STEP 1: IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY BURNED OUT, STRESSED, AND DEFINITELY NOT HAPPY....
YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE ADAPTIVE—ESPECIALLY RIGHT NOW
IN THE CASE OF A PANDEMIC, NEGATIVE AFFECT (E.G., FEELINGS OF SADNESS, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, STRESS) CAN ACTUALLY LEAD TO BETTER BEHAVIORS

- Things like:
  - Staying home
  - Wearing masks
  - Staying in bed
  - Avoiding Others

- Fear is a common public health tactic to change behavior (e.g., think about smoking labels on cigarette boxes)

- Depression and Sadness can produce behaviors we want right now such as avoiding social situation
BUT WHEN STRESS BECOMES CHRONIC

- At high/lasting levels, feelings of stress and related negative emotions can lead to serious physical changes and downstream health effects
  - Worsened health behaviors (diet, exercise, sleep)
  - Dysregulated immune, hormonal and cardiovascular function
  - Increased risk of disease + increased disease severity/duration
  - Mental illness
  - Pain
- We need a way to BREAK this feeling so it's not how you ALWAYS feel.
SO WHY FOCUS ON HAPPINESS?
REASON #1: HAPPINESS IS THE ANTIDOTE TO STRESS
WHY? WHAT IS HAPPINESS DOING?

Example Stress Responses

- Alters perceptions of severity and threat
- Thinking about happy thoughts displaces negative ones (incompatible)
- Broadening & Building resources that help

Pressman & Cohen, 2005
This benefit can be observed with a simple emotional tweak: just smile

• Facial Feedback Hypothesis: Emotion can be aroused/changed with a shit of facial expression
SMILING REDUCES YOUR HEART’S STRESS RESPONSE

Kraft & Pressman 2012
SMILING REDUCES PAIN

Possible pain range
0-100

F(3,226) = 3.2, p < .05
Similar benefits for self-reported stress & anxiety relating to needle

Pressman, Acevedo, Hammond & Kraft, 2020
REASON #2: HAPPINESS IS HEALTHY
POSITIVE PEOPLE GET SICK LESS WHEN EXPERIMENTALLY EXPOSED TO CORONAVIRUSES
PROBABILITY OF DEVELOPING AN OBJECTIVE COLD

NOT JUST Colds…

- Happy people
  - Sleep better
  - Exercise more
  - Live longer
  - Survive illness better
  - Heal faster
  - Have fewer accidents
  - Just feel better

Pressman, Jenkins & Moskowitz, 2019
OK I’M CONVINCED – HOW DO I GET HAPPY? AND WHAT IS HAPPINESS?
DEFINITIONS

• Positive Affect:
  • States & Traits that reflect a level of pleasurable engagement with the environment
  • Feelings of happiness, joy, contentment, calm, excitement
    • *cultural & individual differences on what people want the most
  • Can come from a lot of places, both hedonic (pleasure) but also from long term life differences and traits (e.g., having life purpose, good relationships, positive behaviors)

• Well-Being:
  • Includes more categories (e.g., social, physical, cognitive, emotional)
  • Subjective Well-Being often talked about as “Happiness” a combination of life satisfaction + high positive emotion/low negative emotion
Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

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

____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

____ I am satisfied with my life.

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

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

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

http://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/SWLS.html
Before you try out these activities...

Get a baseline or two... Try out some different activities and track how you feel the next day e.g., the PANAS is easy to find & score + you can see how both your positive & negative emotions are changing.

But even a simple smiley measure can work or a simple APP (e.g., trackyourhappiness)
WHERE DO I BEGIN?

THERE ARE COUNTLESS
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND
HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY
INTERVENTIONS TARGETING
WELL-BEING
PROCEED WITH CAUTION

MATCH YOUR ACTIVITY TO WHAT YOU NEED AND HOW YOU ARE FEELING DEPENDING ON YOUR SITUATION SOME MIGHT NOT BE ADAPTIVE
YELLOW LIGHT: POSITIVE PSYCH HELPFUL ACTIVITIES WHEN YOU HAVE MODERATE STRESS

• **GOAL:** TRAIN YOUR BRAIN to focus on the good stuff and positive resources rather than the stress

• **Key Lesson:** If stress isn’t completely overwhelming it CAN be displaced by positivity
GOOD ACTIVITIES TO TARGET

Savoring

3 good things (gratitude) + cause

Positive expressive writing

General positivity enhancing social and leisure activities (e.g., spending time with friends, watching funny movies, listening to happy music and avoiding negativity)
Gratitude Practice: 3 Good Things

I like this one b/c it’s EASY to do and is a low time commitment.

Tied to greater happiness, less pain, better sleep & a lot more.

“Write down three things that went well today and their causes. In addition, provide a causal explanation for each good thing.”

Can vary this (e.g., daily, 2-3x a week, typically for a few weeks).

Why does this work? Fights Hedonic Adaptation & refocuses us on the positive rather than dwelling on the negative.
EXAMPLES

Bumped into Dave - haven’t seen him for ages. I’d forgotten how much he makes me laugh’

“Really enjoyed lunch today - lovely to grab 20 minutes in the park and chat with Jo instead of eating at my desk. It happened because I thought it would be nice and suggested it. And Jo liked the idea too!”

