

Mindfulness and the Science of Happiness

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Why Be Happy?

- It's good for our health
 - Nun Study
 - 678 Elderly nuns
 - Positive in youth tended to be positive in old age
 - Top quartile in happiness lived 9.3 years longer than bottom quartile
 - Negativity is a more powerful risk factor than smoking or alcoholism

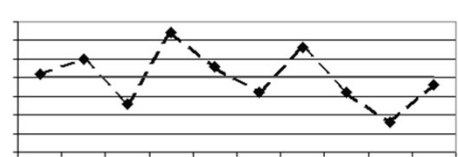


Why Else Be Happy?

- Broaden and build
 - Happiness boosts cognition
 - Clarity
 - Accuracy
 - Creativity
 - Concentration
 - Supports play
 - Connection with others

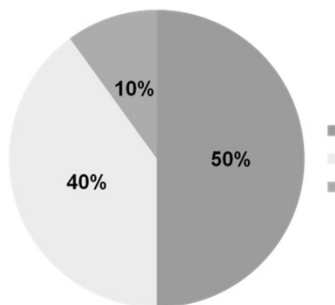


Set Points



Things are not as good or as bad as they seem

Happiness Determinants



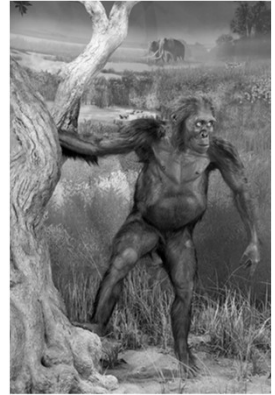
The Hedonic Treadmill

We are terrible at predicting what will make us happy



How Did We Get This Way?

Our Evolutionary Accident



The Thinking Disease

- Analyze past pleasure and pain
- Maximize future pleasure and avoid future pain



Life Is Difficult, for Everybody



The Problem With Selfing



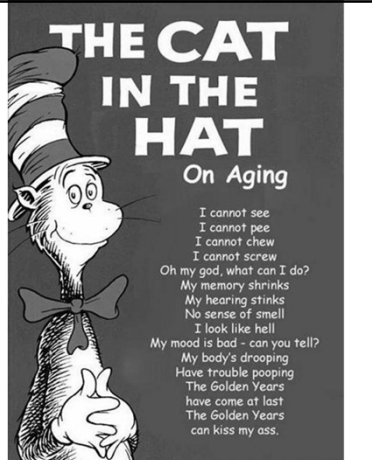
What Doesn't Work

- Wealth
 - (After meeting basic needs)
- Education
 - (or high IQ)
- Sunny days
 - Even though everyone thinks they help



Even Being Young Doesn't Work

- Ages 20-24
 - Sad 3.4 days/mo
- Ages 65-74
 - Sad 2.3 days/mo



Shopping Doesn't Work

- Thinking about buying
- Seeing
- Using
- Acquiring
- Owning
- Habituating
- Thinking about buying. . .

Asceticism Doesn't Work



What Works?

Being Present



What is Mindfulness?

- *Sati* in Pali
 - Connotes *awareness, attention, & remembering*
- In therapeutic arena, also includes
 - Non-judgment
 - Acceptance
 - Adds kindness & friendliness

Mindfulness

1. Awareness
2. Of present experience
3. With loving acceptance

Mind/lessness

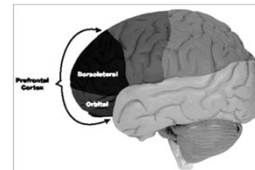
- Operating on “autopilot”
- Being lost in fantasies of the past and future
- Breaking or spilling things because we’re not paying attention
- Rushing through activities without attending to them

Loving Acceptance



Lateral Differences

- Left prefrontal cortex activity
 - Happy
 - Enthusiastic
 - Energized
- Right prefrontal cortex activity
 - Hypervigilance
 - Depression
 - Anxiety



Biotech Workers

- Taught mindfulness 3hr/wk x 8 weeks
 - Subjects tipped right before training
 - Tipped left after training
 - Moods improved
 - More engaged
 - Less anxious
 - Immune response to flu vaccine enhanced

Mindful Savoring



Engagement



- Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)
 - Reduced self-awareness
 - No hedonic treadmill
 - Gratification vs. pleasure
 - Strengths engaging challenges

Gratitude



Meaning & Connection



Engagement for the benefit of something larger than ourselves →

Compassion for Self and Others

Motivational Systems

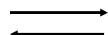
Anger, anxiety, disgust

Drive, excitement, vitality

Threat-focused
Protection &
Safety Seeking

Seeking pleasure
Achieving and Activating

Activating/Inhibiting



Affiliative
Soothing/safety
Well-being

Contentment, safety, connection

Security, Satisfaction, Connection



Compassion

- Latin: *pati*; Greek: *pathein* (“to suffer”)
- Latin: *com* (“with”)
- Compassion means to “suffer with” another person.

Compassion’s Relatives

- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Love
- Pity
- Altruism

Lovingkindness Practice

- May I be happy, peaceful, free from suffering
- May my loved ones be happy. . .
- May all living beings be happy. . .



