

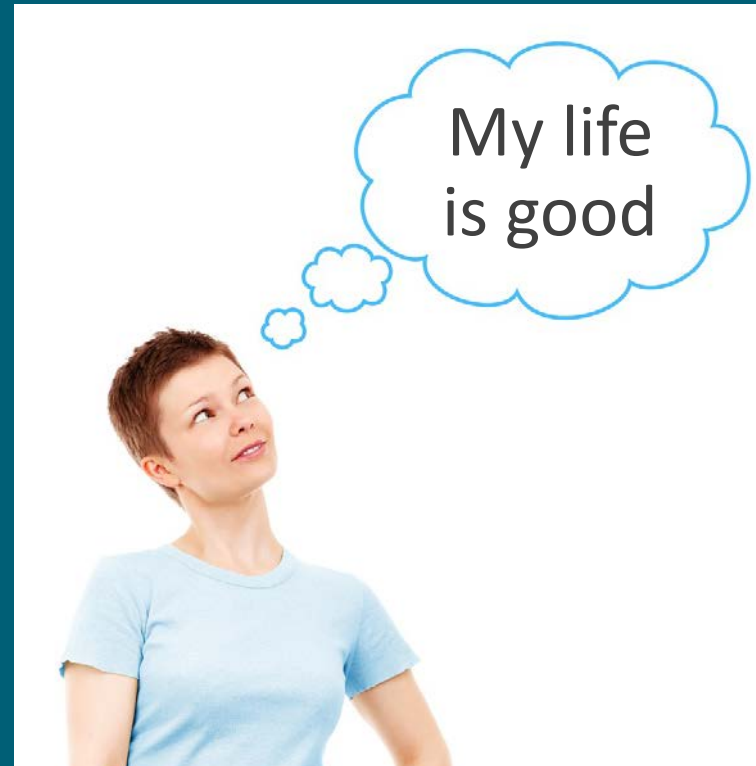
# The Science of Happiness

Emiliana Simon-Thomas, PhD

# What is Happiness?



How we feel



How we think

# Where Does Happiness Come From?

Luck?



Virtue?



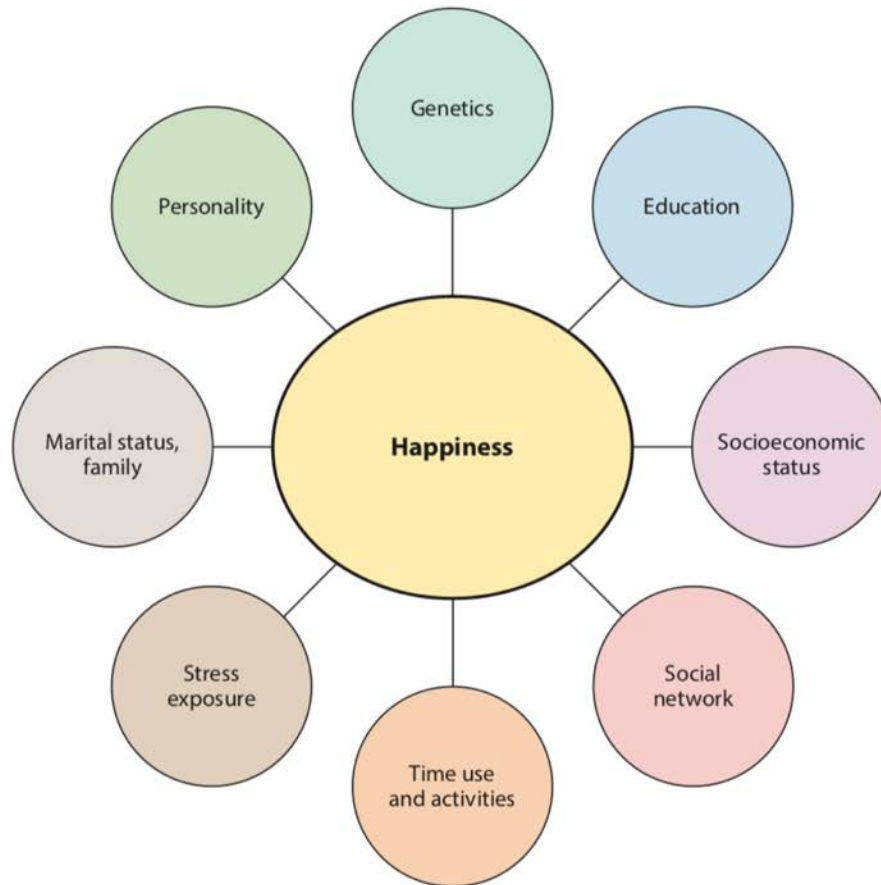
Pleasure?



Connection?



