Standing at the front of a small lecture hall, Ed Diener, University of Illinois psychologist and world-renowned happiness researcher, held up a real brain in a jar with a blue liquid, which he called “joy juice,” trickling into it from a small plastic pouch held above. He asked the audience to pretend that their brains could be treated with a hormone (i.e., joy juice) that would make them ecstatically happy and that they could be happy all the time. Then he asked the crucial question, “How many people in this room would want to do this?” Of the 60 audience members, only 2 raised their hands to signify their desires for perpetual happiness. Given that I (SJL) had had little exposure to philosophy coursework and that my undergraduate and graduate training in psychology had not exposed me to the science of happiness, I hadn’t thought much about happiness in its many forms. Dr. Diener’s question intrigued me, and since attending his lecture in 1999, I have attempted to develop a better understanding of the positive side of the emotional experience; this has led me to the solid research I summarize here. In this chapter, we attempt to add to what you know about pleasure by going far beyond Freud’s (1936) pleasure principle (the demand that an instinctive need be gratified regardless of the consequences) and by fostering an understanding of the many principles of pleasure that have been linked to good living. In this process, we present what we know about that which makes modern life pleasurable. We also summarize research that examines the distinctions between positive and negative affect. Likewise, we highlight positive emotions and their pleasure-expanding benefits, and we explore the many definitions of happiness and well-being, qualities of pleasurable living. To begin, we clarify the numerous terms and concepts used in this chapter. Defining Emotional Terms The terms affect and emotion often are used interchangeably in scholarly and popular literatures. Furthermore, well-being and happiness appear to be synonymous in psychology articles. Unfortunately, however, the interchangeable use of these terms is very confusing. Although we try to clarify the distinctions among these closely related ideas, we acknowledge the overlap that exists. We begin by suggesting that affect is a component of emotion, and emotion is a more specific version of mood. Ed Diener Source: Reprinted with permission of Ed Diener. Affect Affect is a person’s immediate, physiological response to a stimulus, and it is typically based on an underlying sense of arousal. Specifically, Professor Nico Frijda (1999) reasoned that affect involves the appraisal of an event as painful or pleasurable—that is, its valence—and the experience of autonomic arousal. Emotion Parsimonious definitions of emotion are hard to find, but this one seems to describe the phenomenon succinctly: “Emotions, I shall argue, involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 19). These emotional responses occur as we become aware of painful or pleasurable experiences and associated autonomic arousal (i.e., affect; Frijda, 1999) and evaluate the situation. An emotion has a specific and “sharpened” quality, as it always has an object (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009), and it is associated with progress in goal pursuit (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1994). In contrast, a mood is objectless, free floating, and long lasting. Happiness Happiness is a positive emotional state that is subjectively defined by each person. The term is rarely used in scientific studies because there is little consensus on its meaning. In this chapter, we use this term only when it is clarified by additional information. Subjective Well-Being Subjective well-being involves the subjective evaluation of one’s current status in the world. More specifically, Diener (1984, 2000, 2013; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2009) defines subjective well-being as a combination of positive affect (in the absence of negative affect) and general life satisfaction (i.e., subjective appreciation of life’s rewards). The term subjective well-being often is used as a synonym for happiness in the psychology literature. Almost without exception, the more accessible word happiness is used in the popular press in lieu of the term subjective well-being. Distinguishing the Positive and the Negative Hans Selye (1936) is known for his research on the effects of prolonged exposure to fear and anger. Consistently, he found that physiological stress harmed the body yet had survival value for humans. Indeed, the evolutionary functions of fear and anger have intrigued both researchers and laypeople. Given the historical tradition and scientific findings pertaining to the negative affects, their importance in our lives has not been questioned over the last century. Historically, positive affects have received scant attention over the last century because few scholars hypothesized that the rewards of joy and contentment went beyond hedonic (pleasure-based) values and had possible evolutionary significance. The potentialities of positive affect have become more obvious over the last 20 years (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009) as research has drawn distinctions between the positive and negative affects. David Watson Source: Reprinted with permission of David Watson. David Watson (1988) of the University of Iowa conducted research on the approach-oriented motivations of pleasurable affects—including rigorous studies of both negative and positive affects. To facilitate their research on the two dimensions of emotional experience, Watson and his collaborator Lee Anna Clark (1994) developed and validated the Expanded Form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-X), which has become a commonly used measure in this area. This 20-item scale has been used in hundreds of studies to quantify two dimensions of affect: valence and content. More specifically, the PANAS-X taps both “negative” (unpleasant) and “positive” (pleasant) valence. The content of negative affective states can be described best as general distress, whereas positive affect includes joviality, self-assurance, and attentiveness. (See the PANAS, a predecessor of the PANAS-X, which is brief and valid for most clinical and research purposes.) Using the PANAS and other measures of affect, researchers systematically have addressed a basic question: “Can we experience negative affect and positive affect at the same time?” (See Diener & Emmons, 1984; Green, Salovey, & Truax, 1999.) For example, could we go to an engaging movie and come out feeling both pleasure and fear? Although negative and positive affects once were thought to be polar opposites, Bradburn (1969) demonstrated that unpleasant and pleasant affects are independent and have different correlates. Psychologists such as Watson (2002; Watson & Naragon, 2009) continue to examine this issue of independence in their research. In a recent study, Watson found that negative affect correlated with joviality, self-assurance, and attentiveness at only –.21, –.14, and –.17, respectively. The small magnitudes of these negative correlations suggest that, while negative and positive affect are inversely correlated in some groups as expected, the relationships are quite weak and indicative of independence of the two types of affect. The size of these relationships, however, may increase when people are taxed by daily stressors (Keyes & Ryff, 2000; Zautra, Potter, & Reich, 1997). This said, positive as opposed to inverse correlations are found between positive and negative affect