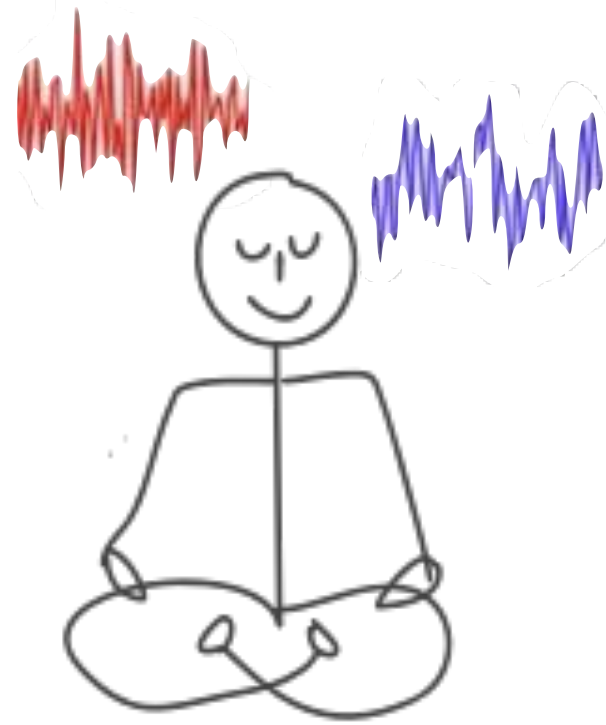




LEARNING TO BE

What Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science
say about Happiness and Well-Being



If you feel that despite an increase in material comforts you could do with more happiness and well-being in your life, this learning module is for you



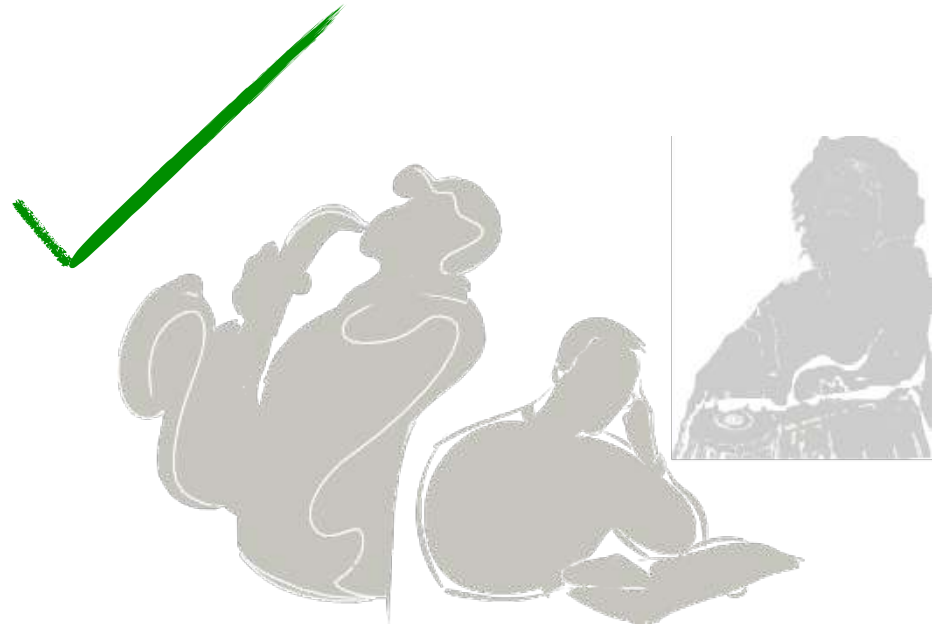
We will explore how we can become happier and enhance our well-being by understanding what ancient wisdom and modern science have to say on these issues



First, lets make a distinction between **pleasure**,
which is momentary or lasts for a short duration...



... and **happiness** or **well-being** which is long-term,
or could even last life long



We are interested in understanding **happiness and well-being** that has long-term impact and not pursuit of momentary pleasure

ANCIENT WISDOM ON HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING



ANCIENT WISDOM STATES THAT

- happiness is a **state of mind**
- happiness is determined by how we **perceive** our life situation
- happiness is not dependent on absolute conditions

