Happiness 2.0: Rethinking Mindfulness and the Science of Psychological Well-Being

UCLA Extension
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Rick Hanson, Ph.D. & Elisha Goldstein Ph.D.
The Wellspring Institute & The Center for Mindful Living

RickHanson.net  Mindfullivingla.org
Topics

- Foundations
- Positive neuroplasticity
- Play
- Three modes of practice
- Heart
Foundations
What’s wrong with happiness 1.0?
Over the past 100 years, psychology has swung back and forth between emphasizing:

- Receptive acceptance: being with what is
- Wise effort: working with what is

These two great themes are often set against each other, but they are actually synergistic:

- We need to work with the mind to build resources for being with pain, etc.
- We need to be with the results of our work.

The bird of practice needs two wings to fly.
Two Aspects of Working with the Mind

- Preventing, reducing, and ending what is suffering and harmful

- Creating, increasing, and preserving what is happy and beneficial
Three Ways to Engage the Mind

- Be with what is present without any deliberate effort to change it
- Decrease what is suffering and harmful
- Grow what is happy and beneficial

→ Let be, let go, let in

→ In the garden of the mind: Witness it, pull weeds, and plant flowers
On a foundation of wisdom and benevolence, practice is like a three-legged stool:

- heart
- mindfulness
- cultivation
The Key Attitude to Optimizing Learning

Play
“It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”

— D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality
Setting Up the Day

- Focus on the elements of Happiness 2.0
- There will be a mix of presentation, discussion, and experiential activity
- Ultimately, take what is useful to you and leave the rest 😊.
Positive Neuroplasticity
What Shapes Your Course?

Challenges

Vulnerabilities

Resources
Where Are Resources Located?

World

Body

Mind
Resources in Your Mind

- Understandings
- Capabilities
- Positive emotions
- Attitudes
- Motivations
- Virtues
Two wolves in the heart
INNER STRENGTHS ARE BUILT FROM BRAIN STRUCTURE
How do you get these inner strengths into your brain?
Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A’s go first). Then you’ll take turns, with one partner mainly speaking while the other person listens, exploring this question:

**Speaker**: What are some of the good facts in your life these days?

**Listener**: Find a sincere gladness for the other person.

**Both**: Repeatedly take 5-10 seconds to feel and register enjoyable, beneficial experiences.
What was happening in your brain?
Mental activity entails underlying neural activity.
Rewards of Love
Repeated mental activity entails repeated neural activity.

Repeated neural activity builds neural structure.
Neurons that fire together,

wire together.
We can use the mind
To change the brain
To change the mind for the better
To benefit ourselves and other beings.
Learning – changing neural structure and function – has two stages:

From short-term memory buffers to long-term storage

From state to trait

From activation to installation.
Inner strengths are grown from experiences of them – activated states – that are installed as traits.
You become more compassionate by installing experiences of compassion.

You become more grateful by installing experiences of gratitude.

You become more mindful by installing experiences of mindfulness.
Installation
Installation

Installation
Installation

Installation

Installation
Most experiences of inner strengths are enjoyable.

They feel good because they are good for us and others.
Without **installation**, there is no learning, no change in the brain.
We’re good at activation but bad at installation.

This is the fundamental weakness in most patient education, human resources training, psychotherapy, coaching, and mindfulness training.
The same research that proves therapy works shows no improvement in outcomes over the last 30 or so years.

Scott Miller
Meanwhile your painful, harmful experiences are being rapidly converted into neural structure.
The Brain’s Negativity Bias

As our ancestors evolved, avoiding “sticks” was more important than getting “carrots.”

1. So we scan for bad news,
2. Over-focus on it,
3. Over-react to it,
4. Install it fast in implicit memory,
5. Sensitize the brain to the negative, and
6. Create vicious cycles with others.
Velcro for Bad, Teflon for Good

The negativity bias
The brain is good at learning from bad experiences but bad at learning from good ones.

Even though learning from good experiences is the primary way to grow resources in the mind.
Getting the Good Stuff into Your Brain
Have a Good Experience
Enrich It
How to Enrich an Experience

- Duration
- Intensity
- Multimodality
- Novelty
- Salience
Absorb It
Link Positive and Negative Material
HEAL Yourself

Have a positive experience.

Enrich it.

Absorb it.

Link positive and negative material.
Have It, Enjoy It
Let’s Try It

- **Notice** the experience present in awareness that you are basically alright right now.
  - Have the experience.
  - Enrich it.
  - Absorb it.