in many Eastern groups, namely in Asian samples (Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, & Wang, 2010). This ability to feel and think dialectically (i.e., in more than one direction, or from more than one point of view) about events in one’s life can be labeled a strength in Asian cultures. It may be that this emotional complexity allows Asians to have a greater level of social intelligence, which is of course beneficial in a collectivist society (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010). The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer on the line provided. Indicate to what extent you feel this emotion right now. Use the following scale as you record your answers. Positive Emotions: Expanding the Repertoire of Pleasure As some psychologists refine the distinction between the positive and negative sides of the emotional experience through basic research and measurement, other scholars (e.g., Isen, Fredrickson) have begun to explore questions about the potency and potentialities of positive emotions. (Here we use the term emotion rather than affect because we are addressing the specific response tendencies that flow from affective experience.) Cornell University psychologist Alice Isen is a pioneer in the examination of positive emotions. Dr. Isen found that, when experiencing mild positive emotions, we are more likely (1) to help other people (Isen, 1987); (2) to be flexible in our thinking (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999); (3) to come up with solutions to our problems (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987); and (4) to be more willing to exhibit self-control (Pyone & Isen, 2011). In classic research related to these points, Isen (1970; Isen & Levin, 1972) performed an experimental manipulation in which the research participants either did or did not find coins (placed there by the researcher) in the change slot of a public pay phone. Compared to those who did not find a coin, those who did were more likely to help another person carry a load of books or to help pick up another’s dropped papers. Therefore, the finding of a coin and the associated positive emotion made people behave more altruistically. Alice Isen Source: Reprinted with permission of Alice Isen. Feeling positive emotion also can help in seeing problem-solving options and finding cues for good decision making (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1997). In one study related to these latter points, the researchers randomly assigned physicians to an experimental condition in which the doctor either was or was not given a small bag that contained 6 hard candies and 4 miniature chocolates (the doctors were not allowed to eat the candy during the experiment). Those physicians who had, rather than had not, been given the gift of candy displayed superior reasoning and decision making relative to the physicians who did not receive the candy. Specifically, the doctors in the positive emotion condition did not jump to conclusions; they were cautious even though they arrived at the diagnosis sooner than the doctors in the other condition (A. Isen, personal communication, December 13, 2005). Perhaps, therefore, we should give our doctor some candy next time we see him or her! Here is a more detailed description of that study that led us to this lighthearted suggestion. (Although Dr. Isen uses the term affect, we believe emotion would be more appropriate here.) Forty-four physicians were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 groups: a control group, an affect-induction group (these participants received a small package of candy), or a group that asked participants to read humanistic statements regarding the practice of medicine. Physicians in all three groups were asked to “think aloud” while they solved a case of a patient with liver disease. Transcripts of the physicians’ comments were typed, and two raters reviewed the transcripts to determine how soon the diagnosis of liver disease was considered and established, and the extent to which thinking was distorted or inflexible. The affect group initially considered the diagnosis of liver disease significantly earlier in the experiment and showed significantly less inflexible thinking than did controls. The affect and control groups established the diagnosis at similar points in the experiment. So positive affect led to the earlier integration of information (considered liver disease sooner) and resulted in little premature foreclosure on the diagnosis. Risk-taking may also be influenced by positive affect when the return on the risk is anticipated to be high (Xing & Sun, 2013). In another study, happier participants showed greater willingness to take greater financial risks for high returns. This process appears to be related to links between positive affect and the psychological resilience that high levels of this type of affect may build over time (Xing & Sun, 2013). Thus, it may be that the link between happiness and psychological resilience allows individuals who are high in both of these areas to be able to feel more comfortable taking risks in general. Risk-taking could, of course, lead to either a positive and negative outcome (e.g., one could lose money or gain money with a risky financial investment). That said, however, taking opportunities as they come could provide more benefits in the long term. In addition, even when crises occur, an individual with psychological resilience (as developed by increased positive affect experiences) may be better able to handle this type of circumstance (Xing & Sun, 2013). Building on Isen’s work, Fredrickson (2000) has developed a new theoretical framework, the broaden-and-build model of positive emotions, which may provide some explanations for the robust social and cognitive effects of positive emotional experiences. In Fredrickson’s review of models of emotions (Smith, 1991), she found that responses to positive emotions have not been extensively studied and that, when researched, they were examined in a vague and underspecified manner. Furthermore, action tendencies generally have been associated with physical reactions to negative emotions (imagine “fight or flight”), whereas human reactions to positive emotions often are more cognitive than physical. For these reasons, she proposes discarding the specific action tendency concept (which suggests a restricted range of possible behavioral options) in favor of a newer, more inclusive term, momentary thought–action repertoires (which suggest a broad range of behavioral options; imagine “taking off blinders” and seeing available opportunities). Barbara Fredrickson Source: Reprinted with permission of Jeff Chapell. To illustrate the difference in that which follows positive and negative emotions, consider the childhood experience of one of the authors (SJL). Notice how positive emotions (e.g., excitement and glee) lead to cognitive flexibility and creativity, whereas negative emotions (e.g., fear and anxiety) are linked to a fleeing response and termination of activities. During a Saturday visit to my grandmother’s home, I had the time of my life playing a marathon game of hide-and-seek with my brother and four cousins. The hours of play led to excitement and giggling . . . and the creation of new game rules and obstacles. The unbridled joy we experienced that afternoon made us feel free; we felt like that day would go on forever. Unfortunately, the fun was interrupted. The abrupt end to the game came when my cousin Bubby spotted me hiding behind the tall grasses on the back of my grandmother’s property. I darted out of my hiding place to escape