

It is well documented that money cannot buy you love or happiness. Why is it so many people are comfortable, even rich and successful, but are not happy. In this short course we will be working to help you bring more joy and happiness in to your life.

It is said that everything comes in 3's; the power of three.

You're going to need 3 things for this course:

- A Notebook (if you like to write) or you can take notes electronically
- A strong *desire* to be happy
- An attitude and commitment to change

Each lesson will contain 3 things:

- Some dates, research, facts and statistics
- A story
- An exercise to work on for the next 21 days

And the 3rd three, is a 3-week cycle (21 days) to create a habit

Lesson 1

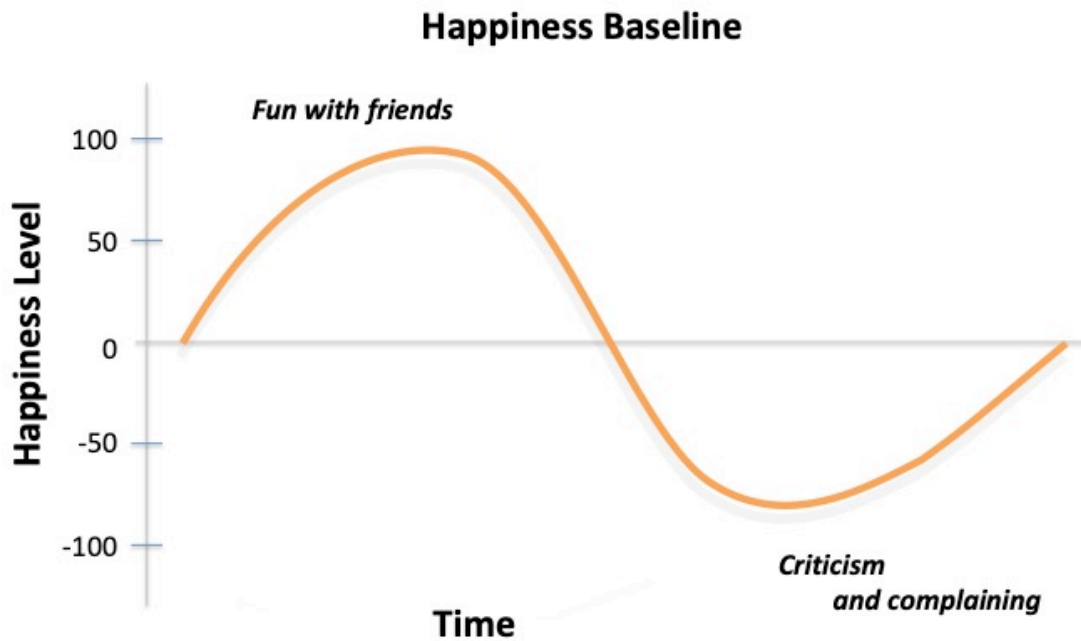
In this session we will cover:

- Identifying your happiness baseline
- A tangible formula for understanding happiness
- Some activities to help you work on your baseline

What Actually Makes Us Happy

We all have a happiness baseline, which is specific and unique to you. Yours and mine are different. Mine is possibly different now to when I was younger. Yours is yours, and you probably know what it is.

The baseline is often determined by external factors or experiences.



I'm sure you've had both good things that have happened to you before that have made you happy, only to find that it doesn't last:

- Relationship
- Pay rise or promotion
- Lost weight

Then you also have times when bad things happen and you are way under your baseline for a while – but that doesn't last either.

In both cases you come back to that baseline.

But we can actually raise the baseline.

Here is an equation for Happiness:

$$\mathbf{H = G + C + T\&A}$$

Happiness = Genetics + Circumstances + Thoughts & Actions

Genetics

We all have a genetic predisposition for happiness that accounts for roughly 50% of our happiness.

Researchers argue over the exact numbers, but what matters is this:
As with nearly everything, some people win the genetic lottery of life, and some people don't.
However, even if you are one of those unlucky people seemingly doomed for misery, don't give up just yet!
There's still 50% of your happiness left.

Circumstances:

These are our external circumstances, which we often tend to focus on the most:
Money, status, jobs, cars, beautiful houses, and other external things that we chase in the pursuit of happiness.

