

What Makes People Happy?

Ready!

- This unit takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. Discussions may vary.
- This unit is intended to help people understand what makes them happy, so they can strive for happiness in their own lives.
- This unit is intended for people of all ages: singles, married couples, and parents.
- Read or review the unit “What Makes People Happy?” at www.arfamilies.org click on “Family Life” then “Human Development” and scroll down to the article.
- Read through the applications and customize them to your personality, objectives, and the audience that you will be instructing.
- Hand out copies of the web unit for the group to review at home.

Grab!

- Take a copy of the handout for each participant.
- If you plan to evaluate the session, take a copy of the evaluation form for each participant.
- If you want to share it with participants, take a copy of the web unit for each person.

Go!

What makes people happy? What are some of the things that you think make you happy? Where does happiness come from?

[Allow participants to share and discuss what makes them happy. Listen to every response carefully and thoughtfully.]

Do you think if you won the lottery that you would be happy?

[Allow a few seconds for participants to decide their answer.]

Many people believe that money can buy happiness, but according to happiness researchers, people who are wealthy are no happier than people with average incomes. About what percent of Americans do you think consider themselves happy?

[Encourage participants to guess the percentage.]

Can you believe that only about 10-15 percent of Americans consider themselves to be truly happy?

[Allow participants to make comments to themselves.]

Some specific personality traits like extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness can obviously be related to people who are more likely to be happy. Does it mean that you are doomed to be unhappy if you do not possess these traits?

[Pause for response.]

No! You certainly are not doomed! In the right situation, anyone can be happy. Let's determine what makes people happy. Psychologists have observed that happy people are satisfied with life because their work and leisure time provide them opportunities to use their talents. These people are good at what they do because they love it. Happy people possess flow in their lives, which is an ideal mix between being challenged and being able to personally contribute to a specific cause. Do you have a happy balance between your work and leisure time? Is what you do for a living meaningful to you?

[Accept all answers. You may ask participants if they wish to expand on their answers.]

Happy people are also involved in meaningful relationships with close friends, family members, or employees. Having close relationships forms a support system and creates a sense of belonging. If you are involved in meaningful relationships you are more likely to take part in helping others and are more likely to seek help with your own problems. Think about all the people that you are close to in your life, and I think you will realize the happiness you receive from having meaningful relationships. Let's take a poll. In terms of married and single individuals, both male and female, who reports the most happiness?

[Allow participants to raise their hands and vote on who is the happiest.]

Are you surprised that married individuals, both male and female, are on average happier than single individuals? Meaningful relationships and flow bring a lot of happiness in to our lives. And finally, happy people are more likely to have a religious faith. In fact, people with a high spiritual commitment are twice as likely to consider themselves as happy as those who are not part of a faith community. I would like to hear some thoughts as to why you think spiritual individuals might be happier than non-spiritual individuals.

[Allow time here for discussion. Encourage participants to share their experiences and thoughts on the subject of religion and happiness.]

There are many sources from which people draw happiness, but we have talked about a few that have been directly linked to experiencing happiness. Have you found that these examples may hold true in your own lives?

[Provide a handout to each participant.]

Now we are going to apply what we know about happiness to come up with ways for us to experience more of it in our lives. There are five suggestions to strengthen your personal happiness found on your handout. To the side of each suggestion, I would like for you to come up with a specific example of how you can apply the suggestion to a part of your life that needs some joy. These could apply to your marriage, family life, work environment, friends, or just allow you to have a better outlook. For example, by the suggestion “smile often,” I might write that I am going to smile and say good morning every day to coworker that is often in a grumpy mood. What ever you write, make it personal and something that you intend to try.

[This is a very important part of the lesson. Take this opportunity to further instruct on a one-on-one level. Work with participants to come up with inventive ways to foster happiness in their lives. Encourage participants to share their thoughts with their neighbors and be as creative as possible. See if every participant can come up with at least one thought for each of the five suggestions.]

Would anyone like to share some of their ideas on ways to promote happiness in their lives?

[Have participants discuss and share their suggestions.]

What did you learn about what makes people happy?

[Have participants review what they learned.]

Have you identified what makes you happy? Do you think it is the same for every person?

[Encourage comments.]

Hopefully, you will now be more in tune with the sources of your happiness. I hope that you will sincerely try the suggestions that you wrote down on your handout, and perhaps they will bring more happiness to your life.

Original work by Jessica Law

What Makes People Happy?



1. Work on something challenging.
2. Do something for others.
3. Smile often.
4. Join a group.
5. Give someone a break.

What Makes People Happy?



Please answer the following questions in order to help us know whether this session was helpful to you.

1. This workshop gave me specific ideas that will be helpful to me.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

2. I think this session will help me be a better family member.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

3. I am glad I attended this workshop.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Comments or suggestions: