



Happiness 101: The Benefits of Happiness and How to Become Happier

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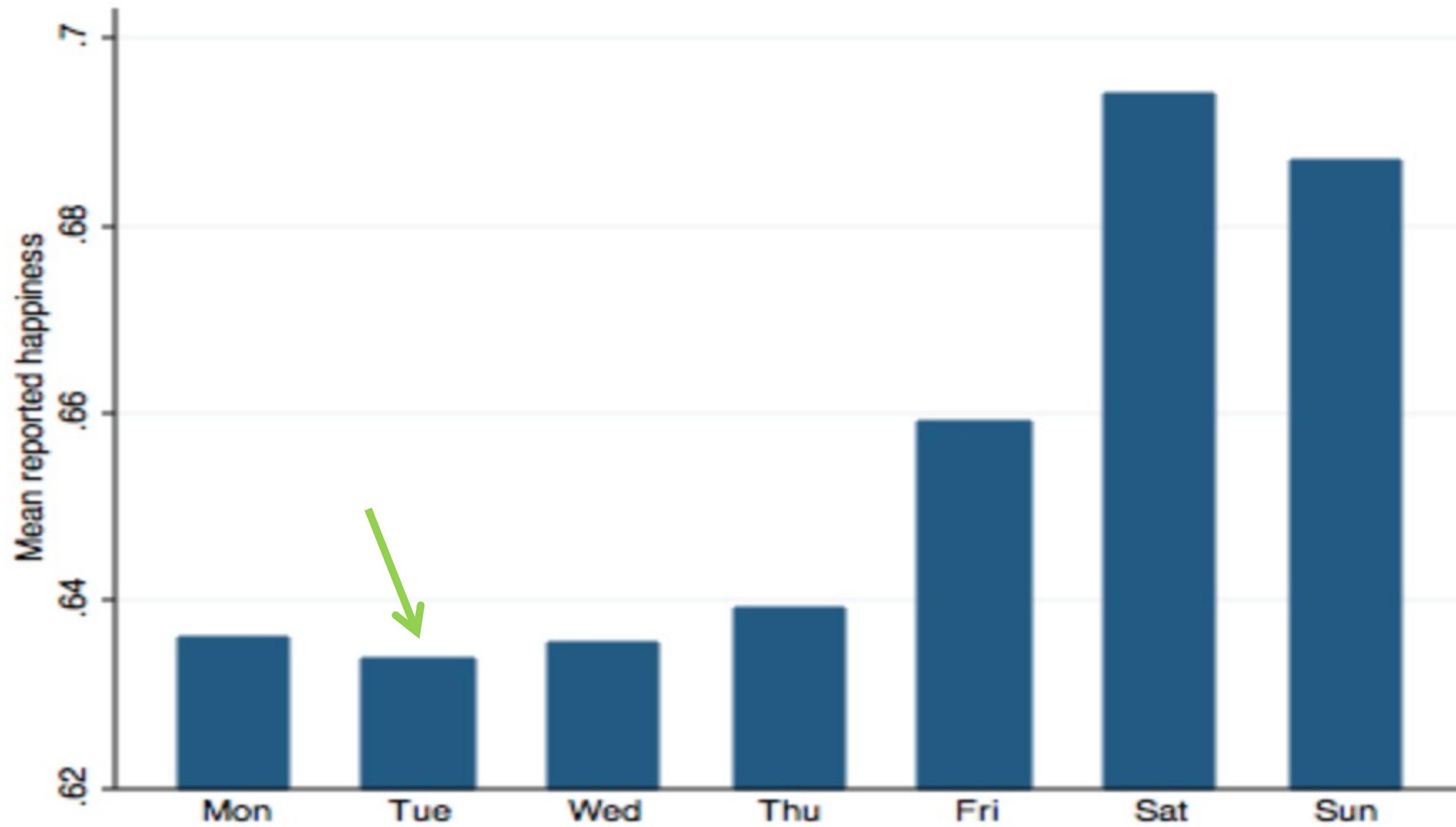
California State University, Sacramento

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October 26, 2021

Agenda

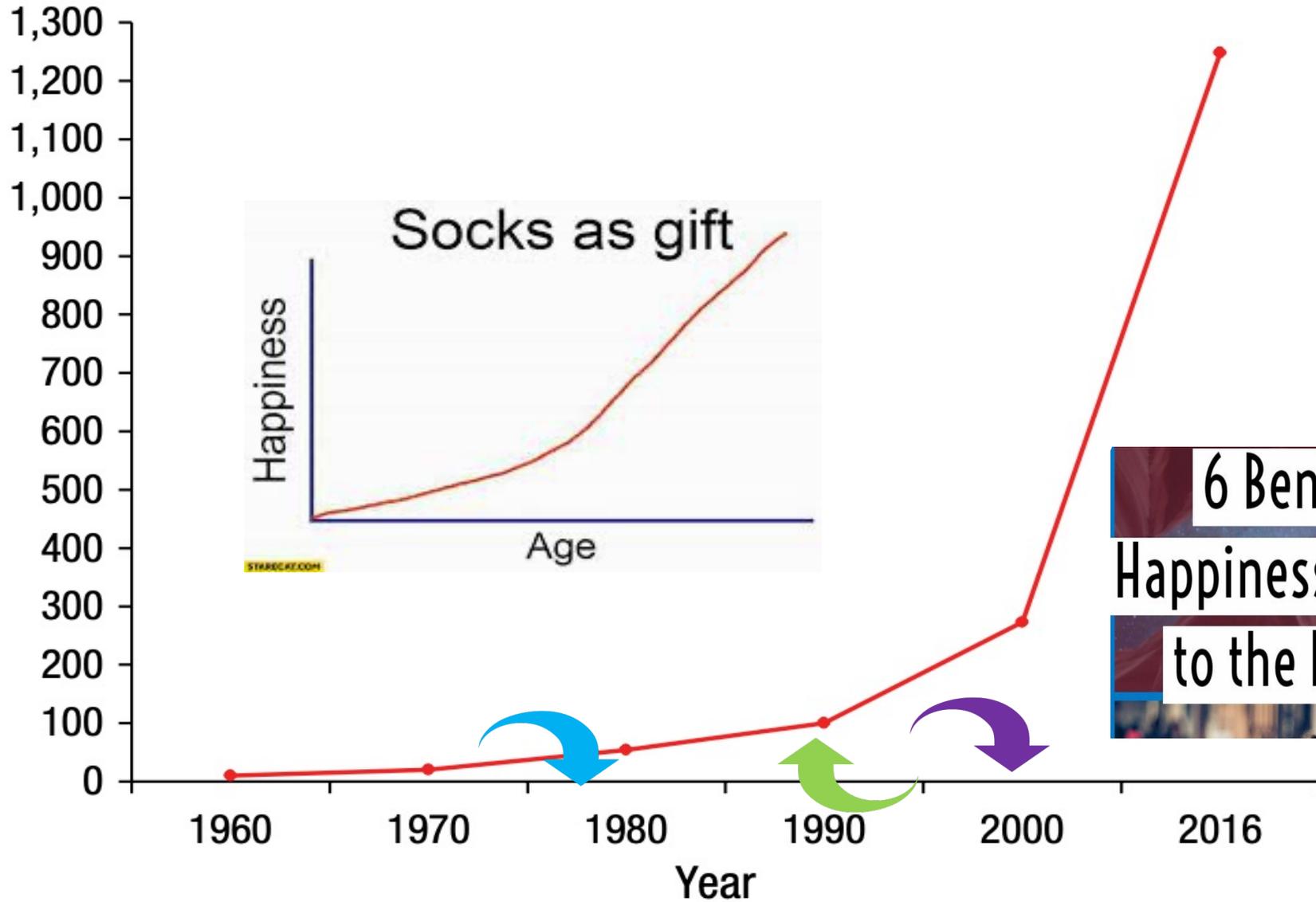
- Brief history of research on happiness
- How do we measure happiness?
- Benefits of happiness
- Happiness and income
- Is it possible to become happier?
- How?







Number of Articles



6 Benefits of
Happiness According
to the Research

Fig. 1. Number of “happiness” articles per year (data from PsycINFO, <http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycinfo/index.aspx>).