# Where Does Happiness Come From?

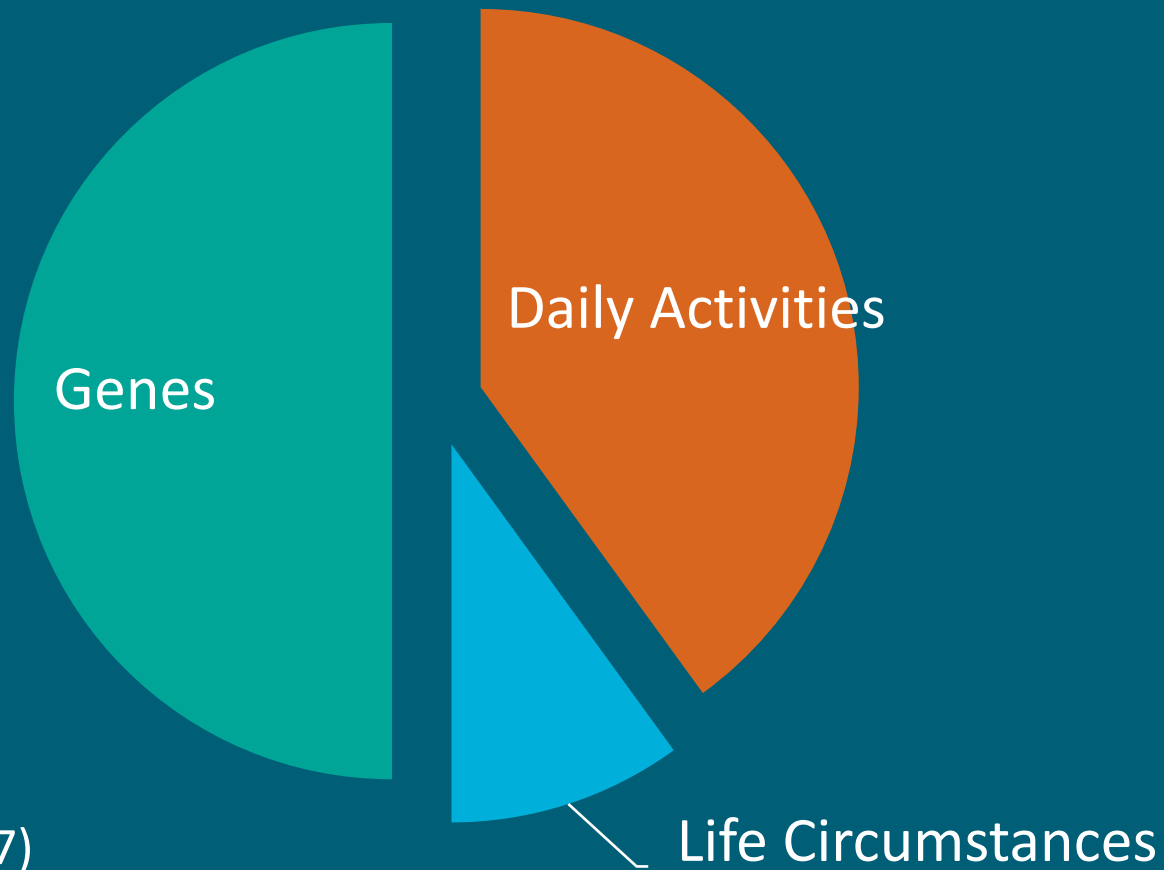


**Figure 1**

Summary of factors contributing to happiness.

(Step toe, 2019)

# Population Variance in Happiness



(Lyubormirsky, 2007)

# Happiness Defined

“...the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.”

(Lyubomirsky, 2007)

“Subjective well-being: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction.”

(Diener, 1999)

# Measuring Happiness

- Psychological Well-Being: *“I am a good person and live a good life.”*

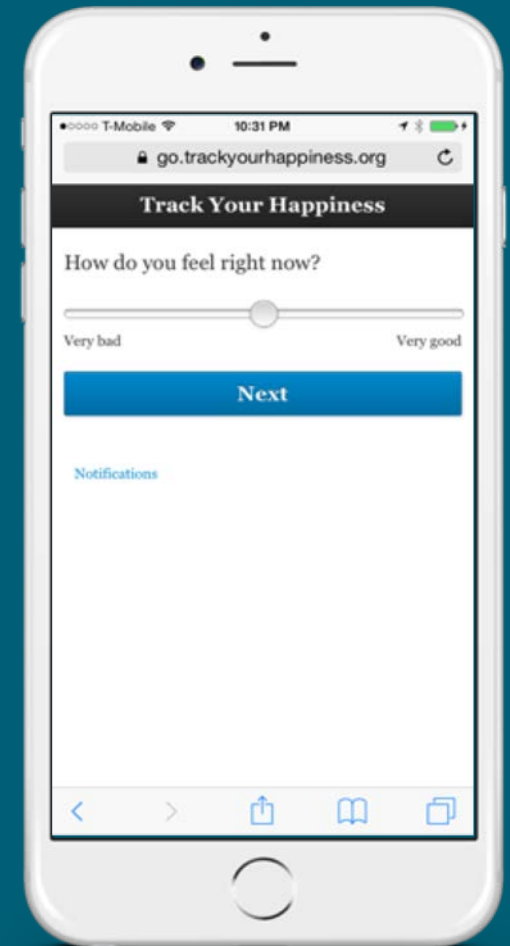
(Ryff)

- Life Satisfaction: *“In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.”*

(Diener)

- Happiness: “In general, I consider myself: 1 = not a very happy person to 7 = a very happy person.”

(Lyubomirsky)

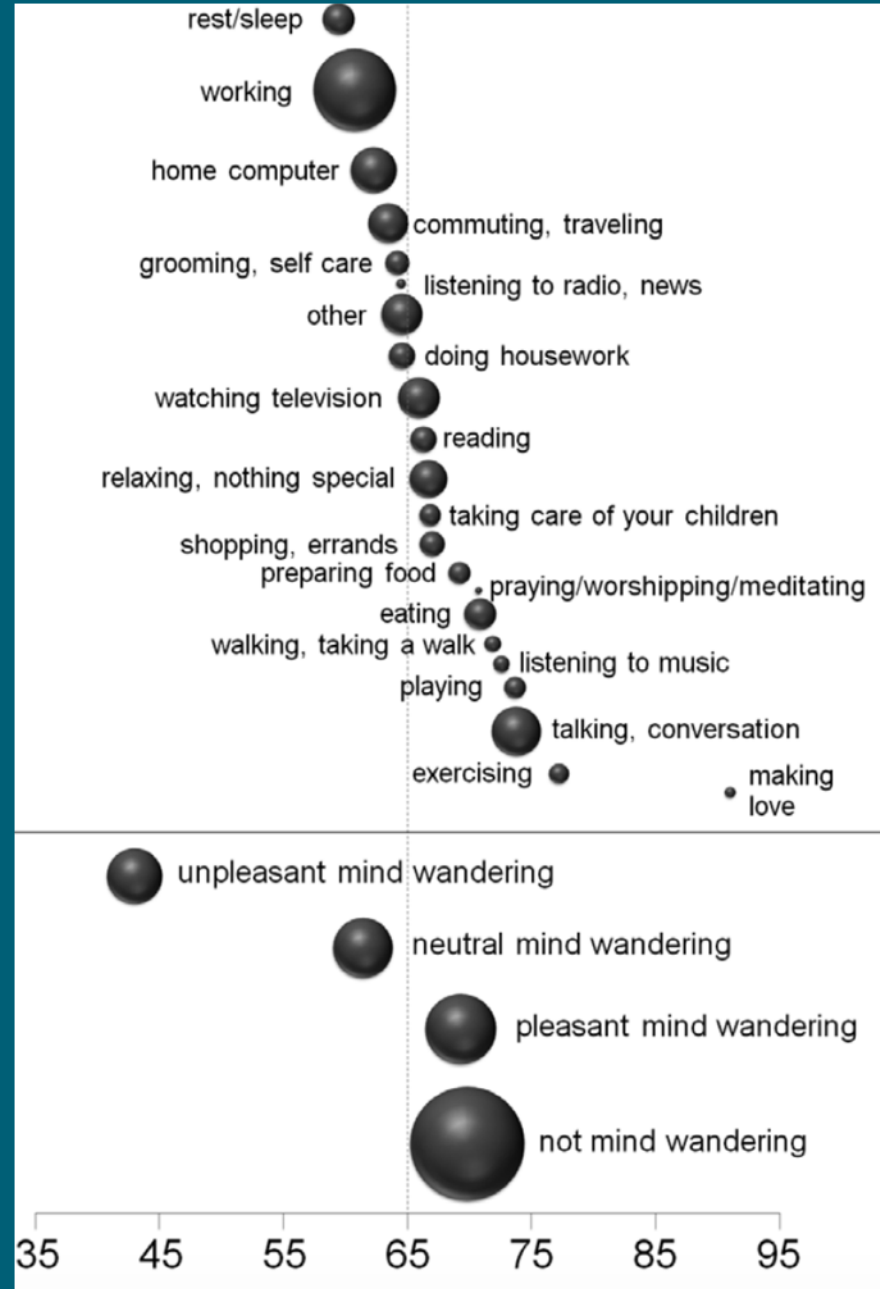


(Killingsworth)

# Key Finding

People feel better, no matter what they're doing, when they are paying attention to what they are doing.