What we think,
we become

Peace
comes from within;
do not seek it without



Buddha

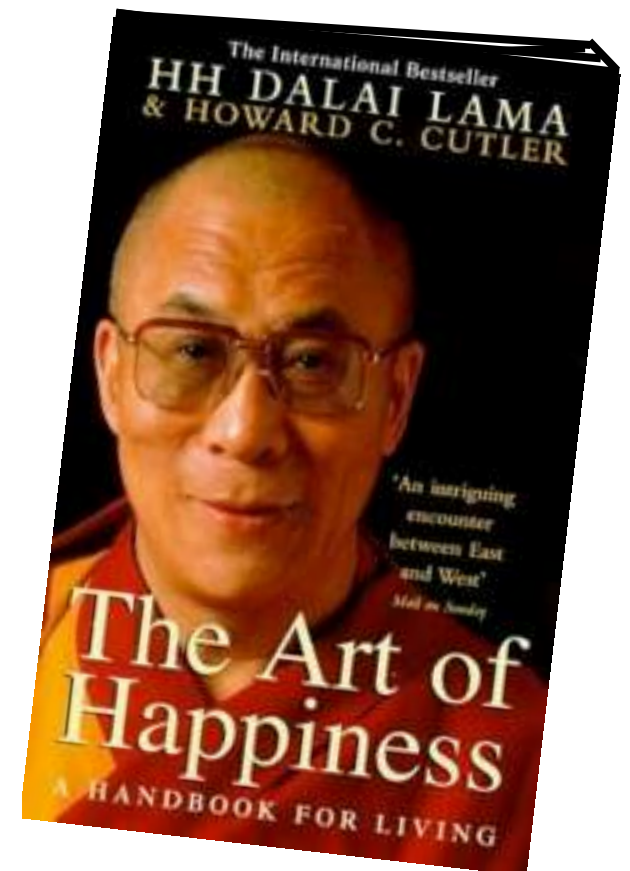
Happiness belongs to the
self-sufficient

Happiness depends
upon ourselves



Aristotle

- Happiness comes from fulfillment
- Happiness is different from pleasure
- Happiness is determined by state of our mind and not by external events
- Happiness depends on how satisfied we are with what we have



THUS, ACCORDING TO ANCIENT WISDOM

Happiness is a state of mind and our
tendency to compare influences
our sense of well-being

... or as H.L. Mencken put it

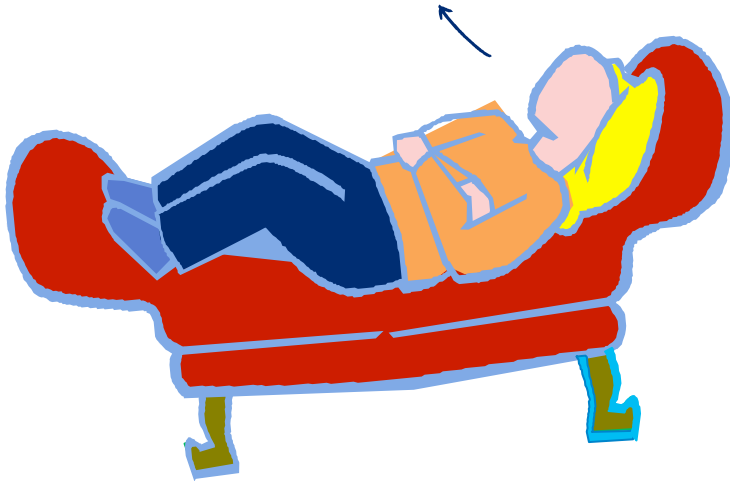


*A wealthy man is one who
earns a hundred dollars more
than his wife's sister's husband!*

MODERN SCIENCE ON HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

In modern science, happiness and well-being have been the topics of research for **Positive Psychology**

I am happily married, have
a great job, lots of friends,
no worries...



Hmmm... and how long
have you been like that?



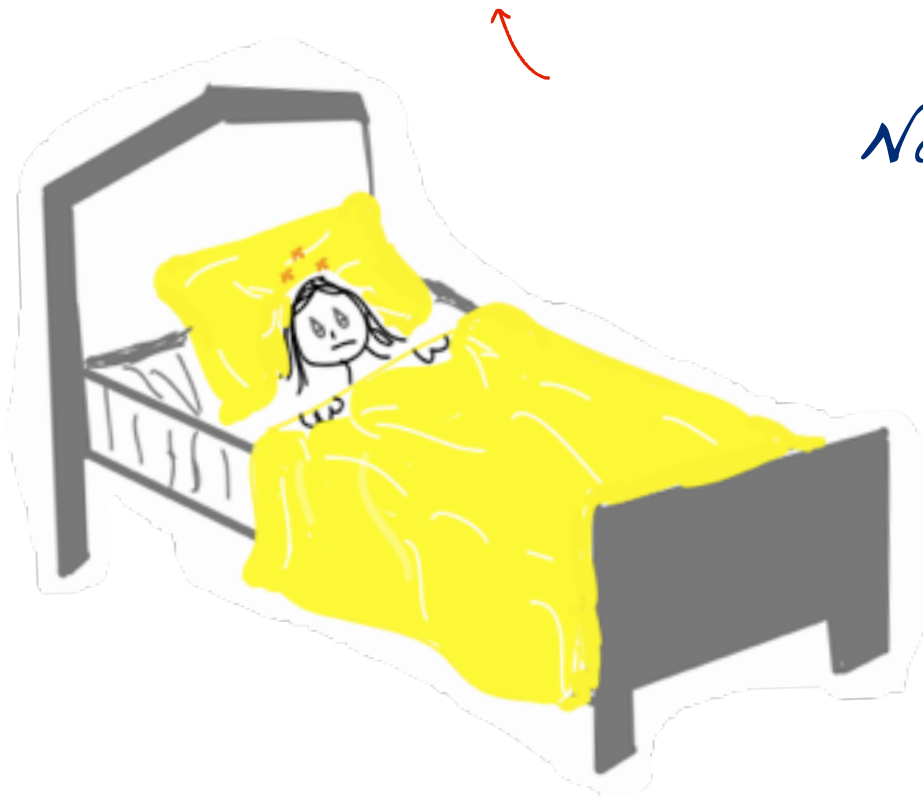
American psychologist, **Martin Seligman**, felt that psychology needed to go beyond the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' and laid the foundations of Positive Psychology

In late 1960s Seligman postulated the concept of
Learned Helplessness...