Now, I hate to break it to you but, despite popular opinion, money and the playthings it will buy won't make you happy.

Ed Diener was the first person to study happiness scientifically. Diener compared people on the Forbes list of wealthiest Americans with the general population, and found that they were only slightly happier than average, with 37% being less happy than the average American.

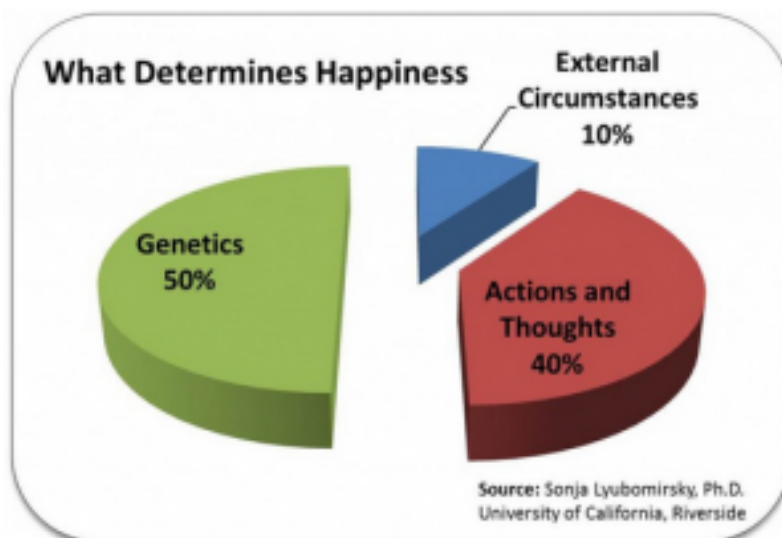
Also, circumstances are often dictated by a lot of other people. They are also chasing their own happiness and you can't always control that.

Now, since we cannot control our genetics, and we can only in part control our external circumstances, there's only one thing left to increase our happiness.

Thoughts & Actions:

If you want to change your happiness baseline for good, there's two ways to do that:

- Change your thoughts, and
- Change your actions.



What are some of the thoughts you can change and some of the actions you think you can do to raise your happiness baseline.

Happy people:

- Are better at relationships
- Are more grateful for everything
- Are more helpful and philanthropic
- Are optimistic about the future
- Live in the present
- Savour life's pleasures
- Often have either a spiritual or religious practice – but many don't
- Are generally pursuing meaningful and significant life goals.

But all the studies done on happiness are correlational (relationship between 2 or more things). Just because a person does the above doesn't mean they will be happier.

Exercises:

It takes 21 days to form a new habit and as 40% of your everyday is made up of habits you should choose them mindfully. If you change your habits you can change your life.

Our brains are constantly changing and rewiring. The brain is made up of billions and billions of neurons – they're interconnected. Electrical currents run down them to make the connections. Once new connections are made the behaviour becomes automatic. So the 21-day cycle of doing exercises that are designed to make you happier can improve many areas of your life.

Normally you will get one (or I might take the liberty of making it two) exercises to do for the following 21 days.

This week I am giving you five though, as you may be starting from a zero base. You can do one, or any amount up to five. It's up to you.

1. **Gratitude Journal** – each evening write down 3 things in your life or 3 events that you are truly grateful for. They need to be different each day (that means you can't be grateful for your Labrador Goldie every day).
2. **Experience Journal** – at the end of the week (the weekend might be a good time) journal for between 2 and 10 minutes on something that happened through the week that made you feel great, or even just slightly happy. This reinforces the great feelings of when the thing happened. To make it even stronger, then go and share the experience verbally with someone.
3. **Exercise** – go for a walk, kayak, climb a mountain, ride a bike, go to the gym, take a yoga class, run around with little kids – anything. Just do something active.
4. **Meditate** – just start with 2 minutes. Clear your mind, focus on your breath in and out.
5. **Perform a Random Act of Kindness** – sign a petition, give money, send a thank you card, tell someone you appreciate them, compliment a colleague on their good work. Anything – large or small. Just do it regularly. It will make you feel great as well as the other person, and the act will be a ripple of positivity out into the world.

You will multiply the impact and outcomes if you involve the people who you live with in any of the activities above.