

## Choose Happy

JOSH: Hi, everyone, and welcome to tonight's webinar Choose Happy. I'm excited to have Brenda Cleaver from WSU Wellbeing Online back with us tonight to share her thoughts on the process of choosing happy. So without any further ado, let's welcome Brenda.

BRENDA CLEAVER: Hi there everybody. Thanks for tuning in today to hear what I have to say about happiness. Just to give a bit of context, I work with the Wellbeing online program at University Recreation and ASWSU Global.

And I'm often here at WSU getting my masters degree in counseling. And so if you have questions about of the material that comes up, please be sure to visit our website site or send an email to wellbeingonline@wsu.edu. All right, let's go ahead and dive into Choose Happy.

So before we get started, it might be helpful to think about why you're tuning into this webinar or what you think happiness means. And a really great way to do this is to build a concept map. So if you've ever written an essay or a letter before, or gone through even high school English, you may have been introduced to the idea of a concept map. I just did one really quick for me.

But you can kind of see here, this is what a concept map kind of looks like. Right here in the middle I have happiness. And then on the other side I have the things that I think make me happy. And some of those things are family and friends, meaningful work, playing I with my cat and my family, and really being connected to other people, or even going outside.

These types of experiences make me happy. And they inform what happiness is to me. It's important to know that happiness was different across regions, across cultures, and across kind of ideologies.

So your version of happiness and my version of happiness might look a little bit different, and that's OK. So just keep that in mind as we move through today that this conversation about happiness is supposed to be something that is intriguing, inspiring specifically for you when you're hearing this information. So take what you can and kind of use this information to reflect on your experience.

So when we talk about the benefits of happiness there have been plenty of research done to kind of investigate positive psychology or well being, or a subjective well being. And kind of the things that many researchers have fleshed out is that there are lots of benefits to happiness. When this comes to work, that means increased productivity, more passionate interest in their work, and it also helps to decrease rates of burnout. If any of you have ever graduated high school or been a senior in college, or been in a job for a really long time and just been unhappy or unfulfilled you kind of might be familiar what this idea of burnout might be. Versus maybe the beginning of the semester when you're excited to get your syllabi and kind of see what this semester ahead looks like.

Next up is relationships. The benefits of being happy is that folks who report higher levels of happiness tend to be better at communicating their needs, and they can kind of focus on the big picture of what their happiness means for them. So keep that in mind.

And then happiness is also directly related to our physical, emotional, and mental health and well being. Rates of illness go down. Folks have longer, healthier lives. And quite often they get more sleep than those with lower level of subjective happiness or well being.

If you get the chance, do some research, see what you find. There tends to be some correlations here. So there is debate in the field about whether happiness leads to these types of correlates or these correlates lead to happiness. And you can kind of ferret that out in the research for yourself.

To me, it speaks to the fact that happiness can be found in a variety of settings. And sometimes happy folks have a better idea of what they want. So that's where I'm going today. You can kind of look at that how you would like.

So the conversation piece here is it seems that happiness is pretty elusive. Even in our constitution we talk about the right to pursue happiness. So happiness seems pretty intrinsic to a lot of cultures and a lot of even structures about how we consider living a fulfilling life.

Some common perceptions are that if I were only to win the lottery, my life would be so much happier. I can have all of the things that I wanted. There's even songs about it, this idea that maybe money can't buy everything, but it will make life easier.

What is really interesting is something that we'll talk about a little bit later on. But the research suggests that even folks with higher incomes or higher stability in their financial process really are not that much happier than the average Joe. And we're going to talk about the hedonic treadmill later on, but this is the kind of touching on that myth that somehow money we make us happier.

Next up is kind of this materialistic or possession oriented thing. I will only be happy when I get a new phone. Or I will be happier in a bigger, larger apartment. Or I'll be happier when I get another dog. This type of collection strategy or thinking that only the next thing will make us happier.