A condition of a human person or an animal in which it has **learned to behave helplessly**, even when the opportunity is restored for it to help itself by avoiding an unpleasant or harmful circumstance to which it had been subjected

I say, she is half dead!

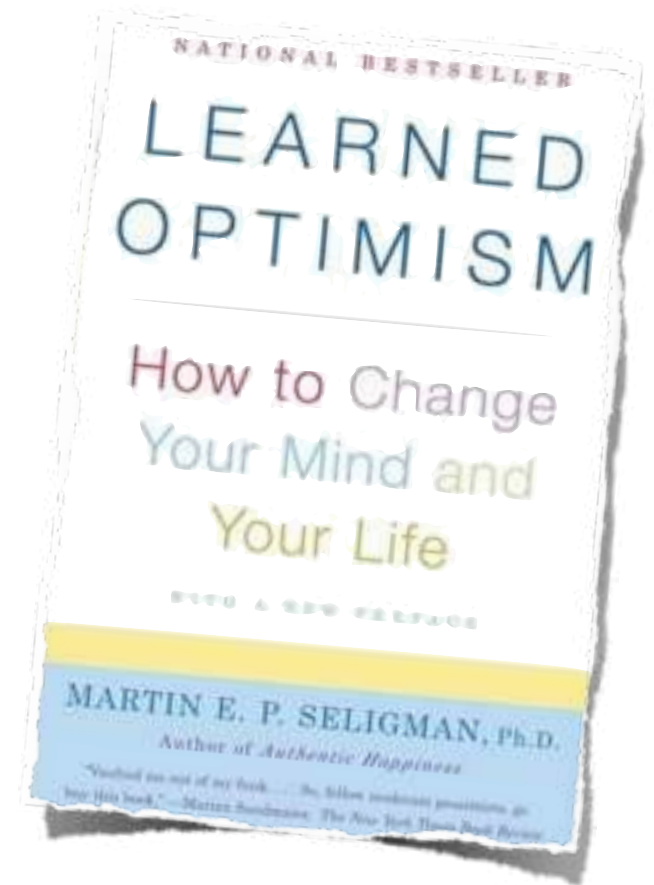


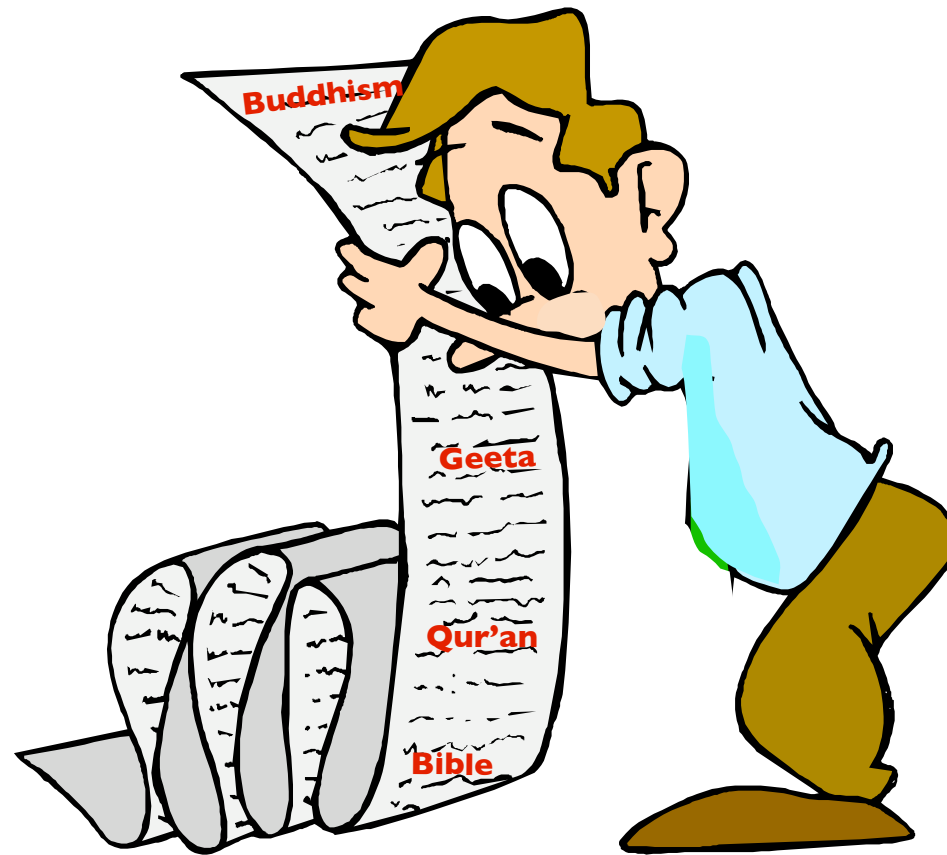
Nah! She is half alive.

