

**Applied Positive Psychology**  
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**Week 2**  
**Lecture 5: Happiness and subjective well-being**

I welcome you all to module two of this course. So, this is module two, which is about positive emotions and happiness, and this is the second lecture of this module; overall, this is lecture number five. So, today's lecture is titled "Happiness and Subjective Well-Being." In this module, we are talking about the concept of positive emotions and happiness, and the different aspects associated with it. In the last lecture, we spoke about positive emotions.

So, just to give you a brief recap of the last lecture, we talked about the concept of emotion and positive emotions in particular. So, in that context, we discussed the difference between the concepts of affect, emotions, and moods. We also discussed the difference between positive and negative emotions and how they are conceptually and experientially different, and at the end, we discussed the concept of positive emotions and its function using a model called the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. So, these are some of the things that we discussed in the last lecture. Just continuing from there, we'll be talking about the concept of happiness in today's lecture and some of its applied aspects. So, the key concepts that we'll be talking about today include the psychology of happiness and subjective well-being. We also address the question: Can we become happier? In that context, what are the sources of pessimism and optimism? We'll also talk about the concept of happiness using a model called a sustainable happiness model, and at the end, we will be discussing some positive activity interventions for enhancing happiness and well-being.

So, let's start today's lecture. The concept of happiness is the central idea in today's lecture. The concept of happiness is an universal concept; happiness is an universal goal across all cultures. So, this is reflected in one of the statements written here by Bentham in 1789. He said happiness is highly valued in present-day society; not only do people aim at happiness

in their own lives, but we also care for the happiness of other people, and that government should aim at creating greater happiness for a greater number of citizens.

So, it is a universal goal, and it is given a lot of importance individually as well as collectively across all societies and cultures. Now, historically at psychological literature, has mostly focused on typically negative emotions, because the focus was more on disorders of the human mind, such as anxiety, depression, neurosis, obsessions, paranoia, delusions, and so on. So, the idea was that most of the psychological disorders are associated with negative emotions. So, psychology emerged because there was a need to treat and diagnose these kinds of disorders. So, a lot of focus has been on these aspects of understanding disorders, negative emotions, and their treatment.

The goal of the practitioner was to bring patients from a negative, ailing state to a normal state of functioning. So, if you look at psychological literature, the aim was about how to shift patients or people who are suffering from psychological disorders to a normal state of functioning. Over the decades, however, with the rise of positive psychology, a few psychological researchers have ventured out from the dark realm of mental illnesses into the sunny land of happiness and well-being. Now, with the rise in popularity of positive psychology, many researchers have started looking at not just disorders and negative emotions; they have also started looking at the bright side of human functioning. Particularly, the concept of happiness and well-being has received a lot of attention, and a lot of research has gone into it.

So we now see more literature in the context of happiness and well-being. Slowly, it is increasing. So, now we know much more about happiness and well-being than we used to know a decade ago. So, the study of happiness is a relatively recent phenomenon in the field of psychology because it was mostly under the purview of philosophical speculations. Philosophers mostly talked about happiness and the different theories about it, and so on.

Psychologists were examining happiness in bits and pieces earlier. Now a more focused and unified form of research on happiness has started because of positive psychology. There

were no proper empirical measures of happiness, which made it an area of speculation and uncertainty. So, there were no proper scientific studies. Philosophers mostly presented theoretical propositions and so on.

There has not been much empirical research into happiness. So, earlier, there were not many theories and understandings that were based on empirical studies. However, during the last decade, the development of reliable and valid measures or questionnaires of happiness helped to make significant advancements in the knowledge in this field. As many standardized tools have been developed to measure happiness, more empirical and scientific research has been possible, and more understanding has evolved from it. So, let us address this question- what is happiness from the perspective of psychological literature? Everyone can have their own definition, but when we talk about doing scientific research, we need to have a proper definition that can be measured and conceptualized in a standardized format. So, in the context of psychological literature or in the field of positive psychology, happiness is technically called subjective well-being. So, that's the important thing that we need to understand. So, happiness is more of a layman's term.

But in the field of positive psychology, we use a more technical term, which is called subjective well-being, which can loosely be translated as happiness in layman's terms. So, one of the ways in which subjective well-being or happiness is conceptualized in the field of positive psychology is that subjective well-being is equal to satisfaction with life plus affect. Now, affect is related to the concept of emotions, but it is a broader term. We discussed the meaning of "effect" in the last lecture; actually, here it broadly means what the emotional experiences are that we go through in our lives.