Thinking about a really great example of this is that sometimes I really think that cupcakes will make my life better. And then I have a cupcake. It is a wonderful experience. I love cupcakes.

But after I have a cupcake, my life kind of returns to where it was before. And this happens quite a bit that we might experience these small spikes in happiness and then we kind of come down to this homeostasis or the mid line happiness. And that makes sense.

Inversely, on the other side is this kind of collecting possessions, is this idea of less is more. In some communities limiting materialistic goods or consumption is related to higher spirituality. And some of this might be accurate for folks.

Thinking about how good it might be to walk into a very cluttered room you have in your house, and kind of collect those things and take them out to be either reused or taken away from your home. And sometimes there's some sense of relief that comes with that. That there's no more that I have to carry or be responsible for in this space. So there are kind of two sides of the coin here with material goods or possessions.

And then finally I think that this speaks very well to me and to a lot of other folks who kind of focus on achievement, that somehow landing the perfect job, of reaching an ideal weight, maybe getting married or having children-- the idea of chasing perfection. That once I reach the status level or I reach this achievement that I will be happy. Then my life will be all together and then I can say I've done it. Unfortunately that doesn't seem to be the case.

So let's move on. Carey joined us. Welcome Carey. Glad to see you here.

The hedonic treadmill is really what I'm hitting on with some of these comments about perceptions about happiness. You can kind of read this graphic here. The hedonic treadmill kind of speaks to adaption. That we kind of go through our environment noticing when things change.

But typically we kind of have this baseline. And that some things, like mentioned earlier, can cause a spike in happiness. And other things can kind of cause a dip depending on where you're at.

So really, we stay pretty mid line. Each of us's mid line looks a little bit different. My mid line might look different than Josh's or even Carey's. And we're going to talk about what might influence that mid line. That kind of this idea about adaption, that even if you were to win the lottery, reach your ideal weight, and have the newest iPhone, you may not be as happy as you were thinking you might be.

Now I know it sounds a little bit doom and gloom. So let's keep chatting, because I think this will get a little bit more hopeful for you. So William Glasser says that we have five basic needs.

Now some of you might be thinking, Brenda, what about Maslow? Well, you're right. There are lots of theorists who have decided that we have kind of these basic need, and that humans tend to develop in a certain way to meet their needs. For today's presentation, I'm going to talk about Glasser.

And he says that we have five needs. I'm referencing my notes down below, if you see me looking now. And the first of which is basic survival. Now this kind of covers what we think of when we think of-- what's the show? Like Naked and Afraid or Naked and Alone where these

people are sent out into the world without clothing or shelter, and they're kind of by themselves. Basic survival says that we do need food, sleep, water, and shelter, just so that way we can kind of move through this world with some sense of safety.

Number two is this belonging piece, that connection, attachment, touch, and love are considered needs. Some studies have been done in the past where infants who were in orphanages were watched to see what kind of the difference was. Because there were some behaviorists at the time who were saying well, as long as we cover food and shelter, kids should be fine. Well, what we found was that these children were actually failing to thrive because they needed a certain amount of touch and connection, or an opportunity for attachment, depending on how you look at this, for children to really grow and become adults, functioning adults and humans.

And what's really interesting is that there's some neural imaging that kind of gives some data for this that we see that infants who were exposed and touched and talked to and given the opportunity for attachment will actually experience quite different rates of brain development than those who do not have the same opportunities. Some really interesting research out there if you'd like to look at it.

Next up is power. This is talking about personal identity and personal agency. This is kind of the belief that I can create change in my own life. Now, there are a lot of cultural and social [AUDIO OUT] that kind of influence this person's sense of agency. But these things are important.

Next up is freedom. This is kind of again, referenced in our constitution. About freedom of choice that folks need to have some autonomy in their life. That we do like to choose the things that feel good to us. We want to be able to choose where we spend our time and energy.

