
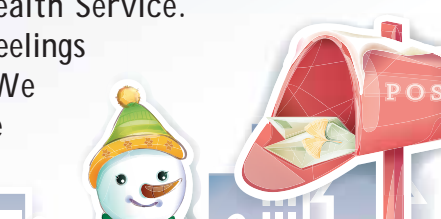


## Editorial



It is very common to wish our friends and relatives a "Happy New Year"; "Happy Birthday" etc. These are usually our wishes for our beloved ones. Actually, what brings you happiness? I think most of us would agree that the amount of money one owns or earns is not the most important deciding factor. Try to recall the last time when you felt happy. What was the occasion? With whom were you? What were you doing? Maybe, having a hearty chat with a friend, having obtained a good academic achievement or a new career development? For sure, happiness is related to the extent of contentedness and satisfaction in life. Every now and then, we read reports on "Global Happiness Index" and "Happiness Index of Hong Kong People". The 2008 survey conducted by the Public Opinion Programme of the Hong Kong University revealed that most people interviewed agreed that "Happiness depends on how one faces life". Another survey on "Hong Kong Happiness Index, 2009" by the Lingnan University indicated that the people would be the happiest if they liked their jobs, loved food, cooking and their families. We can see that happiness is not far away from us. Evidently, personality, circumstances and experience do influence our perception of happiness. However, we can still seek the secret of being happy. The feature article of this issue is authored by the clinical psychologist of Student Health Service. She gives us tips on elevating positive feelings and increasing the happiness index. We hope that it will help to find the source of happiness, and to energize us to live a colorful life.



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# *The Key to Happiness*



Miss Lam Chi Kwan  
Clinical Psychologist  
Student Health Service

Have you ever been frustrated by the difficulties in life?  
Have you ever felt inadequate at times of failure?  
Have you ever felt helpless and hopeless?  
Have you ever been pessimistic about the future?

Every one of us goes through times when life seems difficult. We feel distressed when we have poor grades, when we are disappointed by ourselves, when we have difficulties in our relationships, or when we are dissatisfied with our jobs. Being happy is not always easy and it can be one of the greatest challenges we face when adversity strikes.

## Dealing with Depression

Prevention of mental illness such as depression is another challenge we face. It is reported by the World Health Organization that depression is the leading cause of disability and the 4th leading contributor to the global burden of disease in 2000. By the year 2020, depression is projected to reach the 2nd place of the ranking for all ages.

In order to better manage our emotions, we need to have a better understanding of our emotions. An emotion is a mental and physiological state associated with a wide variety of feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Every one of us experiences a wide range of emotions everyday, including joy, anger, sadness, fear and despair. Some of the emotions are pleasant and some are unpleasant to experience. Studies show that negative feelings and emotions can affect our health. The problem can become chronic or recurrent and leading to substantial impairments in an individual's daily functioning. To be healthy and energetic, we must maintain positive emotions.



## Positive Psychology

For years, the field of psychology has focused its attention on the study of mental illness. Research and knowledge on positive emotion, personal strengths and virtues has been limited. As the founder of Positive Psychology, Professor Martin Seligman has developed a scientific approach to achieving real happiness and satisfaction. He shows how Positive Psychology is shifting the profession's paradigm away from its focus on psychopathology and mental illness to positive emotion and mental health.

It is believed that studies of Positive Psychology have implications on the prevention of mental illness such as depression and anxiety. Positive emotion is found to be a crucial element in the growth of children and adolescents. By building strengths and competencies in young people, buffers against negative emotions can be developed. In helping young people become positive and in building their strengths, the role of parents and teachers is essential.



## The Happiness Formula

Seligman explains how the level of happiness can be changed in an equation:

$$H = S + C + V$$

where H is the enduring level of happiness, S is the set range for our level of positive emotion, C is the life circumstances and V represents factors under our voluntary control.

The (S) set range, which represents the inherited aspect of our emotion, may limit our general level of happiness. But there are two other powerful forces, C and V, that can raise the level of happiness. Although we each have a personal fixed range for happiness, scientific evidence shows that we still can change our enduring level of happiness in sustainable way by changing the external circumstances of our life and also by changing our internal circumstances which are more under our voluntary control. Positive Psychology shows how we can live in the upper reaches of our set range of happiness by applying its principals and strategies in our every day life.