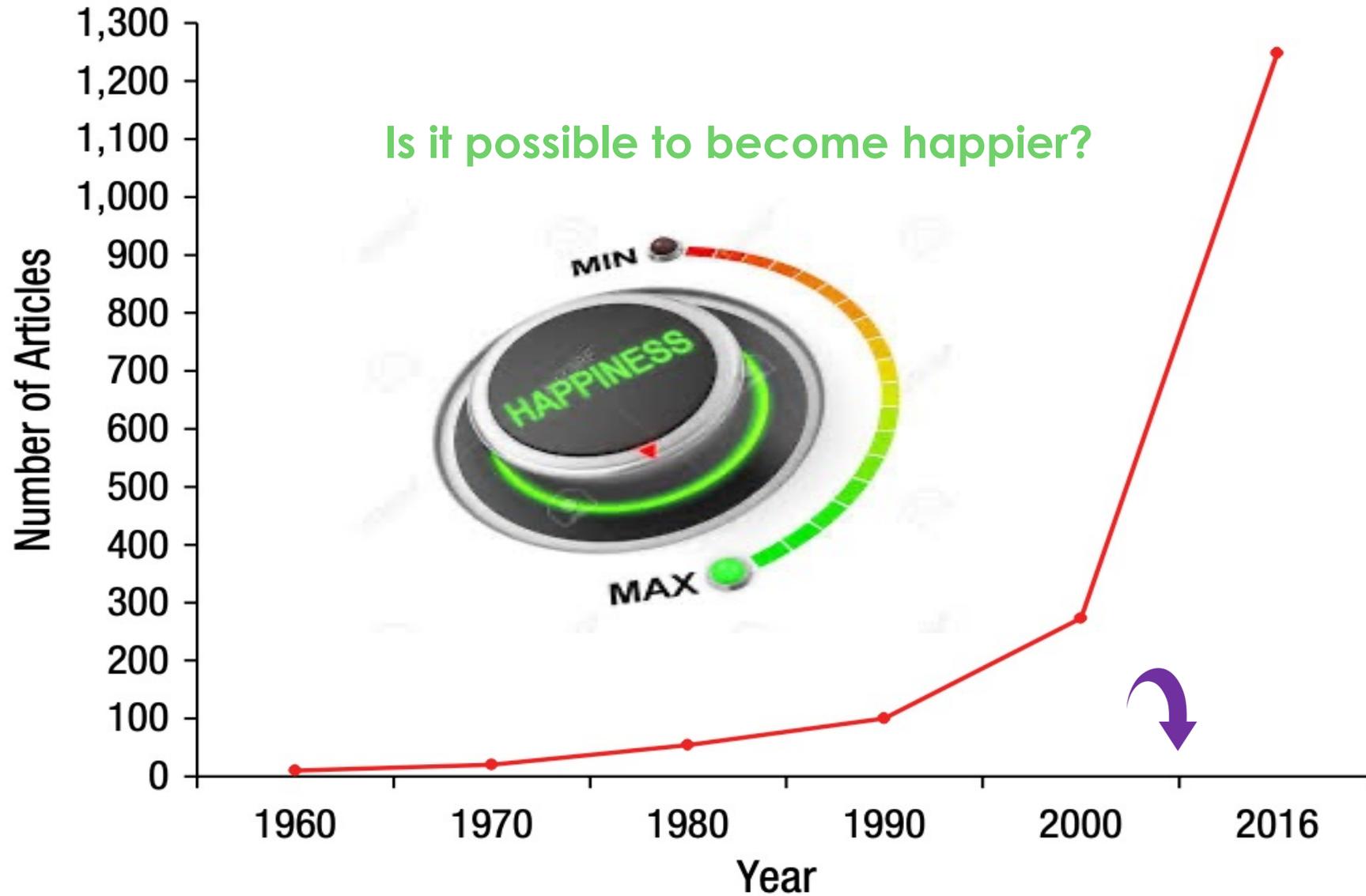
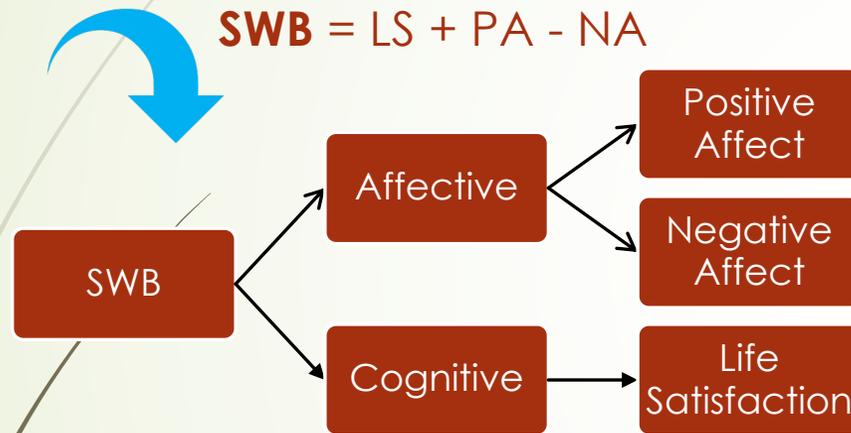


Fig. 1. Number of “happiness” articles per year (data from PsycINFO, <http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycinfo/index.aspx>).

What is happiness?

Tripartite Model of Subjective Well-Being (SWB)



Subjective Happiness

Global

How do we measure it?

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not a very happy person a very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
less happy more happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all a great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all a great deal



Why do we research happiness?