So, to what extent do you experience positive emotions as compared to negative emotions? What is the emotional tone of a person's experiences? Plus, the concept of satisfaction with life refers to how satisfied a person is with his or her life. That is one important component of subjective well-being and happiness.

Another aspect of subjective well-being is the kind of emotions people experience. So,

more specifically, you can say subjective well-being is equal to high positive emotion, low negative emotion, and high life satisfaction. So, the more positive emotions you experience in your life, the more satisfied you are with your life, and the more happiness or subjective well-being you will experience. So, generally, these concepts of emotions and life satisfaction are measured using self-report questionnaires, which are standardized tools.

Now, when we talk about life satisfaction, it is more about how you evaluate your life. So, life satisfaction is a cognitive component, which basically means that when you look at your life, how do you evaluate it? Are you happy with your life? Are you satisfied with your life, or are you not satisfied with your life? So, life satisfaction can also be measured in different ways. One aspect is that it can be measured domain-wise, another way to measure it is general life satisfaction. So, when we talk about domain-wise satisfaction, we are talking about a specific aspect of one's life. For example, every human being has different domains in their life, such as personal life, professional life, etc. So, domain wise measuring of life satisfaction involves asking people about their satisfaction with different domains of their lives. For example, questions such as "Are you satisfied with your professional life? Are you satisfied with your personal life?" are asked. These domains can also be further distinguished or separated. Another way to measure life satisfaction is through general life satisfaction, considering everything taken together in one's life and how satisfied one is with one's life. So, this is how it can be measured.

So there are standardized tools for measuring life satisfaction. So, life satisfaction is a cognitive component based on your evaluation of life. On the other hand, affect represents the emotional side of subjective well-being. So, affect basically talks mostly about the emotional aspect, which typically comprises positive and negative emotions. So, to what extent and what is the frequency of positive emotions experienced compared to negative emotions? If you experience more positive emotions compared to negative emotions, your affect balance is positive, which means you are more likely to score higher on subjective well-being. These are the two important components: the emotional component as well as the cognitive component.

Both together give us a sense of subjective well-being or happiness score in one's life. This is how subjective well-being is conceptualized and measured in positive psychology. In the measurement part, let us look at what kind of standardized tools are used to measure subjective well-being or happiness. Let us look at it from some of the possible samples of items that are used. So, one of the primary challenges in happiness research was how to measure it because it is very difficult to measure a subjective concept.

People may have so many things on their minds when they talk about happiness. So, how do you measure it effectively? I have already discussed how it is conceptualized, what the components are, but then in terms of actual measuring, how do you measure it? Subjective well-being research addresses this by allowing participants to define happiness in their own terms. So, here we have not proposed any specific boundaries in terms of what they take into account while thinking about the satisfaction of life or thinking about positive emotions. So, it is the people who define their happiness; no one else can say whether he or she is happy or not, or what should be included in the concept of happiness.

So, in all these questionnaires, general questions are asked, but what they take into account regarding the different aspects in terms of arriving at this answer is completely given subjectively by the participant freely. So, happiness is defined in terms of their subjective concept; that is why it is called subjective well-being. This makes the person the best judge of their own happiness, and that should be the best criterion because it is only the person who can judge their own life; no one else can do that. So, researchers would simply ask questions like "Are you happy?" or "How happy are you?". This approach is grounded in the subjective nature of happiness and proved surprisingly effective in terms of measuring it. These are some sample questions. Research shows that asking this kind of question gives a very reliable indicator of how people feel about their lives. Studies show that individuals who subjectively report that they have higher satisfaction with their life and higher happiness in their life, behave consistently with these feelings, and others also perceive them as happier and more satisfied, supporting the validity of self-reported happiness. Now, when asking these kinds of questions, one may say that these people can simply lie, and we may not get an accurate picture of people's happiness, but that's not the case.

When large-scale studies were conducted, it showed that people who reported higher happiness and life satisfaction behaved according to the scores; they were actually happier in their lives, and it was corroborated by other people in their lives. So, it reflects the validity of these self-report questionnaires or instruments that are used to measure happiness. So, it is not just an artificial construct.

