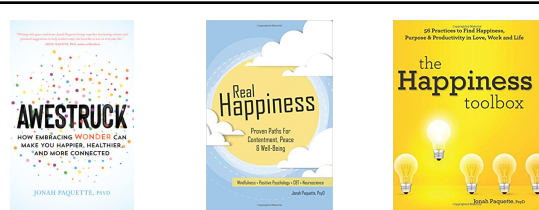


## Fostering Well-Being

Jonah Paquette, Psy.D.  
Author of *Real Happiness*, *The Happiness Toolbox*, and *Awestruck*  
[www.jonahpaquette.com](http://www.jonahpaquette.com)

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### About Me


- Author of *Real Happiness*, *The Happiness Toolbox*, and *Awestruck* (newly released!)
- International speaker and workshop trainer
- Assistant Director of Mental Health Training at Kaiser Permanente in Northern California

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### What we'll cover

<u>What</u> is happiness?	<u>Why</u> happiness?	Can we <u>increase</u> happiness?
Key <u>brain</u> regions and systems	<u>How</u> to become happier	<u>Tools</u> for clinical change • Practical, Evidence-Based, Easy to Integrate

3



### Happiness: A timeless and universal question

4



### Happiness: A new “problem”

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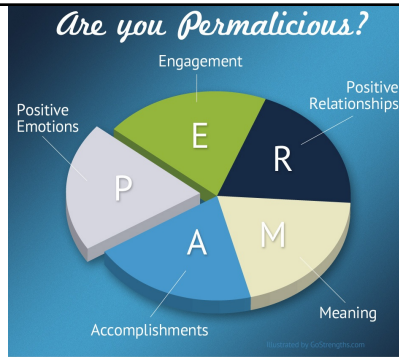
### What is Happiness?

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

– Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D.

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## PERMA Model of Well-Being (Seligman, 2012)



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## Why Happiness?

What do **nuns**, **baseball players**, and **yearbook photos** have in common?

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## The Nun Study (Danner, 2001)

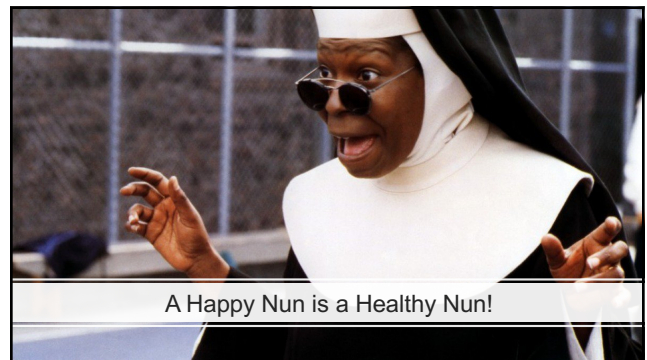
"God started my life off well by bestowing me grace of inestimable value. The past year which I spent as a candidate studying at Notre Dame has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of our Lady and to a life of union with Love Devine."

—Cecilia O'Payne

"I was born on September 26, 1909, the eldest of 7 children, 5 girls and 2 boys. My candidate year was spent in the motherhouse, teaching chemistry and 6<sup>th</sup> year Latin at Notre Dame Institute. With God's grace, I intend to do my best for our Order, for the spread of religion and for my personal sanctification."

—Marguerite Donnelly

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## The Yearbook Study (Harker & Keltner, 2001)



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## The Baseball Card Study (Abel & Kruger, 2010)



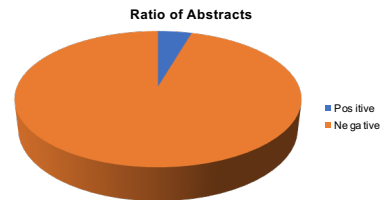
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## It's Good to be Happy

- **Psychological:** Increased life satisfaction, lower rates of depression and anxiety, increased frequency of positive emotional states, increased resiliency, openness to new experiences
- **Physical:** Increased longevity, improved physical health, stronger immune system, decreased inflammation, improved coping with chronic illness
- **Life:** Higher income, stronger marriages, closer relationships, improved job performance

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## Mental Health Abstracts, 1968-2000



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## Happiness: Can we *really* increase it?

"I don't have one minute's regret. It was a glorious experience." – Moreese Bickham

"It was the worst thing that ever happened to me." – Billy Bob Harrell, Jr.