Seligman found that not all people who face setbacks become helpless and in 1990s he presented the concept of **Learned Optimism**

Optimists who do not become helpless are,

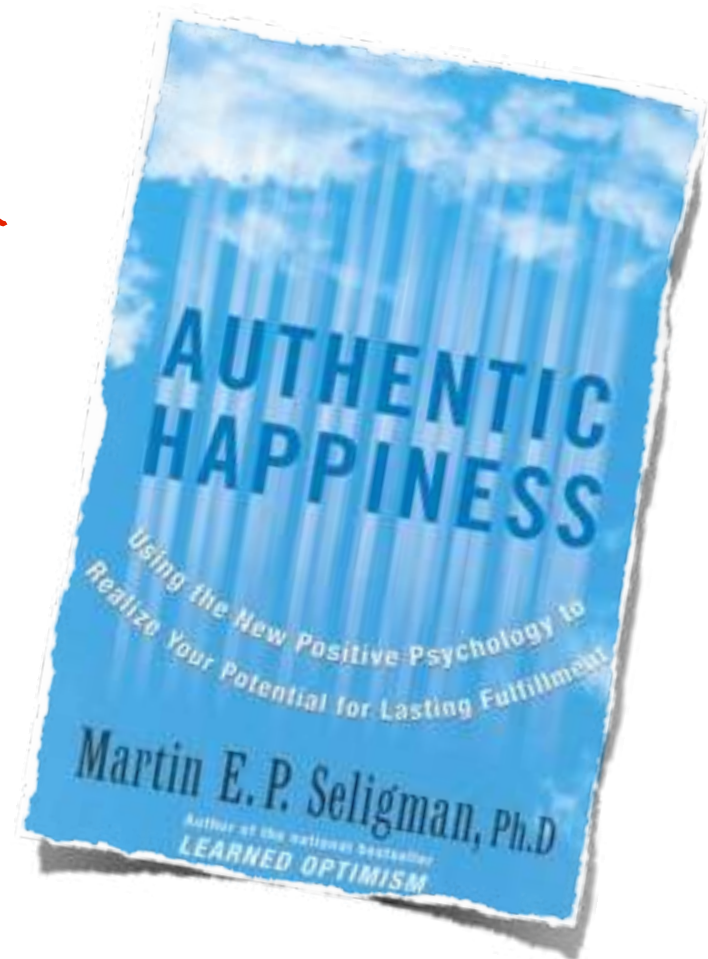
- People who consider setbacks as temporary
- People who have the resilience to bounce back
- People who think setbacks are controllable and local (e.g. I am bad at math, I am not stupid)





Seligman found that optimism is only one of the two dozen strengths that bring about greater well-being

This insight led Seligman to lay the foundations of Positive Psychology and in his book **Authentic Happiness** he writes...



