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HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

People have always aspired for a long, dignified and meaningful life. However, the stresses in contemporary life are increasing in such a way that it is becoming difficult to cope with them. The hectic pace of life, environmental factors, and increasing greed are making people's lives more and more stressful. These factors influence our life style and combine to create serious health hazards. Keeping this in view efforts are being made to achieve health and well-being for all. The study of this area involves many subjects such as psychology, medicine, sociology, anthropology etc. Much concern is shown nowadays for the study of the factors influencing health, well-being, quality of life, healthy life style, and happiness. In this lesson you will learn about the concepts of health and well-being and how important they are for good life and for happiness. Awareness, adoption and practice of healthy lifestyle are the keys to our well being.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the concepts of happiness and well-being;
- distinguish between happiness and satisfaction;
- understand the concepts of self-actualization and mature personality;
- identify the strengths of self-actualized individuals; and
- discuss the ways for developing positive emotions.

17.1 CONCEPTS OF HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

Happiness and well-being are important and necessary for every individual. Both of these bring about the positive feelings of joy, satisfaction, pleasure and pleasantness. Have you remained unhappy, alone and sad for a long time? Were you able to do your daily activities? Did you like meeting other people or talk to them? Yes, if you



are unhappy you do not feel like doing anything. Remaining in this state for a long time is harmful to our body and mind.

The term '**well-being**' includes many aspects such as, happiness, energy, leisure, peace with oneself, contentment and sensitivity to environment. Well-being involves not only happiness and pleasure but also experiencing/feeling satisfaction in life, presence of positive feeling or affect (e.g. interest, love, surprise, pleasure) and the absence of negative feelings (e.g. anxiety, depression, stress). A very rich person may be unhappy and a poor person may be happy. Well-being is a matter of how one experiences and interprets one's life conditions. Money, property, power and prestige provide us with limited sense of well-being. It has been found that material prosperity is positively related to life satisfaction to some extent. But indefinite increase in material prosperity does not lead to significant life satisfaction. You may attempt Activity 1 to understand the meaning of well-being.

Understanding the Meaning of Well-being

Activity 1

Ask some people to choose any one life style - (a) either a life of 70 years in a village with basic amenities and few material comforts or (b) a life of 50 years in a rich country with high living standards. Ask them to provide reasons for their choice. You could answer this question yourself and also ask your parents and/or friends to do the same. Compare the answers given.

Activity 2

Prepare a list of priorities/main concerns in life, that is, those things that are needed in life. You could answer this question yourself and also ask your parents and/or friends to do the same. Compare the lists and note how many material and non-material aspects are listed by the younger and older generation.

A. Factors Influencing Well-Being

We can achieve a sense of well-being through a healthy lifestyle and by adopting good habits. The basic principles of healthy life style include good diet, adequate exercise, sleep, proper recreation and a set routine. Balance and avoidance of extremes is very important for leading a good life.

Nutrition: Do you remember when you were unable to eat for a long period of time? You must have felt weak, irritable and hungry. Sufficient calorie intake is necessary for good health. Since we need energy through out the day we should not skip meals or go on diets or under eat. We should eat a **balanced diet** of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and vitamins. The reverse is also true as some people consume too many calories and became overweight. Such people are also likely to have a lower self-esteem particularly if the culture approves a slim body.



Notes

Exercise: Talk to your grandparents, they will tell you that they have led a physically active life. They used their body to work and to go from place to place, whereas now we prefer to use cars, buses and other vehicles. Decreased physical activity affects our health and well-being. Lack of exercise can lead to headache, high blood pressure, diabetes, backache, irritability, anxiety and depression. Today obesity is another serious problem faced by the youth and adults alike. Exercise has a positive effect on mood. People who exercise regularly are able to control stress and enjoy high quality of life.

Sleep: Adequate sleep is required to rejuvenate and refresh both the mind and body. Sleep deficiency leads to irritability, anxiety, depression and disturbed thinking. How many hours of sleep do you get? We need about 8-9 hours of sleep to function effectively. We should try to establish a regular sleep routine and not sleep at irregular hours. Remember that people who exercise regularly also sleep well.