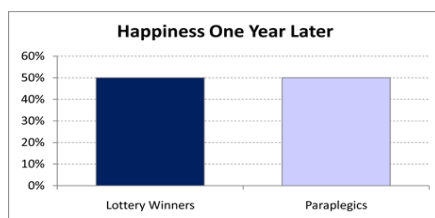
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## Happiness Forecasting



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## 12 months later (Gilbert, 2006)



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## Dead Ends to Happiness

- Money/Income
- Marriage
- Children
- Living in California
- Getting a Promotion
- Sports team winning
- Physical Attractiveness
- Years of Education
- Passing/Failing an Exam

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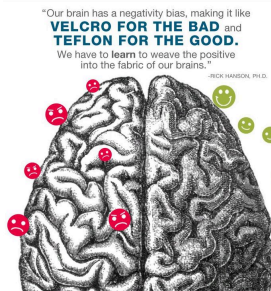


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## Barriers to Happiness



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## Key Barriers to Happiness

1. Hedonic Adaptation
2. Genetics
3. Our Brain's "Negativity Bias"

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## The Brain Science of Positive Change

22

## Key Concepts

- Self-directed positive neuroplasticity
  - "using the mind to change the brain"
- PFC Asymmetry
  - Left PFC activation
- Short-term states becoming long-term traits
  - Strengthening or weakening of synaptic connection, glial cell thickening, neurogenesis/dendritogenesis
- Specific neurotransmitter systems
  - Serotonin, Dopamine, Oxytocin, and more
- Activating the parasympathetic nervous system
  - Including the vagus nerve

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*"The brain is shaped by experience. And because we have a choice about what experiences we want to use to shape our brain, we have a responsibility to choose the experiences that will shape the brain toward the wise and the wholesome."*

— Richard Davidson, Ph.D.

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## Core Habits of Well-Being

- ❖ Gratitude
- ❖ Compassion
- ❖ Cultivating Strengths
- ❖ Meaning
- ❖ Connection
- ❖ Optimism
- ❖ Fostering Resilience
- ❖ Awe
- ❖ Self-Compassion
- ❖ Health & Wellness
- ❖ Forgiveness
- ❖ Mindfulness
- ❖ Savoring

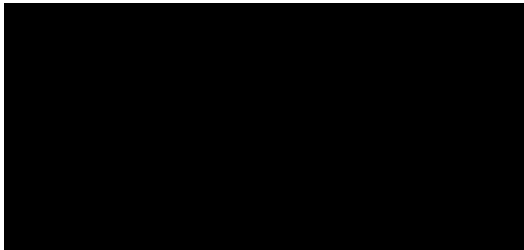
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## Gratitude

"He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for that which he has." –Epictetus



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## A Reflection on Gratitude



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## Gratitude

"A sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life."  
– Robert Emmons

"An antidote to negative emotions, a neutralizer of envy, avarice, hostility, worry, and irritation."  
– Sonya Lyubomirsky

"Gratitude is an attitude, but it is much more. Gratitude has also been depicted as an emotion, a mood, a moral virtue, a habit, a motive, a personality trait, a coping response, and even a way of life."  
–Robert Emmons

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## Benefits of Gratitude

### Psychological

Lower Depression, Anxiety, Stress (Seligman, 2005)  
Joy, enthusiasm, happiness, love, optimism (Emmons, 2007)  
Increased well-being, life satisfaction (Wood, 2010)  
Recovery from PTSD (Kashdan, 2005)  
More able to forgive (Luskin, 2010)  
Improved perception of social support

### Other Benefits

Overall health improved (Emmons, 2007)  
Better sleep (Wood, 2009)  
Increased immune system functioning  
Exercise (Emmons, 2007)  
Decreased physical pain  
Romantic relationships (Algoe, 2010)  
Social Bonds (McCullough, 2002)  
More forgiving (Rye, 2012)

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## The Grateful Brain

- Left Prefrontal Cortex (Zahn, 2009)
- Anterior Cingulate Cortex (Fox, 2015)
  - Interpersonal bonding
- Pregenual Anterior Cingulate Cortex (pgACC) (Wong, 2016)
  - Links emotional and cognitive centers of brain
  - Lasting differences months later
- Hypothalamus
  - Sleep, Stress, Metabolism
- Increased gray matter functioning
- Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex (reward circuitry)
- Serotonin, Dopamine (Zahn, 2008)

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## Three Good Things (Seligman, 2005)

- 3 things that went well today
- Why they happened/your contribution
- Different every day; never repeat an item
- Every day for at least 2 weeks



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## Gratitude Letter/Visit (Seligman, 2005)

