

The trend in the world now is to set yourself apart from others. Given that everyone is trying to work really hard, in order to be more successful, there is a need to differentiate from others. The expectation is that the more successful one becomes, the more satisfaction one is able to obtain.

The general assumption is that you first work hard and become successful, then from this success, you can obtain some happiness. The end goal is to obtain happiness. However, the relationship between this expectation of happiness and success required is not necessarily in that order. Instead, happiness can be a necessity for success such that the happier one is, the higher the quality of their life.

**Often in traditional psychology, the negatives are considered more than the positives.**

Averages have been the center point of traditional psychology: are humans more disappointed than average? More unsatisfied than average? If this is the case, traditional psychology aspires to restore humans to what is the mediated standard level of happiness or fulfillment.

Traditional psychology centers on the adverse more by inquiring on what makes people decline below average instead of what lifts them above it.

The drawback with this approach is that our compulsion with averages is what ultimately prevents us from moving beyond that point into greatness. Strictly by making better the areas where one is inadequate, you forego the chances to go beyond the average.

For a brief, contemplate that there are four out five Harvard students who suffer from depression and that their studies are a source of stress.

Using this information, traditional psychology would recognize the four Harvard students as exhibiting average levels of happiness. Ultimately, they are representative of the obvious majority. But they totally miss the oddity in doing so: the fifth, non-depressed student!

This is of significance, due to the fact that the one student who isn't depressed is also the one who's probably going to succeed – in both schools and later at work.

The discovery that we should focus on positives gave rise to the field of positive psychology.

Positive psychology looks into the question, “what it is that makes people excel?”, with the end goal of utilizing that information and thereby lifting the standard.

Therefore, what is it that makes that one Harvard student triumph where the other four failed?

After staying with students in Harvard for 12 years and journeying all around the globe striving to figure out what carries people above average, the author's discovery was that successful people are successful because of their specific interpretation of reality.

For example, his encounter with students in Soweto, South Africa showed the vast majority to be happy with their studies as they saw schoolwork as a challenge and a privilege. This is in stark contrast to students at Harvard, a lot of who saw school as a source of stress.

## **Happiness causes success, not vice-versa.**

Happiness can be officially defined as the experience of positive emotions. Whatsoever, no exact definition can be arrived at. Essentially, happiness is a very personal experience. One's happiness often differs from that of another.

Researches in psychology conclude that when a person is in a good mood when they can be said to be experiencing positive emotions, they are often more motivated and successful in their activities. To reach the point that happiness is a source of motivation is not difficult.

On the contrary, linking a bad mood as a source of demotivation is a fairly obvious fact. The reason for this is when one experiences negative emotions, they are hindered in their decision making since their focus is lost to thinking more about what is making them unhappy.

We can conclude that happiness widens the capacity of possibilities and enables us to think outside the box. This allows us to develop newer ideas.

In neurobiology, dopamine and serotonin are known as the chemicals our bodies which make us delighted. While experiencing the good feeling, simultaneously, they also contribute to raising our mental capability so that we are able to take in new information.

In addition to this, they also add to our capacity to hold and access the information later on. In short, you have a better chance to perform better in a math test when you are happier than when you aren't.

Additionally, it has been discovered that happiness adds to success across various fields of our lives. This includes our relationships, jobs, health and even creativity. Results from 200 scientific studies can easily help us to draw a conclusion. A total of nearly 275000 participants were subjected to these assessments.

Some companies such as Google and Yahoo try to take advantage of this by striving to maximize the efficiency of their employees by making their working environment a positive area. This allows their employees to do various things at work which contribute to their happiness. For example, bringing one's dogs to work or being able to gain access to a massage or a salon.

## Being happier makes you more productive.

Our brain's productivity peaks when we feel more delighted therefore it should be of no surprise when your work seems less difficult when you're in a pleasant mood.

A research conducted on 272 employees measured and reported their initial level of happiness. Their work rate was also checked on and recorded over a period of 18 months.

The results were as expected. They showed that employees who were most ecstatic at the commencement period had had better performances over that period and therefore had better pay later on.

These prosperous people are able to get the most from their lives by having a positive attitude. That they will obtain happiness first by being successful is an idea they are capable

of getting rid of. This is the Happiness Advantage, the competitive edge attained by feeling positive, which then drives performance.

Primarily because some people have the mindset that they are not happy people, they hold the opinion that they cannot benefit from positive emotions. They are of the impression that being generally happy isn't their style. Nonetheless, a change in mindset and consistency can allow them to achieve the "Happiness Advantage".

Simply taking notice and joy from the small things that give happiness in the world is one way to achieve this. For instance, they can start associating themselves more with joyful people or watch funny videos.

After this step, consistency in making the changes in their lives is what they ought to do to instill the positive attitude.

Meditation is a plausible option for them. Research on the brains of monks that spend a considerable amount of their time meditating shows that their brain's prefrontal cortices, a part of the brain responsible for positive emotions, are commonly larger.

To meditate, one requires only a little patience and consistency. Over time, your happiness levels will rise and your stress levels will decrease.

