

Can Positive Psychology Make us Happier?

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Introduction

Various people define happiness in different ways because what makes one individual happy may not make another person happy. Some positive psychologists view happiness as well, being that it is subjective. Happiness can be defined as a subjective state that is defined by people. Being happy is a personal choice made by an individual that entails positive and pleasant feelings, including gratitude, joy, and affection. Despite the fact that other positive psychologists are satisfied with the definition of happiness, others still feel that the research done is not substantial enough to enable people to learn about ways to make themselves happy. Positive psychology is a subject that tries to outline the factors that lead to well-being and a fulfilling life in human beings. In this paper, I will analyze the two articles presented and then offer a personal opinion on how positive psychology can increase people's happiness.

Summary

The achievement of happiness in human beings is becoming a major debate among positive psychologists. Others believe they can come up with psychological ways to be happy, while other psychologists believe the research conducted on the same is not substantial enough. Schueller and Parks argue that the available research is enough to enable psychologists to figure out ways for people to become happy. According to these scholars, happiness can be achieved by following the paths of those perceived to be happy. They posit that existing research proves an increase in happiness in people who learn and apply the available "happiness" strategies. Evidently, various psychological studies reveal that carefully learned and applied interventions are effective in increasing the level of happiness in human beings. (Gantt & Slife, n.d.)

On the other hand, Laurel Newman and Randy Larsen conflict with the above two scholars in that they feel it is necessary for psychologists to be cautious about the strategies they advise the public to apply so as to be happy. They argue that it is misleading and ambiguous for positive psychologists to assert that 40% of people's happiness is in our control. However, both agree that genetics is responsible for half of the differences in the scores of happiness in a given group. Similarly, some aspects, such as life-changing events that impact happiness, are perceived to be out of the individual's control. Therefore, the strategies that Schueller and Parks believe may increase happiness may not endure since people are likely to shift to preexisting happiness levels in cases of bad and good events. Also, Lauren and Newman assert that for the cited happiness strategies to have substantial effects, specific circumstances must be available.

Analysis and Response

Schueller and Parks' arguments against Newman and Larsen can be both termed reasonable and substantial since they both provide evidence to support their arguments. Although, I support the argument of Newman and Larsen from my personal experiences with being happy. According to Schueller and Parks, despite the question of whether people can increase their happiness attracting debate, the current research clearly answers the concern and provides enough evidence to support the argument. They simply assert that for one to increase their happiness, they only need to learn the strategies used by those who are happy and change their behaviors to align with those who seem to be happy in society. Moreover, they provide evidence to show that positive psychological interventions can increase the well-being of an individual and lower depressive symptoms.

In contrast, Newman and Larsen's study conflicts by quoting an article by Brickman Coates and Janoff-Bulman of 1978, which tries to give examples of people who achieved a certain level of happiness after a greater fortune and later returned to their pre-existing levels. For instance, they point out to lottery winners who enjoy the fortune for some time, but maybe after a year, they go back to their original happiness level. However, they also contend that a re-analysis conducted on the same study revealed that happiness never returns to the baseline after a great fortune in life. In this article, they insist that factors responsible for our long-term happiness are out of human control.

I support Newman and Larsen's argument because I strongly believe there are various circumstances and events one faces in life that are likely to reduce an individual's happiness, even though not to the original state. However, I still feel there is truth in Scheueller and Parks's argument, which posits that human happiness can be increased by learning strategies from people who are happy and changing their behavior to incorporate the strategies. From my life experiences, it is true that sometimes, detrimental events may lower my happiness, although it does not go back to the baseline. Similarly, in the case of great fortunes, my happiness is boosted, and even though after some time it may reduce, it is, to a slight extent, that may be unnoticeable. Also, I contend that there are some other life-changing events that we have no control over, and hence, they end up affecting our happiness.

Conclusion

Conclusively, both sides have posed well-grounded arguments on whether psychology has the ability to influence people's happiness in a positive manner. Also, both parties offered enough evidence to prove their argument in a convincing manner to enable both readers and psychologists to choose the most compelling argument. Despite the conflicting arguments by the two sides, both studies contend on the limitations of positive psychology increasing the happiness of people even though they do not agree on the severity of the limit. Therefore, it is crucial to study both articles carefully before agreeing or refuting one side. Overall, it is evident that even though positive psychology has an impact on people's happiness, it does not last for long.

Work Cited

Can Positive Psychology Make Us Happier? By Gantt and Slife: The Taking Sides Collection General Psychology. McGraw-Hill create. Vital book file.