

# The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

## Introduction (I)



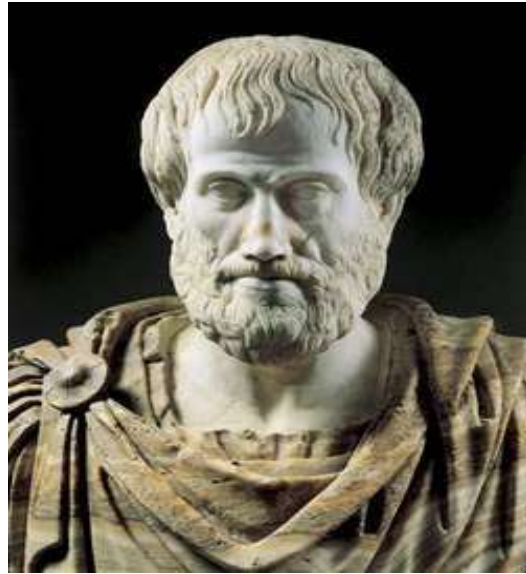
# What happened to happiness?



- Pioneers of happiness
  - Aristotle: Happiness is a major goal of human existence
- The depression epidemic
  - UN declares depression no. 1 cause of disability worldwide
  - Steep climb among teenagers after 2010
  - The elephant in the room: our modern lifestyle
- Birth of a new science:
  - New scientific discoveries on wellbeing and happiness pick up speed in 1980`s



# Two Pioneers of Happiness



- Aristotle
  - Happiness is an ultimate goal of human existence
  - Wellbeing and the cultivation of virtuous habits should be the central goal of education

- Zhuangzi (and Aristotle)
  - Two kinds of happiness exist:
    - Sensual pleasure
    - Long term wellbeing



# Depression by age group and year (US)

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, 12+



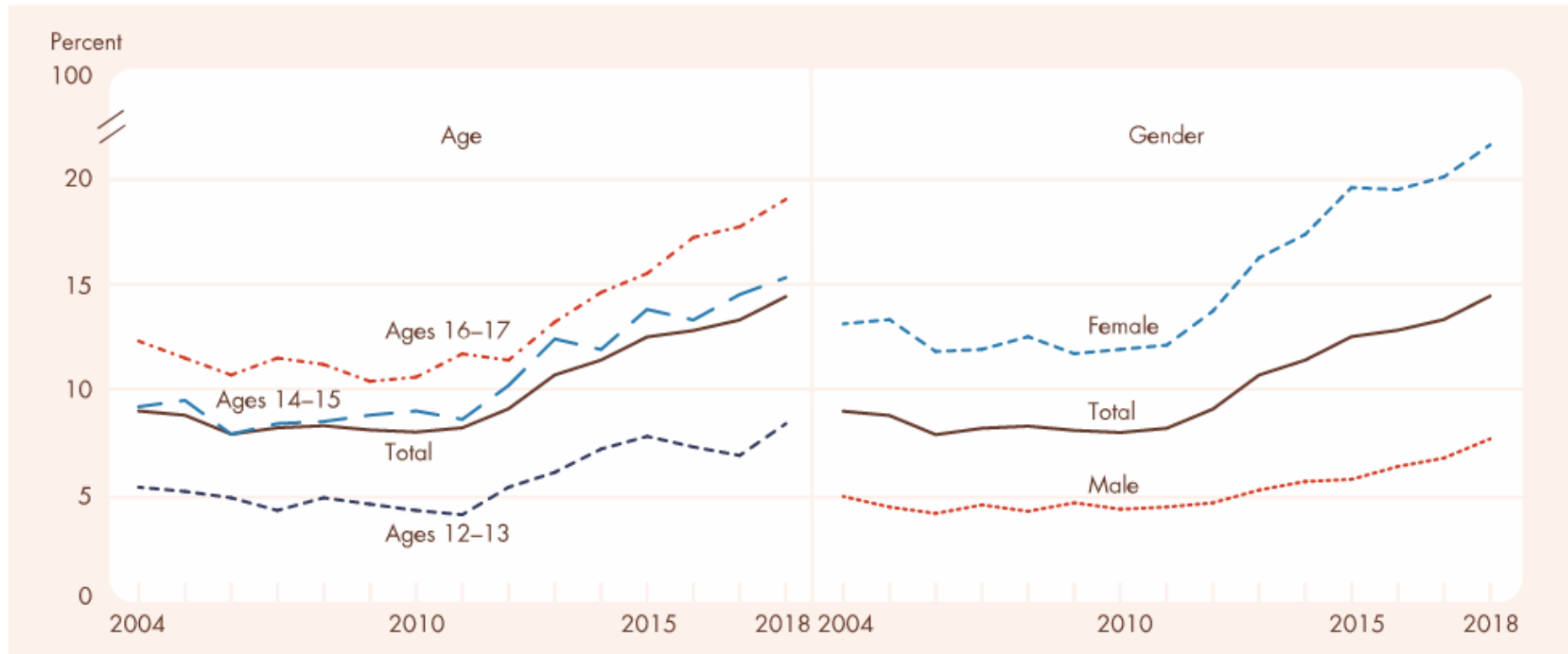
Note: The adult and youth MDE estimates are not directly comparable.