And then also kind of this idea that we want to achieve or have some esteem about things, and want to feel capable and kind of worthy or part of something bigger. Next up is fun. This is referencing happiness, satisfaction, creativity, play. All of these things are really important.

And also I want to make sure to check on this, on the freedom part, this also includes meaning. The freedom to choose an identity and choose the meaning of our lives. Any questions and thoughts so far? If they're coming up, make notes. Carey says she's doing good.

So next up, let's talk about where happiness comes from. This is done from a researcher in California. Key look up Sonja and then happiness research in your Google. You should come up with quite a bit of research.

She has two books out, *The How of Happiness* and *The Myths of Happiness*. And this is where she references some of her research that she's doing at her university, in kind of layman's terms. It's not a dry read. And it's pretty interesting.

Her research suggests that about 50% of happiness is genetic or heritable. This is based on twin studies. And then about 10% comes from external circumstance, things or events that happen in our lives that we really have no control over. This leaves about 40% of our happiness that is decided by our behaviors, our thoughts, our attitudes and choices.

Now, if you're someone who is maybe dealing with depression or [INAUDIBLE] these things, they can be kind of daunting to think about this. What do you mean 40% of my happiness is up to me? Brenda, I'm not happy. That very well could be your experience. A lot of people are feeling unhappy.

And if you are in a point in your life where things are looking kind of hopeless or bleak, I encourage you to reach out to those around you, let them to know where you are and get the help that you might be needing. This webinar isn't meant to tell you that you should be happier. That's not case. This is just ways to just kind of think about how much happiness might be within our control and how much we can do about that. So next slide.

So this is for kind of the lighter end of happiness, for folks who are thinking Brenda, my life-- I'm feeling a bit unfulfilled. How can I increase my happiness? And to do that, we first need to examine what happiness looks like in your life. We talked about the concept map. But now, let's take a second to reflect.

When was the last time you had an excellent day? What was happening? Who are the people that were around you? Where were you? And what were you doing?

This might be an interesting picture for you. Some folks might find this that Brenda, I just rocked a proposal at work. Or I finally got to spend some time at home doing exactly what I wanted to do.

Brenda, actually it was the last time I went out for Thai and it was wonderful. So think about these things. Think about you the things that make you happy.

Next up, we're going to break this down into people, places, and time. So you might notice on this that this is an opportunity to think about how you might commonly interact with those around you. Karen Horney has some really interesting theories out there about knee jerk responses that people might have when they're feeling stressed. These interpersonal styles are consider away, towards, and against. Now these are directly related to the needs, William Glasser's needs that somehow these interpersonal styles are ways to get our needs met.

The away style is a tendency to kind of move away from a stressful situation, to back up. The against style is to kind of move toward something, to really look for what it is that you're wanting in the style. And then towards is kind of like to move towards other people and kind of get the needs that you need met towards working with other people.

Now each of the things has something really important. The moving away kind of gives this space in interpersonal interaction. This towards demonstrates care. And then against kind of demonstrates gumption or this kind of boundary. So these are something to think about.

If you're interested in learning more, there's tons of research out there about interpersonal styles. But really, the goal of this is and they're kind of directly related to happiness is reaching a level of interaction that's genuine, authentic, and present. And that these kind of styles might get the way of this interaction, that's both you and me. So part of this is thinking about how you react to other people.

Do you generally react by moving away? Do you move towards? Do you move against? Or are you thinking what is it that I need from this interaction? How aware are you in the way that you move in interpersonal space?

So this leads to conversation of there might be people in your life who would take more energy or more time than what you have to give. Or there might be people in your life who really fill you up. Who you leave saying gosh, I really needed that coffee. Or I needed that dinner with this person.

They make me feel good about my life. And they make me feel good about me. I feel related or connected to them.

So take a second here to think about the people that you want to spend time with. What are they like? Do they listen to you? Do they make you laugh? Thinking about those things.