(Killingsworth, 2010)





# Key Findings

“Social relationships ... do not guarantee high happiness, but it does not appear to occur without them.”

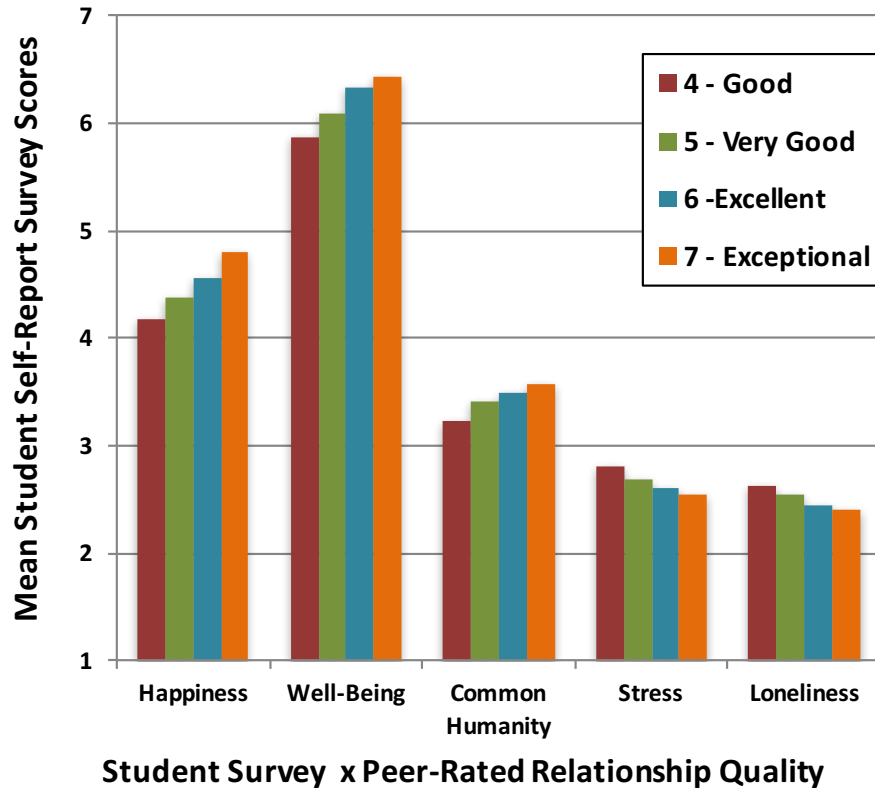
(Deiner & Seligman, 2002)

*“Social relationships, or the relative lack thereof, constitute a major risk factor for health—rivaling the effect of well established health risk factors such as cigarette smoking, blood pressure, blood lipids, obesity and physical activity”*

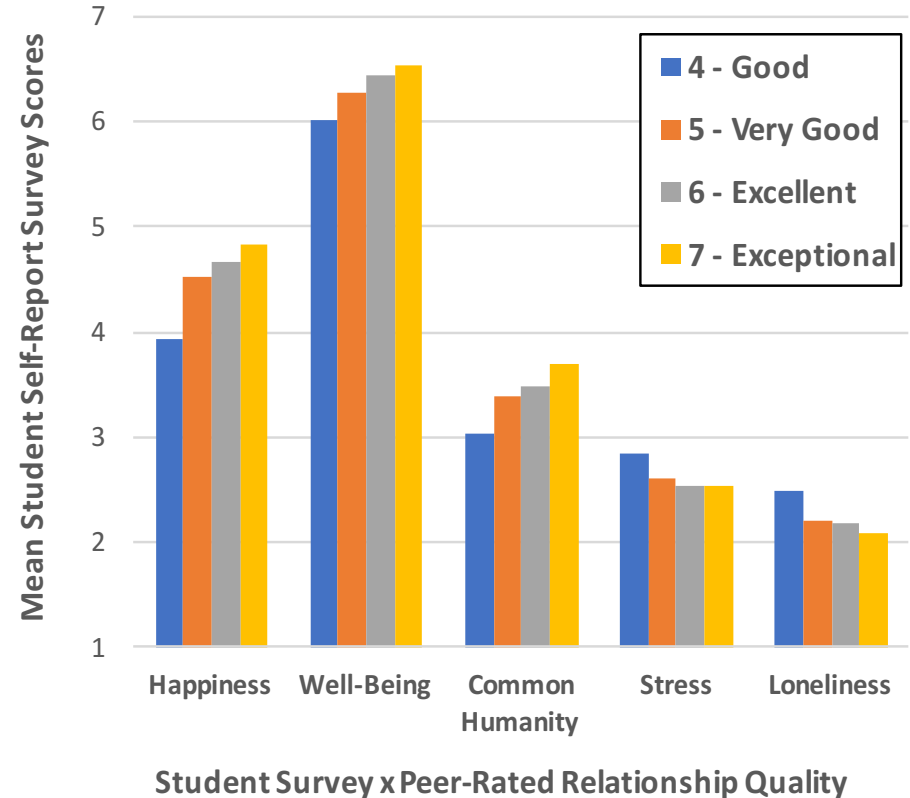
—House, Landis, and Umberson; *Science* 1988 [1]

# Key Findings

Peer Rated Relationship Quality Predicts Greater Well-Being (fall 2015, n=2.2K)

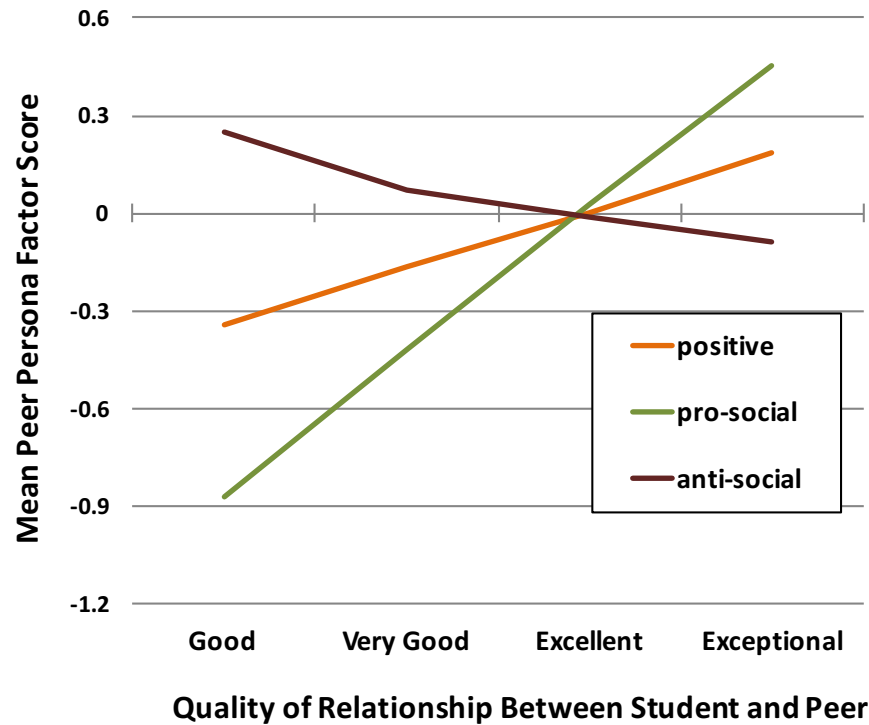


Peer Rated Relationship Quality Predicts Greater Well-Being (fall 2016, n=1K)