+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.



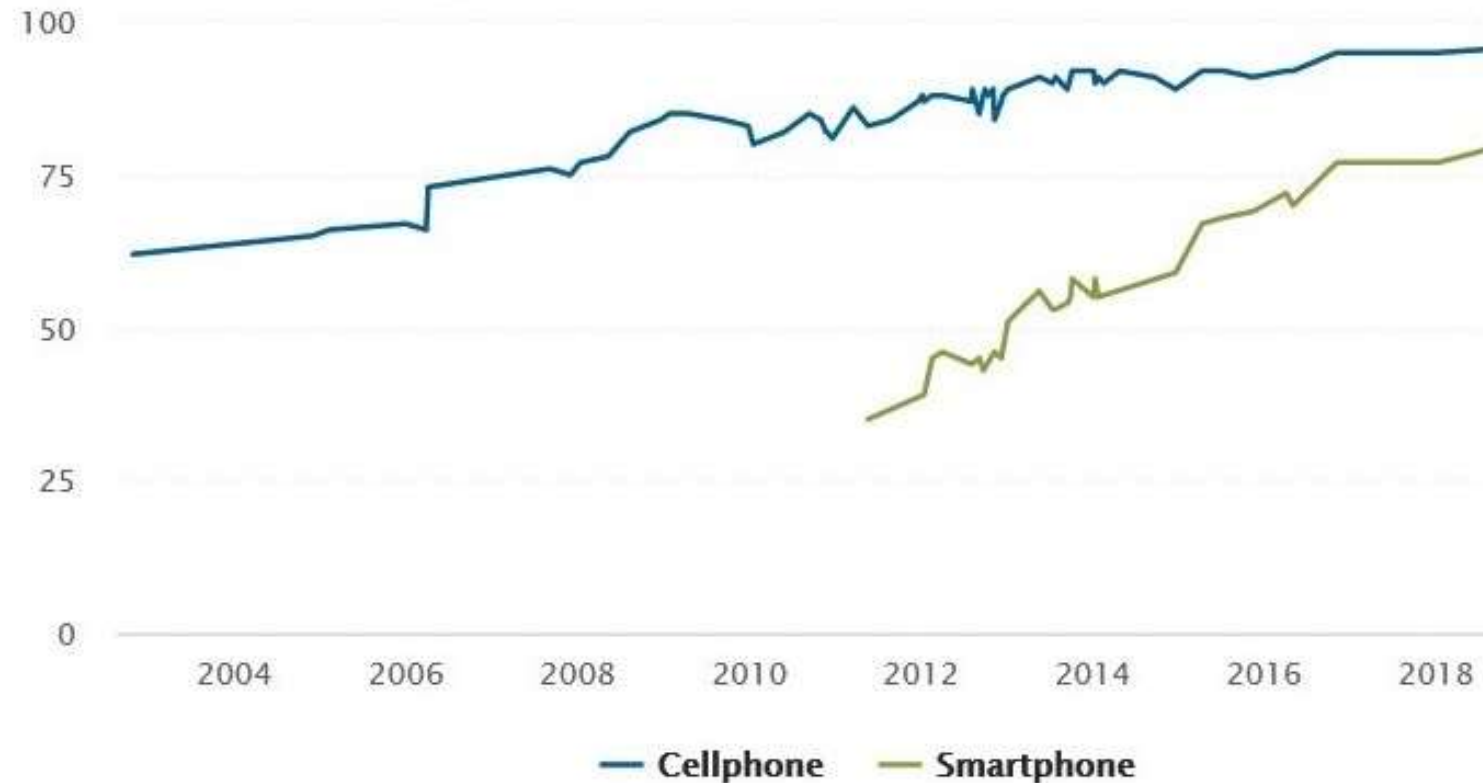
# The teenage depression epidemic (US)

FIGURE HEALTH4.A: PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH AGES 12-17 WHO EXPERIENCED A MAJOR DEPRESSIVE EPISODE (MDE) IN THE PAST YEAR BY AGE AND GENDER, 2004-2018



# Mobile phone ownership

*% of U.S. adults who say they own a ...*



# The Elephant in the Room: Lifestyle



# The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

## Habits of Happy People

1. Close Relationships



2. Kindness



3. Physiological factors



4. Flow



5. Positive Mindset



6. Strengths



7. Meaning





# The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

## Introduction (II)



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

## Abraham Maslow

- Calls for a Positive Psychology
  - How do we achieve our full potential?
- The Hierarchy of Needs
  - Once we meet our "deficiency needs, how do we achieve self-actualization?"



