Reconsidering Happiness with Tree of Life Model: A New Perspective

Dr. Arpita Kackar, Assistant Professor, Dept of Psychology J.N.V.U. Jodhpur.

Abstract

Happiness is the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good meaningful and worthwhile. Subjective Wellbeing is the primary way in which we can measure happiness of individuals. Subjective Wellbeing is defined as evaluations of our own life, moods and emotions. This research paper aims to rediscover a new way in which happiness can be evaluated, by Tree of Life Model given by Robert Biswas Diener, a respected researcher, psychologist, life and organizational coach and expert in positive psychology. This Model can be used as a way to measure the subjective wellbeing and an index by which an individual can himself determine his level of happiness. It is an insight provoking technique by which the knowledge of happiness comes from within.

Key Words: Tree of Life Model, Happiness

Introduction:

Research in the field of positive psychology and happiness often define happy person as someone who experiences frequent positive emotions, such as joy, interest and pride, and infrequent (though not absent) negative emotions, such as sadness, anxiety and anger (Lyubomirsky et al.,2005). Happiness has also been said to relate to life satisfaction, appreciation of life, moments of pleasure, but overall it has to do with the positive experience of emotions. The ancient Greeks defined happiness as "It is the joy that we feel when we are striving for our potential". Modern day psychologists defined happiness as only when we feel our own need and feel satisfied from within can we truly be fulfilled and happy.

Indeed, Happiness is somewhat ambiguous. Some people, especially those who are highly committed to their religious faith, view happiness in ways that emphasize virtuosity, reverence and enlightened spirituality. Others see happiness as primarily contentment- the inner peace and joy that comes from deep satisfaction with one's surroundings with others, accomplishments and oneself. These differences, of course are merely differences in emphasis.

Elements of Happiness: Some psychologist suggested that happiness consist of three distinct elements: the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life. The pleasant life is realized through attainment of day to day pleasures that add fun, joy and excitement to our lives. The good life is achieved through identifying our unique skills and abilities and engaging these talents to enrich our lives; those who achieve the good life often find themselves absorbed in their work or their recreational pursuits. The meaningful life involves a deep sense of fulfilment that comes from using our talents in the service of the greater goal. In general, the happiest people tend to be those who pursue the full life- they orient their pursuits toward all three elements.
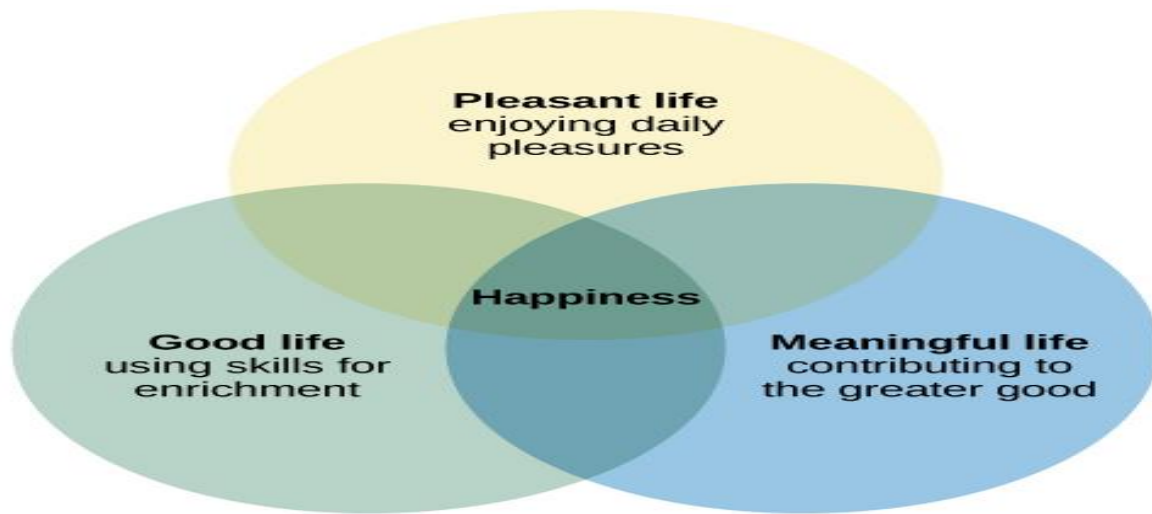
Factors Connected to Happiness

There are many factors which contribute to sustained joy and contentment. It can be money, attractiveness, material possessions, a rewarding occupation or a satisfying relationship. This research paper aims to study Happiness from a new perspective, i.e. Tree of Life Model. The model was developed by Positive Acorn a coaching consultancy spearheaded by Dr Robert Biswas – Diener, the Indiana Jones of Applied Positive Psychology. The main purpose of the model seems to be to give structured way of thinking about factors related to individual growth and development. The various components of the model are:
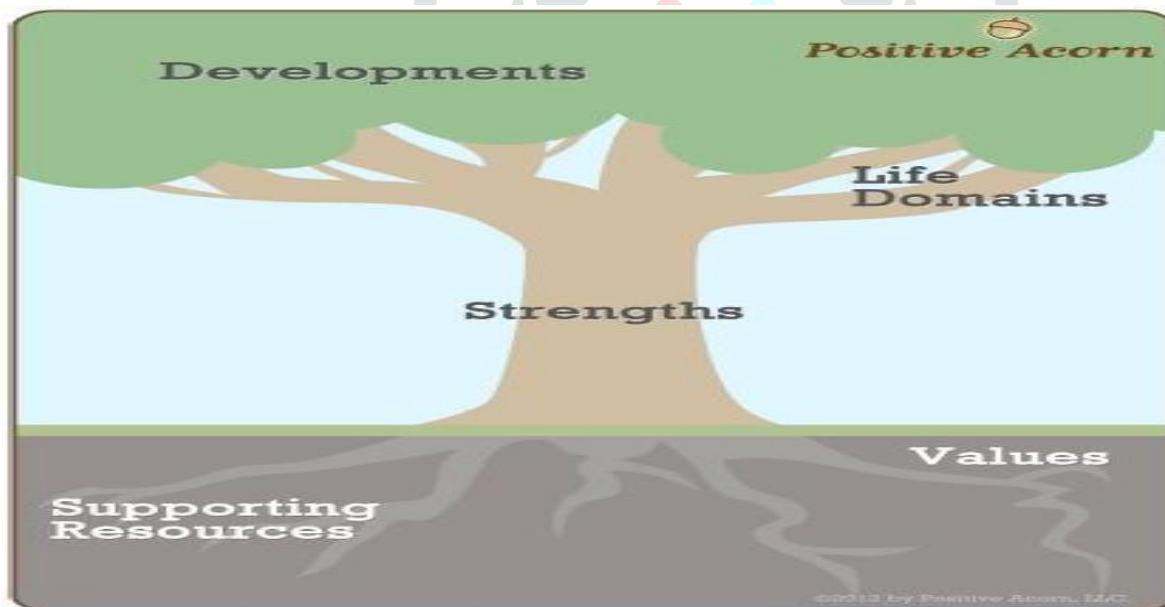
•**Earth \ Compost** = Supporting Resources: These are the things which nourishes us and provide for our fundamental needs. This could include important relationship, particular experiences or achievements, physical health and fitness, opportunities for learning etc. The things which constitute compost are often sources of trauma, abuse, cultural standards of normality\ beauty etc or anything else that shapes negative thoughts about oneself in mind

•**Roots= Values**: These are the beliefs and ideals that make us who we are, the important principles we live by. These could include honesty, kindness, respect, hard work, novelty etc. The more we are closely connected with our values and supporting resources, the more nourishment it will receive. Roots signify our physical existence I.e. where we come from. The more our roots strongly bonded it signifies our positive thoughts about belongingness. The scatter the roots are it shows that individual does not want to relate to the culture in which he has grown up or club or organization that have shaped his youth or a parent \ guardian.

Trunk= Strengths: This represents the activities and behavior that one is naturally good at and enjoy engaging with. They are the methods by which individual activate his values. These could include : Creativity, Courage, Problem Solving etc. The more the individual is able to enlist his skills the better his self-esteem and confidence level.

Branches= Life Domains: These are the various arenas in which individual uses his strength. This could include: health, family, work, leisure etc. Each of the main limbs may have a number of sub branches sprouting from it. At different points in our life, different branches have particular significance. More the branches in an individual life it signifies that his life is rich with support.

Leaves= Developments: These are the outcomes of activities in various life domains. Leaves signify the people who are significant to an individual's life in a positive way, e.g. friends, family, pets, heroes etc. Leaves are the fruits of one's labor.

The Tree of Life activity from positive acorn is a popular way to do goal setting. It is based on the belief that it is important to consider our lives holistically. The visual thinking while making the tree of his life helps to clarify thinking and stimulates somatic ingraining to help support the achievement goals.

Just like trees grow within an ecosystem, we are supported by a strong sense of relationship that they rely on an interconnection of components to function effectively. The Tree of Life model demonstrates how our personal values and strengths influence our life domains and produce various developments based on the support resources. Chris Peterson, one of the pioneers in the field of positive psychology argues that positive psychology can be summed up in three words; Other People Matter. And Seligman identifies relationships as one of the key pillars of happiness in his model of wellbeing called PERMA, which includes: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments.

The Tree of Life model helps the individual to explore the connections between his roots, values, skills, people etc. The drawing part of this model is particularly satisfying and therapeutic in itself. The model helps the individual to confront certain aspects of past life which he might del are left unchallenged. This model helps us to identify and focus on our strengths and abilities. Main benefit of this model is to identify affirmation and self-validation. It helps the individual to focus on what he has rather than what he doesn't. Another advantage is to help to review their achievements in various life domains. Yet another use is in meaning making, helping people to connect the roots and leaves.

This Tree of Life concept is a new way to measure our happiness.

References:

https://careersintheory.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/the-tree-of-life/

https://nathanbweller.com/tree-life-simple-exercise-reclaiming-identity-direction-life-story/

https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/happy-together/201803/the-single-most-important-determinant-happiness