So, various measurement instruments were developed to assess happiness and subjective well-being. All these instruments are focused on understanding the self-perception of happiness, such as how people perceive their happiness level in their lives. It asks individuals to compare themselves with others.

It also responds to statements like, "In most ways, my life is ideal," and they need to agree or disagree. Some questioners use cartoon faces ranging from a big smile to a deep frown that best represent their feelings. So, pictures, cartoon pictures, or emojis are used with the happy face, the sad face, and so on. So, these are some examples of the different ways questionnaires have been used to measure happiness.

For example, using emojis and cartoons, with faces, comes closest to expressing how you feel about your life as a whole. One can pick whatever best represents their emotional state. Some questionnaires, for example, ask certain questions like, "In most ways, my life is close to ideal." So, for the response, you have to either agree or disagree.

Questions like "I am satisfied with my life" are asked, and you need to indicate whether you strongly agree or strongly disagree; it is a seven-point scale. So, in that range, one can take whatever is appropriate according to one's state of life. Other ways to measure happiness include questions like, "Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself less happy, or more happy". So, it is a comparative scale. You can give a score according to your perceptions of how you compare your life to your peers.

Another type of question is that "Some people are generally happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this

characterization describe you?” So, like this, the different formats are available as standardized tools that can be used to measure happiness of people in research, using these kinds of questionnaires. These are some examples; not all items are included here, as these are sample items that reflect how happiness is measured in positive psychology. So, we can get a score from all these questionnaires and assess the level, whether it is high, low, medium, and so on. Now, are the scores that people give in terms of happiness or subjective well-being stable? So, that is an important question.

Now, if this score keeps changing—if I take a score today for a person and tomorrow for the same person, and it changes—then there is no validity of such scores because this will keep changing every day. There is no meaning to such a kind of measurement. So, the question is, are the scores that we get out of these questionnaires reliable? Are they valid in terms of stability? So, that's a very important question in terms of research. So, the key question in subjective well-being research was whether happiness scores represent a stable aspect of a person or if they're just temporary mood fluctuations. If it is a very temporary thing, then there is no use in measuring it and making theories about it.

Now, scientific evidence supports the view that an individual's average happiness and life satisfaction levels are relatively stable over time. Most research shows that the scores people give are generally very stable. They don't change overnight for most of these questionnaire scores, with studies showing consistent self rating of subjective well-being over many years. Even after many years, the scores almost remain the same.

There can be some variation, but the scores are quite stable. Even after years, the scores come out to be very similar, which reflects its stable score. The positive personality traits can remain stable for up to 30 years. Now they are talking about traits related to personality.

Personality is a stable concept. If somebody has an extroverted personality and is outgoing, that doesn't change overnight. So, personality traits are very stable. So, in a study on happiness stability, Harker and Keltner found that positive emotions in high school significantly correlated with well-being even 30 years later. So, when scores were taken in

high school, they were almost predictive of happiness even after 30 years. So, it shows that most of these scores taken from the people remain stable even after years.

So, there is stability in the scores of subjective well-being. Now, the next important question that arises when we talk about subjective well-being or happiness is, can we become happier, or can we increase our level of happiness? So, that is a very pragmatic question because we all want to be happier. Thousands of self-help books seem to talk about various strategies to increase our happiness. But the question is, is it possible? Actually, can we do that? Thousands of self-help books are available on Amazon or in any bookstore that discuss how to make your life happier, but what are the findings in terms of research? Can we become happier, and if so, how can we do that? In the research literature, there are sources of both optimism and pessimism regarding this question, which basically means certain research shows that it is difficult to increase our happiness level, because there are certain obstacles, and there is another line of research that is also optimistic in terms of the possibility of increasing happiness sustainably in one's life. So, let us see what these two are, both pessimism as well as optimism in this direction. Sources of pessimism about why some researchers are not very optimistic in terms of changing the happiness level of people include certain inherent obstacles in our mind-body system. Two such obstacles are the genetic set point and hedonic adaptation. Let us see how these two factors are obstacles to enhancing the level of happiness in our lives.

So, the first one is the genetic set point. Now, genetic set point basically means our genes determine who we are. Physical structure is largely determined by the genes, including height, skin color, complexion, and everything else determined by the genes. Many psychological aspects are also influenced by the genetic composition that we inherit from our parents. So, genetics can play a very important role in our physical structure, as well as how it can influence our mental or emotional aspects of life.