- Identify someone who has helped you, but never properly thanked
- Write and deliver a detailed letter expressing thanks



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## Gratitude for those who support us

(Graham, 2013)

"A hundred times every day, I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of other people, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving." – Albert Einstein

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## Give it up (Coidbach, 2013)

- Identify a source of joy or pleasure in your life (one that you can easily access)
- First, allow yourself to indulge/enjoy it as you normally would
- Then, spend a week completely avoiding it altogether
- After a week, allow yourself to enjoy it once more – notice how it feels different from before

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## Remembering the Bad (Emmons, 2007)

"Think of your worst moments, your sorrows, your losses and your sadness. Focus on how you got through the worst day of your life, the trauma, the trial. You endured the temptation, you survived the bad relationship. You made your way out of the dark. Remember this, and then look to see where you are now."

– Robert Emmons

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## Grateful Reminiscence

- Reflect back on an experience you've had that brings up feelings of gratitude
- Journal 1x per week reminiscing on a past experience of gratitude
- Savoring happy memories shown to increase serotonin production (Perreau-Linck, 2007)
- Thinking back on sad or painful memories shown to decrease serotonin production

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## Mental Subtraction of Positive Events

(Koo et al, 2008)

- Mental Subtraction of positive aspect in life
- Can be person, relationship, opportunity, career, or other source of goodness
- Reflect on how easily this could NOT be a part of your life

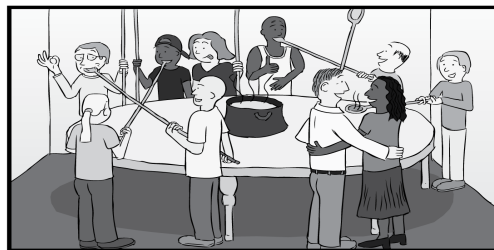
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## Kindness and Compassion

"If you want to be happy, practice compassion." –The Dalai Lama



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## Reflections on Kindness



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## Benefits of Kindness

### Psychological

Depression (Musick, 2003)  
 Anxiety (Post, 2008)  
 Addiction (Pagano, 2009)  
 Meaning/Purpose (Schwartz, 2003)  
Causal factor (Lyubomirsky, 2007)

### Other

Increased longevity (Oman, 1999)  
 44% reduced mortality  
 Improved physical health (Post, 2008; Borgonovi, 2008)  
 Helps with multiple sclerosis, HIV (Post, 2008)  
 Work place success (Grant, 2013)  
 Blue Zone Findings (Buettner, 2011)  
 Closer relationships (Lyubomirsky, 2007)  
 Romantic Relationships (Buss, 1989)

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### Your Brain and Body on Compassion

- Activation of pleasure centers in brain (Moll, 2006)
- Inferior Parietal Cortex (Weng, 2013)
- Anterior cingulate cortex
- Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (Weng, 2013)
- Medial orbitofrontal cortex and ventral tegmental region (Klimecki, 2013)
- Vagus nerve stimulation (Keltner, 2010)
- Release of endorphins, dopamine, oxytocin
- 23% cortisol decrease
- Decreased stress hormones, strengthened immune response (Pace, 2009)
- Increased vagal tone (Kok, 2010)

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### 5 Acts of Kindness (Lyubomirsky, 2008)

- 5 kind acts on a single day (bunch up)
- Repeat for 4 weeks
- Write about impressions/experience



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### Recalling Kindness (Ortaka, 2006)

- Acknowledging and Savoring kindness we've already given
- Reflect on 5 from past week
- Repeat for 4 weeks

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### Feeling Connection (Pavey, 2011)

- Reflect on a specific time when you felt a strong bond or connection to someone in your life
- Spend a few minutes writing and reflecting on this experience
- Repeat 1x/week

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### Self-Compassion

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete."  
—Jack Kornfield



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### Self-Compassion

#### Key Concepts:

- 3 components (Neff, 2011)
  - Mindful Awareness
  - Common Humanity
  - Self-Directed Kindness
- Self-Compassion vs. Self-Esteem
  - "Contingent self-worth"
  - Unstable concept

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## Barriers to Self-Compassion

- "It will make me weak"
- "It's selfish"
- "I won't achieve my goals"
- "A pity party"
- Others?