- **Create** the experience of gratitude.
  - Have the experience.
  - Enrich it.
  - Absorb it.
It’s Good to Take in the Good

- Development of specific inner strengths
  - General - resilience, positive mood, feeling loved
  - Key resources – For challenges, deficits, wounds

- Implicit benefits:
  - Shows that there is still good in the world
  - Being active rather than passive
  - Treating yourself kindly, like you matter
  - Rights an unfair imbalance, given the negativity bias
  - Training of attention and executive functions

- Sensitizes brain to positive: like Velcro for good
Keep a green bough in your heart,  
and a singing bird will come.  

Lao Tsu
Cultivation Undoes Craving

We rest the mind upon beneficial states so that the brain may gradually take their shape.

This disentangles us from craving as we increasingly rest in a peace, contentment, and love that is independent of external conditions.

With time, even the practice of cultivation falls away – like a raft that is no longer needed once we reach the farther shore.
Pet the Lizard
Feed the Mouse
Hug the Monkey
Peace

Contentment

Love
Play
Pop into the Present!
Play!
(Seeing the Stool)
A Scarcity of Play in Psychology
The creation of something new is not accomplished by intellect, but by the play instinct.

~Carl Jung
Let’s Play!

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What is Play?
What Play is Not!

Our Culture’s Implicit Messages

- Unproductive
- Guilty pleasure
- Petty

Except: Competitive Play OKAY!

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It’s Natural
Defining Play

“Play: a flexible state of mind in which you are presently engaged in some freely chosen and potentially purposeless (or purposeful) activity that you find interesting, enjoyable, and satisfying.”

~ Uncovering Happiness
It’s Contagious
The Science of Happy Contagion

If you’re happy and you know it, thank your friends.

- 4,739 Individuals; Over 50,000 social and family ties

- Within a mile a friend increases 25%;
  Next door neighbor 34%;
  Indirect relationship 10%


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What Happens if We Don’t Play?

1970’s study with Mihaly Csikzentmahlalyi

Instructions: Stop doing anything “instrumental” (Walks with friends, reading).

**After 24 hours**
Increased sluggishness
Difficulty concentrating
Felt sleepy
Restless

**After 48 hours**
48 hours “the general deterioration in mood was so advanced that prolonging the experiment would have been unadvisable.”
“The opposite of play is not work, it’s depression.”

~ Brian Sutton-Smith
## Play ≠ Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged (Left Prefrontal)</td>
<td>Disengaged (Right Prefrontal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of self-critic</td>
<td>Self-Judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Mind</td>
<td>Rigid Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social (High Vagal Tone)</td>
<td>Isolation (Low Vagal Tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to possibilities</td>
<td>Helplessness</td>
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Play Enhances Learning & Memory
(aka “Installation”)
Three Conditions
1. Playmates and Toys
2. Playmates, No Toys
3. No playmates, No Toys

Results
Group 1 had a significantly thicker cerebral cortex - Cognitive processing, attention and awareness. (Key determinant of change – novelty).

When thicker is sometimes better - They could also navigate a maze better (higher behavioral performance).

Group 3 showed decreased cortical thickness.

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Mouse from Group 1
Play Helps Maintain Brain Cells

BDNF “Brain Fertilizer”


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Pop into the Present
Pop into the Present

Copyright 2013 Elisha Goldstein, PhD
How to Nurture Play?

Take a Play History
- Diego’s Story
- Julie’s story

Bring it to the Present
- What are your toys?
- Who are your playmates?
- Make a playbook and playdates.

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What Gets in the Way?

- Cultural Implicit Messages (unproductive, guilty pleasure, petty)
- Perfectionism
- Vulnerability
- Foreboding Joy
"To be in harmony with the oneness of things is to be without anxiety about imperfection."

- Dogen Zenji
Your Turn to Uncover Play
Takeaway!

The Good News!
Play isn’t just for kids.

On Top of That!
Taking regular play-breaks builds our play muscle and as we continue to make learning playful, it enhances our natural capacities for resiliency and a deeper installation of learning.
Three Modes of Practice
In the Garden of the Mind

1. Be with what is there.
2. Decrease what’s harmful.
3. Increase what’s beneficial.

Let be. Let go. Let in.
Mindfulness is present in all three.

“Being with” is primary – but not enough.
We also need “wise effort.”
Join us for

**Cultivating Inner Strength - Monastic Daylong [Dana - No Fee Day]**

with Ayya Anandabodhi
and Ayya Santacitta

on

**Sunday, July 8**

from 9:30 am - 5 pm.