Recreation: Just as we need proper nutrition, exercise and sleep, we also need to relax and enjoy life. Indulging in certain activities, personally important to us, give us joy, fulfilment, satisfaction and act as a diversion from the hectic life we lead in current times.

Yoga and meditation: These activities bring discipline and peace in life. In addition there are many health related benefits which make a person fit and active.

Having friends and maintaining relationships: Friends and other people provide support and give opportunities to develop network, cooperation and enriching social life.

Optimism, resilience and hope: People with optimism, resilience and hope are found to be healthier and happier than others who lack these characteristics. Having these positive attitudes makes a person effective and productive. Optimism refers to being positive while resilience is the ability to be strong in difficult times.

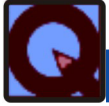
Activity 3**Healthy Pleasures**

Make a list of various things that you do every day which give you happiness and make you feel 'good'. A 15 year old boy wrote the following list: my early morning run, aloo paranthas made by my mother, playing with my dog, listening to music undisturbed, talking to my friends, time spent with my father on Sunday evening, and, watching football matches.

It is the little pleasures we create ourselves that give us delight and a 'good feel' factor.

Routine: Routines help establish healthy habits that bring structure to our lives. A daily routine provides us with a framework and orders our life world. We know what is expected from us; otherwise we get alarmed when we are unclear about the

expectations from others. The positive effect of routine is that it provides a sense of organization, control and responsibility to the person. Bad habits can be turned into good habits. You may love to sleep late but you know that you need to keep your body in good shape. Do you have a routine? Pick a routine that will keep you happy.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1

1. Identify the various aspects of well-being.

2. Identify the important factors that influence a healthy life style.

Quiz 1 State whether the statements given below are 'True' or 'False'.

1. Cultivating healthy pleasures helps increase daily life pressures.
2. Adequate sleep refreshes both body and mind.
3. Consumption of more calories than required leads to more energy levels.
4. Exercise has a positive effect on mood.
5. Routines make our life boring and repetitive

B. Happiness, Well-Being and Need Satisfaction

What is happiness? All of us know what we feel when we are happy but it is often very difficult to define it and express in words. Happiness can be a pleasant feeling for a brief time or for a long duration. When you help a needy person or your friend it may make you feel happy. When you are in need of help and your neighbour helps you, that condition may also give you happiness. Happiness is not only an emotion but refers to living a good life, experiencing well-being and enjoying good quality of life. Happiness and well-being can be attained through many ways.

1. **Material resources:** Money, clothing and housing, provide us with the possibility to satisfy our basic needs. Different needs and their nature were discussed in an earlier lesson. We must satisfy both our primary and secondary needs to be happy.
2. **Cognitive competence:** The ability to search and find what we need is also important. Thus we must be knowledgeable, intelligent, and open to learning.
3. **Subjective competence:** When we believe in our problem solving capacity we have faith in our self and our abilities to achieve our goals.





Notes

Activity 4**Happiness and Well-being**

- Ask persons who are working in an organization as to how work is a source for happiness and well-being. Ask them if they can imagine themselves “free” from work? What are their reactions to such a situation?
- Ask a 15 year old and a 65 year old about various sources of happiness and unhappiness. Compare the two lists to study how age influences the sources of happiness and unhappiness.

We have many needs with some being more important than the others. Fulfilment of our biological and psychological needs is essential. Since need satisfaction provides us with fulfilment it leads to happiness and comfort. When we expect our desires to be continuously fulfilled or immediately satisfied then we are likely to face problems. Non-fulfilment of desires often leads to unhappiness and displeasure. Basic needs must be fulfilled to feel happy and satisfied but there is a limit to it. Do you expect your parents to fulfil every need and desire – to buy clothes every month, an outing every week, a lavish meal every day, or to buy the latest music CD? When we desire too many things we are likely to be dissatisfied when these desires are not fulfilled and that leads to unhappiness. This is the reason why contentment (*santosh*) has been considered important for experiencing happiness. Continuous striving for attaining newer and newer goals pushes us toward a perpetual state of dissatisfaction and discomfort.

Activity 5**Experiencing Happiness**

Ask the following question from people of different walks of life, such as rich and poor, educated and uneducated, men and women, boys and girls, married and unmarried, and so on.

