

Social Psychology Final Exam: Happiness Project

Introduction:

According to Positive Psychology research, happiness is a skill that can be learned and practiced. Like any other skill, with practice the skill becomes automatic and almost an unconscious act. For example, think about when you learned to drive. At first you had to make a conscious decision to turn on your turn signal before making a turn. Chances are by now, as you have practiced your driving skills, that you no longer consciously think about turning on the turn signal because skill has become a learned skill. Happiness is the same way. This project is intended to help you improve and develop your skills and cultivate your own happiness and that of others as well.

If you recall, The Happy Movie identified six skills or practices that are essential for improving happiness. These practices were (1) Expressing your Gratitude, (2) Doing Something Kind, (3) Connecting to your Community, (4) Playing, (5) Getting in the Flow, and (6) Trying Something New. These six skills will be the focal points for completing this project.

Expressing Your Gratitude – More than simply saying “thank you”, expressing thanks can make a person both happier and healthier. Studies have shown that people who cultivate gratitude sleep better, exercise more, and experience less stress, all of which also contribute to overall health. Being grateful helps turn the focus from what people don't have to what they do and helps them feel that they are loved and cared for.

Doing Something Kind – It turns out that being kind to someone else helps both the recipient and the giver. People who regularly practice kindness experience increased happiness, and also benefit from more acceptance and positive relationships. Research indicates kindness is valuable because it helps people feel that they are taking part in something that matters.

Connecting to Your Community – Having positive relationships and experiences with others in your community is an important element of happiness. Community connections contribute to people's sense of self and psychological well-being. For young people, these connections also enhance academic performance and social competence.

Playing – Adding more play and laughter in your life can make you happier. Studies have shown that play has many additional benefits, including helping you think more creatively; reducing stress, struggle and worry; stimulating imagination and curiosity; and making you feel more energized.

Getting in the Flow – Flow is the experience of being so absorbed in a challenging and enjoyable activity that you lose track of time and lose self-awareness. People who regularly experience flow report greater happiness, motivation, and life satisfaction, as well as less stress and anxiety. Depending on a person's skills and interests, flow can come from physical activities, hobbies, or work.

Trying Something New – People who regularly seek new experiences are happier and more fulfilled than those who don't. Novelty challenges our views of ourselves, others, and the world, and stretches our knowledge and skills. Experiencing new things also helps us focus on the present, which enhances everyday life. Trying something new involves novel experiences...it is not simply trying a food you have never tasted before.

ASSIGNMENT:

Task One: Create a Visual Documentary – **DUE DATE MONDAY, MAY 6, 2019**

Over the next three months (January 28, 2018 – May 6, 2019) you are to complete *at least* one task showing and describing how you have personally met **each** of the six practices mentioned in the film *Happy*. As you complete these tasks you are to create a visual documentary of your journey. Your visual documentary may be in a media form of your choosing. Examples may include a movie, slideshow, poster, scrapbook, collage, tri-fold display, etc. The only absolute requirement is that you **MUST** provide visual proof (i.e. photographs, certificates, awards, letters, etc.) of you completing each task including the date of when the task occurred. Also, you must include a clearly written description of how your photograph, and your experience, meets the description of the practice you have selected for that photograph. Remember, a documentary tells a story, so this is a story of your journey to happiness.

Please take a serious approach to this project. All tasks must be completed between the dates listed above. **NO PRIOR ACTIVITIES AND/OR EXPERIENCES MAY BE USED TO SATISFY ANY PART OF THIS PROJECT.** Choose tasks that are meaningful to you when completing this project, avoid simple, lazy attempts to meet the requirements. Tasks should be novel and genuinely connect to the six practices. Any tasks deemed to not meet the rigor of a high school class will not be accepted.

Remember, you are juniors and seniors and your work quality should represent this level of work. Work that is deemed to be below grade level will not be accepted for grading. In addition, all work must be school appropriate and legal. Finally, this is an independent project; no teams will be permitted. It is possible, however, that some tasks may be completed together but each student must complete their own project.

Task Two: Oral Presentation – **DATES WILL BE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED**

Beginning on May 6, 2019, students will orally present their projects to the class. In this presentation you will need to share with the class all of your photographic evidence as well as explain how each photograph relates to the six practices described in the movie *Happy*. In addition, you should explain how completing the tasks impacted your own happiness.

Task Three: Reflection/Essay of Your Experiences

Students will complete a personal reflection and evaluation of the project following completion of their class presentation.

Grading: (Project will be valued at 20% of the student's overall semester grade)

Given the nature of this assignment, this project will be graded primarily on completion of tasks, display of effort, and timeliness. There is no real "right or wrong" answers to the project but it must depict a personal connection and explanation to the six practices of the film.

To earn an "A" grade on this project a student must complete a minimum of **3 tasks in each skill category** for a total of 18 or more completed items, **present** their material to the class, and complete a **project reflection essay**. A student completing these tasks will receive 100% of the possible points.

To earn a "B" grade on this project a student must complete **2 tasks in each skill category** for a total of 12 completed items, **present** their material to the class, and complete a **project reflection essay**. A student completing these tasks will receive 89% of the possible points.

To earn a "C" grade on this project a student must complete **1 task in each skill category** for a total of 6 completed items, **present** their material to the class, complete a **project reflection essay**. A student completing these tasks will receive 79% of the possible points.

To earn a "D" grade on this project a student must complete **1 task in 5 of the skill categories** for a total of 5 completed items, **present** their material to the class, complete a **project reflection essay**. A student completing these tasks will receive 69% of the possible points.

To earn a "D-" grade on this project a student must complete **1 task in 5 of the skill categories** for a total of 5 completed items and complete a **project reflection essay**. A student completing these tasks will receive 60% of the possible points.

Any student who fails to complete at least five of these tasks will receive a zero score for this project.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- Photographs may only be used one time in the project; no duplication across skill categories.
- Presentation must be of quality and visible to all students. (Example: a large poster or Powerpoint)
- Tasks must be meaningful and about you, this is not a "me and my family" project.
- A parent signature may be required of any questionable work to ensure its authenticity.
- All late projects will receive one full grade deduction in the overall project grade.