## Learned Optimism

Positive emotions about the future include hope and optimism. With hope and optimism, we can develop better resistance to negative emotions when we face adverse events in our daily life. Pessimists believe that bad events will persist and are uncontrollable. Optimistic people, in contrast, believe that their troubles are transient and controllable. To build optimism, we can try to recognize and to dispute our negative thoughts by searching for evidence pointing to the distortions in our negative beliefs. We can also try to generate alternative beliefs that are more positive and realistic. Negative thoughts such as 'I can never do it' and 'I am worthless' are often irrational. Such thoughts can be disputed and replaced by positive thoughts such as 'I am getting better and improving' and 'I can try to solve the problem'.

## Gratitude

Research shows that gratitude training can enhance people's emotional and physical well-being. Gratitude can also help secure supportive social relationships which can be a source of happiness. By counting the blessings, we can shift our attention away from the negative to the positive side of life. It is satisfying to be thankful for what we have – loving parents, supportive friends, good health and all other things that we took for granted, and to express our gratitude to people who have been helpful and supportive to us.

## Use of Signature Strengths

Our self image determines our focus or the way we think about ourselves. When we genuinely appreciate our own worth, we can accept compliments and be proud of our achievements. We can also accept our shortcomings while striving to improve ourselves. Studies show that happiness can be cultivated by identifying and nurturing strengths that we already possess, including curiosity, originality, courage, kindness, optimism and generosity. Practical application of Positive Psychology includes helping individuals identify their strengths and use them to increase and sustain their well-being. Parents and teachers can raise the level of positive emotion in our young children by enhancing mastery and discovering the signature strengths of our children. To use our signature strengths every day in the main realms of our life can bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness.



## Living in the Present

By thinking about the past and worrying about the future, we often allow past problems and future concerns to crowd into our present such that we become distressed and ineffective. One of the ways to happiness is in focusing our minds on the present moment, regardless of what happened yesterday and what

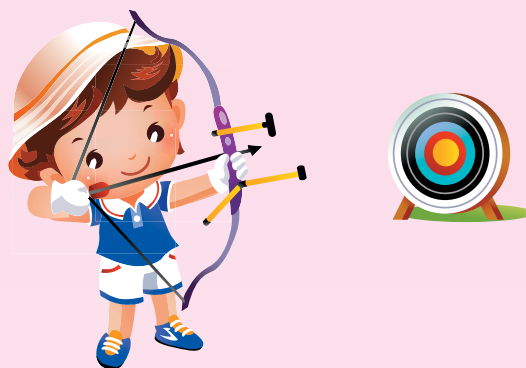
might happen tomorrow. When we absorb ourselves totally in the present moment, whether it be reading a book, enjoying a conversation or whatever else we choose to devote our energies to, we manage to stay totally involved in what we are doing and experience the pleasure of it.



## Engaging in Pleasurable Activities

It is possible to improve our mood by engaging in activities we like and by

developing new hobbies and interests. Activities such as listening to music, drawing pictures or outdoor activities are things that we can do to make us feel good. By engaging in group activities such as playing games with friends or doing exercises, not only can we experience the pleasure of such activities, we can also form a mutual support network with others.



## Goal Pursuit

Research shows that goal pursuit can enhance and maintain emotional well-being and reduce mood symptoms. To apply it in daily life, we can set concrete and achievable goals that can be broken into smaller ones such as helping with housework, reading a short story or doing regular exercises every day. People who have meaningful life goals are generally happier and have a greater sense of achievement.

## Kindness

Another way to enhance our well-being is to do good deeds for others. The act of kindness can enhance our sense of empowerment and self-efficacy. It can also cultivate a sense of meaningfulness. The moment we start to make other people happy, whether we are helping people in need or spending time with friends and families, we feel better about ourselves.

## *The Path to Happiness*

It is not always easy to change the way we see ourselves and our environment, but it is not impossible. Every one of us can learn to be optimistic and to develop our strengths and virtues. Staying positive, building personal strengths and using them in daily life are all a matter of choice. By applying Positive Psychology in our daily life, we can protect ourselves from negative emotions and mental illnesses such as depression. Together with our young people, let us take the first step and lead ourselves to the gate of happiness.

### Reference:

World Health Organization

[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/)

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. N. Y.: Free Press.

Answer:  
c. smoking, drinking alcohol and substance abuse are just escaping, they could not help you relieve from stress. In fact, they are harmful to your health.

Being happy not only makes us healthy physically and mentally, we can also share our happiness with others. We collected students' secret to happiness and would like to share with you. They are about the ways we look at things, the act we do ... Actually, happiness can be very broad. Maybe, at different times, we would find some ways are more applicable and some others are not. Anyway, each one of us could have our own way to happiness.