“Considering all things in your life, would you say you are very happy, rather happy, not very happy, or not at all happy?”

Now calculate the frequency stated by the participants of different groups. You can also present your results in a graphical representation, such as a pie diagram or bar diagram.

C. Characteristics of Happy People

Happiness depends upon situational and personal characteristics. The key personal characteristics are:

- Mental and physical health:** People who are physically and mentally healthy are happier than those who suffer from poor health.
- Psychological characteristics:** Happy people believe that they are in control of the situation, are resilient and confident and open to learning experiences (as we



will discuss in self-actualization). Generally happy people are found to have high self-esteem, get along with other people, feel more in control of events in life, and, are optimistic that they can achieve their goals. Most importantly such people are moderately happy most of the time.

- **Good personal relations:** Happy people interact socially and fulfil social needs of sharing, bonding and in return get support from them in time of need.

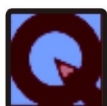
Life events: Happiness is correlated with happy events, such as, promotion, winning an essay competition, parenthood or marriage. Do you think more wealth means more happiness? Once our basic needs are met more wealth does not mean more happiness. Research has indicated that happiness is more important than wealth. There is a strong correlation between happiness and self-esteem, extraversion, optimism, self management skills, good personal relations, progress towards goals, spirituality and religious beliefs. Therefore happiness is closely related to different aspects of the individual and behaviour. Societies that report being happy, value wealth, access to knowledge, personal freedom and equality.

Do you know?

Happiness in Bhutan

Bhutan is a small country in the Himalayan ranges. In the 1970's Bhutan gave the world its first Happiness formula. Countries across the world calculate Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the measure for happiness, well-being and development of the country. Bhutan has happiness at the heart of its government policy. They calculate "Gross National Happiness" (GNH) stating that wealth cannot be the only factor in determining overall development. Growth and development must be considered by a balance between the inner (self) and outer life worlds. Thus, wealth must go hand in hand with cultural values, connection with the environment (nature) as well as the community (people).

Research has also shown that being rich does not make people happy. Are the Bhutanese people giving an important message to the world? Countries like UK and France have also adopted this as a part of their government policies to evaluate well-being of its people. You can read more details about GNH at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_National_Happiness or watch a video about "Happiness – Bhutan" at www.youtube.com



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2

1. Define happiness. Identify the different ways by which happiness and well-being can be achieved.



Notes

2. Can you explain why contentment (*santosh*) is important for maintaining need satisfaction.

3. Identify the important characteristics of happy people.

17.2 SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND MATURE PERSONALITY

In another lesson we read about motives and the crucial role they play in our life. We learnt that fulfilment of primary needs and secondary needs is essential for growth and development. All humans have the tendency to grow and develop. There is a need to grow, expand and mature. All of us have talents and capabilities, but do we really use them to the maximum? Some people appear to be doing the best that they are capable of doing, but not all.

Self-actualization refers to the development of the individual upto his or her full potential. We must understand that self actualization does not mean the end of growth; it is not the path *to* maturity rather it is the path *of* maturity. You may feel that only grown ups or elderly people achieve self actualization. You must start learning about the process as early as possible. As we are nurtured in our social world we come to learn social and moral values. Values help us to give direction and help us evaluate the world to make effective decisions and successful adjustments. Love and respect for self, others and nature, being problem centered and not self-centered, openness to learning, having a purpose in life are some significant aspects to imbibe in life.

In addition we have to continually work for our personal growth. Just having values is insufficient, for we must be motivated to translate our values into action. Self-actualization provides us with the motivation to grow and expand.

Mahatma Gandhi not only advocated but also personally followed the principles of *ahimsa* and disciplined life. Mother Teresa served the poor and down trodden with love, devotion and compassion. Such people recognize and identify their potential and put it to productive use. Self-actualization helps define the person, thus when we say Mahatam Gandhi or Mother Teresa the words '*ahimsa*' and '*devotion*' immediately come to our mind.