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## Benefits of Self-Compassion

<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Other</u>
Lower rates of depression & anxiety (Neff, 2011)	Alleviates chronic pain
Recovery from PTSD (Thompson & Waltz, 2008)	Improved lower back pain (Carson, 2005)
Eating Disorders (Leary & Adams, 2007)	Chronic Acne (Kelly, 2009)
Cigarette Smoking (Kelly, 2010)	Closer relationships (Germer, 2009)
Greater compassion towards others	Increased altruism (Crocker & Canavello, 2008)
	Romantic Relationships (Neff, 2011)
	School & Work (Neff, 2011)

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## The Physiology of Self-Compassion

### Self-Criticism

- Increased amygdala response
- R Prefrontal Cortex
- Cortisol increases
- Adrenaline released

### Self-Compassion

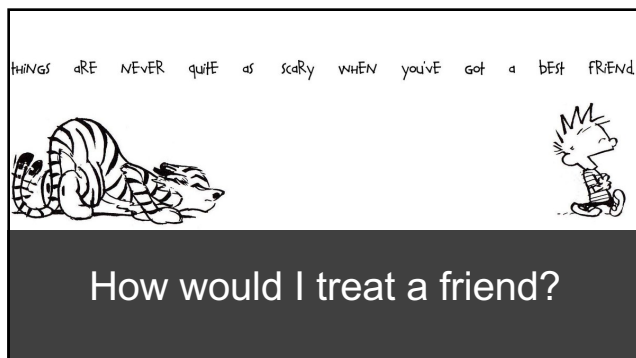
- L Prefrontal Cortex
- Increased PNS activation
- Breathing slows
- Insula activation
- Decreased cortisol
- Increased oxytocin

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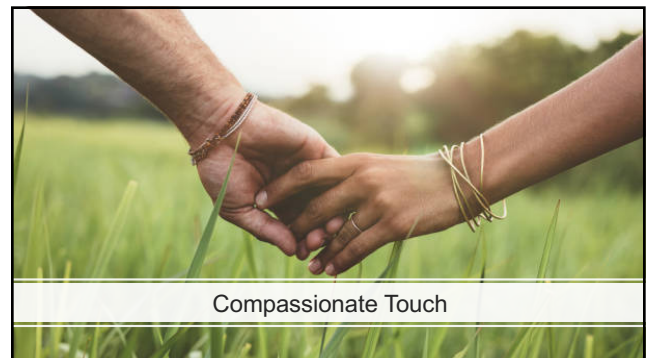
## Self-Compassion Break

- Reflect on something causing you stress
- Feel the feelings, call it to mind
- In the moment, saying to yourself:
  1. This is a moment of suffering
  2. Suffering is a part of life
  3. May I be kind to myself

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### A Letter of Self-Compassion

- Envision receiving kindness from a trusted loved one
- Identify perceived problem/ flaw
- Letter written to yourself from this perspective
- Allow the feelings to sink in

“ The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” – Carl Rogers

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### Self-Compassion Journal

- 1x/day for 1 week
- Writing about one event from the day that caused you pain, that created negative self-judgment, or that you felt bad about.
- For each event or situation, use the 3 pillars of self-compassion to reframe the experience

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### Self-Appreciation

- Recognizing and savoring the positive aspects of ourselves
- The importance of recognizing the whole picture
- 5 aspects of self you are proud of
- Savoring the experience

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### Loving-Kindness Meditation



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### Benefits of Loving-Kindness

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Increased positive emotions (Frederickson, 2008) | • PTSD symptoms (Kearney, 2013)                 |
| • Increased Vagal Tone (Kok, 2013)                 | • Increased gray matter (Leung, 2013)           |
| • Reduced Migraines (Tonelli, 2014)                | • Prosocial behaviors increased (Leiberg, 2011) |
| • Improves lower-back pain (Carson, 2005)          | • Increased empathy (Klimecki, 2013)            |

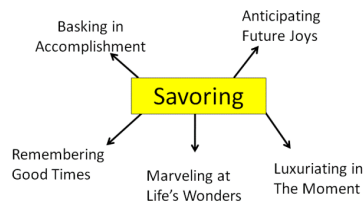
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### Savoring



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## 5 Paths to Savoring



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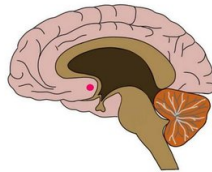
## Savoring

- | <u>Why</u>  | <u>How</u>   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negativity Bias</li> <li>• Positive experiences come and go</li> <li>• Using the mind to change the brain               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased neural firing</li> <li>• Long-term changes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 A's               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice or Create</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Amplify*                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrich the experience</li> <li>• 5-10 seconds or more</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Absorb                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let it sink in</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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## Savoring and the Brain

- Ventral Striatum
  - Linked to sustaining positive emotions and reward
- Left Prefrontal Cortex
- Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex
- Decreased Cortisol
- Increased serotonin, dopamine



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## Tips for Savoring (Fred Bryant)

- Share the Experience with others ("Capitalizing")
- Memory Building
  - Mental Notes, Photos/Souvenirs
- Self-Congratulate
- Pay attention to our senses
- Avoid multitasking
- Absorption
- Ruminant on the Good

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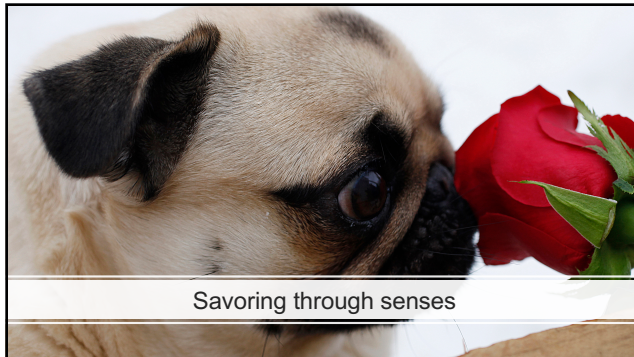


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Savoring Walk



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## Strengths and Flow



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## Signature Strengths

- 24 Signature Strengths, 6 core virtues (Seligman & Peterson)
- Character Strengths and Virtues – Classification Handbook (Peterson & Seligman)
- Assessing/Testing strengths
  - VSI (Values and Strengths Inventory)
  - BST (Brief Strengths Test)
- Utilizing strengths in new ways

[www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)

[www.authentic happiness.com](http://www.authentic happiness.com)

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## Examples of Items

- Love of Learning
  - Do you feel an adrenaline rush from learning new things?
- Kindness
  - Have you done good deeds for strangers on a regular basis?
- Appreciation of Beauty
  - Does a sense of awe sweep over you as you contemplate the vastness of nature?
- Creativity
  - Is your mind constantly challenging the status quo and looking for a better way?

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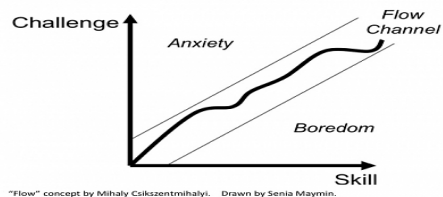
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## Identifying and Using Signature Strengths

- Take the VSI or BST to identify core strengths
  - Ensure that identified strengths resonate with the individual
- Identify 3-5 core "signature" strengths that are both resonant and high scoring
- Choose 1 signature strength per day
- Use it in a way that is outside your normal routine

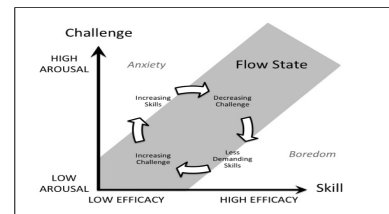
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## Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)



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## Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)



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## Flow

- A state of complete absorption in what one does
- Moments of peak performance
- Matching skills to challenge
- How to Increase Flow
  - Activities that engage our skills and strengths
  - Using Signature Strengths in new ways

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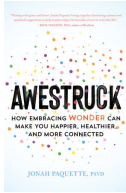
## Flow and the Brain

- Neuroanatomical changes
  - transient hypo-frontality
  - temporary deactivation of the prefrontal cortex
- Neurochemical Changes
  - Large quantities of norepinephrine, dopamine, serotonin, endorphins, anandamide
- Neuroelectrical Changes
  - Increased alpha waves to enhance focus & concentration


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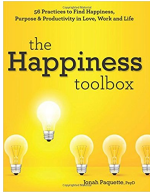
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**AWESTRUCK**  
HOW EMBRACING WONDER CAN  
MAKE YOU HAPPIER, HEALTHIER,  
AND MORE CONNECTED  
JONAH PAQUETTE, PHD



**Real Happiness**  
Proven Paths for  
Contentment, Peace,  
& Well-Being  
Jonah Paquette, PhD



**the Happiness toolbox**  
48 Proven Ways to Find Happiness,  
Purpose & Productivity in Love, Work and Life  
Jonah Paquette, PhD

**Stay in touch**

Email: [doctorpaquette@gmail.com](mailto:doctorpaquette@gmail.com)  
 Website: [www.jonahpaquette.com](http://www.jonahpaquette.com)  
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