“Hooray - the kids did their homework without me having to remind them (too much). It was because we agreed to a quiet hour after tea…which is finally becoming part of the routine”

http://www.actionforhappiness.org/take-action/find-three-good-things-each-day
GLUE VS. TEFLON

Bad stuff

Good stuff
SAVORING

• savoring involves **noticing and appreciating the positive aspects of life** – the positive counterpart to coping. Savoring is more than pleasure – it also involves mindfulness and “conscious attention to the experience of pleasure”. You can savor vicariously, enjoying another person’s pleasure.

Bryant and Veroff, 2007
SAVORING ACTIVITIES

Share good news with someone- describe in DETAIL
Take a mental photograph
Sharpen sensory perception
Get absorbed in the moment
Remind yourself how quickly time flies

http://booksite.elsevier.com/9780123745170/Chapter%2024/Chapter_4_Worksheet_4.18.pdf
PLEASURE OF A KISS

LOOK UP A “CHOCOLATE MEDITATION” TO PRACTICE THIS
SAVOR VIA WRITING

• Writing is often thought to be a way to process events, create a helpful narrative, find meaning and benefit in even BAD situations, and the result is many good wellness outcomes.

• Has also been done in a positive light as a way to strengthen positive memories, relive them, bring them to mind etc.
WRITE ABOUT POSITIVE THINGS

• I would like you to write your very deepest thoughts and feelings about the most intensely positive experience of your entire life or an extremely important positive issue that has affected you and your life. In your writing, I'd like you to really let go and explore your deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie your topic to your relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends or relatives; to your past, your present or your future; or to who you have been, who you would like to be or who you are now. You may write about the same general issues or experiences on all days of writing or about different topics each day. All of your writing will be completely confidential. Don't worry about spelling, grammar or sentence structure. The only rule is that once you begin writing, you continue until the time is up.

"Dr. Pennebaker has demonstrated that expressing emotions appears to protect the body against damaging internal stress and appears to have long-term health benefits." — Daniel Goleman, The New York Times
WITH A SIMPLE SHIFT OF BEHAVIOR AND FOCUS YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR MOOD.
GREEN LIGHT ACTIVITIES: WHEN YOU ARE FEELING PRETTY GOOD

• YOU CAN ALSO PROTECT YOUR MOOD – prevent adverse health and worsened mood by doing forward focused things less focused on the moment.

• Best when you have some time or feel like you have energy to take care of yourself and when you are not feeling overwhelmed by pandemic

• Green = Go! Go! Go!
PLAN A VACATION OR TWO

Capitalizes on SAVORING ANTICIPATORY JOY EXPERIENTIALISM
WRITE ABOUT YOUR FUTURE OR A GOAL

• Think about your life in the future. Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of your life goals. Think of this as the realization of all of your life dreams. Now, write about what you imagined. Do this for 20 minutes per day for three days in a row.

  • (if you want- write about this 1 year from now, 3 years from now, 10 years from now)

• Write a HOPE PLAN about something you hope to accomplish and how you will use your strengths to get there OR put these into your future writing (how you did it, how you used your strengths to get to where you wanted)

King 2001
DO SOMETHING GOOD FOR SOMEONE WORST OFF THAN YOU

FEELING USEFUL, DOING GOOD, ALIGNING YOUR BEHAVIORS WITH YOUR MORALS GIVE YOU SOME OF THE BIGGEST HAPPINESS BANG FOR YOUR BUCK THAT YOU CAN.
• Best Possible Self/Best FUTURE self/Your best POSSIBLE FUTURE

• Goal Setting

• Hope Plans

• Building and Using Strengths (VIA StrengthsFinder) or Self-Affirmations on Values

• Volunteer or think about how you are or could help others and write about it (this helps with meaning, purpose, etc. that help foster long term well-being)
  
  • These are actions that are forward looking, plan oriented, esteem enhancing, and confidence building which will take you out of the despair/worry of now and mind time travel you to the future with the confidence you can get there
RED LIGHT: OVERWHELMING STRESS

- No point in trying to tell someone to be happy
- Manage the overwhelming stress first and related negative feelings and behaviors
- Calm/Relaxation are likely more useful emotions vs. feelings of happiness and excitement at this point although in some cases ENERGY management may require activity
SELF-CARE & SIMPLE GOOD BEHAVIORS FOR WELL-BEING

• Take a shower
• Prioritize Sleep
• Plan a safe social activity
• EXERCISE
• Leisure and creative activities
• UNPLUG and go into NATURE
• Meditation (see other UCI courses!), Yoga, Paced Breathing
• Buy a dog 😊
• FAKE CONTROL. Even when you don’t have it.
Exercise gives the body under stress what it wants to do. It fixes the mismatch.
REGULAR EXERCISERS HAVE MORE THAN A 20 TIMES GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF BEING IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF HAPPINESS COMPARED TO LESS FREQUENT EXERCISERS

Pressman et al. 2020
YOU CAN'T BUY HAPPINESS.
BUT YOU CAN BUY A PELOTON.
THIS PANDEMIC IS A GIANT EXPERIMENT IN UNCONTROLLABILITY
THE PERCEPTION OF CONTROL HELPS... EVEN WHEN IT’S FAKE OR UNIMPORTANT

Langer’s work in Assisted living homes

Rich Schulz Controlling time/length of visits

Sieber et al Fake control is as good As real when it comes to immune function
EFFECTS OF CONTROL ON MORTALITY IN ASSISTED LIVING

15% mortality vs. 30% mortality
HOW CAN YOU INCREASE PERCEIVED CONTROL IN YOUR LIFE?