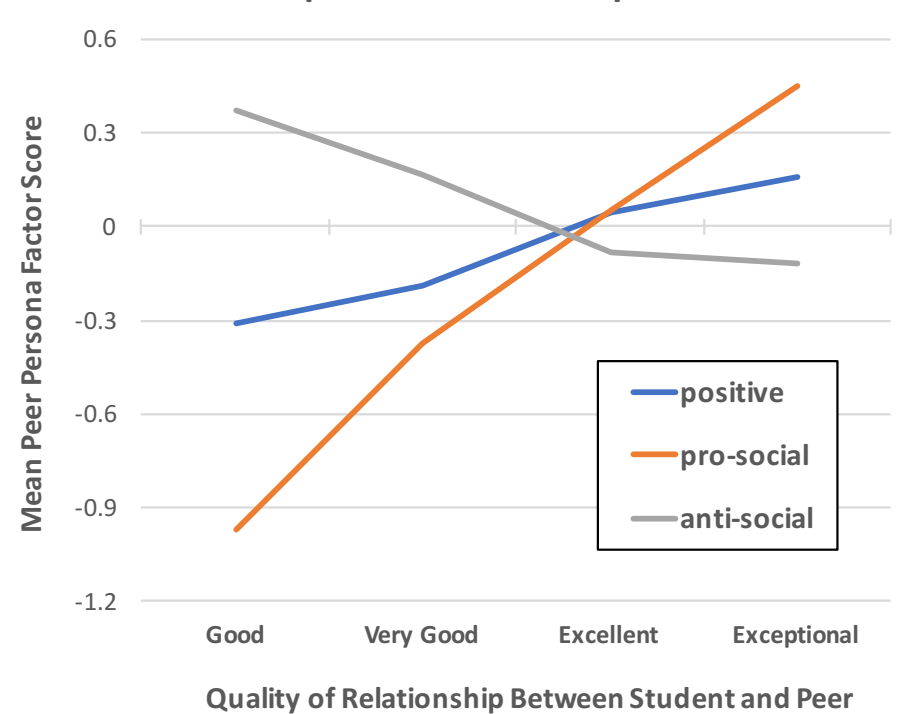


# Key Findings

Students Rated as Pro-Social are Most Likely to be in Exceptional Relationships (Fall 2015, n=2K)



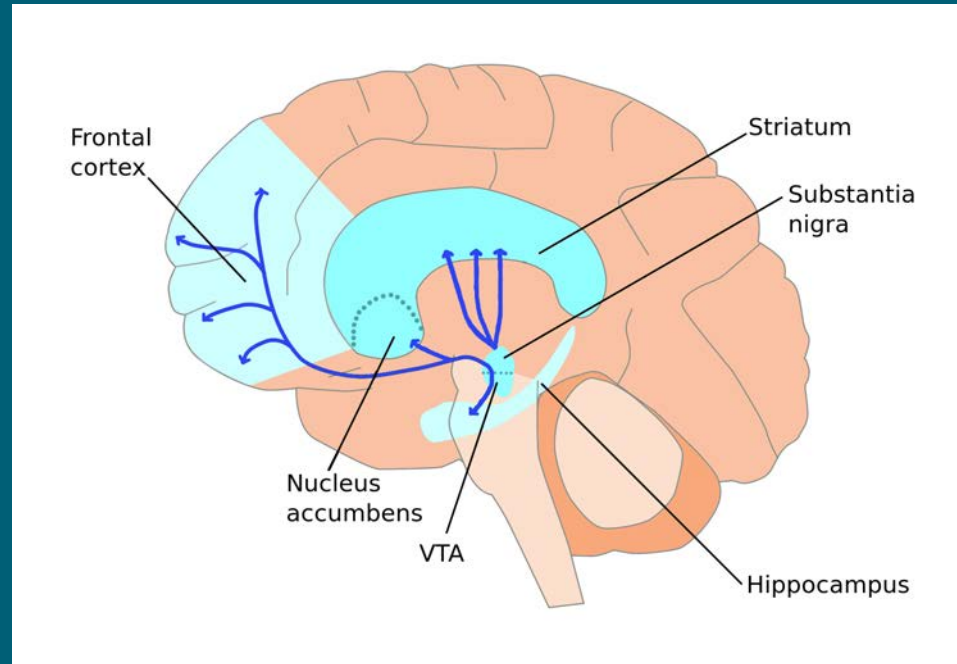
Students Rated as Pro-Social are Most Likely to be in Exceptional Relationships (Fall 2016, n=1K)