Focusing on something that you are anticipating is another way to increase your happiness. For instance, your endorphin levels can increase by 27 percent just by thinking about your next vacation.

## Change your attitude to improve your productivity

We can acknowledge that what happens around us in our environment is beyond our control. Occasionally realities that may cause us to be in a certain mood may challenge us. In spite of this, of importance is how we take in and react to these encounters of misery and anguish.

Young children make a great example. When a younger child hits the younger one, the younger one tends to cry out to their parent. This could spell out trouble for the older one in

case the parent knows. So, before the parent finds out they need to hastily pacify their sibling.

The older child may attempt to make a joke or say something nice to the sibling in order to pacify them. They optimize their situation this way. From this example, we can reach that how we see things around us may be vital to get optimal from the realities that we face.

Our brains have limited capabilities. When presented with two different scenarios that elicit both a sad and a happy reaction, it has to decide which reaction it will prioritize. This is why when you tell your little sister a joke after whacking her, it can keep her from crying. Her brain must choose between feeling pain and laughing.

Our reality is defined more by the way we see how activities more than the activities themselves.

For example, in a 1979 test, a group of 75-year-old men were enclosed for a week in an environment that focused on recreating the essence of living in 1959. The group was instructed to act exactly as if it were 1959.

In short, they were to see the world as if they were 55-years old. Later it seemed that they had improved in physical strength, posture, perception, cognition, and short-term memory when they were tested.

This shows that by changing their attitude, they changed their performance abilities. True happiness can be caused by simply having a positive attitude which later can increase one's performance. The more you trust in your ability to become successful the more probable that you will.

**Train yourself to consider the positive more than the negative.**

By now you should be convinced of the ability of a positive mindset, and you likely want to know what you can do to become more happy. To start with, comprehend that your mind takes up patterns of the viewing world.

For example, take this Harvard study where researchers paid 27 people to play Tetris for many hours a day for 3 days consistently.

Two days later, the volunteers confessed to having had begun doing things like fixing cereal boxes in the market into straight lines and even thought of rearranging buildings to pack them more densely on the street!

This compulsion was termed as the Tetris effect. It comes in two variations, the negative and the positive.

The negative Tetris effect comes up when your mind gets stuck in patterns that hinder your chances of success. In contrary, the positive Tetris effect occurs when your brain has been trained to look for opportunities that raise your chances of success.

The more positivity your brain encounters, the more optimistic one can be. It is advisable to seek positive experiences as research has shown that optimistic people set harder goals and put in more work towards attaining them as compared to pessimists.

A way to focus on positivity is by making a practice of writing three good things that happened the previous day. This could be anything that was positive and doesn't have to be intense.

Although this is a simple task it needs consistency to be efficient. one will be on the lookout for positive experiences if they can develop this as a habit. In turn, this will increase the quality of your day and therefore the quality of your life.

**By transforming negative momentum into positive momentum, fall up.**

A variety of perspectives can be developed in a single situation. When it comes to one's happiness and success these perspectives are very important.

One's mind follows one of three parts after a bad experience or crisis:

- The negative encounter creates no change and you end where you started.
- More negative consequences and you end up worse after the encounter.
- The Third Path which entails using negativity and failure to become stronger and more capable than before.

The difference between those who become affected by the failure and those who rise above it is finding The Third Path. This is because they're not affected by what has happened to them but rather they are able to produce something from those events.

A good example is Walt Disney who was fired from a newspaper because of his "lack of creativity". Instead of looking for a new career he worked even harder and is now world-renowned.

Moreover, after a crisis, our brains create counter-facts that are alternate scenarios that assist us to evaluate whatever just happened.

For example, if you are in a bank that was being robbed from and you suffered from a gunshot wound, are you unfortunate because you are the only one who was shot? Or were you fortunate to be shot in the arm and not in the head?

One's brain makes the counter-facts without their input, but one has the choice of selecting which ones to believe. Therefore, you should choose the ones that make you delighted and produce positive encounters for the future.

Success isn't about never failing but rather it's about pushing yourself up to become happier and more successful. This is The Third Path: falling up but not falling down. For example, when Michael Jordan was cut from his high-school basketball team, he used that as motivation to train harder and become the legend he is now.

## The greatest improvements are obtained by getting control and centering one's focus on the little changes.

The belief that we have control over our future is one of the strongest drivers of well-being and performance. Those who believe they have the capability over their results enjoy higher academic achievement, career accomplishment and are happier at work.

For instance, a successful athlete doesn't blame the referees or the weather when she loses just as much as she doesn't attribute her wins to strokes of fortune.

Whenever our stress levels rise up to our ultimate point, the feeling of control can easily crumble. And you'll become less happy and lose motivation when you place too much focus on the things you genuinely can't control.

However, this control can be repossessed!

Putting negative emotions into words is one way. Talk about or write what you're feeling. As brain scans show, putting negative emotions into words diminishes their power and is the first step in regaining control.