Self or Inner Compassion

When Things Go Wrong

Unholy trinity of

- Self-criticism
- Self-isolation
- Self-absorption

An Anidote: Self-Compassion

- Self-kindness
- Common Humanity
- Mindfulness



Attachment



Self-Compassionate Letter

- Describe something that makes you feel badly about yourself
- Think of loving, accepting, imaginary friend
- Write a letter to yourself from your friend's perspective

---Kristen Neff

Pixel Thoughts

A 60-second meditation tool to help clear your mind

It's Darwin's Fault



What Realms Define Me?

- Skills & Talents
- Accomplishments
- Pedigree or Group Membership
- Moral Standing
- Appearance



Becoming Addicted



The Failure of Success

- Narcissistic recalibration
- Impossibility of winning consistently



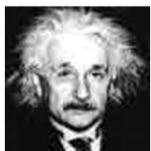
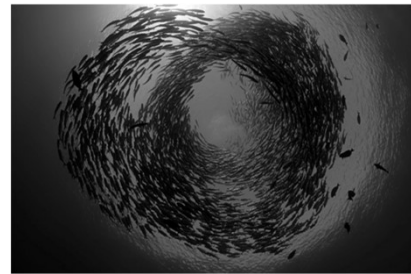
Wrong Wall?



Selfie Esteem



Transpersonal Awareness: An Antidote



“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking. No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.”

--- Albert Einstein

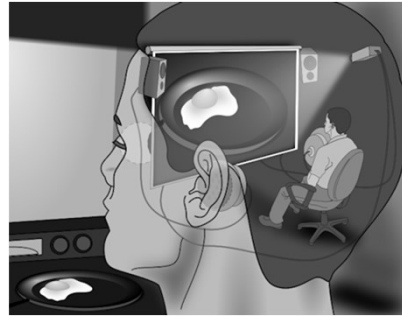
Therapeutic Benefits of Transpersonal Awareness

1. Increased affect tolerance
2. Radical acceptance of parts
3. Freedom from self-esteem concerns
4. Deeper connection to others

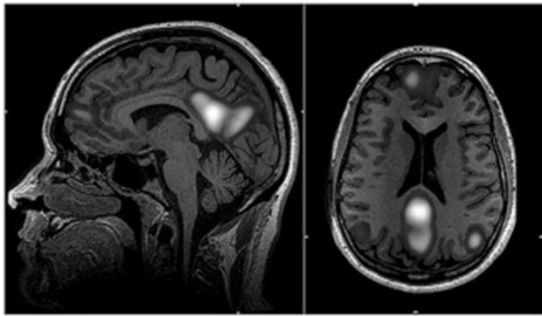
Thinking



Homunculus?



Default Mode Network



Who Am I?

- Two types of self-reference

- Narrative focus (NF)

- Enduring traits
- Talking to ourselves about ourselves

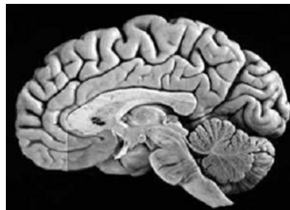
- Experiential focus (EF)

- Moment-to-moment experience
- The mind-body in action



Medial Prefrontal Cortex (mPFC)

- Links subjective experiences across time
- Holds memory of
 - Self traits
 - Traits of similar others
 - Reflected self-knowledge
 - Future aspirations



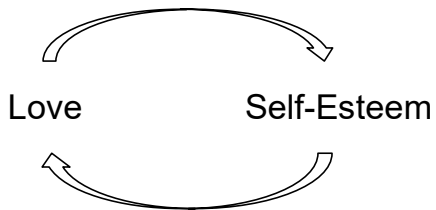
Freeing Ourselves from Self-Preoccupation

3-H Approach

- Heads
- Hearts
- Habits



Catching Ourselves in the Act



Self-Esteem Autobiography



Healing Past Injuries



“They said
I threw like
a girl”



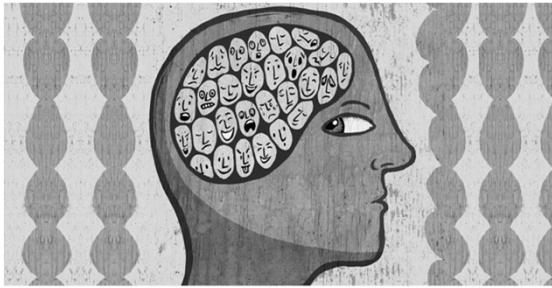
And I, Sir, Can Be Run Through with a Sword



Selfing & Affect Tolerance

- Not “my,” but “the”
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Joy

Welcoming All Parts



Our Polytheistic Mind



Jung's Shadow

- We identify with some parts while rejecting others
- We become defensive when shadow is illuminated



Cultivating Self-Compassion Instead of Self-Esteem



Connecting to Others



Harvard Study of Adult Development

- 724 men studied for 75 years
- Since 1938
 - 1/2 Harvard students; 1/2 poor young men in Boston
 - 60 still alive
- Most important predictor of happiness, mental and physical health was quality of relationships

Judgments



Make a connection, not an impression.

Generosity



Gratitude



"Brilliant."—Tara Brach, PhD, author of *Trusting the Gold*

the
extraordinary
gift of being
ordinary

FINDING HAPPINESS RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE



Dr. RONALD D. SIEGEL