

Module 1: Introduction



Subject: Psychological Well-being

Duration of Module: 3 classes (45 min each)

Central Messages:

1. Great thinkers have puzzled over the causes of happiness and suffering throughout history.
2. Scientists are discovering new secrets about human happiness. Some of these insights deeply resonate with ancient wisdom.
3. The “Happiness Pie” has three components, including genetic traits, environment, and life skills. Life skills are under our control.



LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings:

- Two great thinkers from East and West, Zhuangzi and Aristotle, both suggested that two kinds of happiness exist, the temporary happiness we find through sensual satisfaction, and a deeper, long-term kind of happiness.
- Through regular practice of certain life skills, (the “habits of happy people” we can improve our psychological wellbeing and prevent depression.

Essential Questions:

- What makes you happy?
- Why do people experience depression?
- Do you experience different kinds of happiness?
- What is the difference between the philosophy and science of happiness?
- What kind of life skills have the biggest impact on our happiness?

LESSON PLAN

Day 1 Main Topic: What Happened to Happiness?

- **Group Activity:** Facilitate a discussion on the questions:
 - What is your definition of “happiness? Peace of mind? A feeling of joy? Or something else?
 - What kinds of things make you happier?” Allow students to respond and write all the ideas on the board.
 - What do you think are the three top causes of depression among young people? (15 mins)
- **Video:** Watch the Pursuit of Happiness (PoH) video “**What Happened to Happiness?**” (10 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts: “What about this video surprised you? What was the most memorable clip, and why?” (5 mins)
- **Presentation/Q&A:** Use slide deck to underline main points of the video. (10 mins)
- **Assignment:** Ask students to spend about 15 minutes exploring the main ideas of the pioneers Zhuangzi and Aristotle on the Pursuit of Happiness website:
 - <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/zhuangzi/>
 - <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/aristotle/>
 - In the Aristotle reading, focus on two sections, “Happiness as an ultimate purpose of human existence” and “The pursuit of happiness as the exercise of virtue.”

Students should write a brief reflection on the following:
“Which thinker do you agree with the most and why?” (5 mins)

Day 2 Main Topic – Birth of a New Science

- **Assignment Debrief:** Have students break into pair-shares or small groups and share their assignment reflections on Aristotle and Zhuangzi. (10 mins)
- **Writing exercise:** Let students know that they will be creating written journals or online portfolios that capture their learning from this course. **The portfolios become a place where they can capture their key insights and discoveries from the class.** The first entry in the portfolio will be their

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responses to the questions on Day 1. Give them time to rethink their answers in the group activity on Day 1 (perhaps they changed their minds after listening to fellow students) and add this to their portfolio. (10 mins)

- **Video:** Watch PoH intro video “**Birth of a New Science.**” (10 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts: “What about this video surprised you? What was the most memorable clip, and why?” (5 mins)
- **Presentation:** Use slide deck to underline main points of the video. (5 mins)
- **Assignment:** Read about the following scientific pioneers of happiness. Write about the following questions:
 1. What did you think was the most useful insight of each thinker?
 2. Why is each of these thinkers regarded as a pioneer?
<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/abraham-maslow/>
<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/>
<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/martin-seligman-psychology/>
(5 mins to describe the assignment)

Day 3 Main Topic – Habits of Happy People

- **Assignment Debrief:** Have students break into pair-shares or small groups and share their Assignment reflections on the three scientific pioneers. (10 mins)
- **Presentation:** Use slide deck to underline main points of the video. Include the personal stories of each psychologist (for example, how Marty Seligman became interested in happiness when his daughter asked him why he was so grumpy. (15 mins)
- **Video:** Watch PoH intro video “**Habits of Happy People.**” (5 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts: “What about this video surprised you? What is your favorite habit and why?” (5 mins)
- **Group Activity:** Facilitate a discussion on the questions:

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1. What are the three slices of the happiness pie?
2. Do you think they are equal in size, or are some bigger and some smaller?

- **Assignment:** (Portfolio reflection) In your experience, what do you think are three ways of building closer relationships with family and friends?

Summative Assessment:

- Review the portfolios to make sure that students have included their answers to questions on Day 1.