So, genetics can set limits based on our experience, including emotions and happiness. So, genes can influence the emotional aspects of your life. So, it is possible that certain people are generally happier compared to other people, not because of any specific external

reasons, but simply because of their genetic composition. They are generally more likely to experience positive emotions, because of body chemistry and other factors, the gene influences them in a positive sense which are more likely to release certain hormones and neurotransmitters that can improve their mood much more effectively than other people. So, genetics can influence our moods and our emotions, and that is where it can set certain limits to the extent to which you can experience those moods. So, genetics can determine certain aspects of our emotions and happiness; it can influence them. If genetics can influence our happiness and moods, it means that happiness is very strictly controlled by genetics, and it is very difficult to change. A growing body of literature has accumulated evidence that we all have a baseline level of happiness, which is in part influenced by our genetics.

So, happiness is not completely determined by the genes, but is in-part determined by genes. This means that even though happiness may be very largely determined by genes, it is not 100 percent determined. So, what is your basic baseline level in general? How do you experience life? How do you experience emotions in life? That is your baseline level when everything is normal in one's life, whether you are generally in a positive mood or generally in a sad mood, can be influenced by genes, at least in part. So, that is why our happiness level generally remains relatively stable, because of this set point.

So, what happens? Here in the graph, it is shown that when something good happens, your happiness score increases, but after some time you revert to your baseline level. So, this is the baseline level where we generally remain most of the time. If something good happens, our happiness increases, and then slowly, slowly, we come back to the set point again. When something bad happens, our happiness decreases, and then after some time, our happiness level moves back to the baseline level again. So, like this, our life goes on in this pattern, but ultimately, we remain in this baseline. So, happiness can be determined by our genetic composition. So, genes can set this baseline level, and your happiness can increase, and decrease based on what is happening in your life.

But ultimately, we'll return to that baseline level again. So that's one important aspect

because many researchers are not very optimistic in that sense. So, there may be temporary shifts, but ultimately, we'll come back to our baseline level, which is determined by our genetic composition. So, how do we know that there is a genetic set point for happiness? What is the evidence for this? Now, evidence mostly comes from genetic research on twin studies. So, twin studies basically study identical twins who have been found to report a more similar level of happiness than fraternal twins, even if they were raised in different households.

Now, when we mostly want to understand the influence of genes and environment, researchers generally study identical twins and fraternal twins. There are two types of twins: one is identical twins, and the other is non-identical, also called fraternal twins. Now, identical twins are the twins who look exactly alike. So, they have a 100 percent identical genetic structure. Non-identical twins, or fraternal twins, have about 50% of the same genetic structure, which is similar to that of any other siblings.

So, these identical twins give us a very good opportunity to study because they are exactly the same in terms of genetic composition. So, if you find that identical twins are more similar in certain characteristics compared to fraternal twins or non-identical twins, then we can be more confident that their genes are playing a more important role because they are very similar in genetic composition. However, one problem in this research is that if identical twins are in the same families, that means they are also in the same environment. Then it is difficult to say whether this similarity of the characteristics can be attributed to the environment or the genetic composition. So, for that, researchers identified identical twins who were reared apart, separated after birth within six months of their birth, and raised in different families.

For example, suppose one identical twin remained with the biological parents, and the other one was adopted by someone else. Researchers tried to identify such cases and found that even though identical twins were raised in very different environments, their emotional and happiness levels seem to be very similar, their personality traits and intelligence levels were also very similar.

Even though it may not be 100% the same, but the correlation was found to be very high. So, twin studies with identical twins have reported a similar level of happiness than fraternal twins, even if they were raised in different households. That means the gene is contributing to these similarities. We can be very sure about that now because environmental influences were separated. So, the twin studies give us very good evidence of how genes play a role in our happiness, emotional experiences, and so on. So, if something is influenced by genes, then it is largely determined by a factor over which we don't have much control.

Now heritability coefficient means to what extent a particular trait can be explained by genetics in a population. So, although studies have found varying heritability coefficients, ranging from 0.25 to 0.55, the overwhelming conclusion of this research is that happiness has a large genetic component. So, although different coefficients were found in different studies, most of the studies give us a sense that there is a large genetic component to emotion and happiness. Now, another thing that is connected to genetics at this point, which is also connected to the concept of the stability of happiness, is called personality traits.