“

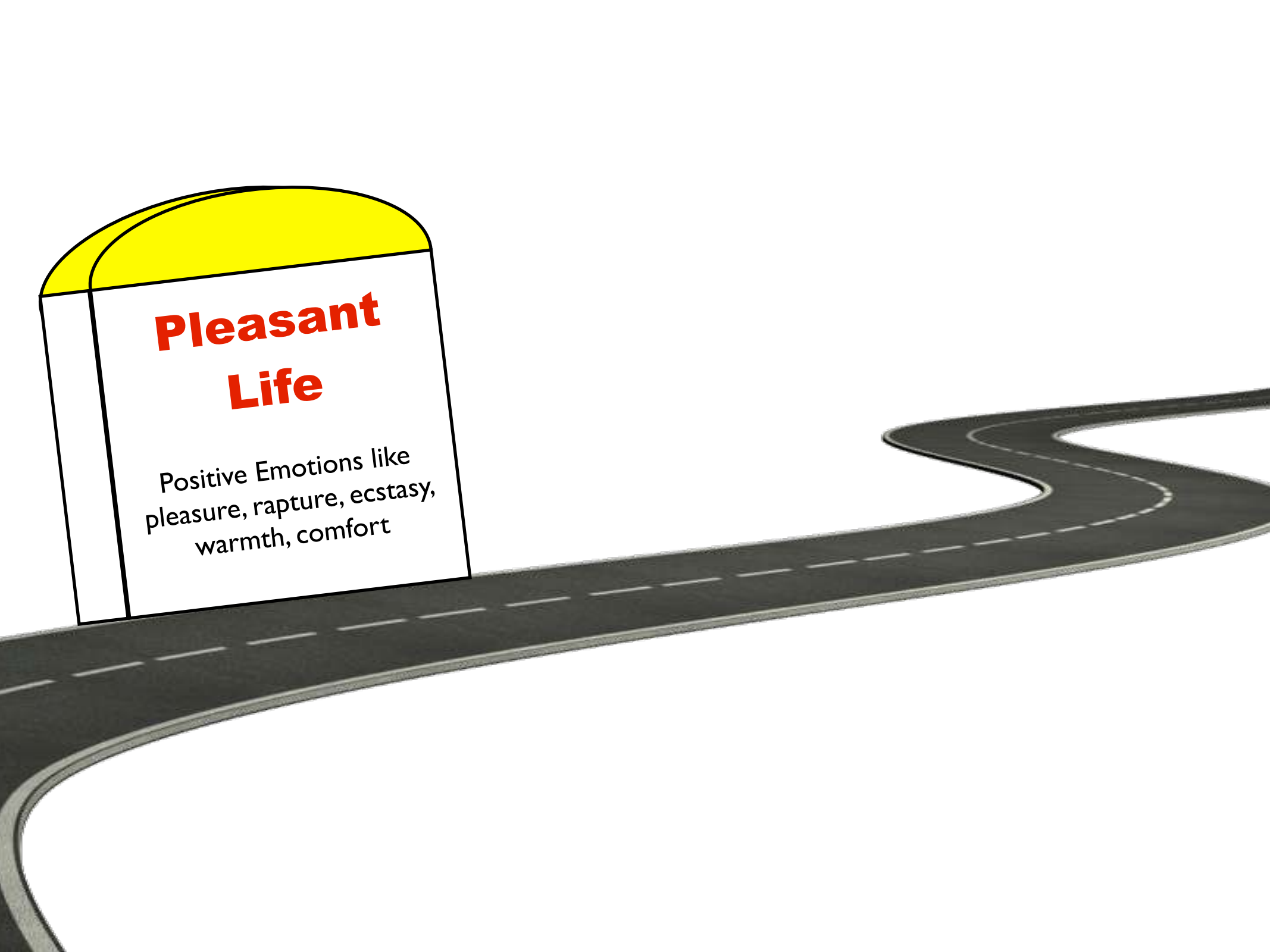
Positive Psychology takes seriously the bright hope that if you find yourself stuck in the parking lot of life, with few and only ephemeral pleasures, with minimal gratifications, and without meaning, there is a road out.

This road takes you through the countryside of **pleasure and gratification**, up into the high country of **strength and virtue**, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment: **meaning and purpose**

”

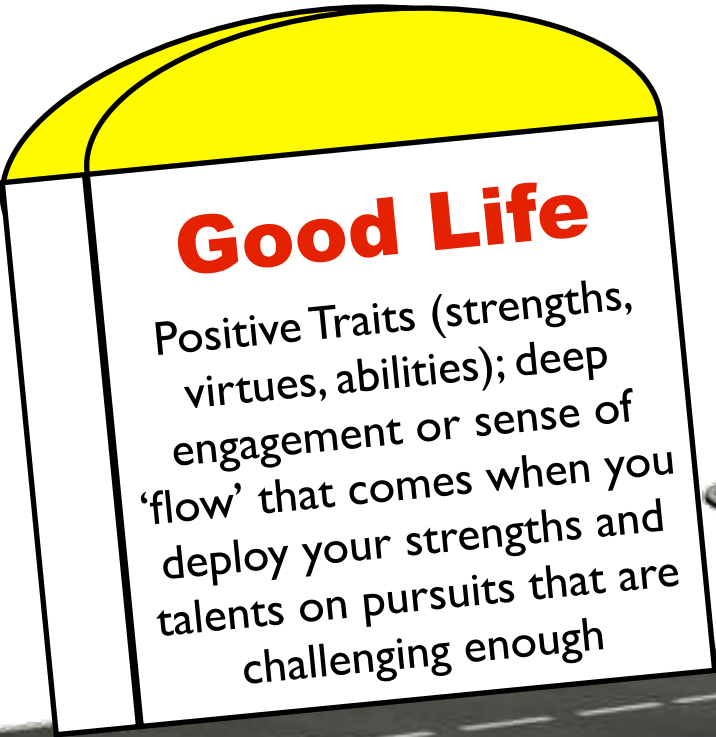
**MILESTONES ON THIS ROAD
TO AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS
ARE...**