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

## Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi

- How do you measure happiness?
- Experience sampling method
- The discovery of Flow



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

## Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi

### Flow

“Flow is about...being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. ..Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.”



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

## Martin Seligman

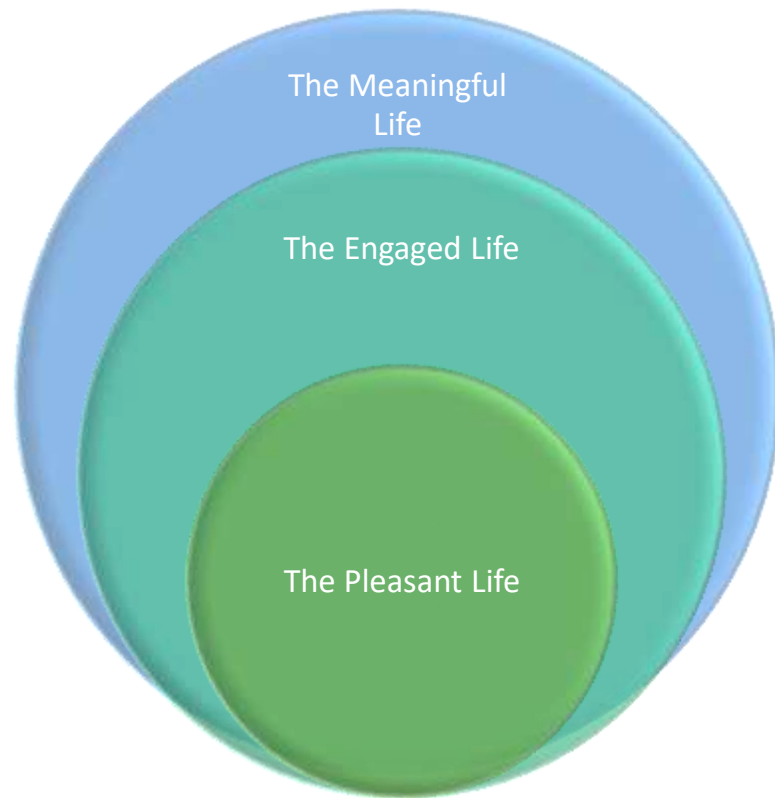
- What makes happy people happy?
  - The pleasant life
  - The engaged life
  - The meaningful life
- Two Pillars of Positive Psychology
  - Positive Emotions
  - Strengths



