



A Course on *Happiness*, Yale University

(via Coursera)

The Yale course on happiness covers insights into happiness, dispels misconceptions and offers practical strategies for living happier. The free class is offered on [coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org), but we've broken down the main points from the lecture below:

Important Factors for Happiness:

- **A Good Philosophy of Life**—the components include: aligning actions with values, fostering meaningful connections, and cultivating a sense of gratitude and purpose. Habits and mindset shifts are crucial to achieving long-term happiness.
- **Emotional Well-Being** is crucial for overall happiness. Strategies for managing emotions effectively include: practicing mindfulness, cultivating self-compassion, and building resilience in the face of adversity. Nurturing positive relationships and engaging in activities that bring joy and fulfillment are an essential aspect of emotional well-being.
- **Genes and Circumstances** can affect happiness but **are not the sole determinants**. While genetics and life circumstances play a role, intentional behaviors can significantly impact overall well-being. Factors such as social connections, self-care, and gratitude can improve happiness regardless of genetics or external circumstances.
- There are many **Negative Impacts of Social Comparison** on happiness. Constantly comparing, particularly on social media where people often present curated versions of their lives, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, envy, and low self-esteem. Focus instead on internal standards and personal growth to foster greater contentment and well-being.
- **Our perceptions are not always accurate**. Our minds can distort reality, causing misinterpreted situations or unrealistic expectations. This distortion can contribute to unhappiness. Practicing mindfulness and self-awareness to challenge distorted perceptions can promote a more balanced and realistic view of the world, which can lead to greater well-being.
- **Our minds think in terms of reference points**, not in absolutes. Our perceptions of happiness, success, and other aspects of life are often influenced by comparison to these reference points rather than objective standards. For example, our happiness may be influenced more by how our current situation compares to past experiences or those of others, rather than an absolute level of achievement or wealth. Try to be mindful of these reference points and cultivate gratitude and contentment with our present circumstances, rather than striving for unattainable ideals.

Ways to Increase Happiness:

- **Savor Things:** Savoring is the act of stepping outside of an experience to review and appreciate it. We often fail to stay in the moment and really enjoy what we're experiencing. Savoring intensifies and lengthens positive emotions.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Taking time to recognize and appreciate what you've received in life can make you happier.
- **Set Goals:** Working toward meaningful goals gives a sense of purpose which contributes to long-term happiness.
- **Build Social Connections:** Building and maintaining strong relationships with friends, family, and community members provides emotional support and boosts happiness.
- **Seek Help:** If you are struggling with persistent feelings of unhappiness or depression, seeking help from a therapist or counselor can provide valuable support and guidance. For more on living happier, reach out to the EAP.