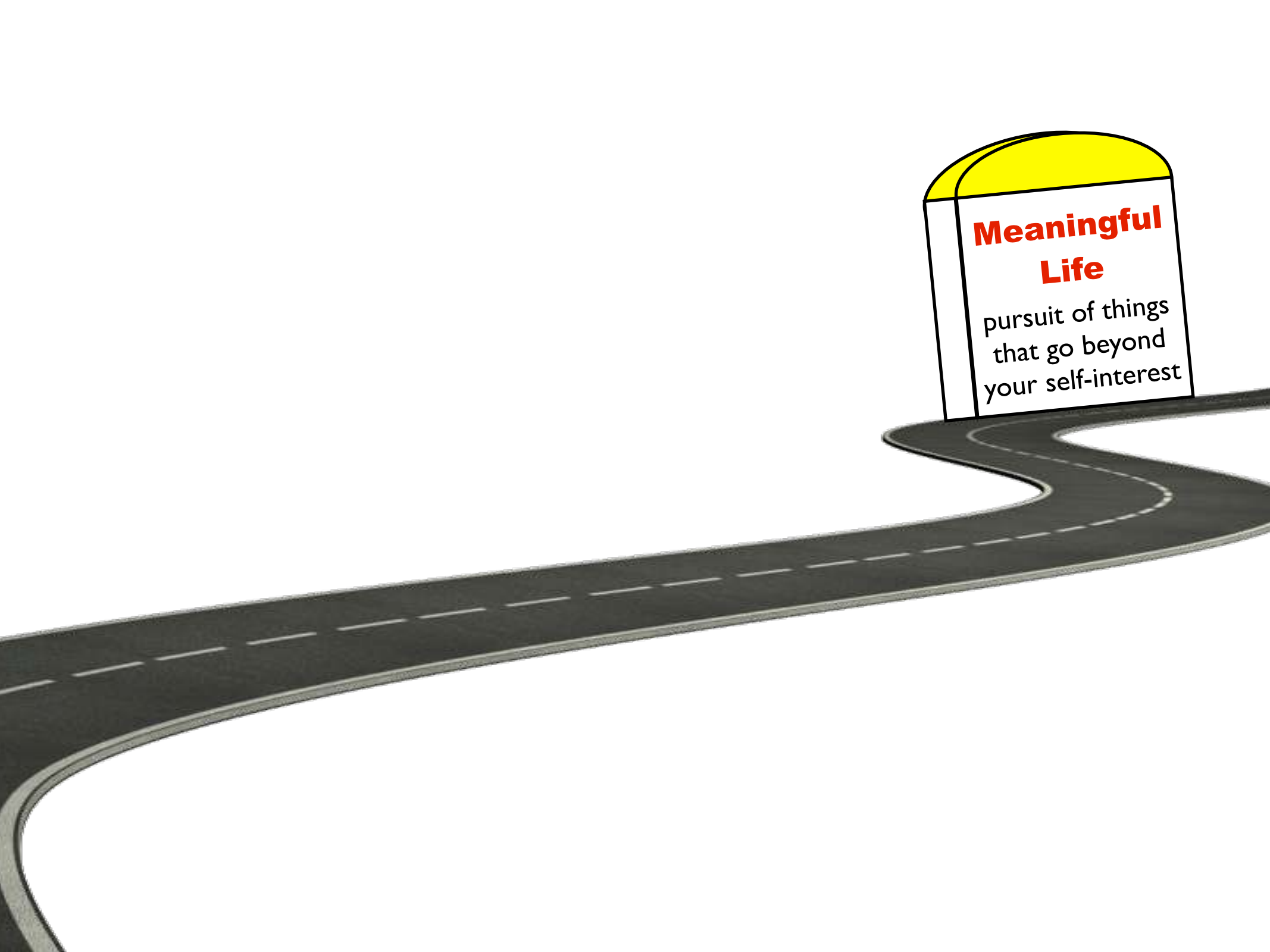
Pleasant Life

Positive Emotions like
pleasure, rapture, ecstasy,
warmth, comfort



Good Life

Positive Traits (strengths, virtues, abilities); deep engagement or sense of 'flow' that comes when you deploy your strengths and talents on pursuits that are challenging enough

A black asphalt road with white dashed lines curves from the bottom left towards the top right. At the end of the road stands a white sign with a yellow arched top. The sign contains the text 'Meaningful Life' in red, followed by a definition in black.

Meaningful Life

pursuit of things
that go beyond
your self-interest

A cartoon illustration of a winding road with three milestones. Each milestone is a white rectangular sign with a yellow arched top. The milestones are labeled 'Pleasant Life', 'Good Life', and 'Meaningful Life' in red text. Below each title is a description in black text. The road is grey with white dashed lines and curves from the bottom left towards the right.