17.3 RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS OF SELF ACTUALIZED INDIVIDUALS

We find that some people are able to smile even when they face difficult conditions. They have resilience How is this possible? We note that such people are likely to have the following strengths which help them to face their problems and go ahead with their life:

- Self-monitoring or examining own behaviour in relation to self and others.
- Self-acceptance, self-esteem and confidence in self.
- Effective communication skills.
- Positive attitude: coping with failure and learn from mistakes.
- Purpose in life or finding meaning in what they do.
- Set realistic goals and try to achieve them to the best of their ability and skills.
- Flexibility or changing according to the demands of the situation.
- Belief that setbacks are temporary and short-lived and not going to last for ever.
- Relate to others and have deep relationships with others.



17.4 DEVELOPING POSITIVE EMOTIONS

In a previous lesson we learnt about the importance of emotions in everyday life. Here we will learn about the role of positive emotions in health and well-being. Negative emotions are important for survival yet often they create disturbance and interrupt the natural flow of life. Positive emotions are desirable to sustain life activities. Would you not like to be loving than hateful, joyful than fearful, and caring for others than neglecting them? Positive emotions make us feel good, soothe us and provide a sense of comfort. For example, when we appreciate the behaviour of another person, we in turn feel happier, relaxed and have a sense of fulfilment.

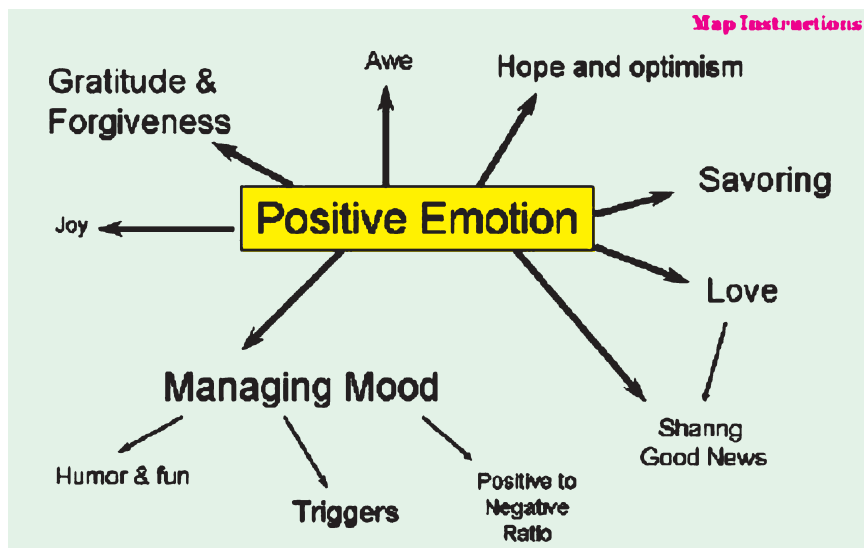


Fig. 17.1: Positive Emotions

A. Positive emotions affect us in two important ways- they ‘**broaden**’ our thinking, physical and social resources, and help ‘**building**’ reserves to draw upon at times of stress and strain. Over time the influence of positive emotions helps because -



- Attention and thinking are broadened and deepened which in turn builds our coping strategies.
- Positive emotions repair the negative effects of negative emotions.
- Enhances mental health and well-being: we show alertness, enthusiasm, determination and energy.
- Helps build personal resources for interaction with others: we make new friends, we share and bond with them.
- Build optimism, tranquility and resilience.
- People who show positive emotions are more likely to feel loved.
- Happy people are more effective and successful in their work.

Activity 5

List the positive emotions you have felt in the last few days and state how they have helped you in evaluating the situation. Also make a list of possible positive emotions. Some examples are: accepting, admirable, beautiful, cheerful, cherish, jovial, sharing, patient, self-reliant, good natured and active.

B. Ways to Promote Positive Emotions

The ways by which we can enhance positive emotions are:

- Do relaxation exercises such as meditation and yoga.
- Find positive meaning in life – reframe negative events and view in a positive light.
- Find happiness and satisfaction in daily life activities.
- Pursue realistic goals so that you get a sense of achievement.
- Undertake activities which you love doing.
- Focus beyond self and help others as this makes you a happier person.
- Show gratitude – when you show gratitude towards others your identity and awareness will be broadened.
- Nurture your spiritual self – people who have a faith system in place are happier. When you join a community/group you are part of a shared belief system which gives you a sense of belonging and provides help in times of stress and strain.

