



# HAPPINESS, MOTIVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY



The last 30 years of the positive psychology movement has shown a compelling link between our 'subjective view of reality' (perception and meaning) and the results that come about in our lives. More specifically, when any event or experience happens to us we can perceive it in many different ways and make many different meanings of it, and it is this perception and these meanings that have all the impact to us – not the experience itself.

These internal cognitive processes ultimately control our emotions, health, energy, behaviour and hence, productivity. In fact, our overall sense of 'control' over a situation (empowerment), or lack thereof, also known as 'helplessness' towards it, accounts for more than all other behavioural influences put together and once again, this is purely a perception, one based on heavily researched 'structures' of habitual thought patterns that we will literally deconstruct for you here and now.

## Happiness

Martin Seligman, Ph. D. is regarded as the father of the modern science of Positive Psychology, is the professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, and his 20+ years of research into quantifying and qualifying optimism, pessimism, learned helplessness and positive psychology has been supported by the National Institute on Mental Health and the National Science Foundation.

Seligman's many years of research have stemmed around finding the measurable characteristics of optimism and pessimism and being able to literally SCORE an individual's level of 'personal control' vs 'helplessness'. It all comes down to our 'self-talk', what's known as our 'explanatory style' – the way we explain to ourselves the events that happen to us, and how this is simply a belief – the perception and meaning that we give to things.

Seligman found that explanatory style is defined by three dimensions, known as the 3 P's – **Permanence** (temporary vs permanent in time), **Pervasiveness** (specific vs universal in space), and **Personalisation** (internal vs external).

As an example, an optimist would 'explain' a bad event to themselves as being:

- temporary ("its only for now"),
- specific ("only in *this* case"),
- and external ("it's because of something/someone else, not me")

Whereas the pessimist explains a bad event to themselves as being:

- permanent ("it's forever"),
- universal ("it effects everything"),
- and internal ("it's all because if me).

In the case of 'explaining' good events, optimists and pessimists take the exact opposite stance on each of the 3 P's.

*"My life has been filled with terrible misfortune; most of which never happened"*  
Michel De Montaigne

Seligman found that optimistic people are generally happier and generally get better results, while in the case of pessimistic people, as Seligman puts it - "twenty-five years of study has convinced me that if we *habitually* believe, as does the pessimist, that misfortune is our fault, is enduring, and will undermine everything we do, more of it will befall us than if we believe otherwise."

Happiness, which is inextricably linked to optimism, has a lot to do with empowerment, meaning one has a feeling of control or at least influence over a situation, as the 'personalisation' dimension shows us. Since the pessimist concedes control to external factors they have the feeling that "nothing I do matters", which is known as 'helplessness' and it is the polar opposite of empowerment.

So, optimism and happiness has a lot to do with control, our ability to maintain an empowered mindset most of the time. Now, it's not always easy to be that way when the constant pounding surf of the modern day stresses unrelentingly serve to darken our moods, but remember, everyone faces it, it's HOW they face it is that makes all the difference.

Here are some great reasons from Seligman's research why we should all try to maintain a state of happiness and the optimistic approach:

- Optimists lead better lives
- Optimists live longer
- Optimists are healthier
- Optimists do better at work and in school
- Optimists have fewer depressions
- Optimists have more friends and better social lives

## **Motivation**

Much has been said and written about motivation over the years and yet it is still a very misunderstood topic. The general consensus still seems to regard it as something you either have or don't have or that it is something that we have to wait for to 'enter us' through some outside influence.

The simplest way to understand motivation is through its base word – 'Motive'. Most people understand that motive has to do with a reason, a purpose, an explanation, just like the detective always seeks for the perpetrators 'motive' in the crime. Having said this, we all have motive towards things that we want, however, there are also motives towards taking the opposite road or actions that produce results counterproductive to the one we desire, so which wins in the end? Well, which is the stronger motive at the MOMENT of DECISION?

The structure of motivation can be broken down into two elements, each which contain two ends of a spectrum. They are:

- 1) **Source:** Either Intrinsic or Extrinsic
- 2) **Direction:** Either Away or Toward

### Source:

The source of a motive can either be classed as Intrinsic/Internal (from within yourself) or Extrinsic/External (from some outside influence), or even a combination of both. For example, a boss offering a reward for performing above duty would be external, while performing with extra effort to receive the extra gratifying recognition on your own behalf would be internal.

Simply put, while all of us could do with external help, and extrinsic motivation can definitely help in most endeavours, the really great achievers have always been predominantly driven from within. Their intrinsic source of motivation is much more fuelling because it is their own vested interest, as opposed to that of someone else. You may know of some extremely driven people, who you class as very 'motivated' and also find that they have higher expectations of themselves than anyone else does, they are propelled by their own standards and motives.