Pleasant Life

Positive Emotions like
pleasure, rapture, ecstasy,
warmth, comfort

Good Life

Positive Traits (strengths,
virtues, abilities); deep
engagement or sense of
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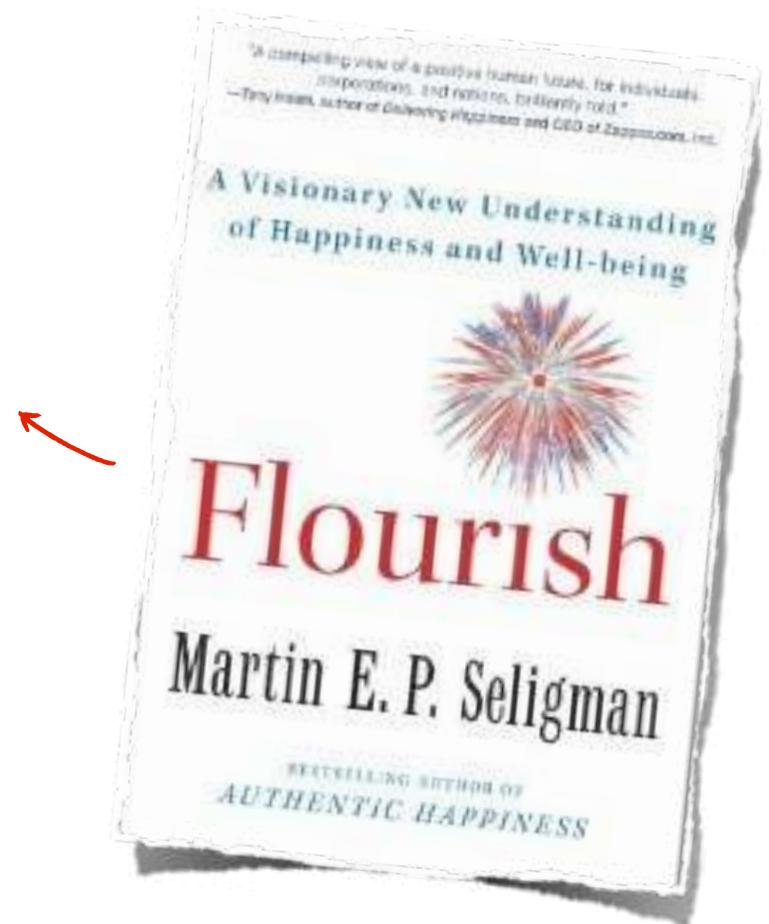
Meaningful Life

pursuit of things
that go beyond
your self-interest

**MILESTONES ON THE ROAD TO
AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS - RECAP**

In his more recent book, **Flourish** Seligman says that **Well-Being** (measured by flourish) is a better focus area for positive psychology than happiness

Happiness is measured by life satisfaction, which is influenced hugely by how we are feeling at the very moment we are asked the question and which is often confused with being in a cheerful mood



**FIVE
ELEMENTS OF
WELL-BEING**

-PERMA

**(P) POSITIVE
EMOTIONS : OR
PLEASANT LIFE**

**(E) ENGAGEMENT:
OR FLOW MOMENTS**

**(R) POSITIVE
RELATIONSHIPS:
ALTRUISM, OPPOSITE
OF BEING LONELY,
CAPACITY TO BE
LOVED**

(M) MEANING:
BELONGING TO AND
SERVING SOMETHING
THAT YOU BELIEVE IS
BIGGER THAN YOURSELF,
MEANINGFUL LIFE

(A) ACCOMPLISHMENT:
SUCCESS OR
ACHIEVEMENT IN
MOMENTARY FORM AND
MASTERY OR ACHIEVING
LIFE IN EXTENDED FORM

RECAP

Flourish =

P - Positive Emotions

E - Engagement or Flow

R - Positive Relationships

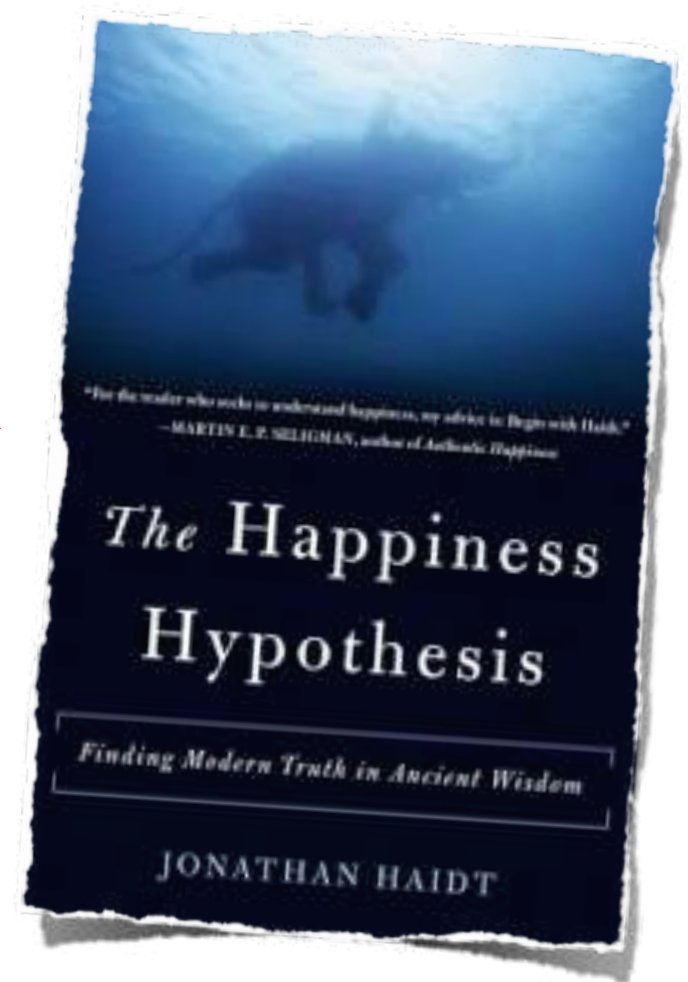
M - Meaning

A - Accomplishments

**LET'S TAKE A DEEPER DIVE INTO
WHAT MODERN SCIENCE HAS TO
SAY ON HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING**

Social psychologist,
Jonathan Haidt, has put
ancient wisdom and
philosophy to the test of
modern science

