CONTRARY TO WHAT MOST OF US BELIEVE, HAPPINESS DOES NOT SIMPLY HAPPEN TO US. IT IS SOMETHING THAT WE MAKE HAPPEN

-MIHÁLY CSIKSZENTMIHÁLYI

WATCH: http://www.ted.com/playlists/4/what_makes_you_happy
WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

- The scientific study of what constitutes and facilitates a satisfactory life
- Ways to cultivate optimal human functioning and foster well-being

Focuses on:
- Strengths
- Best things in life
- Fulfillment & nurturing of talent

Happiness can be measured:
- Students can assess themselves at:
  - https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/
  - Can be used as pre and post survey
WHY CULTIVATE POSITIVE PSYCH FOR STUDENTS?

- **Need**: Higher numbers of depressed students who are struggling (US News and World Report, 2007)

- **Correlational Data**: Happiness has positive relationship with GPA (Okuna, Levy, Karoly, Ruehlman, 2009)

- **Outcome**: Positive emotions facilitate personal growth and productivity:
  1. Greater motivation toward education and career because they believe they have more control over attaining their goals (Haase, Poulin, Heckhausen, 2012)
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS TO CULTIVATE HAPPINESS

- Life Satisfaction - Ways of living
- Mindfulness
- Flow
- Learned optimism (instead of learned helplessness)
- Relationships
- Intentional Thoughts and Actions
- Campus Resources and Technology
LIFE SATISFACTION - WAYS OF LIVING

- Pleasant Life
  - Positive Emotion
    - Matters if you have both engagement and meaning

- Good Life
  - Engagement - with job, hobby etc.
  - Flow (more on this later)

- Meaningful Life
  - Contributing to the good of something greater than yourself

Martin Seligman
FINDING MEANING & ENGAGEMENT

This is what the Student Affairs Professionals do on a regular basis:
- Help student identify activities and work that makes them “lose themselves”
- Identify how this translates into possible career areas
- Encourage them to continue to pursue hobbies
- Help them understand what a “meaningful” life means to them

Examples:
- Craft center
- Experimental college
- Community Service Resource Center
- Peace Corps, Agricorps, Americorps
- Research projects
FLOW

Full immersion in task, feeling energized focus and enjoyment:

- Lose track of time or basic bodily needs
- Loss of focus on inner dialogue, emotions
- Spontaneous joy
- Long-term life satisfaction through personal development and growth
MINDFULNESS

- Contributes to a satisfied life:
  - Fewer worries about the future and regrets over the past
  - Become fully engaged in activities
  - Savor the pleasures in life as they occur
  - Develop a greater capacity to deal with adverse events
  - Better able to form deep connections with others.
  (Harvard Health, 2015)
MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

- Meditation
- Body Scan
- Sensory
- Naming emotions

MEDITATION ACTIVITY: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEzbdLn2bJc
LEARNED OPTIMISM

What happened was an unlucky situation (not personal), and really just a setback (not permanent) for this one, of many, goals (not pervasive)

- Permanence- setbacks temporary not permanent
- Pervasiveness- failure in one area is not a failure as a whole/good events brighten every area of life
- Personal- Not internalizing negative event as personal failure, but as useful information

- Study (Seligman, Buchanan, APA): College freshman
  - Most pessimistic students invited to participate
  - Randomly assigned to 16 hour workshop on techniques of learning optimism
  - 18 months later: those who took the workshop reported less depression, anxiety and health issues
HOW DO WE HELP STUDENTS LEARN OPTIMISM?

- **Test link:** [http://web.stanford.edu/class/msande271/onlinetools/LearnedOpt.html](http://web.stanford.edu/class/msande271/onlinetools/LearnedOpt.html)
- **Teach them their ABCs**
  - **Adversity:** You don’t have the GPA in your science courses to get into veterinary school
  - **Belief:** You think, “I am stupid will not be able to pursue my passion of working with animals.”
  - **Consequence:** You feel a sense of failure, hopelessness and paralysis in moving forward
- **Then get them to D and E:**
  - **Disputation:** provide counter-evidence to negative beliefs
    - Maybe working in such a science heavy field won’t fulfill me and make me happy. This is an opportunity for me to explore other options for careers with animals and maybe I will find something closer to my interests
  - **Energization:** Successful disputation causes feelings of positivity and increases energy. This should be actively celebrated
    - You are energized to explore careers and internships

Eventually, optimism will become automatic
RELATIONSHIPS

- What factors correlate with happiness?
  - Experiencing more good events than bad events
  - Better looking
  - Richer
  - More spiritual
  - Close family and friends

- Advisor relationships matter!
INTENTIONAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

- Count blessings once a week (5 things for which you are grateful)
  - Students became happier and more satisfied with their lives
    (Froh, Sefick, Emmons, 2008)

- Commit acts of kindness on regular basis
  - Even small things can contribute to life satisfaction
    (Buchanan, Bardy, 2010)

- Smiling
  
  [Video Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR9ITqrkTYw)
Studies show exercise releases endorphins and increases mental wellbeing:

- Study compared exercise to a commonly prescribed anti-depressant medication (Zoloft), and found that both were equally effective in reducing depressive symptoms.
- Novelty and variation in exercise is especially effective
USE OF TECHNOLOGY

MindSpa at North Hall and CAPS Clinic at SHWC
- Massage Chairs & Light Therapy
- Conquering Insomnia Program
- Biofeedback to learn Mindfulness Skills

Free, downloadable Mindfulness & Relaxation Podcasts: shcs.ucdavis.edu/relax

Each Aggie Matters: http://eachaggiematters.ucdavis.edu
- Just In Case App

Health Education and Promotion: https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/hep/
- Alcohol eCHECKUP TO GO

UC Davis Wellness Maps
- Local Physical Activity Map: http://maps.shcs.ucdavis.edu/physical-activity.html
- Nap Map: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zyL-X1stTjMg.kBqid-H-QAGw&msa=0
IN SUM: HELP STUDENTS

• Find their FLOW of enjoyable, energizing focus
• Have a good life by identifying what is MEANINGFUL and ENGAGING
• Practice non-judgmental, sensory and present-focused MINDFULNESS
• Hold in mind that unlucky events tend not be personal, pervasive nor permanent by disputing negative beliefs to obtain LEARNED OPTIMISM
• Engage in RELATIONSHIPS and EXERCISE
• Use Campus and TECHNOLOGY Resources
• Smile, Be Kind and Grateful

..........................to be happy