#### Direction:

The direction of motivation refers to whether the specific motive drives us AWAY from something we don't want, also known as 'Pain' or 'Negative' motivation, or whether it entices us TOWARD something we desire, also called 'Pleasure' or 'Positive' motivation.

Again, we all have both forms as it is simply a one-way street motivating us further away from our 'pain' and toward our 'pleasure', but usually one of the ends influences us more than the other and this changes from person to person as well as from context to context.

Take weight loss as an example. Away motivation would be the doctors dramatizing portrayal of the likely decline of your health due to the excess weight and the discomfort, illnesses, diseases and costs that may well ensue. Toward, on the other hand, would be the promise from your partner to celebrate with every 5lbs that you both lose in your joint endeavour (in whatever way your imagination can devise).

*"Nature has placed mankind under the government of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure - they govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it"*

Jeremy Bentham

The best motivation overall, the type that is not only the most compelling but also the most enduring, is **internal** and **toward**. That is, the drive is from within, for your own reasons and not someone else's as well as being focussed on and driven toward that which you desire. Don't get me wrong, someone else pointing a gun at you (external) saying "do it, or I'll blow your brains out!" (negative) is probably one of the most compelling forms of motivation out there at that specific moment in time, however, it is not enduring. In fact, away motivation is sometimes the best way to get STARTED because it is usually an immediate form of pain that compels you away but it will inevitably diminish with every step you take toward your goal, even though you may still have very far to go, the pain motivation only lasts while you are feeling the heat of the iron, and that only works within proximity.

Both internal and toward motivation have everything to do with 'the love of it', with passion and satisfaction in what you are doing, and this is all related to happiness. You would rarely have met a fitness machine who hated fitness or an entrepreneur with disgust for business success.

#### **Productivity**

The direct measures of productivity are typically based on the relationship between the output produced (the result, outcome, product etc.) and the inputs, or resources consumed to produce it.

$$\text{productivity} = \frac{\text{output}_{\text{produced}}}{\text{resources}_{\text{consumed}}}$$

Whether it's in a workplace, a school student studying or an athlete aiming for improved performance and better results, there are direct resources such as energy, costs, time, equipment, etc. that go into producing such results, but what is less typically analysed is the **indirect** inputs that enhance the end productivity.

## **So what's the link between Happiness, Motivation and Productivity?**

There are many indirect factors that contribute to improving the end result or productivity, even for the same given resources, which are far too complex to measure. However, there is surmounting evidence linking the qualities not typically associated in the output/input equation to the daily results produced by men, women and children of all walks of life. And this leaves little doubt that some of the 'soft' skills or attributes that we have spoken of so far account for a lot more than meets the eye in terms of hard, fast, measurable results in the long term.

Below are the top four reasons why Happiness is so integrally linked to Motivation and Productivity, and how you can use them to produce better results while enjoying the journey much, much more along the way:

### **1) Better Health**

- a. Energy – just as 'tired' and 'cranky' go hand in hand, so too do happy, chirpy people have more energy, learn and train with more attention and bring a natural enthusiasm to their work.
- b. Immunity – happy, optimistic people get sick less often, which means decreasing the performance dips associated with it as well as less costs in replacing them.
- c. Gains – fewer days off training/work means more days of gaining/producing.

### **2) More Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- a. Creativity – happy, motivated people have clearer focus and are more creative.
- b. Problem Solving – they focus on solutions and solve problems instead of complaining about them.

### **3) Enduring Motivation**

- a. Internal Drive – optimists more commonly have intrinsic motivation which is more powerful to their sense of resolve.
- b. 'Toward' Focus – happy, optimistic people focus on what they want more than what they don't want, which lasts longer as a source of motivation and gets better results.
- c. Positive Outlook – when one believes in a positive outcome or that their efforts will pay off in an advantageous result it is much more motivating than believing in the opposite.
- d. Team Work – happy people work better with others, so common motives and goals are communally shared.

### **4) Personal Empowerment**

- a. Locus of Control - optimism implies the locus, or place, of control lies within. The extent to which one believes they can influence/control the events that affect them. This is true empowerment. The opposite of control is 'helplessness' and how much productivity and effectiveness would one produce when they are of the disempowered belief that, "nothing I do matters"?
- b. Decisions – optimists perceive things in better light and make clearer decisions.
- c. Results – happy, motivated people make more positive meanings of the events that happen to them, this produces more positive emotions, more positive behaviours and, ultimately, more positive results.