

Figure 1 Dimensions and specializations of well-being.

Definitions

Anomie

Lack of the usual social or ethical standards in an individual or group.

Transcendence

Existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level.

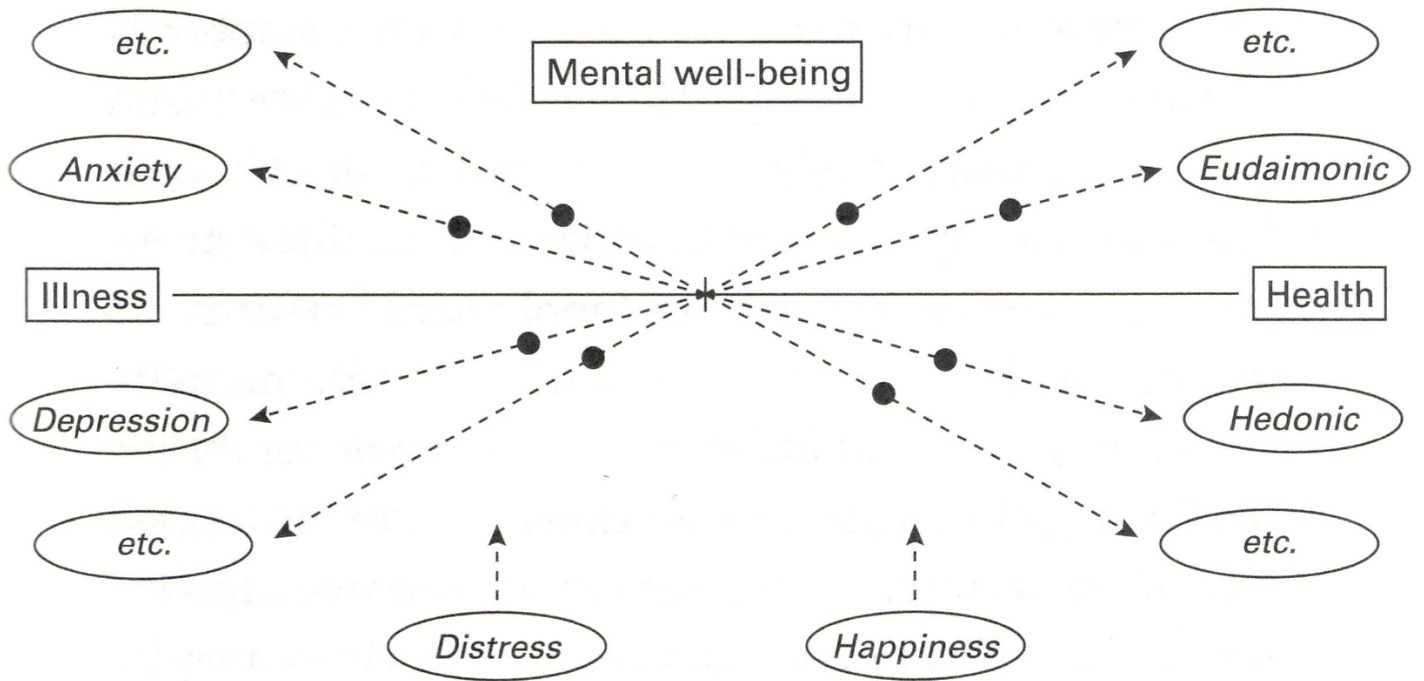


Figure 3 The differentiated mental well-being spectrum.

Definitions

Eudaimonic - Aristotle

A contented state of being happy and healthy and prosperous.
 The subjective experiences associated with eudaimonia or living a life of virtue in pursuit of human excellence.

Hedonic - Aristotle

Devoted to pleasure.
 Of, characterizing, or pertaining to pleasure.

The Roots of Happiness through time and in different cultures. These are roughly listed in chronological order.

Aboriginal

Humans have reflected and sought out the concept of well being happiness since the origins of human life, as reflected in Aboriginal culture. Studies of Aboriginal society indicate their desire for a happy life through the concept of *aljerre-nge*. *Aljerre-nge* refers to the idea of all life being interconnected in both the physical and spiritual levels, through the ability of dreams to connect humans to higher power for knowledge and guidance. It was used as a compass to a fulfilling and happy life. Those who are connected to others, the physical/natural work around them and to the spiritual side of life are those who are most happy.

Mesopotamian

The people of Mesopotamia were “successful” and/or prosperous but sought for something more fulfilling causing them to pursue happiness

Uses a tale – literature – as an example to show that worldly possessions/success did not compare to the “simple pleasures” of life including dancing, food, or the love one has for their child.

Chinese

The origin of Taoism was found in I Ching (the Book of Changes), which involved the generation and analysis of hexagrams. Hexagrams represent states of becoming rather than being and promotes change. Taoism highlights principles such as wu-wei (non-action) meaning surrendering to and aligning oneself with the organic patterns of life. Taoism holds that a deep understanding of the Tao is the true path to well-being.

Vedantic

The Vedas, Foundational Texts now referred to as Hinduism are comprised of four materials: samantas (mantras and prayers), Aranyakas (rituals and ceremonies), Brahmanas (commentaries on Aranyakas), and Upanishads (philosophical and spiritual teaching:). The Vedas serve as a reference to ananda (intense happiness or bliss), which can denote experiential release from samsara (eternal bliss in the cycle of life and rebirth). More specifically the Upanishads focus on a union between an inner spirit and ultimate reality. The Vedas provide paths to attain the states elaborated on within their text, the main physical practiced mentioned is yoga, which allows for the meditation, dedication, and devotion.