Now, personality traits are also greatly influenced by genes. These are basically the characteristics that are very stable and by which we identify a person, and these characteristics define the person and make this person different from another individual. So, we define people with certain characteristics, such as this person is very extroverted, and this person is introverted. So, that means this is like a defining characteristic of the person, and it is a relatively stable characteristic.

So, those are called personality traits. So, these personality traits may underlie the genetic influences on happiness. Subjective well-being is highly positively correlated with extraversion and negatively correlated with neuroticism. Therefore, certain traits, such as extraversion is very strongly connected to happiness.

Generally, people who are more extroverted tend to report higher happiness. Neuroticism is another trait that is related to emotional instability in people who are more nervous, and

so on. The report shows that people with higher neuroticism tend to report less happiness in their lives. So, these personality traits are also connected to happiness levels, and these are very stable aspects. Generally, it is difficult to change these traits. So, if happiness is also determined by personality traits, then it is also difficult to change because personality can have a genetic component. Genetics may influence personality, which may influence our happiness and so on. So, there can also be many indirect connections to it. So, some research suggests that the genetic influence on extroversion, neuroticism, and another trait called conscientiousness entirely explains the heritability of subjective well-being because genetic influences tend to set certain personality characteristics, which can ultimately influence our happiness level. So, this is another reason for the stability of happiness, and for this reason, it is difficult to change it. So, personality traits can predict happiness better than many of these life circumstances. Personality predicts happiness more strongly than life circumstances.

So, self-reports of subjective well-being were found to be very stable across a 10-year period for people, regardless of whether their income increased, decreased, or stayed the same. So, a lot of life circumstances keep changing, but still, people's happiness level tend to remain the same because of probably genetic and personality influences. So, these findings suggest that we are disposed to experience a certain level of happiness irrespective of our life circumstances. So, this is one reason why some researchers are very pessimistic about changing happiness levels, as it is controlled by factors that are not in our control, like genetics and personality traits.

Another reason why some people are pessimistic about it is something called the adaptation process. For example, if I ask you this question, when some major life changes happen, either positive or negative, do they really affect the long-term level of happiness? Do they change your happiness level for a very long time, or is it a very short-term thing? Can you think of a time when you were very happy because of something positive happening in your life, like buying a new car or house, did your happiness last long? Can you think of a time when you were very sad because of certain bad incidents, did your sorrow last long? So, these are the questions that try to find out whether the impact of changes in your life

on happiness lasts for a long time or not. These questions are addressed by a concept called hedonic adaptation.

Generally, this impact of outside events doesn't last long. One of the reasons for this is hedonic adaptation. People experience an increase in happiness following positive events and decline in happiness after negative ones. However, this shift in happiness does not last. We will come back to our baseline level sooner or later. Growing literature has shown that individuals become habituated to changes in their lives through hedonic adaptation.

Whatever changes happen, we adapt to them. New changes become the new normal, and then you keep thinking about something else. So, let's say your income increased; you'll be very happy for some time, but after some time, this new increased income becomes the new normal in your life. So it doesn't give any kind of boost in your happiness after some time. It initially increases happiness, then after some time, it becomes a normal thing.

So that's called hedonic adaptation. So, hedonic adaptation is the psychological process by which people become accustomed or habituated to a positive or negative stimulus such that the emotional effect of that stimulus is reduced over time. So, after some time, these changes that happen don't impact our happiness too much; that's hedonic adaptation. In simpler terms, it can be said that hedonic adaptation refers to the process by which individuals return to a baseline level of happiness following changes in life circumstances. After changes in life circumstances, we again return to our baseline level; that's called hedonic adaptation.

So it's a psychological mechanism through which we adapt to changes in life. Therefore, happiness can also be influenced by genetic factors, but at the psychological level, we also adapt to it by hedonic adaptation. So, hedonic adaptation is based on the concept called the hedonic treadmill, which basically says that while our feet move, we remain stagnant. So, if you see how a treadmill works, you are running, but at the same time, you are in the same position. You might have run about a few kilometers on the treadmill, but if you look, you are in the same position at the end of the process.