Benefits of Happiness



Career success*

Coping

Health*

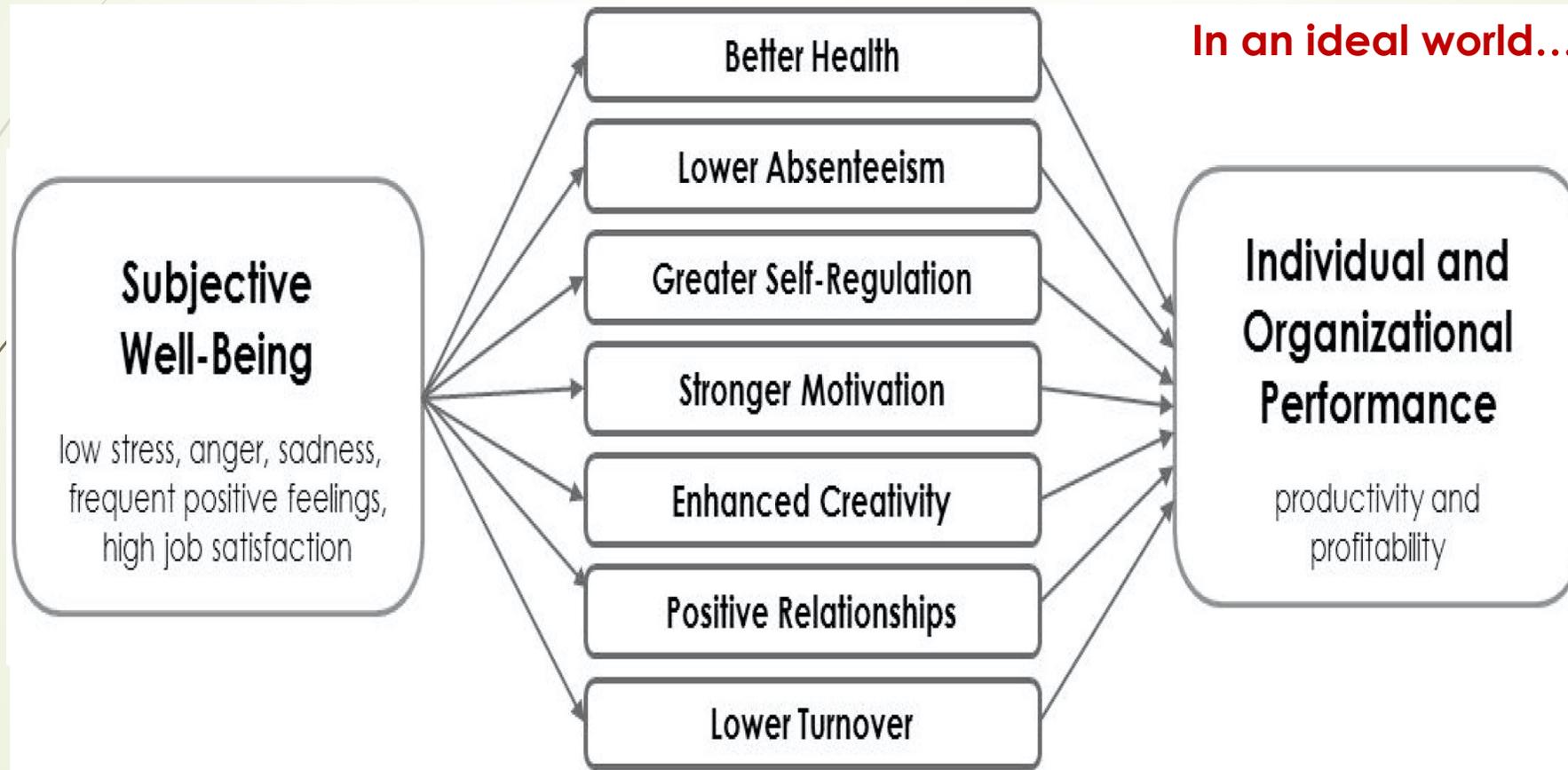
Prosocial behavior

Creativity

Social Relationships

Benefits of happiness

► Career Success





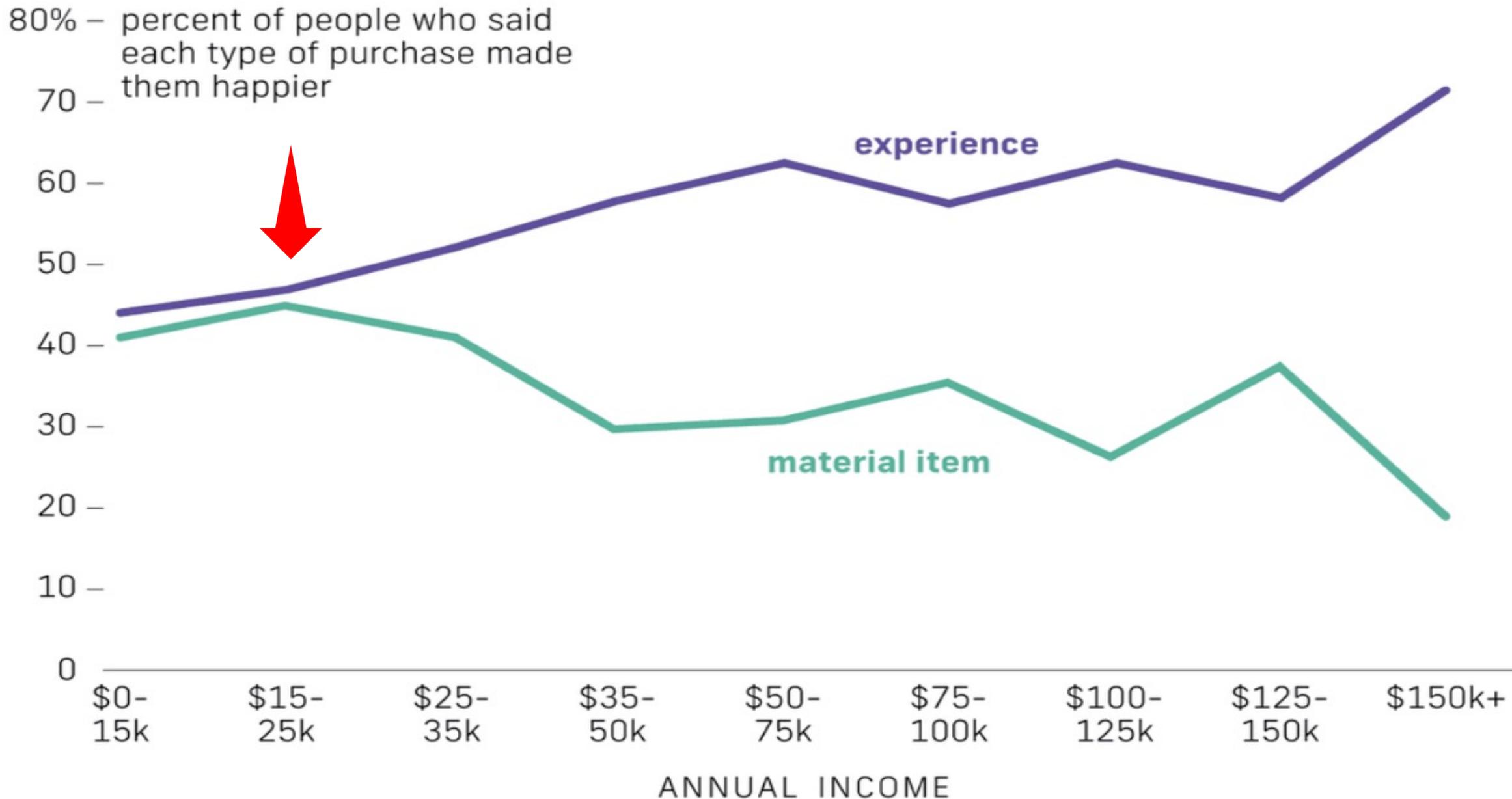
Benefits of happiness

- ▶ Happy workers and individuals
 - ▶ More likely to be reemployed and get a 2nd interview
 - ▶ More likely to be rated highly by supervisors
 - ▶ Tend to earn **higher income**
 - ▶ 10% above average
- 

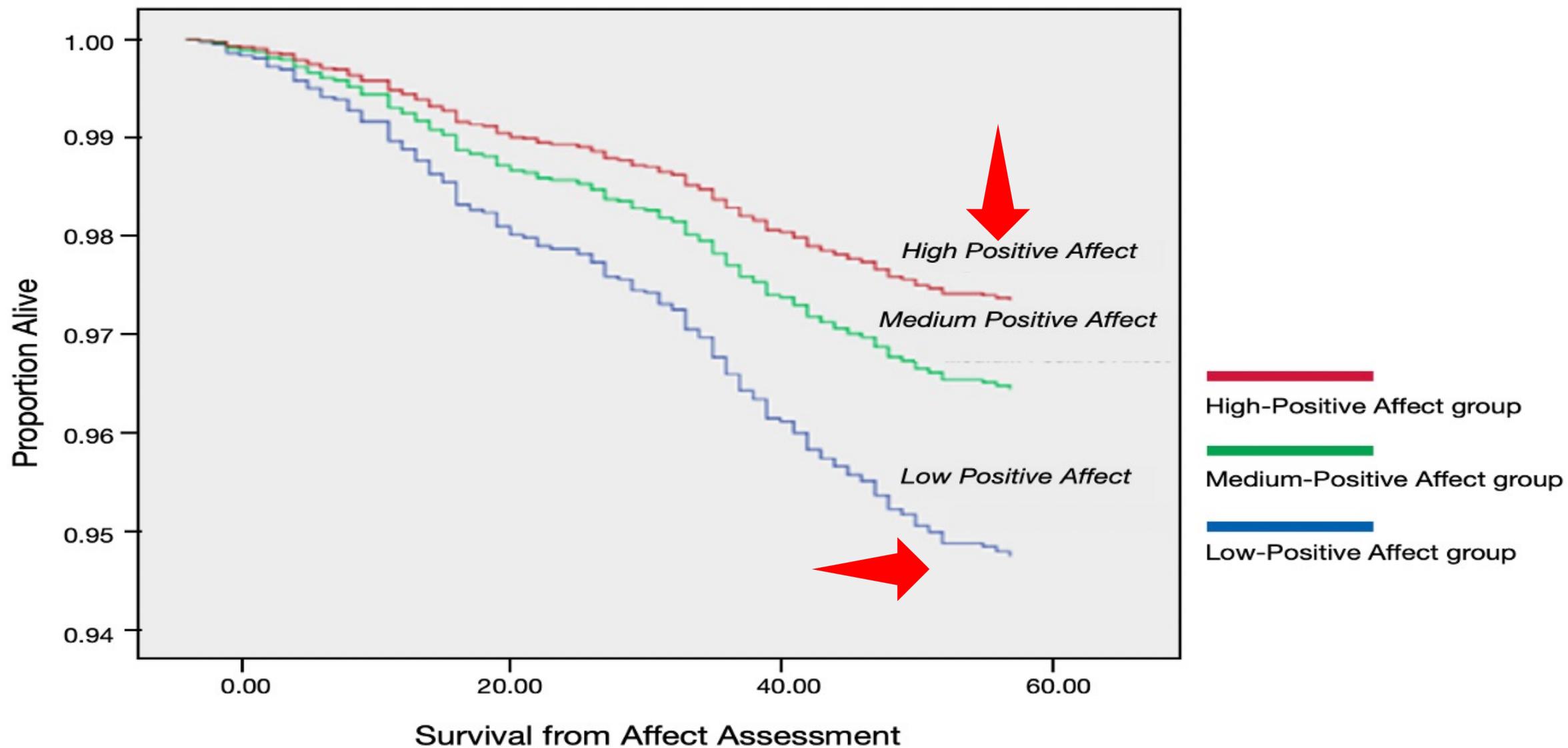
Table 1 | Satiation points across region, gender and education

Region	LE satiation	PA satiation	NA satiation
Global	\$95,000	\$60,000	\$75,000
Western Europe/Scandinavia	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Eastern Europe/the Balkans	\$45,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Australia/New Zealand	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Southeast Asia	\$70,000	N/A	N/A
East Asia	\$110,000	\$60,000	\$50,000
Latin America/the Caribbean	\$35,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Northern America	\$105,000	\$65,000	\$95,000
Middle East/North Africa	\$115,000	\$110,000	\$125,000
Sub-Saharan Africa	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$50,000
Women	\$100,000	\$55,000	\$60,000
Men	\$90,000	\$65,000	\$60,000
Low education	\$70,000	\$50,000	\$35,000
Moderate education	\$85,000	\$60,000	\$65,000
High education	\$115,000	\$80,000	\$70,000

N/A indicates occasions where no positive relationship was found between log income and SWB. LE, life evaluation; PA, positive affect; NA, negative affect.



Material vs. Experiential Purchase



Notes: Figure from Steptoe and Wardle (2011). “Survival from affect assessment” is measured in months from initial interview where positive affect levels were reported. The English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing is a representative sample of older men and women living in England. Positive affect reported on a single day by individuals between 52 and 79 years old were used. Values are adjusted for age and sex. Respondents with the highest third of reported positive affect were 34% less likely to die over the period studied than those in the lowest positive affect group after controlling for demographic and health factors. Those in the high and medium positive affect groups had death rates of 3.6% and 4.6%, respectively, compared to 7.3% for the low positive affect group.