Judaic

Alongside the growth of influential teachings in ancient history was the creation of the Tanakh, Jewish scripture that carried many foundational texts. Within the Tanakh was the Torah that contained one of humankind’s oldest codified moral frameworks, the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are precepts that outline one’s responsibility to their worship of God and respect for others. These laws offer a meaningful perspective on well-being and happiness based on the premise that fulfilling religious duties will provide one with the joy or gladness that they desire. Various forms of happiness were blanketed under the importance of religion and became a central part of Judaic teachings.

Buddhist

Siddhartha Gautama (known as Buddha) spent 45 years of his life creating the dharma which is characterized by its Four Noble Truths. Buddhists believe life is full of dukkha (dissatisfaction) but this dukkha can be identified and hopefully treated by the individual.

Buddhists believe in the Noble Eightfold Path as a blueprint to alleviate dukkha and the ultimate goal after the path is the zenith of nirvana for the individual. The path has eight elements falling under three categories which are wisdom (vision and resolve), ethical conduct (speech, conduct and livelihood), and meditation (effort, mindfulness and concentration) with the individual wanting the best in every element.

Hellenistic

This era arguably had the greatest influence on contemporary thinking on happiness because Aristotle made the pivotal distinction between 2 forms of happiness; Hedonic and Eudaimonic. Hedonic refers to pleasure while Eudaimonic refers to deeper forms of happiness that arise through self-cultivation. Another influence on contemporary thinking is stoicism which contains ideas such as “the happy man is content with his present no matter what it is.” Some even take this thought to the extreme, claiming you could be sick/dying yet still happy. This, however, is characterized by ataraxia, a lucid, tranquil, imperturbable detachment from the vicissitudes of life.

Christian

- Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount introduced the term “blessed” into the discussion of happiness. Blessedness is an overarching umbrella for happiness and its wide spectrum of emotions.
- Jesus thought that being blessed is available to all despite social class (which contradicted beliefs in the Roman world).
- Jesus thought that the poor were more blessed than the rich and powerful; this was a radical claim to make at the time.

Islamic

Islam’s influential text known as the Quran differentiates forms of happiness, one being “mut’a”, referring to earthly satisfaction of hedonism. Another form of happiness known as “sa’adah” and is tied to an ultimate or superlative happiness for those that believe in the afterlife. The reward of “Jannah” (paradise) is a key component in guiding people’s conduct in life to promise sensual delights and elevated visions (ex. Beholding God). However, Islamic perspectives on happiness don’t only focus on the afterlife, but also the ways to live good on earth via core tenants of temperance, modesty, and self-restraint pertaining to eudaimonia.

Renaissance

The Renaissance was one of the most pivotal periods for the evolution of happiness as it reflected the shift from the “dark ages” of religious constraints to more personal fulfillment and values in the west. This was characterized by the forthcoming of light as the dark tones of the church, which usually consisted of convincing the people that a happy life didn’t exist until the afterlife led to the turning point of optimistic humanism. This is what is usually called the rebirth, which ushered in secular visions of the “good life” encouraging the people to engage in their own purpose of truth. Although the church still remained prominent in the west, the goal of happiness and fulfillment became more widespread.

The Enlightenment

A science and technology began to advance through the age of Enlightenment, people began believing that happiness could be found on Earth. Through Christianity, happiness was primarily said to be found before life and after death, but as advancements were made in society it was believed that perfection would lead to happiness. As people began seeing improvement in technology, they also began seeing improvement in their everyday life. With this newer pursuit of happiness came a strong sense of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Therapeutic

In our modern age of thoughts on happiness and well-being, there are four waves, with the first being psychiatry and psychotherapy. This first wave mainly focused on one’s negative territory of their respective happiness, and did not give any attention to the positive aspects of one’s life. Many key figures believed in this course of action. And this was reflected in a quoted remark by Freud about the goal of psychotherapy being limited to “turning hysterical misery into ordinary unhappiness.” Therefore this prompted a new second wave of exploration into the positive aspects of one’s happiness. This new wave didn’t wipe out the first wave, but rather complimented it in the healing process.

Humanistic

The humanistic approach to happiness stemmed from the desire to focus on the positive potential of humankind. One of Freud’s protégés spread the belief that psychotherapy should create a nurturing space, emphasizing the fulfillment of human potential. Humanistic happiness helps people become “self-actualized”, which is the crossroads between one’s actualized and idealized self, again stressing the fulfillment of human potential. This wave’s foundation is best summed up with: “It is as if Freud supplied us with the sick half of Psychology”, and the humanistic approach is looking for the “healthy half”.

Scientific

The scientific era focused more on thriving/positive psychology rather than focusing on those who were in distress. Through different methods of research, psychologists created different ways to measure well-being such as Hadley Cantril’s Self-Anchoring Striving Scale. This method has respondents rate well-being themselves by ranking where they stand on a ten-rung ladder from worst to best possible life. Although this scientific era did not consist of many “remedies”, they were able to broaden their understanding of what makes people thrive, which could eventually offer society greater support.

Global

The global part of this book puts together the ideas that methods and dynamics are changing and “shifting”. Yet it has remained focused on the west and the connection to individualism. As to psychology research, the author stresses that cultural practices are needed to fulfill the understanding of what happiness is and exploring its diversity. For example., the incorporation of other cultures has led to the finding of the 3 shared categories of happiness; qualia, relationships and development.