

Research Seminar: The study of well-being and happiness

Lecturer: Moshe Talmon, Ph.D

Mail: [Talmon@moshetalmon.com](mailto:Talmon@moshetalmon.com)

Office hours: by appointment

Seminar goals:

1. Critical review of the main subjects researched in the field of well-being and happiness
2. Summary and presentation of leading researchers and their key publications.
3. Independent, qualitative study of your own subjective experience of well-being.
4. Final independent research paper (theoretical, quantitative or qualitative).

Tasks, grades and deadlines:

1. Research paper on a selected topic in the study of well-being.  
The paper is 50% of the seminar grade. The paper should be at least 15 pages long in double space. The deadline for the paper is three months after the end of the academic year by October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Those of you who takes the seminar as a course should submit the final paper by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.  
You may choose to do quantitative, qualitative or theoretical paper. The research paper can be a "sample" study using few subjects (N) and simple basic statistics like frequency, averages or basic correlations. Qualitative study may be ethno-biographical and based on the narrative of your own experience and/or few others. A theoretical paper may be based on extensive literature review of a focused subject or comparing two different approaches/theories/religions to well-being and happiness.
2. Presentation of 3 selected research papers or a book chapters to the class including your critical thinking about it during a class discussion. Dates of presentation will be set during the first class. They count as 10% of your grade.
3. Three (out of 4 options) short accounts of a qualitative, experiential, subjective experiments in well-being and happiness. Summarized in free style writing of 2-3 pages. The count as 40% of your grade. The deadlines are: March 27<sup>th</sup> for the first paper, May 10<sup>th</sup> for the second paper and June 10<sup>th</sup> for the third paper.

The subjects of the personal accounts are (you may take three out of the four options):

- a. Spiritual Happiness: is often experienced via appreciative Inquiry of your universe, your significant other and self and our ability to express our gratitude and bless our being alive in the here and now. Find at least three things you can appreciate, thank or bless in each day. Share them with yourself and/or significant other.
- b. Being & doing in time: Most of our days consist of many repeated habits. Here we will Study few of good habits/rituals. Pick one (or few) that you already have and you consider to be good or healthy for you. How you keep them? Do you still enjoy, notice or fully present when you do it? Pick new one you wish to adopt. Make sure is simple, can be kept daily and easy enough to adopt and follow through for three weeks.
- c. Human strengths:

We all tend to identify and criticize our short comings. Identify your three core strengths (Three characters of yourself that you see as positive). You may do it by filling the VIA strength questionnaire at [viame.org](http://viame.org) or via character and/or by self-search) and try to describe their significance for you and how they express themselves in your daily life (or how they might have expressed in your future), in your friendships, love, school, your work, etc

D. forgiveness:

We all have been hurt, disappointed or even betrayed by others. Choose a person or an event you want to leave behind you so you don't get stacked with negative feelings. Remember that forgiveness is not justifying what did happened, but a way for us to free ourselves and move on with our lives. You forgive for yourself and for your own goodness and therefore, you don't have to send that letter. You may choose to forgive yourself as well. Do not try to forgive in cases you wish to keep your justified anger or sense of

List of references:

1. Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and Its Role in Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (4), 822-848.
2. Csikszentmihalyi, C. (1999). If We Are So Rich Why Aren't We Happy? *American Psychologist*, 821-827.
3. Diener, E. & Seligman, M.E.P., (2002) Very Happy People, *Psychological Science*, 13, 80-83.
4. Emmons, R. A. & McCullough, M. E. (2003) Counting blessings Vs Burdens: Experimental Studies of Gratitude and Subjective well-being in Daily Life *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377-389.
5. Fredrickson, B. L, Branigan, C. (2005) Positive Emotions broaden the Scope of Attention and Thought-action Repertoires. *Cognition and Emotion*, 19, 313-332.
6. Killingsworth M. A., Gilbert, D.T, A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind, *Science* **330**, 932 (2010)

7. Kahneman, D., Krueger, A. B., Schkade, D., Schwartz, N. & Stone, A. A. (2006). Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion. *Science*, 312, 1908-1910.
8. Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M. & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.
9. Park, N., Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. E. P., (2004) Strengths of Character and well-being. *Journal of social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 603-619.
10. Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. Chapter 3, 12-28. Guilford Publications
11. Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention, and Positive Therapy. In C. R. Snyder and S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 528-540. Oxford University

**BOOKS:**

- Diner, E., & Biswas-Diner, R. (2008) Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth, Blackwell Publishing.
- Loehr, J. & Schwartz, T. (2004). *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Time*. Free Press.
- Layard, R. (2006). *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. Penguin.
- Gilbert, D. T. (2006). *Stumbling on Happiness*. Knopf.
- Peterson, C. (2006). *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. Oxford University Press.