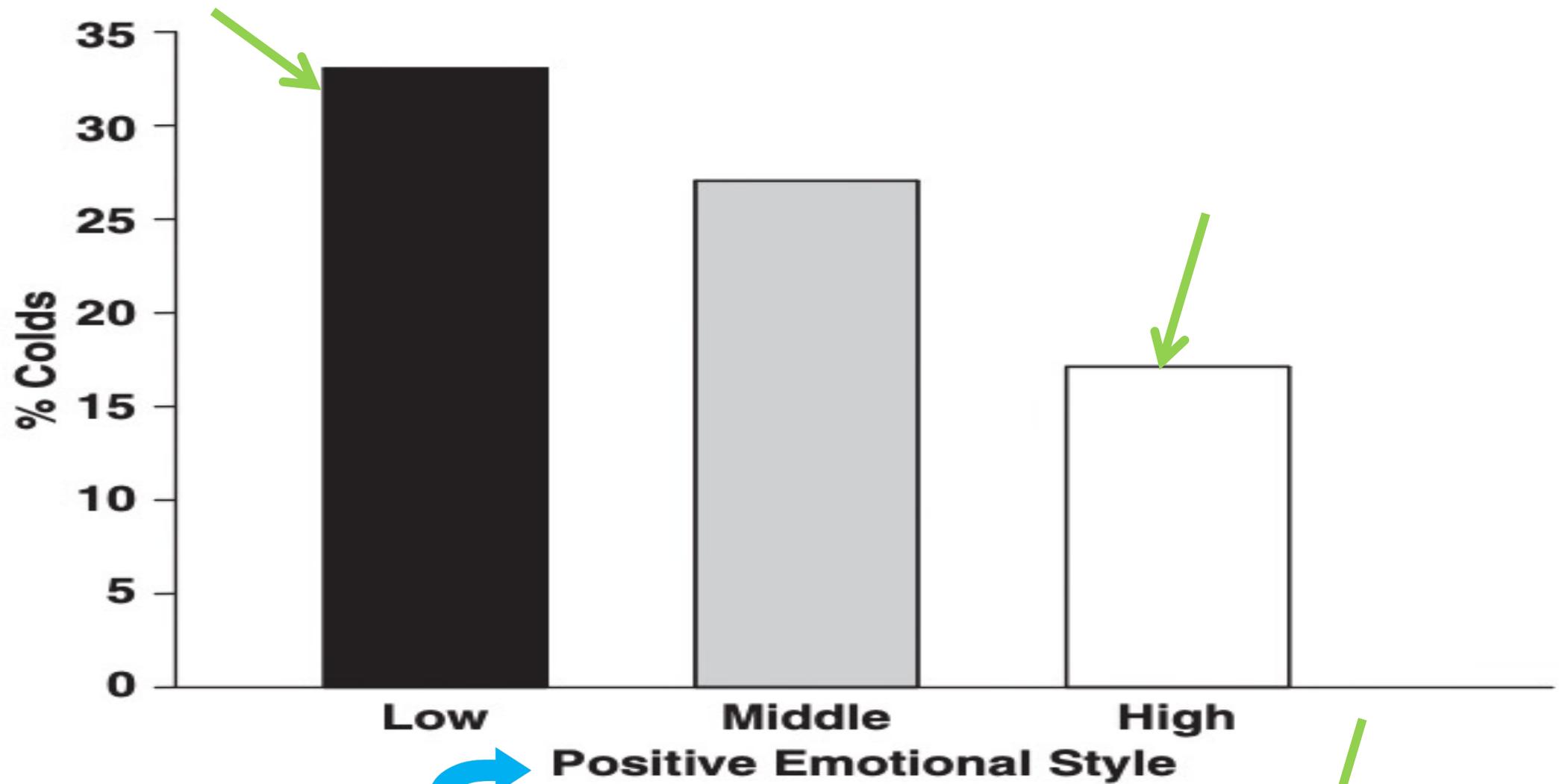


Fig. 1. The association between trait positive emotional style and the incidence of the common cold as diagnosed through objectively assessed markers of disease (infection, mucus weights, and congestion). Adapted from data reported in Cohen, Doyle, Turner, Alper, & Skoner (2003).

Benefits of happiness

- ▶ **Health**
- ▶ Happy individuals
 - ▶ Live longer (4 to 10 years)
 - ▶ Stronger immune systems
 - ▶ Quicker recovery among surgical patients
 - ▶ Lower risk of heart disease & stroke
 - ▶ Reduced inflammatory and neuroendocrine problems



Benefits of happiness

- **Health**

- Level vs. change

- Increases in SWB across time (**becoming happier**) independently predict better physical health, beyond SWB level.

Is it possible to become happier?

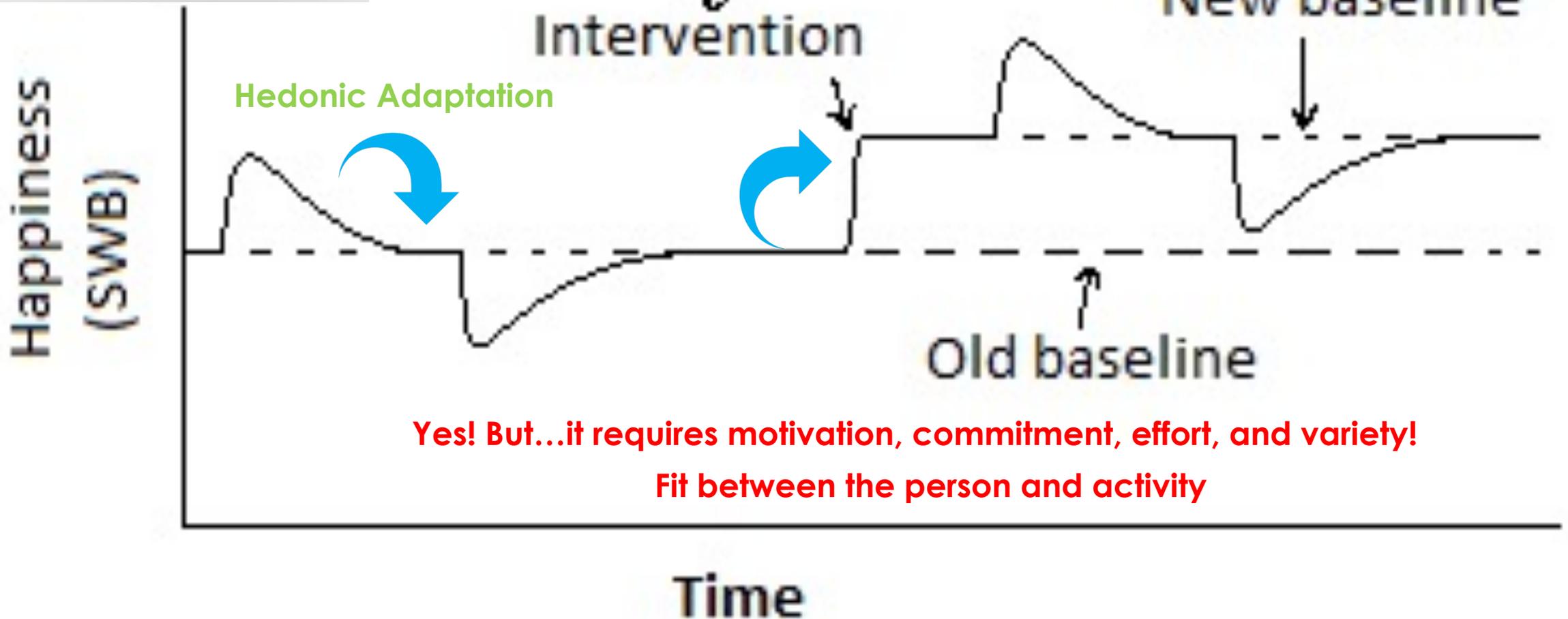




HEDONIC TREADMILL

Is it possible to become happier?

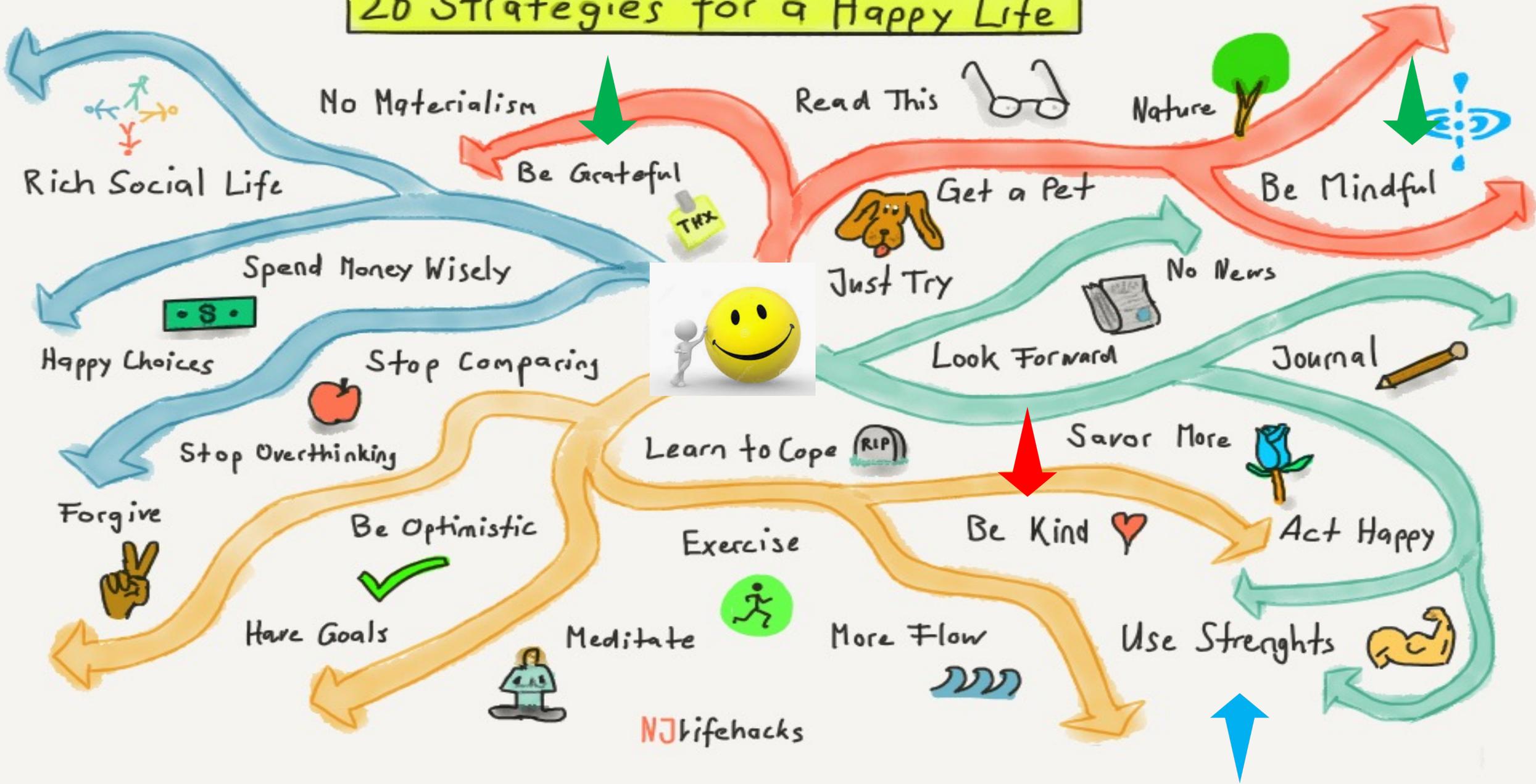
Does anything like this exist?