So, that's called the hedonic treadmill. So, hedonic adaptation is similar to the treadmill, many changes happen, but still, we get back to the same baseline level. So, that's called the hedonic treadmill concept, based on which adaptation happens. So, adaptation may be caused by genetic or personality factors. So, it can be influenced. Why do we adapt? Genetics can also influence personality factors, and hedonic treadmill can also influence. Hedonic treadmill is more of a psychological mechanism that can be influenced by other factors.

So, this hedonic adaptation is actually very important. It serves very important functions in our lives. It is because of hedonic adaptation that we are able to survive in this life. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to survive. Imagine if something bad happens, and you go into depression and are not able to come back. So you will never be able to function properly in life again. When something bad happens, we may be sad for some time, but later we come back to the baseline emotional state and start functioning properly again. This happens because of hedonic adaptation.

Hedonic adaptation protects us from all the harmful effects of prolonged negative events. So, it protects our mind so that we don't remain in a negative state for a long time. So, this adaptation process serves a very important function. It protects people from potentially dangerous psychological and physiological consequences of prolonged negative emotions or emotional states. If you are too emotionally aroused because of some negative or positive event, then it can be dangerous if you remain in that aroused emotional state for a long time because the body wants to remain in a stable state.

Therefore, excessive feelings of both negative and positive emotions for a long time can be detrimental to the body. So, adaptation allows unchanging stimuli to fade into the attentional background, so that changes in the environment receive extra attention, enabling you to adapt to the older stimuli, so that if something new happens, you can pay attention to it. It allows individuals to disengage from goals that are less likely to be successful by reducing the emotional reaction associated with them. So, it helps you to disengage from

the goals.

Whatever has happened, you disengage, and then you engage with the newer things. It happens because of hedonic adaptation. So, survival-wise, it plays a very important role. Now, what happens is that in this whole process, we also get adapted to positive changes, so if something good happens, that feeling doesn't last long. In that sense, it is an obstacle to happiness, but it is good for survival.

For negative events, it has a very important survival value; for positive events, it can kind of reduce your duration and intensity of your happiness level. However, hedonic adaptation is more likely to be complete and faster in the case of positive experiences than negative experiences. We generally adapt to positive changes very quickly. In negative situations, it takes more time to adapt because the impact of negative events is much stronger on our minds. Also, many times, research shows that people may not completely adapt to a lot of negative experiences that are very severe, like disability and unemployment. These experiences can still bother after years. But in the case of positive events, whatever positive things happen in your life, we generally get completely adapted to them.

This is what research shows. So, we are more likely to adapt to positive experiences much more quickly and completely compared to negative experiences in life. So, hedonic adaptation is very fast and complete in the case of a positive event. The implication is that your happiness and the boost in positive emotions will return very quickly compared to negative things, which take more time to adapt and adjust. There is consistent evidence that people, on average, adapt completely to major positive life changes such as getting married, acquiring a new job, and even winning the lottery.

It's a very short-term thing. People get happier for a while, then they come back very quickly. So, this may be one of the obstacles in the pursuit of happiness. So, we are talking about why some researchers are pessimistic about increasing happiness. These are some of the reasons. One reason is the genetic set point, which is connected to a personality trait, and the other reason is hedonic adaptation, which is very quick and much faster in the case

of positive events compared to negative ones. So, why is adaptation faster in the case of positive experience compared to negative? The primary reason is that the impact of negative events is much stronger in our minds. So, coming out of it also takes more time. So, the cognitive effects of negative stimuli are stronger than those of positive stimuli. Generally, whenever something negative happens in our lives and something positive happens, the negative things obviously influence us the most. We are to pay attention to negative things; that is how our mind is designed, because there is a danger in negative things, and we are more likely to remember them, more likely to process them, and it takes more time to come out of them.

This is generally because the impact of negative things is much stronger, so people are more likely to monitor, pay attention to, remember, and be influenced by negative feedback than by positive feedback. Negative information is stronger than positive information in first impressions, non-verbal messages, interpersonal interactions, and evaluative categorization. So, even when we meet other people, let's say it's the first time you are meeting someone, if there is anything negative about that person in their appearance, thought processes, speaking, etc., there may also be positive things, but people's attention will first go to the negative aspects, and it will influence their decision-making about judging the person.