When is the best time to seek out the people that you want to spend time with? Are they pretty chatty? Do you know that you have to set aside an hour to call your mom? Think about those things.

How much time do these people take? And then what are the trade-offs for spending time with these folks? Do you have an assignment due?

Are you thinking about a work project while you're with them? So all of these things kind of go into whether or not people might make us happy. And what types of people we want to kind of create our happiness with.

Next up is the place. Take a second and look at the room around you. Interestingly enough, our environment seems to also affect our mood, just as much as the people that we're interacting with. So take a second, look around. Notice what do you like?

Do you like the way that you have a view out to the sunset? Do you like that your chair is comfortable? Do you like that you have a snack within easy reach? What do you dislike? Do you not like the way the room smells?

Is it kind of chilly? Thinking about these things and knowing that the rooms and the environments that we're in change throughout our context. We might not have a chance to change where we work or where we go to class at. Or maybe we can change where we live.

And sometimes, changes are always possible. Now this means that we need to take stock of the places that kind of drain our happiness away. And that also means that we need to take stock of the things that make us happy. And kind of adjust accordingly.

If you're spending a lot of time in a place kind of sucks you dry where you don't like to be in, notice that and give yourself a little kindness to spend some time in a place that you do enjoy, or a place that you do want to spend time with. Noticing these things is different to everybody. Some folks are really sensitive to smells and lights. Some folks are sensitive to screen time. And just thinking about those things.

Next up is our time. Where is your time going? This is kind of an interesting thought because who develops their time to pursuing happiness? Culturally speaking, it seems that pursuing happiness for happiness's sake, might seem a little bit luxurious.

So this might mean taking stock of where it is that you are spending your time. Are you spending your time work, at home with the people you care about? Are you spending your time commuting three hours a day? Where is it that you're spending your time? And how might that be affecting your happiness?

This seems like a great time to talk about loss aversion. The reason why there is an alarm clock below is because this is one of the greatest times to kind of demonstrate loss aversion. If we believe that making time in the morning have a cup of coffee will make our day better, that somehow this will make us happier, we might need to set our alarm clock back a little bit. So that way we can allow this time to drink some coffee.

But when we're laying in bed dreaming, and the covers are warm and comfortable, and the alarm goes off, you may have this thought of oh, just 10 more minutes of sleep. This becomes more important than the 10 minutes of time you have to yourself in the morning. This is where loss aversion kind of becomes glaringly true. We kind of lose sight of the larger goals, the larger ambition. And we get kind of stuck in this present moment view of I will lose this comfortability of being in bed where I'm comfortable, I'm warm.

And our cognitive process isn't fully loaded because we're not quite awake yet. So this is really a great time to kind of look at loss aversion. Loss aversion could also be happening in other areas of your life too.

If you're thinking boy, Brenda, I know that going to the gym will make me happier, but yet I can't find time, notice where you are spending your time. And notice if the things that you're wanting to do really will make you happier. Or they will end up taking time away from the things that you really do enjoy.

Next up is the premack principle. This is kind of grandma's rule. Eat your vegetables so that way can get a cookie at dinner tonight, or do the chores before you do something pleasurable.

This is kind of looking at our common behaviors and using them to reinforce less common behaviors. This can happen in a variety of contexts. You might be using this with your dog or cat, or even with your children or partner, depending on if the grandma's rule is used in your home.

Oops. Sorry. I've been neglecting the dialogue. So I'm just reading really quick to catch up. National Nutrition Month. I like that.

So realistically, looking at do you have time for the activities that you want to do? Why are the costs and benefits of spending time? And how much time can you realistically dedicate to this things? This form of happiness or this new behavior? And thinking about how it might be tied into your concept map of what it is that makes you happy.

So now we're in the meat of the presentation. And talking how about Brenda, how would do I achieve happiness in my own life? Well, these are six kind of general principles that the research has shown that might increase happiness in your life. And the first of these is to kind to yourself. And this means kind of taking a step back to fill up your cup or fill up your love bucket, or fill up on the things that make you happy or makes you feel good and satisfied.

