

CONNECT to the topic page 2

Host: Today we have a topic that I think will make you smile: the topic of happiness! My guest today is Professor Stefano Tassi. Professor Tassi teaches a popular college course on happiness. Professor, welcome.

Psychology professor Stefano Tassi: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Host: Now, my first question is, how do you define happiness?

Prof. Tassi: That's a good question. We often say that there are two kinds of happiness.

Host: Two?

Prof. Tassi: Yes, we've identified two types of happiness—short-term happiness and long-term happiness.

Host: OK. And how are they different?

Prof. Tassi: Well, short-term happiness is the type of happiness you feel now, in the moment. It's when something specific makes you happy. For example, you've just heard some good news. Or you're sitting on the beach on vacation. Or you have just enjoyed a nice dinner with your family. Short-term happiness is happiness that is caused by specific events.

Host: I see, very specific.

Prof. Tassi: Yes, it's specific. So this feeling can often change from day to day.

Host: And long-term happiness?

Prof. Tassi: Yes, long-term happiness is different. Long-term happiness is the level of happiness you feel generally in your life. It doesn't depend on what is happening that day. This level of happiness stays the same throughout our lives.

Host: I see. So a person who is generally unhappy can have a great day and feel happy, but for a short time.

Prof. Tassi: Right. And a person who is generally happy can experience something bad and feel unhappy, but for a short time.

Host: Got it. A person's long-term level of happiness doesn't usually change. So interesting.

FOCUS your attention page 5

Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Today, we're going to talk about positive psychology. First, I want to start with a definition of positive psychology. After that, we'll look at the goals of positive psychology—what positive psychologists are trying to learn. Finally, we're going to discuss

some research done by positive psychologists. So, is everyone clear on the topic? ...

WATCH the lecture page 6

Professor Dana Dailey: E01 Good morning everybody. Today I want to get started with the main topic of this course: happiness. First I want to talk about how psychologists like myself measure happiness. Then we'll look at some common characteristics of happy people. And finally, we'll look at whether or not we can change our level of happiness—in other words, whether we can learn to be happier. **(COACHING TIP 1) E02** OK, so we all know what it's like to feel happy, right? But how do we measure happiness? One common method psychologists use is interviewing people. First, we ask them questions to find out how happy they are—how happy they feel in general. Then we gather information about them—like their age, health, income, and so on. We use all of this data to determine the most common characteristics of happy people. **E03** So what have psychologists learned? Well, there are a few characteristics we know are not relevant to happiness. One of them is having a lot of money. As long as people have enough money for a home, food, and clothing, having more money doesn't make people happier. So, money doesn't buy happiness. Are you surprised? Another thing that is not connected to happiness is having more education. People with a lot of education are no happier than people with little education. So now maybe you're questioning your decision to take this class, huh? Finally, a third characteristic that is not a requirement for happiness is youth—being young. In fact, the opposite is true. One study found that sixty- to sixty-four-year-olds are actually happier than twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds. **E04** So we know that money, education, and youth are not important to happiness. Then what is? Well, there's no one way to achieve happiness. But there are a few specific characteristics that happy people have in common. One very important characteristic is family and friends. A study of students at the University of Illinois found that the happiest students had strong connections to family and friends, and that they made time to spend with them. Another common feature of happy people is that they have religious beliefs or a belief in something bigger than themselves. This helps them feel that life has significance, or meaning. A third important thing about happy people is that they set goals for themselves. In the workplace or in their personal lives, they establish goals around things they find interesting or things that allow them

to use their strengths. **(COACHING TIP 2) E05** Now, another question psychologists have tried to resolve is, can we change how happy we are? Can we learn to be happier? Some psychologists think the answer is “No, we can’t.” This is because research shows that happiness depends a lot on our personality—the kind of person we are. Some people just have more positive attitudes about life than others. We’ve all noticed this, right? And because it’s difficult for people to change their personalities, some psychologists think that we stay at about the same level of happiness throughout our lives. **E06** But many of us in the field of positive psychology believe we can change—that we can consciously learn to be happier. **(COACHING TIP 3)** Positive psychologists have developed some exercises that people can do to feel happier. One of these is called the “Gratitude Visit.” In this exercise, people write a letter to someone they want to thank. For example: a parent, a friend, a teacher—someone they feel has helped them in their life. But they don’t send the letter. Instead, they visit the person and read the letter to them. **E07** Now, research shows this really works to make the person who wrote the letter feel happier. Why? First, it helps them feel more connected to others. And remember, that is very important for happiness. Second, the people are giving something—in this case, their thanks—to someone else. And giving or helping others makes us feel better about ourselves. It helps us feel that our lives have meaning. **E08** In addition to the Gratitude Visit, psychologists have developed other exercises that help people focus on the positive things in their lives, and help them use their strengths to achieve goals. And studies have shown that these exercises can help people feel better. However, they do have limits. **(COACHING TIP 4)** For one thing, each exercise only works for a certain amount of time. For example, the Gratitude Visit only makes people happier for about three months. And, of course, we can’t become a lot happier. Remember, we can’t totally change our personalities. You can’t take a really unhappy, negative person and make him or her feel super-happy all the time. **E09** But, I do believe that if we really want to, we can all learn ways to feel better, to feel the best that we can. And you’re going to find this out for yourselves. For the next time, I’d like you to look into choosing your own happiness exercise.

TALK about the topic page 9

Mia: I think this class is going to be really fun! I mean, we’re studying happiness!

Hannah: Yeah, I know what you mean. This is a cool topic.

Mia: Maybe the ideas from this course can completely change people’s lives! Like, maybe I’ll become happier!

River: Really? I don’t think so. I don’t think these ideas can really work. I mean, we’re either happy people or we’re not, like she said.

Manny: Yeah, exactly. Like, did you guys get the “Gratitude Visit”? I mean, is that really going to make you happier for ... How long did she say?

Hannah: Three months.

Manny: I doubt it. Maybe like a week. But then you’re yourself again.

Mia: I’m sorry. I don’t agree. I think a really positive experience can stay with you a long time. Like I said, it can change your life!

River: But don’t forget: Not all psychologists believe you can learn to be happier—do you have that in your notes?

Mia: Yeah, I guess so. I guess I’m just a positive thinker.