from him. As I ran around the house, I veered off into the vacant lot next door. Laughing with glee, I ran as hard as I could. Suddenly, there was an obstacle in my path. I leaped over it as Bub screamed uncontrollably. As I turned around, I realized I had jumped over a four-foot water moccasin, a highly poisonous snake. As my cousin’s screaming continued, I grew increasingly jittery. Without thinking, we backed away from the snake . . . and then ran for our lives. When we finally stopped running, we could not catch our breaths. No one was hurt, but our fear and anxiety had taken the fun out of our day. In testing her model of positive emotions, Fredrickson (2000) demonstrated that the experience of joy expands the realm of what a person feels like doing at the time; this is referred to as the broadening of an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire. Following an emotion-eliciting film clip (the clips induced one of five emotions: joy, contentment, anger, fear, or a neutral condition), research participants were asked to list everything they would like to do at that moment (see the results in Figure 6.1). Those participants who experienced joy or contentment listed significantly more desired possibilities than did the people in the neutral or negative conditions. In turn, those expanded possibilities for future activities should lead the joyful individuals to initiate subsequent actions. Those who expressed more negative emotions, on the other hand, tended to shut down their thinking about subsequent possible activities. Simply put, joy appears to open us up to many new thoughts and behaviors, whereas negative emotions dampen our ideas and actions. Figure 6.1 The Broadening Effects of Positive Emotions Source: Fredrickson (2002). Used with permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. Joy also increases our likelihood of behaving positively toward other people, along with aiding in developing more positive relationships. Furthermore, joy induces playfulness (Frijda, 1994), which is quite important because such behaviors are evolutionarily adaptive in acquisition of necessary resources. Juvenile play builds (1) enduring social and intellectual resources by encouraging attachment, (2) higher levels of creativity, and (3) brain development (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson, 2002). Playfulness is now also being studied in adults with more positive results. Young adults who are more playful have less perceived stress and are found to cope better with various stressors in their lives (Magnuson & Barnett, 2013). Other research has found that playfulness can be linked to greater life satisfaction (Proyer, 2012) and other positive attributes (Proyer & Ruch, 2011). It appears that, through the effects of broadening processes, positive emotions also can help build resources. In 2002, Fredrickson and her colleague, Thomas Joiner, demonstrated this building phenomenon by assessing people’s positive and negative emotions and broad-minded coping (solving problems with creative means) on two occasions 5 weeks apart. The researchers found that initial levels of positive emotions predicted overall increases in creative problem solving. These changes in coping also predicted further increases in positive emotions (see Figure 6.2). Similarly, controlling for initial levels of positive emotion, initial levels of coping predicted increases in positive emotions, which in turn predicted increases in coping. These results held true only for positive emotions, not for negative emotions. Therefore, positive emotions such as joy may help generate resources; maintain a sense of vital energy (i.e., more positive emotions); and create even more resources. Cohn and Fredrickson (2009) referred to this positive sequence as the “upward spiral” of positive emotions (see Figure 6.3). Figure 6.2 The Building Effects of Positive Emotions Source: From Mayne, T. J., & Bonanno, G. A., Emotions. Copyright © 2001. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press. Figure 6.3 The Upward Spiral of Positive Emotions Source: From Cohn, M. A., & Fredrickson, B. L., Positive emotions, in S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), Oxford handbook of positive psychology (pp. 13–24). Copyright © 2009. Reprinted with permission of Oxford University Press. Extending her model of positive emotions, Fredrickson and colleagues examined the “undoing” potential of positive emotions (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000) and the ratio of positive to negative emotional experiences that is associated with human flourishing (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Fredrickson et al. (2000) hypothesized that, given the broadening and building effects of positive emotions, joy and contentment might function as antidotes to negative emotions. To test this hypothesis, the researchers exposed all participants in their study to a situation that aroused negative emotion and immediately randomly assigned people to emotion conditions (sparked by evocative video clips) ranging from mild joy to sadness. Cardiovascular recovery represented the undoing process and was operationalized as the time that elapsed from the start of the randomly assigned video until the physiological reactions induced by the initial negative emotion returned to baseline. The undoing hypothesis was supported, as participants in the joy and contentment conditions were able to undo the effects of the negative emotions more quickly than the people in the other conditions. These findings suggest that there is an incompatibility between positive and negative emotions and that the potential effects of negative experiences can be offset by positive emotions such as joy and contentment. Given that positive emotions help people build enduring resources and recover from negative experiences, Fredrickson and Losada (2005) hypothesized that positive emotions might be associated with optimal mental health or flourishing (i.e., positive psychological and social well-being; see the complete mental health model on p. 140). By subjecting data on undergraduate participants’ mental health (from a flourishing measure) and their emotional experience (students rated the extent to which they experienced 20 emotions each day for 28 days) to mathematical analysis, the researchers found that a mean ratio of 2:9 positive to negative emotions predicts human flourishing. Unfortunately, it was recently discovered that the math used to attain this ratio had many flaws. Nicholas Brown, a graduate student at the University of East London, discovered the math mistakes and submitted a paper (Brown, Sokal, & Friedman, 2013) questioning the assertion that a critical point between flourishing and languishing could actually be quantified. Fredrickson (2013) responded to the critique, noting computation errors and acknowledging the absence of such a tipping point between languishing and flourishing, but she defended the merit of the body of research on positive emotions. Fredrickson states that, regardless of an actual number existing to represent this point, it still appears that the data reflect the effect of a higher number of positive events in comparison to negative events and that this effect is a beneficial one. Individuals in the original study who were flourishing did have ratios that reflected this balance (Fredrickson, 2013; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Brown and his colleagues reject this response as being valid to the argument. In the end, we are left with more questions in this area, and it is clear that more research may provide us with answers. All in all, perhaps it was the act of trying to assign a number to the human condition that began the argument. It may be that it is more beneficial for us to think both qualitatively and quantitatively about positive experiences. In daily life, looking for the positive more often than the negative still seems to be a worthwhile pursuit. Positive affect may have other benefits as well. Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener (2005) conducted an extensive review of 225 papers across three classes of studies (longitudinal, cross-sectional, and experimental) to investigate the complicated links between happiness and other positive outcomes, such as success. Though many studies in the past have found correlational links between these constructs, Lyubomirsky and colleagues posit that “positive affect—the hallmark of well-being—may be the cause of many of the desirable characteristics, resources, and successes correlated with happiness” (p. 803). These researchers found that preliminary evidence exists to suggest that success and other beneficial outcomes may be caused by the presence of happiness in a person’s life. Though more research in this area must be done, these initial findings lay the groundwork for future studies to determine more information about the causal links between happiness and other related constructs. Personal Mini-Experiments In Search of Joy and Lasting Happiness In this chapter, we discuss positive emotion and happiness. Our review suggests that pleasant emotional experiences can be induced via brief mini-experiments. Here are a few ideas for experiments aimed at boosts in joy and happiness. The Cartoon/Comedy Pretest–Posttest. Respond to the PANAS (see p. 134) based on how you feel at the moment, then watch an episode (5 to 20 minutes without commercials, if possible) of your favorite cartoon or situation comedy that showcases good-natured humor (not sarcastic or sardonic humor). Complete a second PANAS immediately after viewing the show. Then, note the changes that have occurred in your positive and negative affect. The “Movie, Then What?” Experiment. This experiment requires careful selection of two movies: one that has sad themes and a sanguine ending (a “feel-bad” film), and one that emphasizes joy and triumph (a “feel-good” film). Across two occasions, invite the same group of friends for movie watching at home or in the theater. After the movies, ask your friends, “Hey, if you could do anything at all right now, what would you do? What else?” Make mental notes of how many future activities are mentioned and the exuberance with which your friends discuss these activities. Identify the differences in the thought–action repertoires across the conditions of the “feel-bad” movie and the “feel-good” movie. Commonsense Definitions of Happiness. Have you ever asked someone about his or her views on happiness? We encourage you to ask friends and acquaintances of various ages and backgrounds, “How do you define happiness in your life? What are some benchmarks or signs of your happiness?” You will be surprised by the diversity of answers and refreshed and entertained by the many stories accompanying people’s responses. In listening, pay attention to the cultural contexts that often shape these definitions. Positive Emotion Styles Linked to the Common Cold A. Palmer Positive emotions may increase resistance to the common cold, according to a recent study in Psychosomatic Medicine (Vol. 65, No. 1). The research by Sheldon Cohen, PhD, of Carnegie Mellon University, and colleagues adds to a body of literature that suggests that emotional styles influence health. The researchers interviewed 334 healthy volunteers by phone for 7 evenings over 3 weeks to assess their emotional states. Participants described how they felt throughout the day in three positive-emotion areas of vigor, well-being, and calm and three negative-emotion areas of depression, anxiety, and hostility by rating their emotions on a scale of 0 to 4. After this initial evaluation, researchers administered a shot of a rhinovirus, the germ that causes colds, into each participant’s nose. Afterward, participants were observed for 5 days to see if they became sick and in what ways cold symptoms manifested. The volunteers were considered to have a clinical cold if they were both infected and met illness criteria. “People who scored low on positive emotional style were three times more likely to get sick than those with high positive emotional styles,” Cohen says. The researchers then measured how emotional style affected all sick participants’ reporting of cold symptoms. Each day of the quarantine, researchers asked them to report the severity of such cold symptoms as a runny nose, cough, and headaches on a 4-point scale. While negative emotional style did not affect whether people developed colds, the study found that people with higher negative emotional styles reported more symptoms than expected from objective health markers, Cohen says. Those with lower positive emotions reported fewer symptoms of illness than expected. Positive emotional style was also associated with better health practices and lower levels of epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol, three stress-related hormones, but the researchers found that this did not account for the link between positive emotional style and illness. Considering the average adult catches 2 to 5 colds per year and children average 7 to 10 colds per year, developing psychological risk profiles and considering ways to enhance positive emotions might reduce the risk of colds, says Cohen. Cohen adds that future research should focus on the unique biological role that emotions play in health. Source: From Palmer, A., Positive emotion styles linked to the common cold, Monitor in Psychology, November 2003, p. 16. Copyright © 2003 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission. No further reproduction or distribution is permitted without written permission from the American Psychological Association. Happiness and Subjective Well-Being: Living a Pleasurable Life Age-Old Definitions of Happiness Buddha left home in search of a more meaningful existence and ultimately found enlightenment, a sense of peace, and happiness. Aristotle believed that eudaimonia (human flourishing associated with living a life of virtue), or happiness based on a lifelong pursuit of meaningful, developmental goals (i.e., “doing what is worth doing”), was the key to the good life (Waterman, 1993). America’s founders reasoned that the pursuit of happiness was just as important as our inalienable rights of life and liberty. These age-old definitions of happiness, along with many other conceptualizations of emotional well-being, have had clear influences on the views of twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars, but more recent psychological theory and genetic research have helped us to clarify happiness and its correlates. Theories of happiness have been divided into three types: (1) need/goal satisfaction theories, (2) process/activity theories, and (3) genetic/personality predisposition theories (Diener et al., 2009). (Explore folk definitions of happiness by completing the third exercise in the Personal Mini-Experiments earlier in this chapter.) In regard to need/goal satisfaction theories, the leaders of particular schools of psychotherapy proffered various ideas about happiness. For example, psychoanalytic and humanistic theorists (Sigmund Freud and Abraham Maslow, respectively) suggested that the reduction of tension or the satisfaction of needs lead to happiness. In short, it was theorized that we are happy because we have reached our goals. Such “happiness as satisfaction” makes happiness a target of our psychological pursuits. In the process/activity camp, theorists posit that engaging in particular life activities generates happiness. For example, Mike Csikszentmihalyi, who was one of the first twentieth-century theorists to examine process/activity conceptualizations of happiness, proposed that people who experience flow (engagement in interesting activities that match or challenge task-related skills) in daily life tend to be very happy. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975/2000, 1990) work suggests that engagement in activity produces happiness. Other process/activity theorists (e.g., Emmons, 1986; Snyder, 1994) have emphasized how the process of pursuing goals generates energy and happiness. This pursuit-of-happiness perspective mirrors the United States’ founders’ promise of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Activities such as the practice of gratitude and kindness may also provide boosts in well-being for some groups. Empirical evidence exists for the fact that regular engagement in these types of positive acts can help individuals to improve their happiness over time by prescriptive use of tasks such as the writing of gratitude letters and purposeful acts of kindness (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009), or strategic use of optimism (Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, 2011). Interestingly, however, well-being is not always improved by the same activities in different cultural groups. In a comparison of participants from the United States and those from South Korea, it was found that while expressing gratitude benefited the U.S. participants with spikes in well-being, this activity was significantly less helpful for South Korean participants, resulting in decreases in well-being (Layous, Lee, Choi, & Lyubomirsky, 2013). This same study found that acts of kindness had the same effect in both groups, however. The authors of this study suggest that a construct such as gratitude may have different cultural meanings for the two groups. In South Korea, feelings of gratitude may be more closely linked with feelings of indebtedness, showing the dialectical pattern that is often found between positive and negative affect in Asian groups. In United States samples, gratitude may not be linked to negative feelings in quite the same way. Other research has shown that even when the same construct boosts well-being in multiple cultures, there may be significant differences in the amounts of increases seen in different groups (Boehm, Lyubomirsky, & Sheldon, 2011). Thus, we must consider which types of processes and activities are valued and deemed positive by a particular cultural group before deciding which may have the desired effects on well-being. Lyubomirsky and Layous (2013) suggest a model for determining whether certain activities will provide the desired increases in well-being. Their parameters include looking closely at the types of activities and their “dosage” (p. 57), the effort and agency of the participant toward the activity, and the fit between person and activity. This last criterion can be attained by taking care to devise interventions and activities that have cultural relevance for the group one is studying. Those who emphasize the genetic and personality predisposition theories of happiness (Diener & Larsen, 1984; Watson, 2000) tend to see happiness as stable, whereas theorists in the happiness-as-satisfaction and process/activity camps view it as changing with life conditions. On this latter point, Costa and McCrae (1988) found that happiness changed little over a 6-year period, thereby lending credence to theories of personality-based or biologically determined happiness. More recent research, however, found evidence that the links between personality and happiness may be more idiographic than previously thought (e.g., personal set points for happiness may not be neutral and may be more dependent on temperament, or individuals may vary in the type of adaptation to positive or negative external experiences; Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). In addition, these researchers believe that multiple set points for positive emotion may exist for any one individual, and these set points may be able to be changed under some conditions. More work is needed in this area to determine the nuances of these complex relationships between happiness and personality. Further elucidating the link between happiness and personality, Lucas and Fujita (2000) showed that extroversion and neuroticism, two of the Big 5 factors of personality (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism), were closely related to the characteristics of happiness. Shiota, Keltner, and John (2006) found similar results with regard to these Big 5 personality factors and also link positive affect to adult attachment styles. The link between personality and life satisfaction has been found to occur in many cultures; however, the strength of influence of personality on well-being has been shown to be moderated by culture (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Thus, culture also plays a role in the determinants of the strength of this relationship. Studies of the biological or genetic determinants of happiness have found that up to 40% of positive emotionality and 55% of negative emotionality are genetically based (Tellegen et al., 1988). Obviously, this leaves about 50% of the variance in happiness that is not explained by biological components. Overall, therefore, a thorough understanding of happiness necessitates an examination of genetic factors and the variables suggested by need/goal satisfaction and the activity/process theorists. Subjective Well-Being as a Synonym for Happiness Building on a utilitarian tradition and the tenets of hedonic psychology (which emphasizes the study of pleasure and life satisfaction), Diener (1984; 2000; Diener et al., 2009) considers well-being to be the subjective evaluation of one’s current status in the world. More specifically, well-being involves our experience of pleasure and our appreciation of life’s rewards. Given this view, Diener defines subjective well-being as a combination of positive affect (in the absence of negative affect) and general life satisfaction. Furthermore, he uses the term subjective well-being as a synonym for happiness. (The satisfaction component often is measured with the Satisfaction With Life Scale; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Subjective well-being emphasizes peoples’ reports of their life experiences. Accordingly, the subjective report is taken at face value. This subjective approach to happiness assumes that people from many cultures are comfortable focusing on individualistic assessments of their affects and satisfaction and that people will be forthright in such personal analyses (Diener et al., 2009). These assumptions guide the researchers’ attempts to understand a person’s subjective experiences in light of his or her objective circumstances. The Satisfaction With Life Scale Instructions: Please use one of the following numbers from 1 to 7 to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Note: Scores for all items are summed to calculate a total score. Determinants of Subjective Well-Being When examining satisfaction in various life domains of college students from 31 nations, financial status was more highly correlated with satisfaction for students in poor nations than for those in wealthy nations (Diener & Diener, 1995). Moreover, the students in wealthy nations generally