . . Naturally . . .

The Opposite of Savoring



▶ We **dampen or spoil** good experiences, while savoring or chewing on our mistakes

▶ Anybody ever get stuck **chewing on the negative** or spoiling the positives? [Yet another natural obstacle to happiness]



Easier Savoring

- ▶ Mutual savoring
- ▶ Find a friend – Remember when . . .
 - ▶ Improves mood and hope
 - ▶ Improves likelihood of repeating
 - ▶ Increases planning
- ▶ How will you REMEMBER to savor the positives?



Tool #4: Gratitude



- ▶ Do you want to increase optimism, improve life satisfaction, be healthier, exercise more, and be happier?
- ▶ Weave intentional gratitude into your life
 - We will encourage you to experiment with gratitude in Week 3
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/fCNxvKEkKgU>

TOOL #5: FORGIVENESS

- **Why Forgiveness?** – Because forgiveness is both simple and profound AND because forgiveness has substantial emotional, health, and interpersonal benefits
- **Warning:** Forgiveness is also very hard... And so get ready to be challenged!

FORGIVENESS IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Forgiving others
- Self-forgiveness
- Divine forgiveness
- Forgiveness of the system
- Being forgiven by another
- Seeking forgiveness [apologizing, repentance, reparations, ...]

OPRAH'S AHA MOMENT (GERALD JAMPOLSKY)



Book: Greatest Healer of All

REMEMBER TRANSCENDENCE

- You may have noticed that Oprah mentioned “Transcendence” which is often connected to things like forgiveness
- From the religious perspective, transcendence involves a state or experience beyond physical existence. Usually it’s momentary, and comes about through chanting, prayer, rituals, meditation, etc. It usually involves moving beyond our bitterness, resentments, and things like that.

ECKHARD TOLLE ON TRANSCENDENCE



FORGIVING OTHERS

- “Hanging onto resentment is letting someone you despise live rent-free in your head.” **Ann Landers**
- **Anne Lamott** quotation: “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die” – from *Traveling Mercies*



FORGIVING OTHERS

- Lamott's point is that holding a grudge is physically unhealthy
- But what does the research say about **forgiving others**?
 - Mental health and the brain
 - Physical health
 - Mood



RESEARCH SUMMARIES: FORGIVING OTHERS

- **Physical Health:** Meta-analysis of 128 studies and 58K+ participants. Small, but very significant correlation between forgiveness and physical health (Lee & Enright, 2019).
- **Forgiveness interventions and mental well-being:** Forgiveness interventions reduced depression and anxiety; increased hope; reduced stress and distress; reduced anger and hostility; more positive affect (Akhtar & Barlow, 2018).

Tool #6: Positive Distractions

- ▶ Life is hard
- ▶ We all experience common unhappiness and wonder about ourselves
- ▶ Emotions are a pain☺; your work is immensely stressful
- ▶ Sometimes, we need distractions
 - ▶ **What songs help you feel your feelings or boost your mood?** [JSF]
 - ▶ What places? What cat videos? What . . . ?

THE KEY TO
happiness

1. Order a pizza.
2. Eat the pizza.
3. Repeat...

Summary

- ▶ Three-step emotional change trick
- ▶ Three good things
- ▶ Strategies for sleeping (or almost sleeping) well
- ▶ Savoring
- ▶ Gratitude
- ▶ Positive distractions



Final Conclusions

- ▶ The brain, our culture, the news . . . are all built to track negativity
- ▶ Well-being (eudaimonic happiness) requires awareness, intention, effort, reminders, and persistence
- ▶ Most of us will forget to apply these unless we REMEMBER
- ▶ This class gives you the unique opportunity to select and practice a few evidence-based positive psychology interventions and then talk with others about your experiences (and listen to each other)

MOLLI Resources

- ▶ MOLLI ShareFile: <https://www.umt.edu/um-osher-lifelong-learning/sharefile.php>
 - ▶ Click on the following link to go to ShareFile.
 - ▶ Enter the User Name and Password fields. ...
 - ▶ Click on the Folders on left side of screen.
 - ▶ Click on Shared Folders.
 - ▶ Select class or event to access documents and/or recordings.



Organizing

- ▶ All remote, online users please stay online for organizing into groups
- ▶ All in-person participants, in groups of four, move to the four corners of the room for organizing