Now for many of us, this might be Brenda, I don't have time to be selfish. Or somehow talking a bath at night to wind down at the end of the day will make me selfish. I ask you to kind of reflect on that, and think about what the meaning is behind these behaviors that you're seeing as selfish. Would you say that to your best friend? You're being selfish for taking a bubble bath?

If you wouldn't, there might be some inflexibility happening there. You might be losing space to be kind to yourself. So notice when you could be kind to your body, to yourself if that's easier. Think of yourself as maybe a child who needs taken care of or a pet who needs some pampering. Sometimes those types of strategies make it easier to be kind to ourselves.

Next up is giving. There has been lots of research done about what happens inside of our brains when we give to other people. Whether this is giving our time, giving our resources. There is a flood of neurotransmitters that happen when we give or we engage in these altruistic behaviors. And they contribute to our sense of subjective well being. These types of behaviors make us feel better about ourselves or feel better about our relationships with other people.

Next up is fostering friendships and connections with others. And this means meaningful relationships. Think about the people that you identified earlier.

Who are the people that you do want to spend time with and who are the people that you don't? And if you're spending more time with the people that you don't want to spend time

with, think about how you might increase the time with the people that you do. And know notice what happens to your happiness levels when that is going on.

Next step is to practice gratitude. This is an easy one to do, but some of us might not think of it. It might be connected to something that brings up [? things that are ?] a bit uncomfortable. Practicing gratitude does not have to be a complicated or burdensome process.

This is really taking a moment to be appreciative of the things that are currently happening in the present moment. And this could be waking up in the morning and thinking, gosh what a great day to be alive. Or it can be saying thank you to the barista that made your drink. It helps you to identify sources of happiness that are in your world, the things that you want to say than you for, you might want more of. So thinking about that.

Next step is to paying attention to your foundations. And by foundations, I mean your sleeping, eating, and movement patterns. There's been research that shows that moving and eating in ways that feels good to your body helps increase your subjective well being, as well as getting enough sleep at night. Notice how you're spending your time and you're caring for your body, because that really influence your happiness.

And then the next step is increasing awareness. Now increasing awareness of both positive and negative feelings. And it's important to notice when these things are coming up, and what types of thoughts, behaviors, or feelings might be happening for you in a certain situation. When we increase our awareness, we might notice that we're having certain types of thoughts and certain types of feelings.

So of these might be negative. And when we have negative feelings, they often are trying to tell us when something is important. Many times we try to shut down negative feelings, feelings like anxiety. It's silly to be nervous about this is something we might say to ourselves. Or I really don't need this much sleep at night. I'm wasting time.

And that doesn't seem to be as helpful as maybe giving our bodies or our emotions the time and space that they need to be heard, because they're often trying to tell us what it is that we need. So it's kind of an interesting little thought pattern to think about. And then noticing what types of people, places, or things might evoke certain kinds of feelings in you. Because if it's not connected to a sense of wellness or happiness. Notice how that might be happening in your life.

Maybe going to work everyday fills you with dread. If that's the case and you're spending 40 hours a week there, no wonder you may not be happy. And thinking about those things and making connections so that way you have increased choice about the happiness that is in your life.

Next step-- now for this portion you might need a pencil or a paper. And this is a little bit of a thought exercise to help you strategize how you might increase happiness in your life. The first

of these is to pick three people that you do enjoy spending time with. These are people that you think, yep, I always will go to coffee with this person if I have time.

Also thinking about three places that you like to be. One of them might be your grandma's garden. My grandma's garden was really great for me. I loved the smell of the corn and the feel of the dirt beneath my feet. That was a very happy place for me.