## My secret to happiness...

I am very happy because I only have short-sightedness, but not astigmatism, which I hope it won't happen.

Be happy for what you've got!

Playing football and playing with friends give a very happy feeling. Try my best in my studies, no guilt feelings

Discover some knowledge.

Forgiving others would give a cheerful heart. If we have hatred towards others, we are bitter ourselves.

Love your family as much as you love yourself, be kind to everybody. Forgive everyone even if they've done something wrong. Lastly, be grateful at all times.

Enjoy some funny jokes

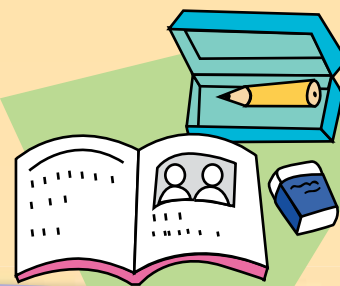
Try to take some time to do the things I like

Have the three kinds of happiness in the world: laughing always, helping others and counting our blessings

Praying, talking to somebody (family members, church friends, classmates etc), doing physical exercise, sleeping.



Happiness - different people see it from different perspectives, and it is hard to measure. When opening the door to happiness, we should not stick to previous unhappy experience or blame ourselves for not doing well; rather, apply an optimistic and positive attitude. Don't hold extreme viewpoints and negative thoughts to face anything, but live with a contented spirit and have gratitude for people and the surroundings. Happiness is then not difficult to attain.



Dear Ka Ming,

Thank you for your letter. You mentioned that you always felt lonely and you wanted to have somebody who concerned about your feelings. It made you very disappointed when your family forgot your birthday. I can understand that. In this society, many parents are very busy with their work, as they hope their family can live a more comfortable life financially. Sometimes, they may neglect their children's need. However, children can try to take a different perspective and understand their parent's point of view. Try to talk with your family members frankly about how you feel. In this way, you can understand each other better. Talking face to face can be a good way to improve child-parent relationship.

You also mentioned that you are not getting along too well with your classmates and you felt upset about that. I do believe you want to build up a good relationship with your classmates. I encourage you to understand your own character and be open to express your feelings and ideas. Be sincere to your friends. If your friends come across some problems, you should help them. You can try talking with your classmates to show your concern towards them, and your wish to make friends with them. Building up a good relationship is very much a matter of sincerity and respect towards each other. It is not dependent on school performances nor outlook appearances. Hope my advice is helpful to you. If you want to have more information on building up relationships with people, you can look it up from the Student Health Service website: ([http://www.studenthealth.gob.hk/tc\\_chi/resources/resources\\_bl/resources\\_bl.html](http://www.studenthealth.gob.hk/tc_chi/resources/resources_bl/resources_bl.html)).

Ka Ming, thank you again for your letter talking about your problems. Apart from writing to us, you can also seek advice from agencies with hotline services:-

"Children Hotline" of Hong Kong Boys' and Girls' Club Association, (Tel. 25206800, Service Hour: 17:30-19:30 on Mon-Fri and 10:00-12:00 on Saturday) and "Youth Hotline" of Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (Tel: 27778899, Service Hour: 14:00 to 02:00 on Mon-Fri)

Wish you happiness and good relationships with your friends.

Best regards,  
Health Box



## Interesting knowledge Q&A

The following are good methods to manage stress except:

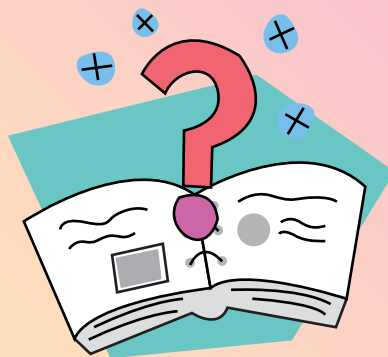
- a) Be optimistic and face your problem positively, don't just think of the negative side
- b) Understand your strength and weakness, set reasonable expectations and achievable goals according to your capabilities. Handle things gradually and step by step:
- c) Avoid the problem by smoking, drinking alcohol and substance abuse
- d) Share your worries with your family, teachers or friends when you encounter problems and consult professionals if necessary



(Answer: find it out from the newsletter)

## Health Tips

List out your strengths and achievements and place it somewhere noticeable as an encouragement and self-recognition



For enquiries of student's health problem,  
please write to "Health Box"