Yes! But...it requires motivation, commitment, effort, and variety!

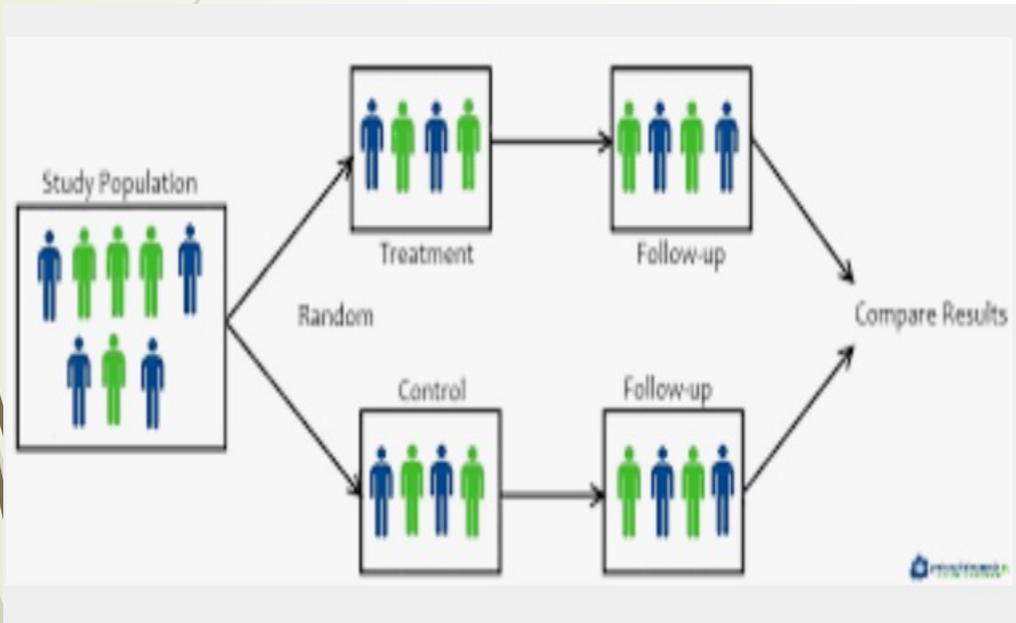
Fit between the person and activity

26 Strategies for a Happy Life



Positive Psychology Interventions

- Happiness increasing activities/strategies
- Randomized control trials



Happiness activity

Daily tasks

Lab
visits/Online



**When does it
kick in?**



Kindness

- ▶ Engaging in random acts of kindness
 - ▶ Strangers or immediate social network
 - ▶ Pick a day & 3 acts of kindness
 - ▶ Perform 3 acts everyday for a week

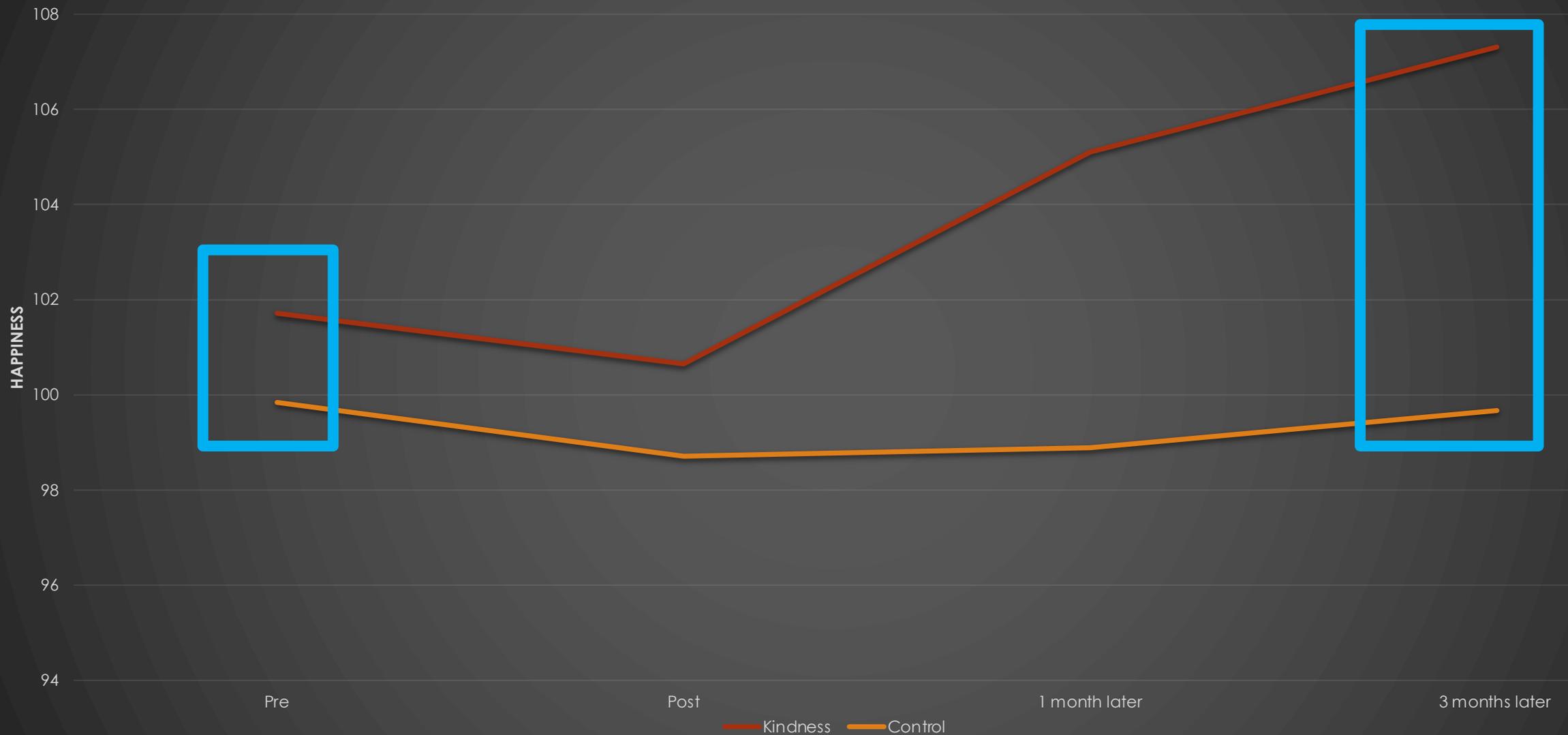


What are some acts of kindness you have performed in the past couple of weeks?

Kindness: Does it make a difference?



Kindness: Does it make a difference?



Kindness: Does it make a difference?



Does this activity fit you as a person?

Would you consider engaging in this activity in the future?





Gratitude

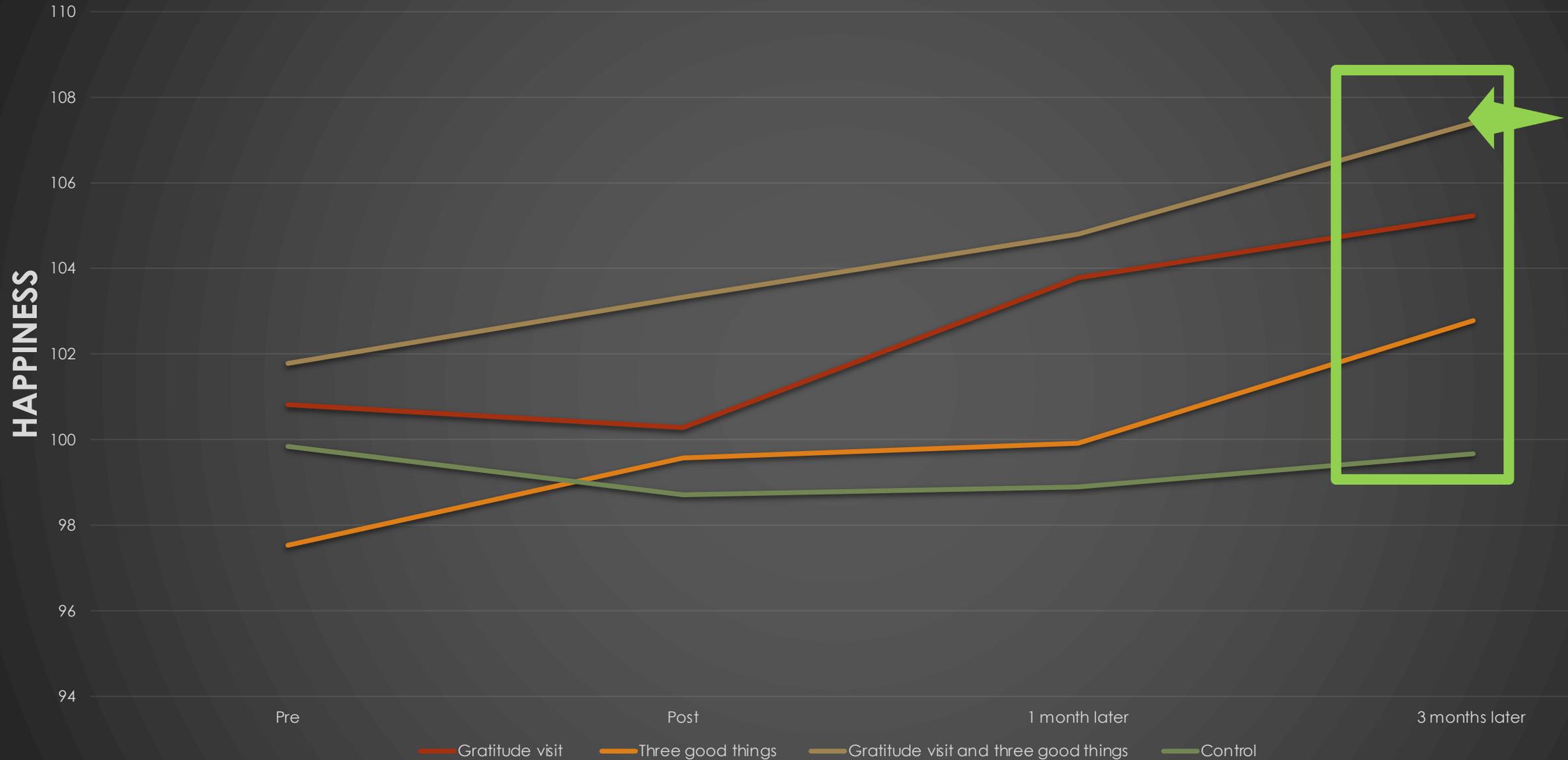
- ▶ Expressing gratitude
 - ▶ In relationships
 - ▶ Letter & visit
 - ▶ “Write and then deliver a letter of gratitude in person to someone who had been especially kind to them but had never been properly thanked.”