# Measuring Happiness



Expressive behavior

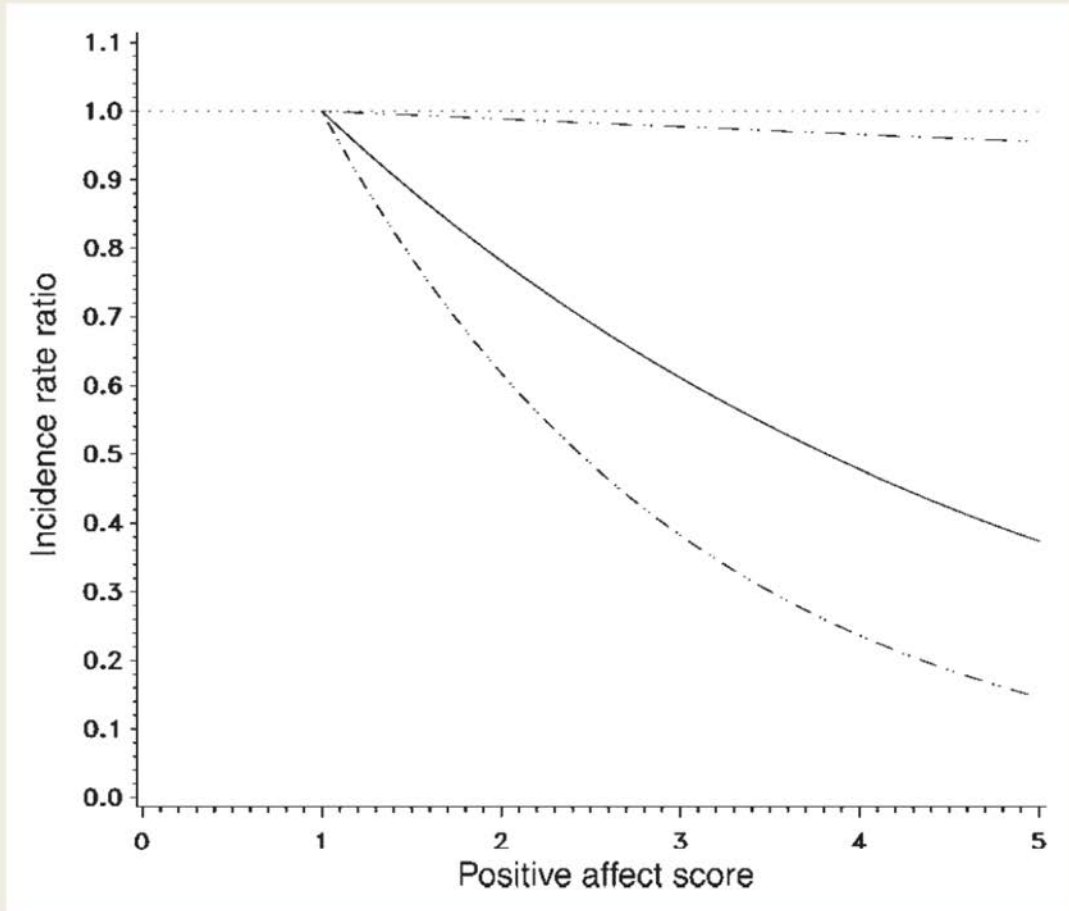


Activation of neural reward pathways

# Key Finding

Coronary heart disease rates are lower in happier people (22% lower per one point increase in happiness)

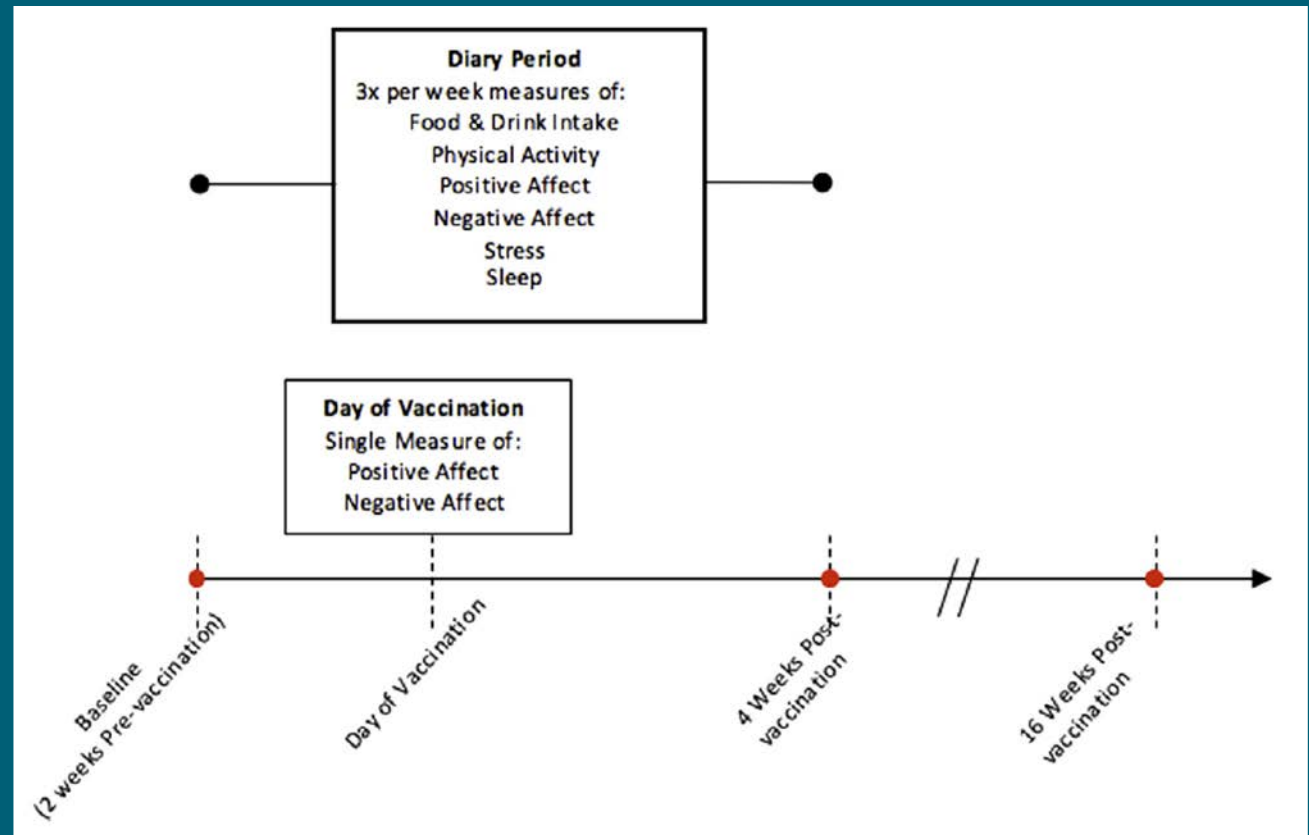
(Davidson, 2010)



**Figure 1** Cubic spline analysis of the incidence rate ratio comparing each level of positive affect to a score of 1. Solid line indicates point estimate and dashed lines indicate 95% confidence interval. Dotted line indicates no association.