*(Photo by Ed Ritger)*
Biological Evolution

- 4+ billion years of earth
- 3.5 billion years of life
- 650 million years of multi-celled organisms
- 600 million years of nervous system
- 200 million years of mammals
- 60 million years of primates
- 6 million years ago: ancestor with chimpanzees
- 2.5 million years of tool-making
- 150,000 years of *homo sapiens*
Evolutionary History

The Triune Brain - (P. MacLean 1990)
Three Stages of Brain Evolution

- **Reptilian:**
  - Brainstem, cerebellum, hypothalamus
  - Reactive and reflexive
  - *Avoid* hazards

- **Mammalian:**
  - Limbic system, cingulate, early cortex
  - Memory, emotion, social behavior
  - *Approach* rewards

- **Human:**
  - Massive cerebral cortex
  - Abstract thought, language, cooperative planning, empathy
  - *Attach* to “us”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Signal</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Unpleasant</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Approaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Heartfelt</td>
<td>Attaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental Resources for Challenges

**Safety** – Grit, protection, relaxation, feeling alright right now, peace

**Satisfaction** – Gratitude, gladness, accomplishment, contentment

**Connection** – Belonging, appreciation, friendship, compassion, love
Psychological Antidotes

Avoiding Harms
- Strength, efficacy --> Weakness, helplessness, pessimism
- Safety, security --> Alarm, anxiety
- Compassion for oneself and others --> Resentment, anger

Approaching Rewards
- Satisfaction, fulfillment --> Frustration, disappointment
- Gladness, gratitude --> Sadness, discontentment, “blues”

Attaching to Others
- Attunement, inclusion --> Not seen, rejected, left out
- Recognition, acknowledgement --> Inadequacy, shame
- Friendship, love --> Abandonment, feeling unloved or unlovable
Societal Implications of Positive Neuroplasticity

- For most of the time our human and hominid ancestors have lived, it was not possible to meet the core needs of everyone. But now the resources and know-how exist to do this. How we handle this unprecedented opportunity will be the central theme of this century.

- Improving external conditions is vital – but not enough. Many affluent people dwell in anxiety and anger, frustration and drivenness, and hurt and ill will.

- Repeatedly internalizing Responsive experiences develops a “green brain” that is harder to manipulate with threats and fear, greed and consumerism, and “us” vs. “them” rivalries. A critical mass of “green brains” will bring a tipping point that changes the course of human history.
Think not lightly of good, saying, "It will not come to me."

Drop by drop is the water pot filled.

Likewise, the wise one, gathering it little by little, fills oneself with good.

Dhammapada 9.122
Encouraging the Heart

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4 Ways to Warm the Heart

- Toward our pain – Self-Compassion
- Toward others pain – Compassion
- Toward our joy – Mudita (self-less joy)
- Toward others joy – Mudita
Warmth Toward Pain

Self-Compassion and Compassion
Self-Compassion: What is it?

“Being aware of our own suffering with an inclination to help ourselves.”
Self-Compassion ≠ Depression

142 Depressed, 120 not-depressed

Depressed showed lower self-compassion
  - Controlling for depressive symptoms

Self-compassion ≠ depressive symptoms, rumination and avoidance

Rumination and avoidance mediated relationship between self-compassion and depressive symptoms

Translating the Non-Verbal Experience of Compassion

Since it’s difficult to cultivate self-compassion with a history of depression. How do you convey the quality of compassion when dealing with our own emotional suffering?

We need to appeal beyond the rational brain and to the emotional brain.

How can we do this?
What Comes Up for You?
The Power of Vulnerability
Don’t turn away. Keep your gaze on the bandaged place. That’s where the light enters you.

~ Rumi
13th Century Sufi Poet
Self-Compassion Practice #1:
Laying of Hands
Discussion

- What did you notice?

  i.e., thoughts, sensations, emotions?

- How is this relevant to installing a deeper sense of well-being?
Compassion: What is it?
Sometimes you hear a voice through the door
Calling you,
A fish out of water,
Hears the waves…
Come back, Come back
This turning toward what you deeply
Loves, Offers to Life.
Saves you.

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Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom.