were happier than those in impoverished nations. Within-nation examination of this link between income and well-being reveals that, once household income rises above the poverty line, additional bumps in income are not necessarily associated with increases in well-being. When well-being data are divided further by categories of economic status (very poor versus very wealthy), it appears that there is a strong relationship between income and well-being among the impoverished but an insignificant relationship between the two variables among the affluent (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). Other analyses have shown that the link between wealth and happiness may be strongest when “wealth” is defined as economic status (as opposed to flow of income) and when measures of life satisfaction are used (as opposed to measures of happiness) to determine subjective well-being (Howell & Howell, 2008). While some may feel that their road to happiness is by spending some of this wealth, studies show that thrift is actually much more closely related to hedonic happiness! Though the idea that thrift (as opposed to spending) could be a hedonic pleasure sounds like an oxymoron, Chancellor and Lyubomirsky (2011) found that hedonic happiness can be derived from refraining from spending with the goal of eliminating debt and savoring what one has as opposed to replacing those materials. As over-consumption, materialism, and greed are all detractors from a healthy society, these data bode well for our future. Data specific to Western samples indicate that married men and women alike report more happiness than those who are not married (never married, divorced, or separated; Lee, Seccombe, & Shehan, 1991). The link between subjective well-being and being married is different for people of all ages, incomes, and educational levels, and it also varies across racial and ethnic backgrounds (Argyle, 1987). Same-sex couples who have legalized unions (i.e., marriages and/or civil unions) also report greater levels of well-being (Rothblum, Balsam, & Solomon, 2011). Not surprisingly, marital quality also is positively associated with personal well-being (Sternberg & Hojjat, 1997). Though some believe that a dimming of passion and happiness is a natural by-product of being in a long-term relationship, this is not always (or even often) the case. Couples who practice certain behaviors in their relationships may have an even better chance at avoiding this decrease. Bao and Lyubomirsky (2013) have created a list of ways to combat this “hedonic adaptation”—that is, the tendency for people to adjust back to their baseline happiness after a positive event such as the start of a relationship. Their specific strategies are presented in Table 6.1 below (see also Chapter 12 in this volume on love and relationships). Data from Bao, K. J., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). Making it last: Combating hedonic adaptation in romantic relationships. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8, 196–206. In a study of the happiest 10% of U.S. college students, Diener and Seligman (2002) found that the qualities of good mental health and good social relationships consistently emerged in the lives in the sample of happiest young adults. Upon closer inspection of their data, analyses revealed that good social functioning among the happiest subset of students was a necessary but not sufficient cause of happiness. Happiness + Meaning = Well-Being Psychologists who support the hedonic perspective view subjective well-being and happiness as synonymous. Alternatively, the scholars whose ideas about well-being are more consistent with Aristotle’s views on eudaimonia believe that happiness and well-being are not synonymous. In this latter perspective, eudaimonia is comprised of happiness and meaning. Stated in a simple formula, well-being = happiness + meaning. In order to subscribe to this view of well-being, one must understand virtue and the social implications of daily behavior. Furthermore, this view requires that those who seek well-being be authentic and live according to their real needs and desired goals (Waterman, 1993). Thus, living a eudaimonic life goes beyond experiencing “things pleasurable,” and it embraces flourishing as the goal in all our actions. Both hedonistic and eudaimonic versions of happiness have influenced the twenty-first-century definitions. Twenty-First-Century Definitions of Happiness Modern Western psychology has focused primarily on a postmaterialistic view of happiness (Diener et al., 2002, 2009) that emphasizes pleasure, satisfaction, and life meaning. Indeed, the type of happiness addressed in much of today’s popular literature emphasizes hedonics, meaning, and authenticity. For example, Seligman (2002) suggests that a pleasant and meaningful life can be built on the happiness that results from using our psychological strengths. Describing a new model of happiness, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) propose that “[a] person’s chronic happiness level is governed by three major factors: a genetically determined set point for happiness, happiness-relevant circumstantial factors, and happiness-relevant activities and practices” (p. 111). Lyubomirsky and colleagues’ “architecture of sustainable happiness” (p. 114) incorporates what is known about the genetic components of happiness, the circumstantial/demographic determinants of happiness, and the complex process of intentional human change. Based on past research, which they summarize, Lyubomirsky et al. propose that genetics accounts for 50% of population variance for happiness, whereas life circumstances (both good and bad) and intentional activity (attempts at healthy living and positive change) account for 10% and 40% of the population variance for happiness, respectively. This model of happiness acknowledges the components of happiness that can’t be changed, but it also leaves room for volition and the self-generated goals that lead to the attainment of pleasure, meaning, and good health. Publications on the topic of cultural differences and well-being have grown substantially in the past two decades (Suh & Koo, 2008). Past research has found that the extent to which a nation is more collectivist (i.e., cooperative and group-oriented) in orientation versus individualistic (i.e., competitive and individual focused) is one of the strongest predictors of differences in subjective well-being across nations, even when national income level was held constant (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). In addition, different relationships have been found between subjective well-being and variables such as self-esteem when studying different cultural groups; this relationship, which is very strong in individualist nations, was weaker in collectivist nations (Diener & Diener, 1995). Something that must be considered in analyzing the results from the above studies is the fact that Western measures of well-being were used in these cases. Though translated appropriately, and thus linguistically equivalent measures, this does not account for the differences in conceptual equivalence with regard to definitions and culturally normative manifestations of happiness that are found in other studies. For example, in another study, Lu and Gilmour (2004) analyzed essays entitled “What is Happiness?” from Chinese students and compared them with those of students in the United States, and differences were found in the way in which these two groups described the construct. The Chinese students “emphasized spiritual cultivation and transcendence of the present,” whereas their