Even if something is negative, it will influence more than if there are positive things for the person. So, negative events influence us more. That is why even on social media, people keep showing more negative things because people pay more attention to those things. So, that is the reason why, sometimes adaptation to negative things takes more time and may not be complete in certain severe situations that are very negative in life, such as disability. Now, if these factors are creating an obstacle to our happiness, is it useless to pursue happiness or make our lives happier? Is this whole pursuit useless? Now it is clear that these are the barriers to the pursuit of happiness, such as genetic set point, personality, and hedonic adaptation.

Hedonic adaptation again seems to be more complete and faster in the case of positive

experiences than in the case of negative experiences. So, is the pursuit of happiness a futile pursuit? Now, it is not a futile pursuit because there are certain optimistic findings available that show it is possible to change our happiness level. For example, a certain study by Lyubomirsky and others found that some interventions for increasing happiness seem to work, such as practicing virtues like gratitude, forgiveness, and so on. Certain interventions for enhancing positivity or happiness seem to work in a sustainable way. It changes people's happiness levels. Many motivational and attitudinal factors have been found to facilitate happiness and well-being, such as pursuing intrinsically motivating goals and optimism.

Various motivational factors also seem to enhance happiness levels and facilitate happiness. Many studies indicate that older people tend to be happier than younger ones. This at least indirectly indicates that people can enhance their happiness by using attitudinal and volitional factors. Some research shows that as people grow older, their happiness actually increases, even though many physical problems occur. This seems to suggest that with the passage of time, people can change their happiness level.

So, these are also some of the sources of optimism. So, how do we reconcile these opposing findings? So, this paradox—how do you reconcile it? This can be reconciled using the sustainable happiness model proposed by Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade. They proposed a model called the sustainable happiness model. This model says that there are three major determinants or factors that influence the happiness of human life- these are the genetic set point, life circumstances, and intentional activities. They initially gave certain percentages, which are not absolute, and they may not be very appropriate based on different research. They propose that the genetic set point, which is a very strong determinant, accounts for about 50 percent.

Although individually this percentage may not work, it is just an indicative percentage. Life circumstances account for a very small percentage, which is 10 percent, and intentional activities make up the remaining 40%.

So, let us see these three factors. So, one is a genetic set point. We have already discussed

it. These are the influences of genes, and we have found that twin studies show that genes play a very important role in our happiness levels. So, there is a heritability coefficient that could be around 50% and is influenced by genes. So, this is one factor that determines your set point. These are some of the pieces of evidence that are shown from the twin studies.

Long-term panel studies and twin studies show that the test-retest correlation of 0.50, which means 50%, could also be attributed to genes. The second factor is called life circumstances. Life circumstances are those factors that are secured and stable elements of a person's life, which are incidental but relatively stable facts of an individual's life. So, whatever the stable aspects of one's life, what we generally get from birth are called life circumstances. It may include things like National, Geographic and cultural region of residence, where your birth has taken place, what kind of country, what kind of regions, and so on; demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity; individual personal history such as experiences of past trauma, accidents, and so on; and life status variables such as marital status, income, health, and religious affiliation.

These are all life circumstance-related variables. All this could influence the happiness level. Some research shows that certain circumstances are more strongly related to happiness or subjective well-being. These are like being married, having a religious affiliation or some faith in a religion, being employed, being healthy, and having sufficient wealth to meet basic needs. These are some of the factors that are related to life circumstances and have been found to be strongly connected to subjective well-being. Now, research shows that all these life circumstance factors don't contribute very strongly to our happiness level. Their contribution could be only 8% to 15%, somewhere on average, maybe 10%. Why is this the case? We generally tend to think that life circumstances are the major factors that determine the happiness of people, such as your income, many other things, and the kind of country you live in, and so on. But they don't actually contribute very strongly to our happiness levels. The reason could be that we adapt to these life circumstances because they are generally constant things. So obviously, they don't give a very strong boost to our happiness. So, we adapt to life circumstances. Whatever situation you are in, after some time, you get adapted to it. They don't influence you much after some

time. So, there are a variety of life circumstances, most of which are very constant factors in one's life. As a result, we adapt to them. So, they may not actually contribute much to our happiness level. Now, both this genetic set point and life circumstances are largely not in our control. These are like situations we find ourselves in. Although we can change some life circumstances, most of the life circumstances are not in our control.

So that is why we cannot do much regarding genetics and life circumstances. But the third factor that determines happiness is called intentional activities. It provides an important avenue for increasing happiness levels, and according to their model, a very strong determinant of life happiness is intentional activities. So, let us see what these intentional activities are. Intentional activities are generally effortful actions or practices that we do in our lives. With intention and effort, the various things we do daily can all contribute to our happiness level.