To whom would you write a letter of gratitude and why?



Gratitude: Does it make a difference?



Gratitude: Does it make a difference?



Does this activity fit you as a person?

Would you consider engaging in this activity in the future?



CREATIVITY

[originality, ingenuity]

WISDOM

CURIOSITY

[interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]

WISDOM

JUDGEMENT

[critical thinking]

WISDOM

LOVE of LEARNING

WISDOM

PERSPECTIVE

[wisdom]

WISDOM

BRAVERY

[valor]

COURAGE

PERSEVERANCE

[persistence, industriousness]

COURAGE

HONESTY

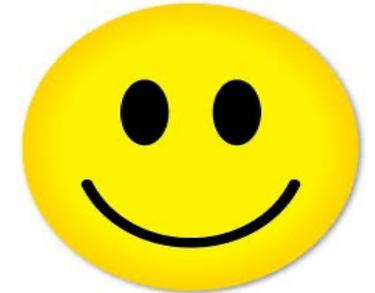
[authenticity, integrity]

COURAGE

ZEST

[vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]

COURAGE



LOVE

HUMANITY

KINDNESS

[generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]

HUMANITY

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

[emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]

HUMANITY

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

TEAMWORK

[citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]

JUSTICE

FAIRNESS

JUSTICE

LEADERSHIP

JUSTICE

FORGIVENESS

[citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]

MODERATION

HUMILITY

MODERATION

PRUDENCE

MODERATION

SELF-REGULATION

[self-control]

MODERATION

APPRECIATION of BEAUTY and EXCELLENCE

[awe, wonder, elevation]

TRANSCENDANCE

GRATITUDE

TRANSCENDANCE

HOPE

[optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]

TRANSCENDANCE

HUMOUR

[playfulness]

TRANSCENDANCE

SPIRITUALITY

[faith, purpose]

TRANSCENDANCE

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www>

WISDOM

COURAGE

HUMANITY

JUSTICE

MODERATION

TRANSCENDANCE

YOUR SIGNATURE STRENGTHS



1

Honesty

COURAGE

Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.



2

Self-Regulation

TEMPERANCE

+



4

Judgment

WISDOM

+



3

Kindness

HUMANITY

+



5

Forgiveness

TEMPERANCE

+

Using Your Signature Strengths

If honesty was your top character strength, how would you use it in ways that you had not before?
(two new ways)

YOUR SIGNATURE STRENGTHS

...use one of these top strengths in a new and different way every day for one week or a few days



1

Honesty

COURAGE

Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.