~ Rumi
Reducing Inflammation

**Hedonic Happiness**
“Living the good life”
High Inflammation

**Eudaimonic Happiness**
“A life of purpose and meaning”
“A life rich in compassion”
= Low Inflammation


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Raises Vagal Tone

High Vagal Tone
Slows heart rate, regulates internal systems,
Calm, rest, relaxation, contentment

Low Vagal Tone
Difficulty regulating emotions
Flat affect
Low voice tone
Tied in with Oxytocin network (Connection)
Associated with Trauma and Depression

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When Money Can Buy Resiliency
Pro-Social Vs. Anti-Social

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When Money Can’t Buy Resiliency

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Purpose = Happiness/Resiliency

2009 – Mayo Clinic

556 Academic Physicians sampled

34% met criteria for burnout (aka “Compassion Fatigue”)

The amount of time spent on meaningful work had an inverse relationship with burnout.

Tiat Shanafelt et al., “Career Fit and Burnout Among Academic Faculty,” Archives of Internal Medicine 169, no. 10 (may 2009): 990 – 95.

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“It’s not enough to be compassionate, you must act.”

~ The Dalai Lama
What Do You Value?
Making Pro-Social Values into Verbs

- Compassion: A daily practice of thinking of people in my life or in the world who are struggling and wishing them lovingkindness.
- Strong Family: Have nightly meals together without electronics.
- World Peace: Volunteer or give money to (Pick your organization).

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Too Much Compassion?

We’re all at risk

Between 16 – 85% of healthcare workers develop “compassion fatigue” – a gradual lessening of compassion.

Balance with compassion and...


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Who is Your Compassion Hero?
S.A.F.E

S – Soften into the feeling

A – Allow/Accept it as it is

F – Feel into it with inquiry
   * Use Self-Compassion Hero
   * What am I needing?
   * Integrating Lovingkindness

E – Expand Lovingkindness to all who are in the same boat.

Source: Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

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Compassion Practice

#2:

SAFE

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Warmth Toward Joy
A Boost for Sharing, and an Extra Boost for Self-less Joy

One Study – Three Conditions

- Kept a journal of grateful experiences (no sharing)
- Kept class notes (sharing)
- Kept a journal of grateful experiences (sharing) (increased in life satisfaction, positive affect, happiness)

Follow-up study

- People who received an active supportive response expressed more positive affect than all other previous conditions.

Making it Real
Sharing Joy

- **Speaker:** Think of an experience where you were generous, kind, caring or loving

- Share the story with a partner
  - Note obstacles: don’t want to show off, guilty that we might feel good while others are suffering.

- **Listener:** Connect with your heart and listen with the understanding that this person is just like me, be happy for their joy.
  - Or say phrases in your mind such as:
    - May you learn to appreciate the happiness and joy you experience.
    - May the joy you experience continue and grow.
    - May you be filled with joy and gratitude.

- **Bonus:** After the person is done speaking, take about 10 seconds to register that this person has been glad for me. Uncover a piece of happiness that is right there.

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Confidence
Tying it All Together
The Golden Rule:
Getting Better is Not About Performing Well
Mindset Matters

Fixed Mindset - Performance
- Rigid belief that you have finite abilities.
- Every encounter with the boosting real happiness becomes a measure of your ability. Setbacks just reinforced the fixed belief.

Growth Mindset - Learning
- Flexible belief that we all have varying abilities, with strategy and effort we can increase them.
- Every encounter with the boosting real happiness becomes an opportunity to learn and grow.

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3 Steps to Happiness 2.0

1. **Engage** – Be on the lookout for good moments (big and small), add some mindfulness for deeper installation.

2. **Forgive** - When the mind wanders, practice “forgive and invite” and gently guide it back.

3. **Repeat** - Repeat step 2 indefinitely.
Remember...

“Wherever you are that’s the entry point.”

~Kabir
Question and Answer
Suggested Books


- Goldstein, E. & Stahl, B. 2015. *MBSR Every Day: Daily Practices from the Heart of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction*
Key Papers - 1

See www.RickHanson.net for other scientific papers.


Hanson, R. 2008. Seven facts about the brain that incline the mind to joy. In *Measuring the immeasurable: The scientific case for spirituality*. Sounds True.
Key Papers - 3


Where to Find Rick Hanson Online

Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence

www.rickhanson.net/hardwiringhappiness

Personal website: www.rickhanson.net

Wellspring Institute: www.wisebrain.org

youtube.com/drrhanson facebook.com/rickhansonphd
Where to Find Elisha Goldstein Online

*Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*

www.elishagoldstein.com/books/uncoveringhappiness

Personal website: www.elishagoldstein.com

The Center for Mindful Living: www.mindfullivingla.org

twitter.com/Mindful_Living   facebook.com/ElishaGoldstein/