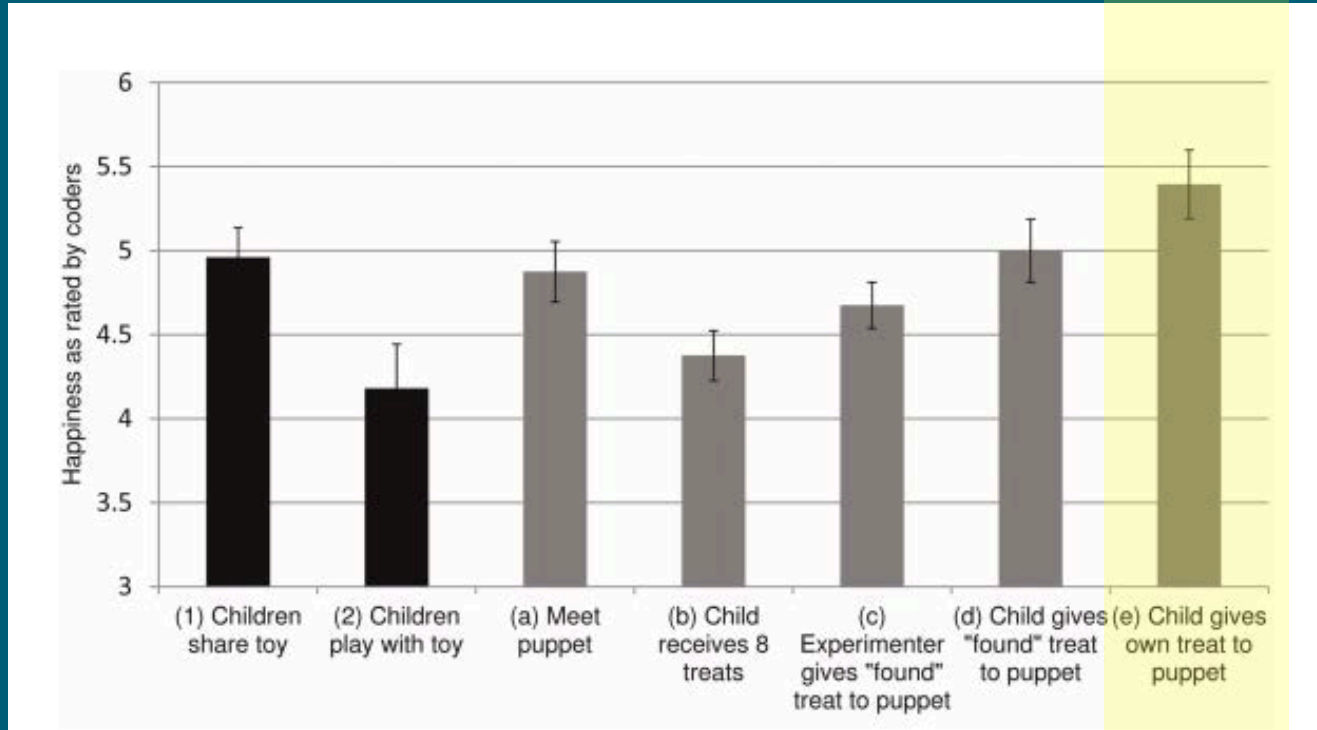
# Key Finding

Greater happiness is associated with enhanced response to vaccination



(Ayling, 2018)

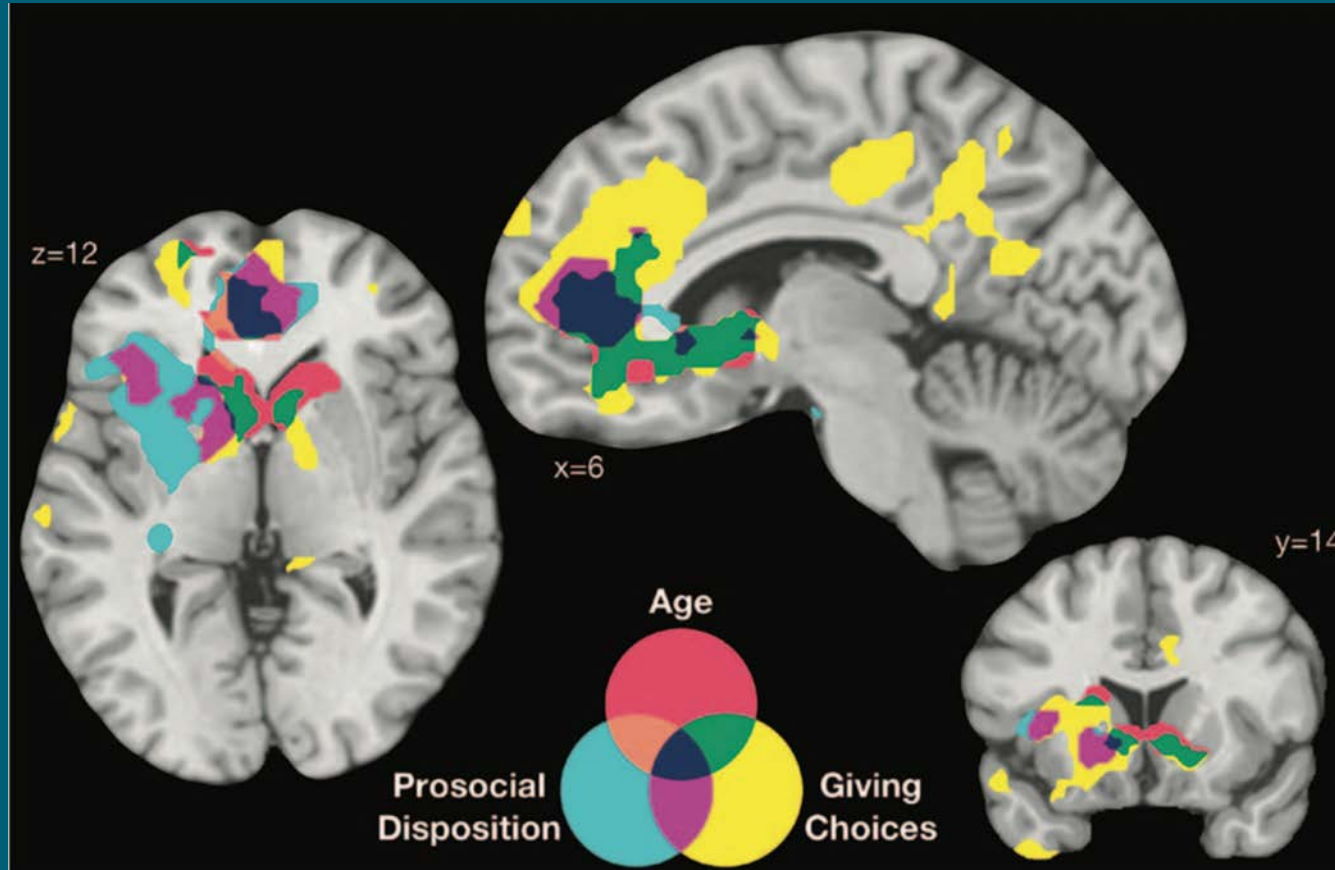
# Key Finding



Children smile most robustly when they are giving from their own reserves.