Now, I live quite a ways from my grandma's garden, so that might not be realistic. The thing about places that might invoke that same type of feeling. And then two things that you want to spend more time doing. Are there two things in your life that you think, Brenda, I know that when I do blank every day or even once a week, I feel happier. This is a pattern I've noticed.

Now, the reason why we're focusing on the things that make us happier is because behaviorism tells us that when we spend energy focusing on the behaviors that we want to increase, or the sensations that we want to increase, the things that we want to decrease kind of do that on their own. We're kind of replacing behaviors, thoughts, and feeling in this kind of methodological way. When we identify things that we want to spend more time with, or people that we want to spend more time with, think about rewarding those behaviors. If it's rewarding in itself just to be with the person, maybe not an additional [INAUDIBLE] award to that. Think about moving towards the things that you already are, and why were moving towards them.

All right, so this is a care label activity. This is just an interesting way to think about what it is that makes you happy. So you could take a second with the pencil and paper that you collected earlier and think about what is your blend? Now they list some examples here. 50% drive, 20% optimism, 15% sarcasm, 15% worry.

What is it that is your make-up? Where do you thrive? Do you thrive in cool, dark places? With coffee? In a productive place?

Somewhere where you're allowed to be creative? In the quiet of nature? And then why is it so good for you? Maybe you don't like arid environments where there's a lot of heat, or maybe even a lot of cold. Do fluorescent lights bother you?

Is negativity and complaining kind of a big unhappy part of your life that maybe the people around you might be contributing to? This is a great time to kind of think about all the things that you need to make that happiest day happen more consistently. Now this is kind of the tricky part is this intentional piece. Because when we create our care label, or when we say Brenda, this is it. This is what makes me happy.

Knowing how to share those things. Because we increase our awareness, we increase our choice and our ability to be intentional. And part of this is sharing your care label with those around you. Unfortunately humans haven't got the mind reading down pat yet.

I think a lot of us are trying to mind read for others. But it really helps when we share what we need with the people around us. If this means that after you go home to visit family, you need to day away from your friends, communicate that. If this means that you need more time with your family during a very stressful period of your life, like finals, take that. See what you need, and how can you fill it up or ask for the things that you need from the people around you.

It's important to know that people, places, and time can be positive, negative, and neutral. And that these things depend on your lens. And they're informed by your values and attitudes. Everybody's ideas about happiness look a little bit different. And how we might use them looks a little bit different too.

But communicating what it is that makes us happy and how we want to be made happy is really important. It can also help increase congruence. And when I think congruence, I think the balance between our attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and then our behaviors. And sometimes when these things aren't balanced or congruent, we end up with this dissatisfaction or this anxiety or this worry.

And when we move towards congruence, people generally feel a bit more consistent, satisfied, happy. So maybe you take stock of the things in your life where you're thinking you know, I really do believe in this, but here I am doing that. How can I connect the behaviors, the attitude, or the value?

All right, so the last bit of this is to out happiness in your own life. To think about those three people, those three places, and those two things, and figure out how might you use them in your own world. Brenda, I want to spend 20 minutes a week just journaling. Great! Reward the behavior that you want.

See what it is that makes you happy. These things might change over time. They might change with circumstance and they might change with the people in your life. Remember that this is flexible, and that it just needs to be about what makes you happy. And then having this conversation with the people around you who help to inform your happiness as well.

This is all that I have today. Carey, do you have any questions or thoughts before I turn it over to Josh? Nope. I got a thumbs up there. So I going to go ahead and hand it over to Josh.

JOSH: Thanks, Brenda. I hope that you guys got a sense of what you can do to help choose happy for yourself in this webinar. I know I sure did. I want to thank you for your time for tuning in.

And I would like to remind you that I just copied and pasted the link over for a survey about tonight's webinar. If you could just click on that, Carey, and let us know your thoughts as we are gearing toward planning programming for next year. So yeah, if you have any questions, feel free to email myself or Brenda. And have fun and good luck choosing happy. Thank you.