2

Self-Regulation

TEMPERANCE

+



4

Judgment

WISDOM

+



3

Kindness

HUMANITY

+



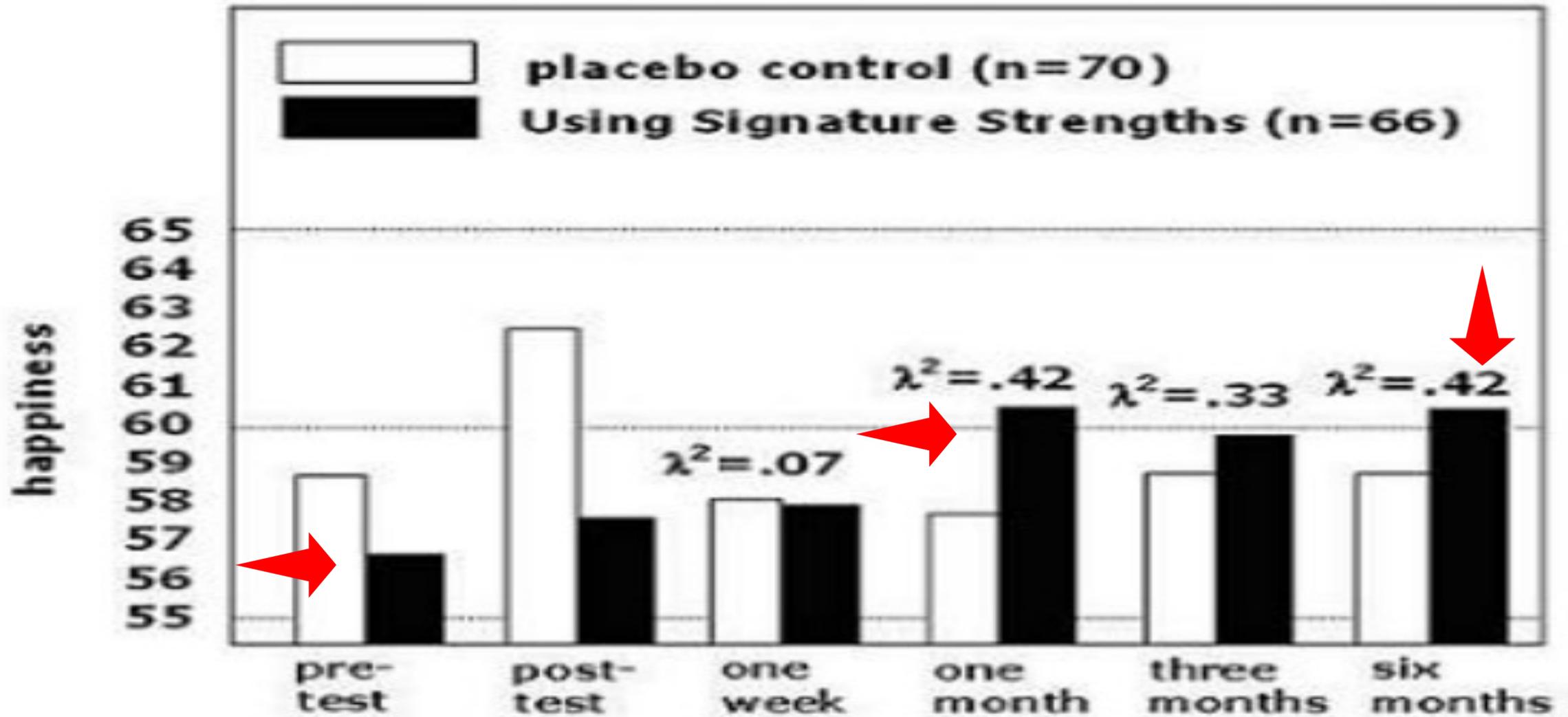
5

Forgiveness

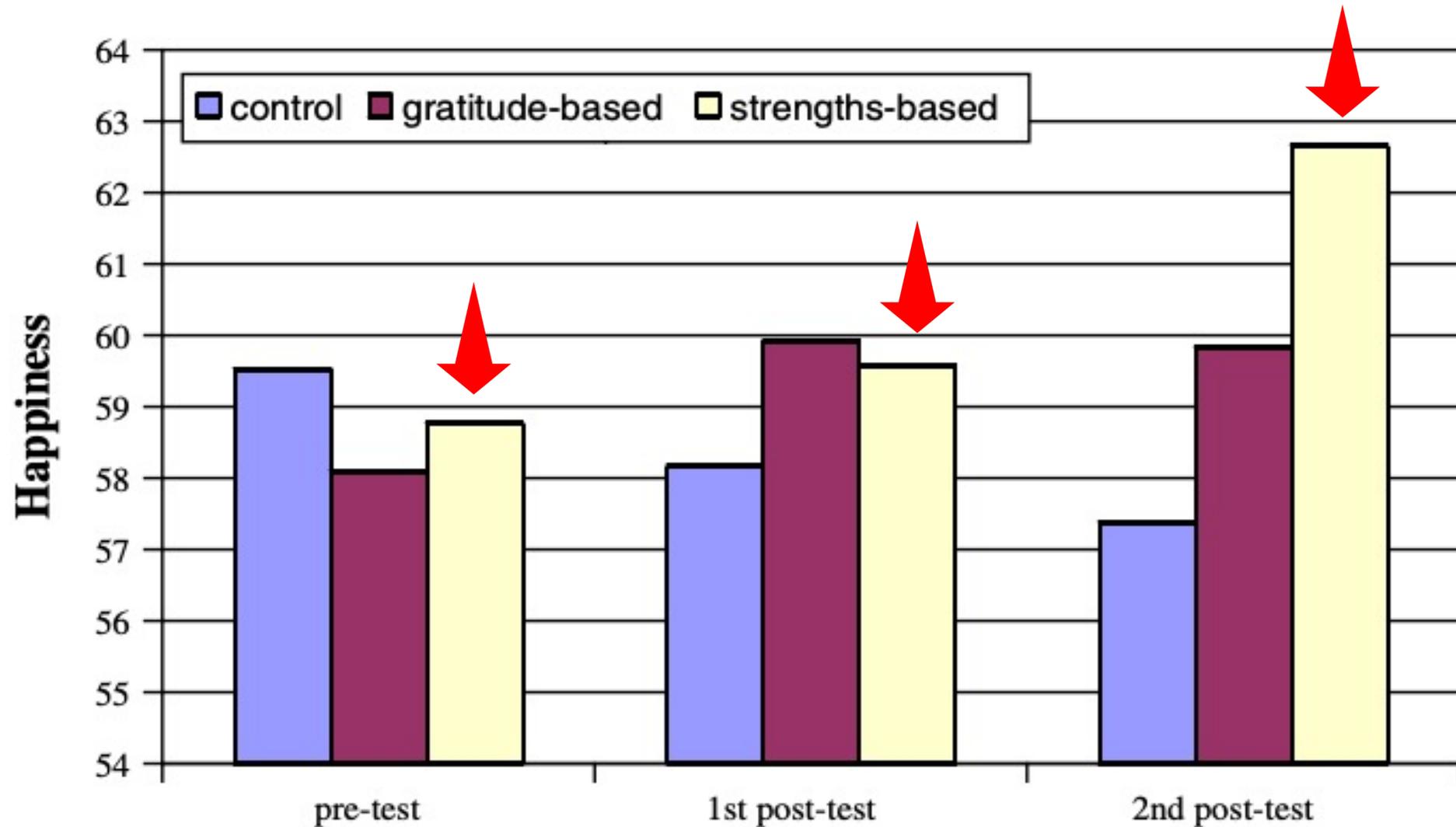
TEMPERANCE

+

Strengths: Does it make a difference?



Strengths: Does it make a difference?



Signature Strengths: Does it make a difference?



Does this activity fit you as a person?

Would you consider engaging in this activity in the future?



Mindfulness

- ▶ A process of openly attending, with awareness, to one's present moment experience
- ▶ The opposite of mindfulness is mind-wandering
 - ▶ **What is the % of** waking conscious experience occupied by thoughts unrelated to a primary task?
 - ▶ **30 to 50%**



Question:

Are you thinking about something other than what you're currently doing?

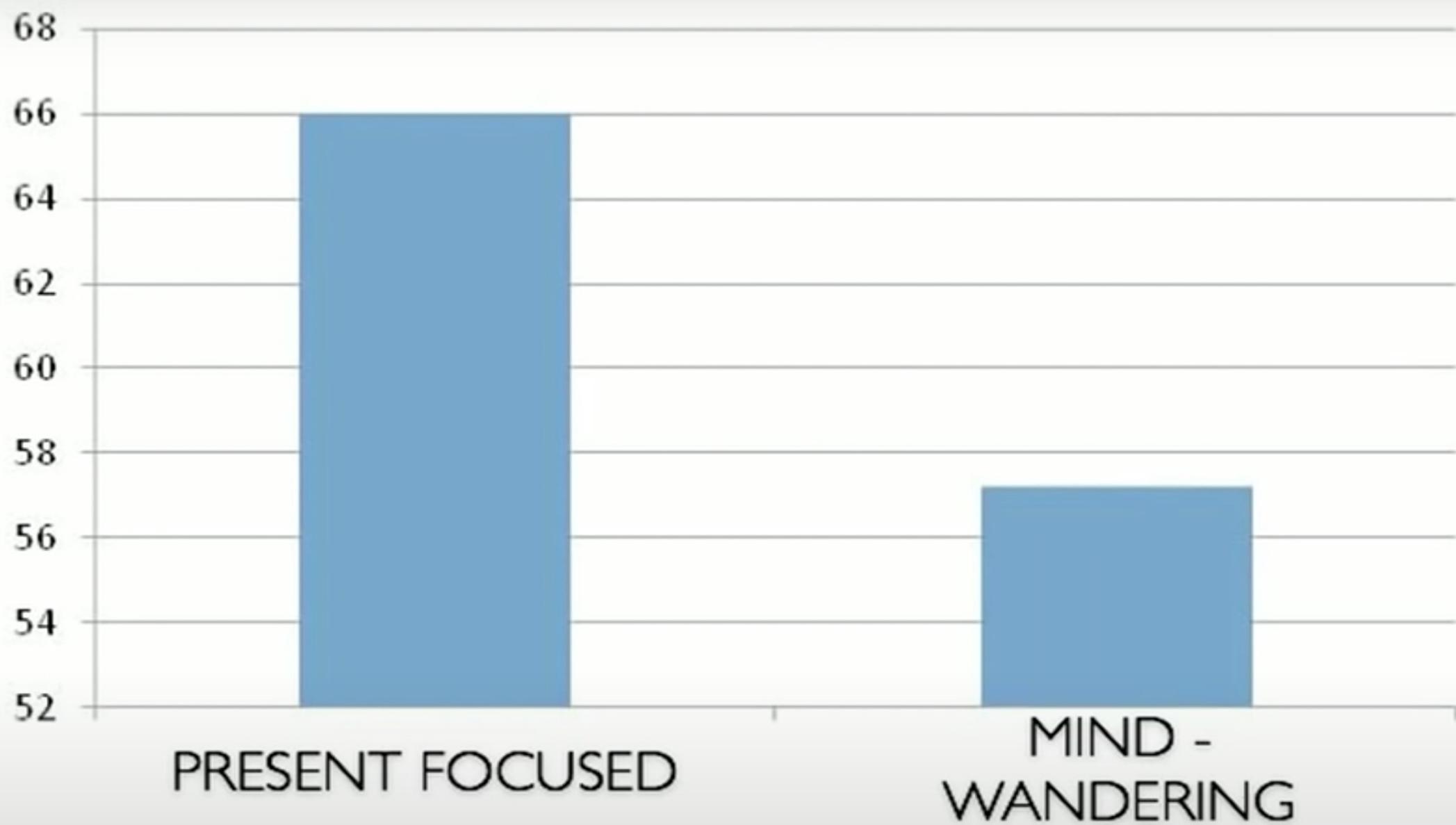
no

yes, something pleasant

yes, something neutral

yes, something unpleasant

Happiness



Mind-Wandering State

Mindful Mini-Courses

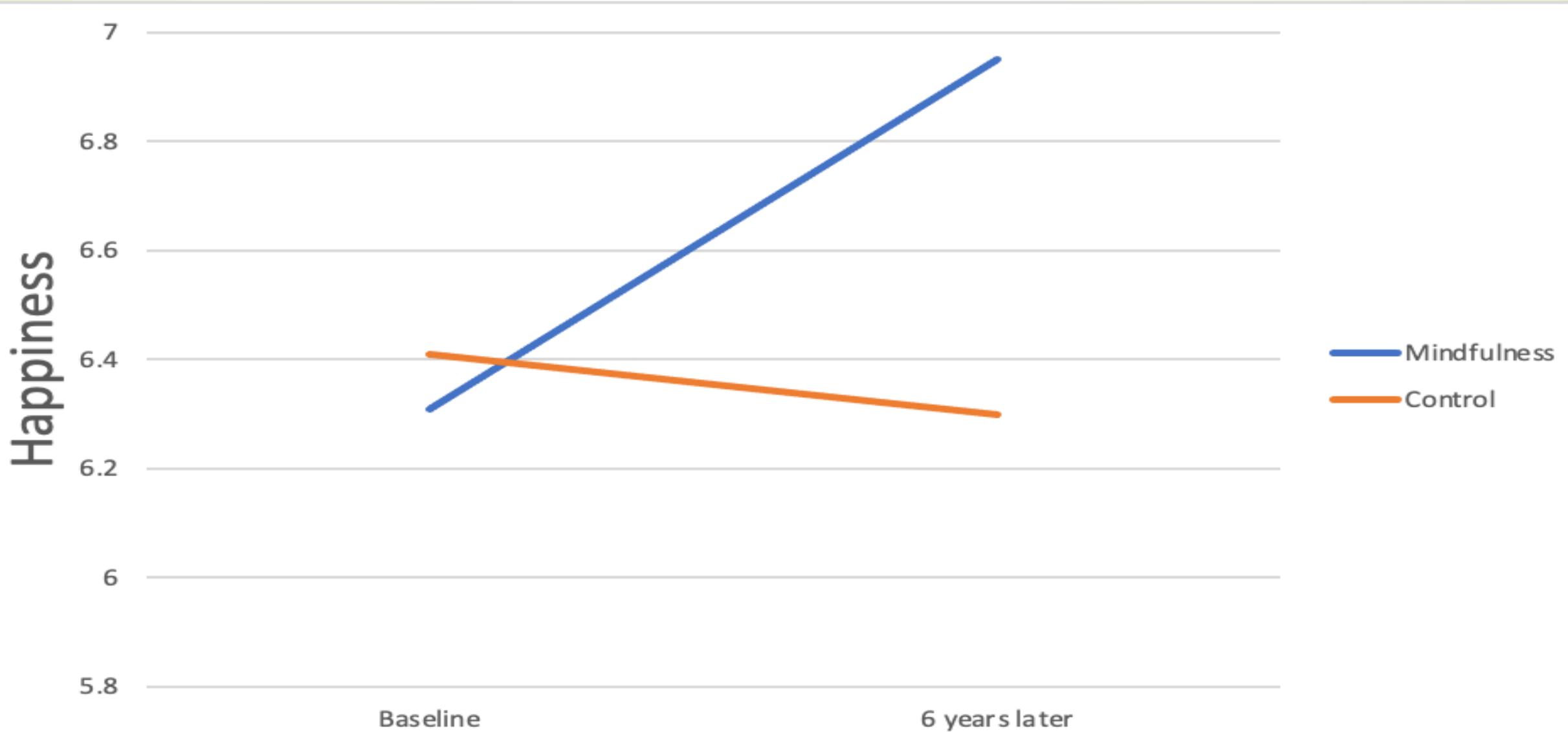
Whether you're in need of a reminder to take a few deep breaths or looking for guidance in your mindfulness meditation practice, we've got you covered. Each course offers video, audio, and transcripts so you can choose your favorite way to engage with each practice.