(Aknin, 2012)

# Key Finding



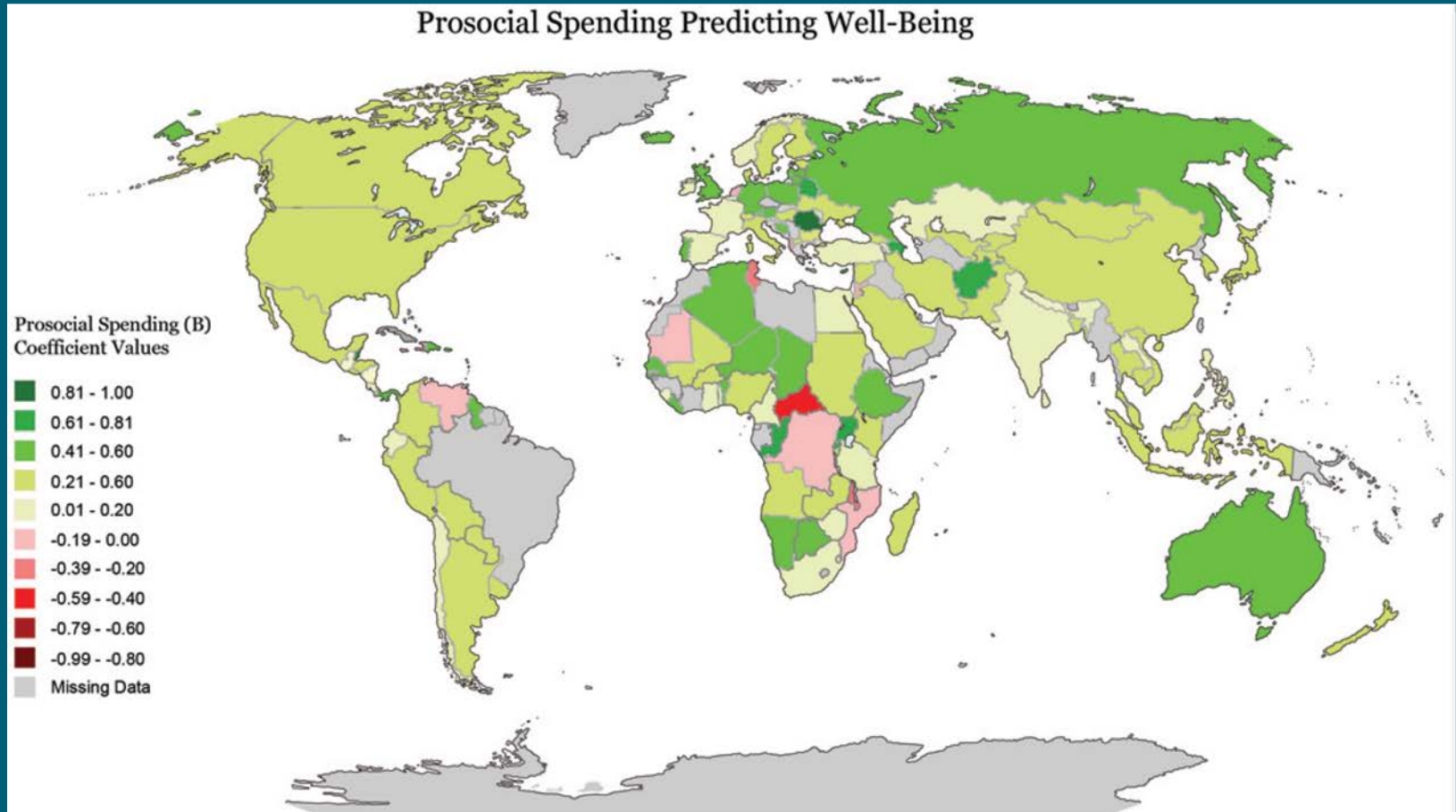
(Hubbard, 2016)

“...being kind to others registers in the brain as more like eating chocolate than like fulfilling an obligation to do what’s right.”

(Zaki, 2012)



# Key Finding



(Aknin & Dunn et. al., 2013, 2015)

# Summary of Advantages of Happiness

- Better physical health, longer life
- More satisfying relationships, engagement & sense of belonging
- More likable, and willingly helped by others
- More professional productivity and career advancement

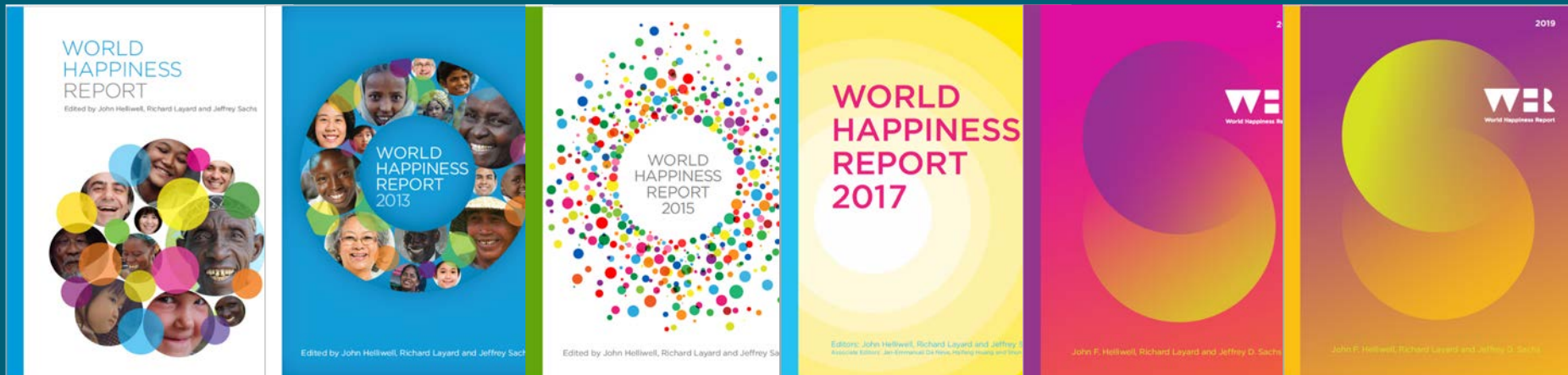
Emotion	Likeability relationship type	
	Communal	Exchange
Happy	36.6 <sup>f</sup>	33.7 <sup>e</sup>
Sad	29.7 <sup>c,d</sup>	24.7 <sup>a,g</sup>
Irritable	25.9 <sup>b,g</sup>	22.1 <sup>a</sup>
No Emotion	28.4 <sup>b,c</sup>	28.5 <sup>b,c</sup>

(Clark, 1991)

# In fact...

“Happiness is increasingly considered the proper measure of social progress and the goal of public policy.”