So, intentional here basically means effort, or things we choose to engage in. So, there is a choice in it. There is an effort involved in it. So, intentional activity does not happen automatically. It requires conscious effort. So, the researcher posited that circumstances happen to people, but intentional activities are ways that people act on their circumstances. Most of the life circumstances you find yourself in, but how you act in these life circumstances are the intentional activities. Things like what you do and how you think in your life are all part of intentional activities, and they can contribute to a large aspect of our happiness. So, intentional activities are more controllable because we choose to engage in them. There is a choice involved. We decided to do them. So, we can change them. We can control them. So, we can change our level of happiness using those intentional activities.

Genetic factors, personality, and many other things are mostly not in our control. So, they cannot be directly changes. We cannot make any interventions for those factors. So, what kinds of intentional activities do people generally do? Generally, there are three types of intentional activities. One is called a behavioral activity, which means actions such as physical activities that people do.

For example, I choose to do physical exercises every day. So that's an intentional behavioral activity that I do. So, this is an example of a behavioral activity. Then, cognitive activities. These are the thought processes or mental attitudes that we have in our lives.

For example, you decide to forgive someone. It's an intentional thing. You decide, "OK, now I should forgive this one." So, it's an attitude that you took in that situation. So, this is a cognitive intentional activity. The last one is volitional activity, which means the different activities that we do related to goal setting, how to achieve them, what kind of motivation we have, and what kind of values and interests we have in our lives in terms of reaching goals and setting goals. All of these things are called volitional activities.

So, all the intentional activities we do every day, can be categorized either as behavioral activity, cognitive activity, or volitional activity; and all these have a very strong potential to contribute to our happiness in life. Now, in positive psychology, there is something called a positive activity intervention. A lot of research has been done on interventional research where they use some of these intentional activities, which are called positive intentional activity, which basically means that these actions are positive in nature. That means they have the potential to contribute to your happiness or increase your well-being. So, all the intentional activities that are positive in nature can have the potential to increase happiness in our lives. So, in positive psychology, many of these positive activity interventions are conducted in research to see how they impact our happiness levels. So, these positive activities are simple, intentional, regular practices that mimic the healthy thoughts and behaviors associated with naturally happy people.

So, these are simple activities, actions, thought processes, and practices that kind of mimic the healthy thoughts or behaviors of people who are naturally happy. So, those activities can be done, and the more we do them, the stronger the potential to increase our happiness level. It may include things like practicing gratitude, optimistic thinking, prosocial behavior, and so forth. Many positive activities can be done. Some of the research shows that the positive activities listed here demonstrate a very strong potential for contributing to our happiness levels.

Some of these things we'll explain in detail in the upcoming lectures. For example, positive activities related to writing letters of gratitude show that gratitude itself is a very big area in terms of understanding. A lot of interventions have shown that if we change or become more experienced in gratitude in our lives, it enhances happiness very strongly.

So gratitude is just the opposite of a complaining mind. So, gratitude means recognizing that something valuable has happened in your life. There is so much goodness in your life; if you look and pay attention to that rather than just complaining about what is not there, that is an attitude of gratitude, and it has a lot of potential to enhance happiness. It involves things like writing letters of gratitude to the people whom you have not thanked enough, and so on.

Counting one's blessings is also connected to gratitude. Practicing optimism and performing acts of kindness are also very important. Using one's strength in new ways, affirming one's most important values, practicing meditation, and mindfulness—these things have been shown in research to have a very strong potential to contribute to our level of happiness. All of these are very brief; one can do them themselves. They are also very cost-effective; you don't have to spend money on these things. These are small things that can be integrated into one's life on a daily basis and have very important potential to enhance happiness. All these things actually increase our positive emotions, positive thoughts, and positive behaviors in our lives. That is how they contribute to happiness and well-being in our lives. A lot of meta-analyses and many studies that looked at all these intervention studies summarized them. Like 51 randomized control intervention studies found, people who engage in positive intentional activities such as gratitude, optimism, and mindfulness become significantly happier.

In the next two lectures, we'll be focusing on these specific positive intentional activities in more detail. So there, we'll understand more about these positive intentional activities. So, with this, I will stop here. Thank you.