# Psychology: Pioneers of Happiness

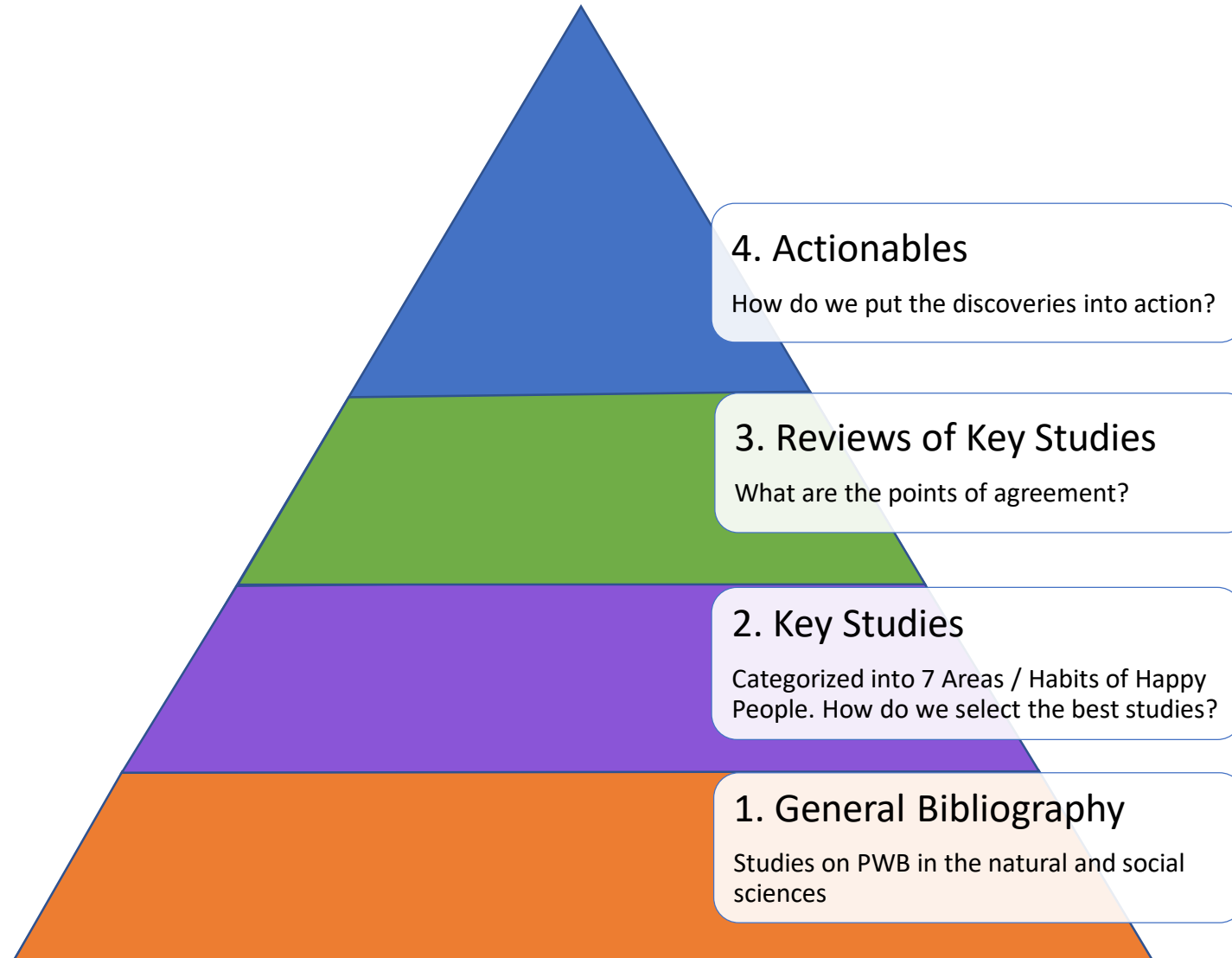
## Martin Seligman

Three Dimensions of Happiness



# The Science of Happiness

## Mining Mountains for Nuggets



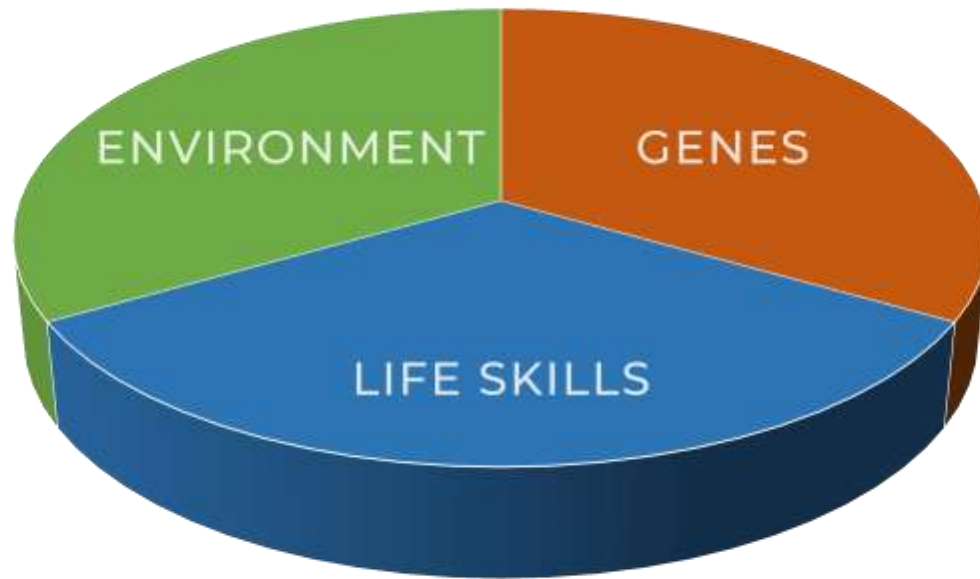


# The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

## Introduction (III)



# Happiness Pie



- Genetic slice
  - Probably quite large, but not under our control
- Environment
  - Not easy to change
- Life Skills
  - AKA “habits of happy people.”
  - This slice is under our control

# 7 Habits of Happy People

1. Close Relationships



2. Kindness



3. Physical Well-being



4. Flow



5. Strengths



6. Positive Mindset



7. Meaning



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 1. Close Relationships

- A top priority
- Key component of wellbeing



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 2. Kindness

- Random acts of kindness
- Volunteering
- Immediate impact



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 3. Physical wellbeing

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Exposure
- Sleep



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 4. Flow

Experienced through activities that:

- We love doing
- Are challenging
- Are creative



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 5. Strengths

- Enrich life
- Major impact on self-esteem, self-confidence





# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 6. Positive Mindset

- Gratitude
- Savoring
- Hope



# 7 Habits of Happy People

## 7. Finding Meaning

- Mitigates suffering
- Promotes long-term well-being



# Happiness Soup



## DIY Gazpacho

- Many ingredients
- Focus on what you like, and slowly work on the rest
- Discover your recipe
- Which habits do you want to focus on?