U.S. counterparts “emphasized the enjoyment of present life” (Suh & Koo, 2008, p. 416). Other researchers have found similar differences between Western and Eastern individuals with predictors of happiness varying from independence, autonomy, and agency (West) to interconnectedness of self and closeness to others (East) (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). Other findings point to the fact that different racial and ethnic groups may also obtain happiness by different methods (Le, Lai, & Wallen, 2009). More research must be done in these areas; however, these findings remind us that we must view constructs through the appropriate cultural lens in order to have a fuller understanding of them. In addition, we must be careful to be culturally competent in interpreting studies that are conducted from Western perspectives on non-Western samples, or vice versa. In the study above regarding lower well-being found in collectivist nations, for example, one might falsely draw the conclusion that, due to the differences found, collectivism is problematic for well-being; this may in turn accidentally set up a deficit model that favors the West. It is not likely the case that collectivism leads to lower well-being, and these results may instead be a function of lack of equivalence in constructs in the two cultural groups. But without consideration of potential lack of conceptual equivalence, we may make mistakes such as this in interpreting. On this topic, based on empirical findings, Sheu (2014) cautions that it may be inappropriate to compare life satisfaction or other well-being means among various cultural groups. Careful consideration of cultural, linguistic, functional, and metric equivalence is necessary in any cross-cultural or multicultural research (see Chapter 3 for a more thorough description of equivalence). Twenty-first-century scholars will undoubtedly produce many more refined views of happiness. Our prediction is that the pursuit of happiness through positive psychological science and practice ultimately will develop a better sense of the genetic (summarized in Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005); neural (Urry et al., 2004); and neurobiological correlates and underpinnings of happiness and will embrace the contentment, peace, and happiness of Eastern philosophy along with the folk wisdom of the Western world. So imagine a science of happiness that is grounded in what is known about the genetic and biological bases of happiness and that examines the rigor and relevance of Buddha’s teachings alongside Benjamin Franklin’s recommendations for virtuous living (see Figure 6.4). Through good biological and psychological science and an appreciation of philosophical stances on happiness, we can increase the international relevance of our scholarship in positive psychology. Excerpts From Authentic Happiness Martin E. P. Seligman When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity. Feelings are states, momentary occurrences that need not be recurring features of personality. Traits, in contrast to states, are either negative or positive characteristics that bring about good feeling and gratification. Traits are abiding dispositions whose exercise makes momentary feelings more likely. The negative trait of paranoia makes the momentary state of jealousy more likely, just as the positive trait of being humorous makes the state of laughing more likely. (p. 9) The well-being that using your signature strengths engenders is anchored in authenticity. But just as well-being needs to be anchored in strengths and virtues, these in turn must be anchored in something larger. Just as the good life is something beyond the pleasant life, the meaningful life is beyond the good life. (p. 14) Source: Seligman (2002). Beach Man Named Nation’s Happiest Jason Skog VIRGINIA BEACH—Who’s the happiest man in America? He’s not rich or powerful, so scratch Bill Gates and President Bush. And he’s not a famous movie or rock star, so forget Tom Cruise and Bruce Springsteen. According to the March 7–9 cover story of USA Weekend magazine, a Sunday supplement in almost 600 newspapers, the nation’s happiest guy is a 45-year-old Virginia Beach stockbroker, J. P. ‘‘Gus’’ Godsey. Godsey will be introduced early today on ABC’s Good Morning, America, and he’s, well, happy. ‘‘It’s real cool,’’ Godsey said. ‘‘I didn’t realize how big this was going to be.’’ Since word of the recognition leaked, he’s had inquiries for national TV interviews. And there’s been talk of appearances with Regis, Oprah, and Letterman. Godsey’s grin is nearly as broad as his shoulders. When he speaks, words tumble out in rambling, overflowing tones that are full, raspy, and fast. He can hardly contain himself. ‘‘I’m not going to believe all the hype,’’ Godsey said, ‘‘but I do know, if there are happier people, I haven’t met many of them.’’ Godsey earned the distinction based on studies that suggest that volunteer work and civic involvement contribute to a person’s happiness. Virginia Beach’s quality of life also helped the magazine pick Godsey. ‘‘It was a combination of science, sleuthing, and surveys,’’ the USA Weekend story reads. The magazine set out to find the happiest man in Virginia Beach, and Godsey’s name continued to come up. After some initial interviews, he was subjected to a battery of psychological and emotional tests—five in all—measuring his level of contentment. Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, author of Authentic Happiness and a University of Pennsylvania professor, spent a day in Virginia Beach administering some of the tests. Seligman divides happiness into three types: the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life. ‘‘He did great in all three and actually was off the scale in the second one. He’s real unusual,’’ Seligman said. Godsey is a member of the city’s Human Rights Commission, founder of local Thanksgiving and holiday food and toy drives, past chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia Beach, and a coordinator of benefit concerts. He and his wife, Judi, have a son, Jeremy, 23, and a daughter, Jessica, 20. The couple lives on a 1¼-acre lot along the Lynnhaven Inlet in the Wolfsnare Plantation neighborhood. ‘‘Not only is Mr. Godsey a very amiable, pleasant person,’’ said Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf, ‘‘he is a perfect example of the young people we want to return to our city to establish their lives and families and their careers.’’ Lynda Filipiak-Wilchynski, Godsey’s sales assistant at Ferris, Baker, Watts Inc., a regional brokerage house based in Washington, said her boss’s good humor is contagious. ‘‘Everything is cool, everything is smooth with J.P.,’’ she said. Godsey said the key to happiness is simple. ‘‘We wake up every morning full of choices,’’ he said. ‘‘And your state of happiness is something you can do every single day. How are you going to make your day this morning? And we only have today. God never promised us tomorrow.’’ Do the faltering economy, threats of terrorism, and a looming war make this a difficult time to be happy? ‘‘No. Absolutely not,’’ he said. ‘‘Because I cannot control those things. . . . Why focus on something I can’t control or that will bring me down?’’ Reach Jason Skog at jskog@pilotonline.com or 757-222-5113. Source: From Skog, J., Beach man named nation’s happiest, The Virginian-Pilot, March 3, 2003, p. A1. Reprinted with permission of The Virginian-Pilot. Complete Mental Health: Emotional, Social, and Psychological Well-Being Ryff and Keyes (1995; Keyes, 2009; Keyes & Lopez, 2002; Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003) combine many principles of pleasure to define complete mental health. Specifically, they view optimal functioning as the combination of emotional well-being (as they refer to subjective well-being; defined as the presence of positive affect and satisfaction with life and the absence of negative affect); social well-being (incorporating acceptance, actualization, contribution, coherence, and integration); and psychological well-being (combining self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, positive relations with others). Taking the symptoms of mental illness into consideration, they define “complete mental health” as the combination of “high levels of symptoms of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being, as well as the absence of recent mental illness” (Keyes & Lopez, 2002, p. 49). This view of mental health combines all facets of well-being into a model that is both dimensional (because extremes of mental health and illness symptomatology are reflected) and categorical (because assignment to distinct diagnostic categories is possible). This complete state model (Keyes & Lopez, p. 49; see Figure 6.5) suggests that combined mental health and mental illness symptoms may be always changing, resulting in fluctuations in states of overall well-being ranging from complete mental illness to complete mental health. Figure 6.4 East Meets West in the Discussion of Happiness Source: Malcolm Tarlofsky. Reprinted with permission. Increasing Happiness in Your Life Although there are numerous theories of happiness and countless definitions of it, researchers (e.g., Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004) have begun to build on past work (Fordyce, 1977, 1983) in their attempts to answer the question many of our clients ask: “Can I learn how to be happier?” David Myers (1993), an expert on the subject and the author of The Pursuit of Happiness, provides general strategies for increasing the happiness in daily life (see Figure 6.6). We provide additional Life Enhancement Strategies for boosting happiness in specific domains of your life. When looking at the suggestions below, we would ask the reader to consider that not all suggestions necessarily work for all cultural groups. Use a discerning eye while reading, and this may help you determine what seems plausible and culturally valid in your own life. Figure 6.5 A Model of Complete Mental Health Source: C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez. The Handbook of Positive Psychology - 2002. By permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. Figure 6.6 David Myers’s Suggestions for a Happier Life Source: Adapted from Myers, D., The pursuit of happiness. Copyright © 1993. Reprinted with permission of the author. Life Enhancement Strategies Following is a list of additional tips for increasing pleasant emotional experiences, happiness, and well-being in your life. Although we categorize these suggestions within life’s important domains, as we do in most chapters, we do not mean to suggest that all aspects of positive affect, emotions, and happiness are domain specific. We do believe, however, that some aspects of both the pleasant life and the meaningful life can be found in each of life’s domains. Love Be kind to those you love and those you have just met! Research shows that engaging in kind acts on a regular basis increases well-being in many different types of people. Tell those close to you that you love them. Your sincere expression of love will bolster your relationship and induce positive affect in others. Work Start a meeting with positive comments about peers’ contributions. This may raise positive affect that generates creativity and good decision making. Bring homemade treats to work or class. This may generate productive interactions. Play Help others to find time to play! Take a moment to think of someone in your life who may need some play time but has responsibilities that make it difficult to take that time. Offer to babysit for new parents, take a larger share of a project for someone who is overloaded at work, or bring dinner and a board game to a single parent and stay to play yourself! Participate in brief relaxation activities to break up your day. Relaxation can make your mind and body more sensitive to the pleasurable daily moments. Moving Toward the Positive It is very easy to find the unpleasant, negative aspects of emotions and dysfunctions in life (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenhaur, & Vohs, 2001). All you have to do is read the morning newspaper or watch the nightly news. Our human need to understand the negative is great, given the suffering and loss associated with anger and fear, as well as the evolutionary functions of avoidance strategies. Although the positive aspects of emotional experiences rarely capture the attention of media or science, things are beginning to change. It was only three decades ago, for example, that a few brave social scientists (e.g., Bradburn, 1969; Meehl, 1975) shared their thoughts about the lighter side of life. Today, we know that the flow of “joy-juice” (Paul Meehl’s flippant term for that which induces pleasant emotional experiences) and biological factors are important, but they do not define our entire emotional experience. In addition, we must shift our lens to look at things from perspectives other than our own or risk missing the emotional experiences of those who are different from us. By doing this, we can also contribute to the happiness of others in ways that feel culturally relevant for them; this might also open our minds to new perspectives that can lead to more happiness experiences of our own. In the words of Diener et al. (2002, p. 68), “It appears that the way people perceive the world is much more important to happiness than objective circumstances.” It seems evident that cultural differences exist between the origins, determinants, and moderators of well-being (Layous et al., 2013; Layous & Lyubomirksy, 2013, Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Suh & Koo, 2008; Uchida et al., 2004), and different rankings may be applied by different cultures as to how important personal happiness is for the individual (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). This said, it must be made clear that well-being is still a desired goal across cultural groups especially when it is experienced in culturally normative ways (Diener, 2013). Ed Diener has spoken for several years about the need for our nations to develop “National Accounts” of subjective well-being alongside the economic accounts they regularly determine. These accounts of how our various nations are doing with regard to well-being overall could be helpful for many reasons. For example, national policies could be set to authorize funding in ways that could benefit large portions of a nation. Today, policy makers are starting to heed Diener’s suggestions and some are beginning to collect these data. Specifically, the prime minister of the United Kingdom pledged to collect data on subjective well-being starting in 2010, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation has very recently provided guidelines to leaders who would like to create these types of national accounts of subjective well-being in their respective countries (Diener, 2013). Knowing more about well-being on a more global scale can only be beneficial for our continued health across the world. In Diener’s words, “Although exciting gains have been made in our understanding of subjective well-being, there is much more yet to be discovered” (p. 665).

Reference:

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