Activity 6

Positive Emotions - The above mentioned effects of positive emotions are important for our health and well being, but can we make them a part of our life? Yes, we can if we develop a positive outlook towards our life. Recall any incident where you failed to achieve your goal. Now read the following statements and try to review negative incidents in a positive light:



- *Each setback teaches me something. What can I learn from this situation? Reframe negative events and view in a positive light*
- *Sometimes things do not work out, that does not mean that I am not capable of achieving anything.*
- *I am going to remember what I have achieved and what I can do. I will acknowledge my losses and failures but not keep brooding over them. I will remember the 90 % of the achievements rather than the 10 % I have not been able to achieve.*



INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.3

1. Explain the term self-actualization. Name people who have achieved this stage.

2. Identify two strengths of a self-actualized person.

3. Explain how positive emotions influence our happiness and well-being.

Quiz 2

Fill in the blanks:

1. The three components of happiness are,, and
2. Happiness depends upon and characteristics.
3. Happy people have high self, good relations and are
4. refers to the development of the individual with all his or her potential.
5. Positive emotions influence our and
6. Positive emotions help and Our resources and coping strategies.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Health, well being and happiness are interrelated concepts that include physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions.

**Notes**

- Adopting a balanced lifestyle includes good diet, adequate exercise, sleep and recreation and it ensures health and well being.
- Self-actualization is a process through which a person achieves the level he/she is capable of.
- Positive emotions can be enhanced through a balanced routine, realistic goals, helping others and working towards self actualization.
- Happiness is an emotion but also refers to good living and well-being.
- Need satisfaction provides fulfilment yet we must set realistic desires and goals.
- Happy people are physically and mentally healthy, accept themselves, are confident, resilient and have good relations with others.
- Self actualization is a process through which we achieve what we are capable of doing. We have to continually work towards achieving self-actualization.
- Self actualized people monitor their behaviour, accept self, others and nature, have effective communication skills, a positive attitude, purpose in life, set realistic goals, and believe setbacks are temporary in nature.
- Positive emotions influence our health and well-being. Positive emotions help broaden our resources and build coping strategies.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Define happiness and well-being. Explain the significance of leading a balanced life style to achieve happiness and well being.
2. With examples explain the characteristics of self actualized persons.
3. Discuss the ways of developing positive emotions.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****17.1**

1. Happiness, energy, peace with oneself, contentment, etc.
2. Nutrition, exercise, sleep, recreation, etc.

17.2

1. Happiness is an emotions and also refers to living a good life, experiencing well being and enjoying good quality of life. Material resources, cognitive competence, subjective competence.



2. When we desire too many things we are likely to be dissatisfied when these desires are not fulfilled and that leads to unhappiness.
3. Mental and physical health, resilience, confidence, openness to experiences, personal control, good personal relations.

17.3

1. The development of the individual up to his/her full potential. Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi
2. Self monitoring, self acceptance, effective communication skills, positive attitudes, etc. (any two)
3. Broaden our thinking, physical and social resources, help build reserves to draw upon at stressful and strenuous times.

Quiz 1

1. True 2. True 3. False
4. True 5. False

Quiz 2

1. material resources, cognitive competence, subjective competence
2. situational, personal
3. esteem, personal, optimistic
4. self actualization
5. health, well being
6. broaden, build

Web Sites

1. There are various tests of happiness available on the Internet. One important site is 'Authentic Happiness' of Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania, and connected with Seligman's ongoing research activities. The site also lists various exercises that you can undertake to remain happy. <http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu>
2. The website of Tal Ben Shahar contains articles on happiness and provides tips on how to maintain happiness. He tells us how we can keep a balance between work and life. <http://www.talbenshahar.com/>
3. This web site presents the rankings of the world's happiest countries: <http://thehappinessshow.com/HappiestCountries.htm>

MODULE - V

*Health and Well
Being*



Notes

Hints for Terminal Questions

1. Refer to section 17.1
2. Refer to section 17.3
3. Refer to section 17.4