BY [MINDFUL STAFF](#) | JANUARY 1, 2019

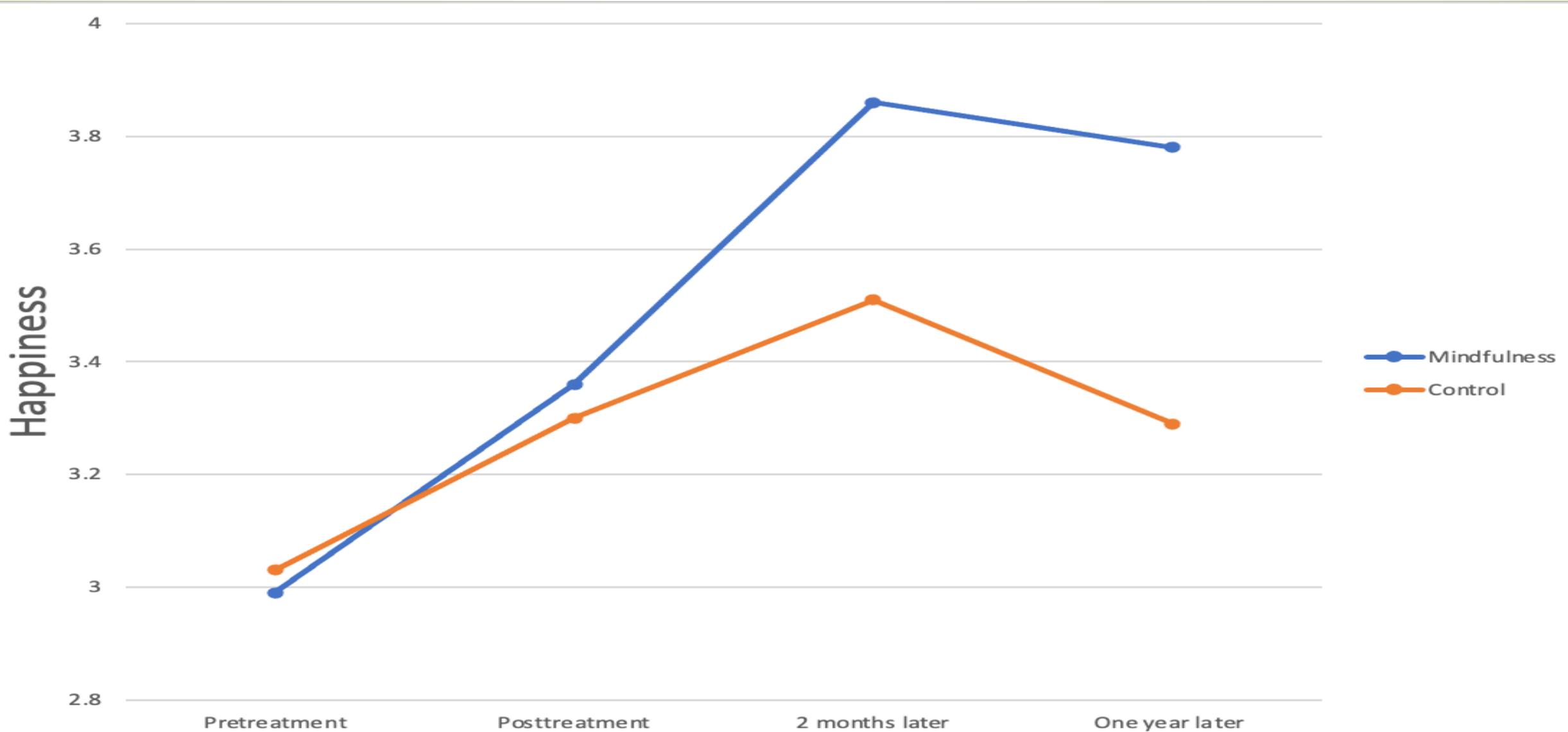


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Mindfulness: Does it make a difference?



Mindfulness: Does it make a difference?



Mindfulness: Does it make a difference?



Does this activity fit you as a person?

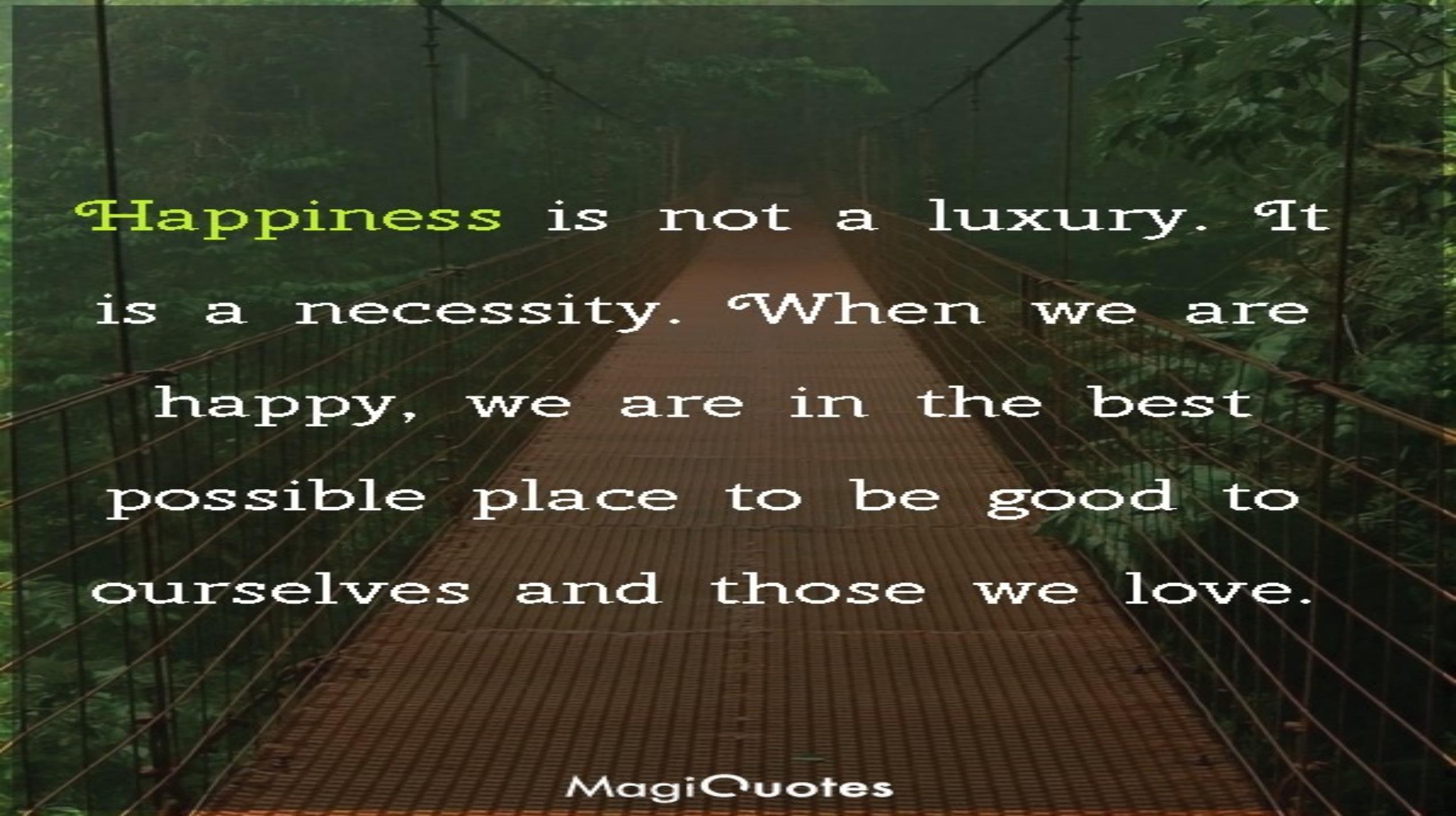
Would you consider engaging in this activity in the future?



Is it possible to become happier?

- It is possible to become happier
- The pursuit of happiness needs
 - **Motivation**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Effort**
 - **Variety**
- **Depends on the fit between you and the activity!**



A wooden suspension bridge with a metal grate floor stretches across a dense, green forest. The bridge's cables and supports are visible, and the surrounding trees are thick and vibrant. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the bridge towards the distance.

Happiness is not a luxury. It
is a necessity. When we are
happy, we are in the best
possible place to be good to
ourselves and those we love.



Thank you



Questions?