• Spend 5 minutes writing or thinking about ALL of the things that you have control over

• ADD some control and predictability to your life: Create a schedule and stick to it. Plan your day.
  - BONUS: people who have structure in their lives report greater MEANING in life

• Stop panicking about things you can’t control and focus on other positive or more controllable things
THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO ENHANCE HAPPINESS

MANY EASY TO IMPLEMENT, ONLINE & NEARLY ALL OF THEM ARE COST FREE
• Don’t expect ALL activities to work for EVERYONE
  • Culture may matter, sex, context
  • E.g., mindfulness has been shown to be harmful to some people with serious trauma

• Take before and after measures when starting out new programs
  • PICK THE RIGHT TOOLS to figure out what is working for you – want to feel more energized? Measure energy? Want to feel more calm- make sure calm is in your self-assessment. WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL AFFECT right now?
    • Starting point but lots and lots more: https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter

• Think about context! Is this the right time for what you are trying? Is it the right exercise-needs match?

• Recognize that sometimes you need clinical/medical help.
HAPPINESS IS AN ANSWER IF STRESS IS A PROBLEM

Give yourself PERMISSION to focus on your happiness.
You can’t pour water from an empty cup.
This isn’t selfish. It’s making sure that you are
And STAY healthy enough to do your job and take care of others.
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TODAY TO FOCUS ON YOUR WELL-BEING

WISHING YOU ALL HAPPINESS!

Questions? Want a Peloton Discount Code? Pressman@uci.edu Twitter @sarahpressman
GREAT RESOURCE ON PP ACTIVITIES
EXTRA SLIDES
IDENTIFY & BUILD STRENGTHS

• We’re all very good at identifying our weaknesses: What about our strengths?
• Gallup or the VIA can teach you to do this

  • What’s the task you are really good at? What tasks MATCH your passions, interests, and likes?

• Not only does this boost esteem to know you are good at something, but you can bring this to mind regularly by savoring and working on your strengths
EXAMPLE ITEM
StrengthsFinder

Achiever  Futuristic
Activator  Harmony
Adaptability  Ideation
Analytical  Includer
Arranger  Individualization
Belief  Input
Command  Intellecution
Communication  Learner
Competition  Maximizer
Connectedness  Positivity
Context  Relator
Deliberative  Responsibility
Developer  Restorative
Discipline  Self-Assurance
Empathy  Strategic
Consistency  Significance
Focus  Woo


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHfT7D8tEeg&list=PLxDaK7wlyw94F9rl1gV50QNoFr9HCdjnA&index=3
VIA

• **Wisdom and Knowledge**
  Creativity
  Curiosity
  Judgment, Open-Mindedness, critical thinking
  Love of Learning
  Perspective, wisdom

• **Courage**
  Bravery
  Perseverance, industriousness
  Honesty, authenticity, integrity
  Zest

• **Humanity**
  Capacity to Love and Be Loved
  Kindness, generosity and nurturance
  Social Intelligence

• **Justice**
  Teamwork
  Fairness
  Leadership

• **Temperance**
  Forgiveness & Mercy
  Modesty & Humility
  Prudence
  Self-Regulation, self-control

• **Transcendence**
  Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
  Gratitude
  Hope, optimism, future-mindedness
  Humor
  Religiousness & Spirituality

Peterson & Seligman
[https://www.viacharacter.org/www/](https://www.viacharacter.org/www/)
BUILDING YOUR STRENGTHS
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQHPSRLt32k

• Other ideas:
  • PICK one of your strengths that you most ID with
  • PRACTICE using that strength FIVE times a day for the next 4 days. You may want to keep a list of what you tried & how it made you feel!
  • TIPS on www.strengthsquest.com or www.reflectivehappines.com

• Put lists up to remind yourself to use your strengths

• At work- have them somewhere obvious so people know how to interact with you (why would this help? Good for those of you heading to I/O psych)

• Why do you think this will improve wellbeing?
BUILDING A HOPE PLAN

• Hope is not the same as optimism
  • Optimism- you EXPECT good things to happen
  • HOPE- same + you MAKE them happen with strategic planning & goal directed thinking

• Great resources here: http://hopemonger.com/
EX. HOPE PLAN

1. Set a goal (e.g., for school, work, personal)
   1. I will ________

2. I plan on reaching this goal by ______

3. My strengths can help me reach this goal by______

4. Roadblocks on the way to this goal are______
   1. Here are pathways I can use to get around these blocks

5. I know I reached my goal when _________

6. I will celebrate by _________