(Helliwell, 2017)



# Boosting Happiness

## I. Find Contentment

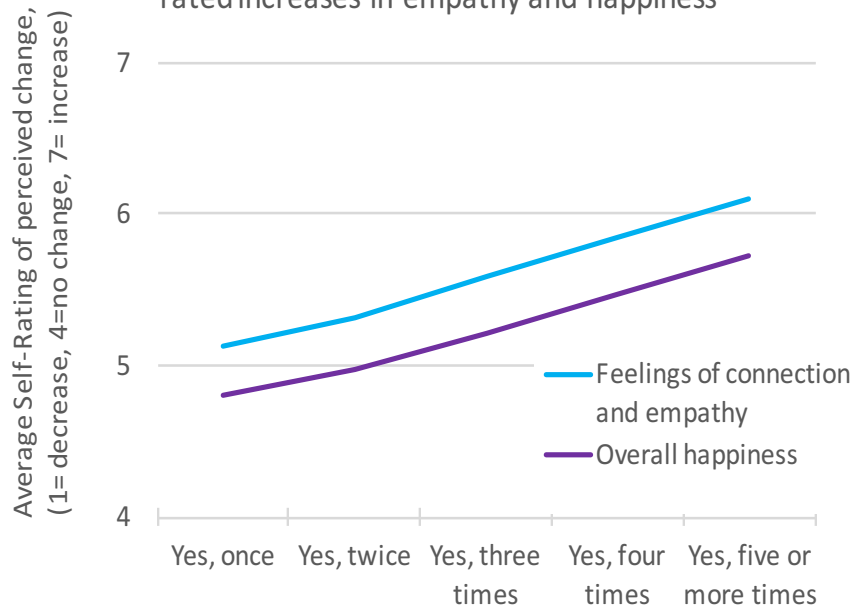
- Awareness
  - Breath practices, mindfulness
- Optimism
  - Self-compassion, satisficing, levity, awe
- Resilience
  - Labelling, disclosing, and self-distancing emotions, challenge mindset

## II. Strengthen Social Connections

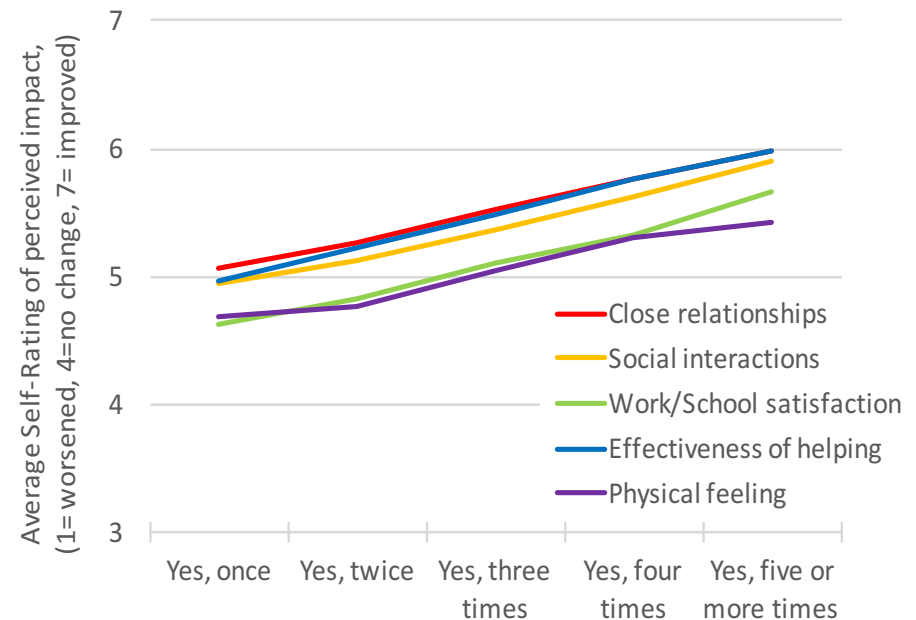
- Trust/Psychological Safety
  - Common humanity, small talk, gratitude
- Social Support
  - Empathy, compassion, help-seeking, reconciliation
- Generosity
  - kindness

# You Can Boost Happiness

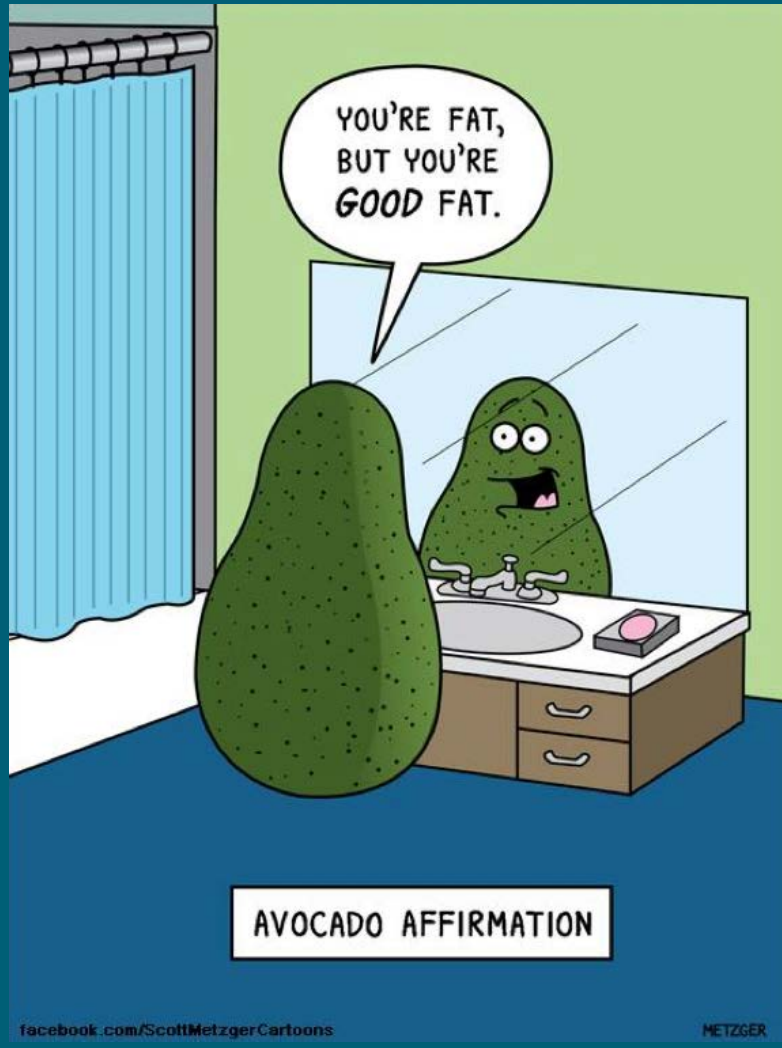
Quantity of Active Listening practice predicts self-rated increases in empathy and happiness



Quantity of Active Listening practice predicts self-rated improvements to key aspects of well-being



# In the Spirit of Levity



# In Closing

*“If I wanted to predict your happiness, and I could know only one thing about you, I wouldn’t want to know your gender, religion, health, or income. I’d want to know about your social network – about your friends and family and the strength of the bonds with them.”*

(Dan Gilbert)

# FREE Resources

## Web links

1. [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu)
2. [ggsc.berkeley.edu](http://ggsc.berkeley.edu)
3. [ggia.berkeley.edu](http://ggia.berkeley.edu)
4. [thnx4.org](http://thnx4.org)

## Online Courses on edX.org:

1. The Science of Happiness
2. Foundations of Happiness at Work
3. Mindfulness and Resilience to Stress at Work
4. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence at Work



THANK YOU!