You can first push further forward by focusing on smaller goals and developing even bigger ones once you accumulate the resources, knowledge, and confidence.

Additionally, try to differentiate the features of the situation you can control those you cannot. A good exercise for this is by making a list of two columns: one for things in your control and one for things not.

Worry not about the things out of your control. This gives you the ability to focus more of your efforts on the things you can alter therefore giving you greater chances of success. And make sure not to tackle each item on the list once. Even small successes lead up to major achievements.

## Willpower by itself is insufficient for change - reduce barriers to form good habits.

Despite the knowledge that exercising is good for you while smoking is not, so many people fail when they try to adopt good habits or leave the bad ones.

The shortcoming is that they over-rely on their willpower which is a limited resource. As a matter of fact, research shows that willpower is ineffective at maintaining lifestyle changes as it becomes depleted with overuse.

Let's take our focus to the experiment where subjects are given two plates one filled with delicious cookies and the other with radishes. Unfortunately for them, they were instructed not to eat the cookies but they could eat the radishes.

Afterward, they were given a puzzle to solve and those who had already used the willpower by not eating the cookies gave up on the puzzle faster than the control group who didn't have to make the tempting decision.

Or imagine the people who started gaining weight after a month of dieting. They immediately returned to the old habits after they've exhausted their willpower.

So how do we create and maintain good habits?

It all comes down to decreasing activation energy which is the physical and mental energy required to overcome inertia. But what does it look like in action?

Contemplate the writing exercise from our previous chapter where you make a list of the positive things that have happened to you on the last day. By keeping an open notebook and pen on your nightstand one can reduce their activation energy.

For instance, to get better at guitar, buy a guitar stand so that it's easier than taking it out of the closet or the case in order to start playing. Or to smoke less, you can conceal your pack of cigarettes from yourself. These are simple changes but make a huge impact on your lifestyle.

## One of your greatest resources is social support.

Think of your manager handing a new assignment to you and you simultaneously indulge yourself in it, isolating yourself from the rest of the world. No socializing, nothing. Either you decline and fail or you totally get yourself tired striving to push through are the only two outcomes in this scenario.

The knowledge that social relationships are precious investments is a mindset taken up by successful people. Socializing is important to give us positivity and we raise our happiness levels by solidifying our relationships with time.

At work, the more group members spend time on social unity the better their results will be. Joy can be triggered even by the smallest interaction around the water dispenser.

Harvard research verified the link between happiness and social support. They showed that social support and happiness are twice as highly interrelated as the standard. Moreover, studies involving a survey of 24,000 American workers verified that those with fewer social connections are 2 to 3 times more probable to suffer from depression.

Knowing about the important value of social interactions should trigger leaders in creating atmospheres that embrace them.

Various leaders, however, assume that they need not have time for socializing with the employees. That socializing with the subordinates will lead to them losing their command as there should be an obvious difference between friendship and work. However, an MIT based research discovered that employees with strong bonds with their bosses make more profit than those without.

Therefore, you should take time to introduce new members of your team to everyone and even two different departments if you're in a position of leadership. You can even go further by doing things like scheduling team lunches.

Showing gratitude is very important. It is the most efficient way to make bonds so one should take his or her time to recognize the accomplishments of their employees. This

recognition ought to be personal and would be even better in front of others, for example, at a monthly meeting.

## You hold the ability to share your happiness with the world.

The same phenomenon that occurs with yawning, where one has the irresistible urge to yawn after seeing someone else do so, occurs with happiness too.

Just because the ideas presented in the blinks start at a personal level doesn't mean that they end there. The benefits of the Happiness Advantage multiply and spread through the community as we start exploiting it. In simpler terms, they are just not a personal attribute.

When one uses these ideas to make positive reinforcements into their life they unconsciously transform the attitudes of others in their environment too. For example, you could influence your child, who could influence his favorite friend, who then ends up influencing her sister and this goes on and on. This is known as the ripple effect.

This unconscious taking up of behavior is explained in neuroscience with mirror neurons. These influence you to copy the behavior of others or experience what you believe experiencing. An example of this is when you see someone who gets hit on their knee in the TV, you cringe and grab yours as if you're in pain.

The same applies to your mindset. It's likely that you will cause your colleague to feel anxious or negative if you feel so too. On the contrary, the happier you are the happier everyone around you will be.

This is why TV sitcoms use a laugh track! Companies have known this for some time. These ripple effects could be so large that they generate into a butterfly effect (which is the idea that a hurricane could be caused by a butterfly flapping its wings on the other side of the world).

# The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Drive Success and Performance at Work by Shawn Achor Book Review.

Happiness is not a result of success. On the contrary, your success depends on your happiness. Discovering happiness doesn't need you to make great changes in your life, fortunately. Once you change your perspective and take notice of the positive influences that are already there then you will develop happiness.

So start by buying a new toy for your nephew. Studies show that using your money on other people could raise your happiness more than just spending it on yourself. utilize this to your own benefit do something good for others, for example, buy lunch for your friend, gift someone or even make a donation to your favorite charity.

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