In his book **The Happiness
Hypothesis** he looks at few
ancient ideas through the
lens of modern science



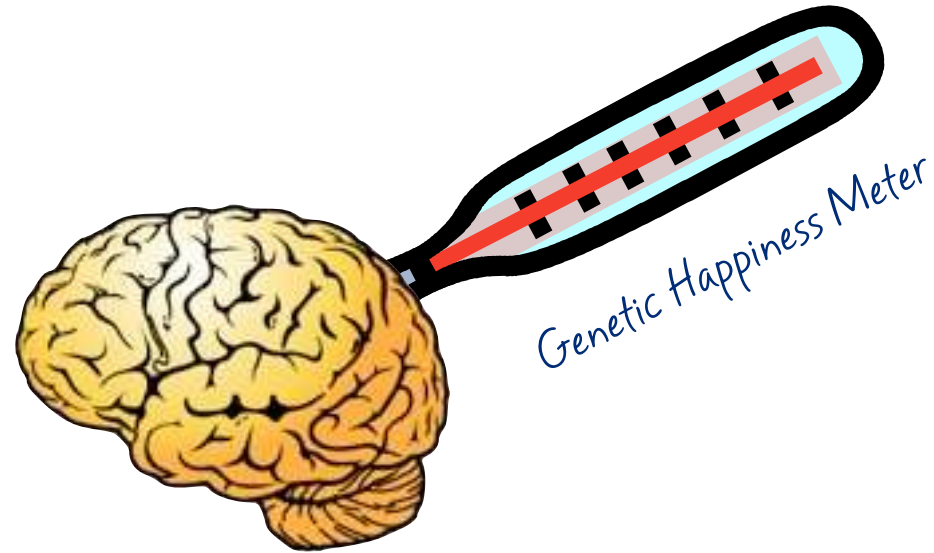
According to Haidt, **Happiness** (H) is a **relationship**
between **Individual** (I) and **Environment** (E)

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$

Let's look at the components of the happiness equation: $H = (I \Rightarrow E)$

We start with **Individual (I)**

$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

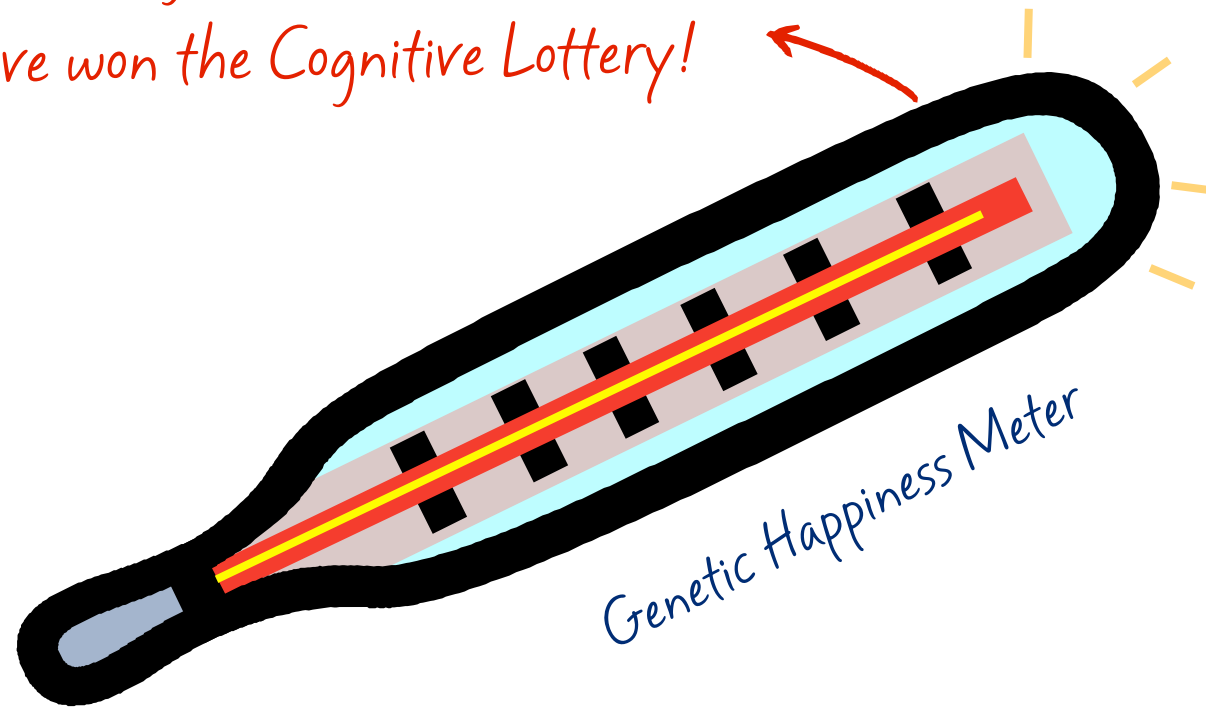


Happiness is one of the most genetically inherited aspects of personality

The **Individual (I)** has a **Genetic Set Point** for Happiness

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$

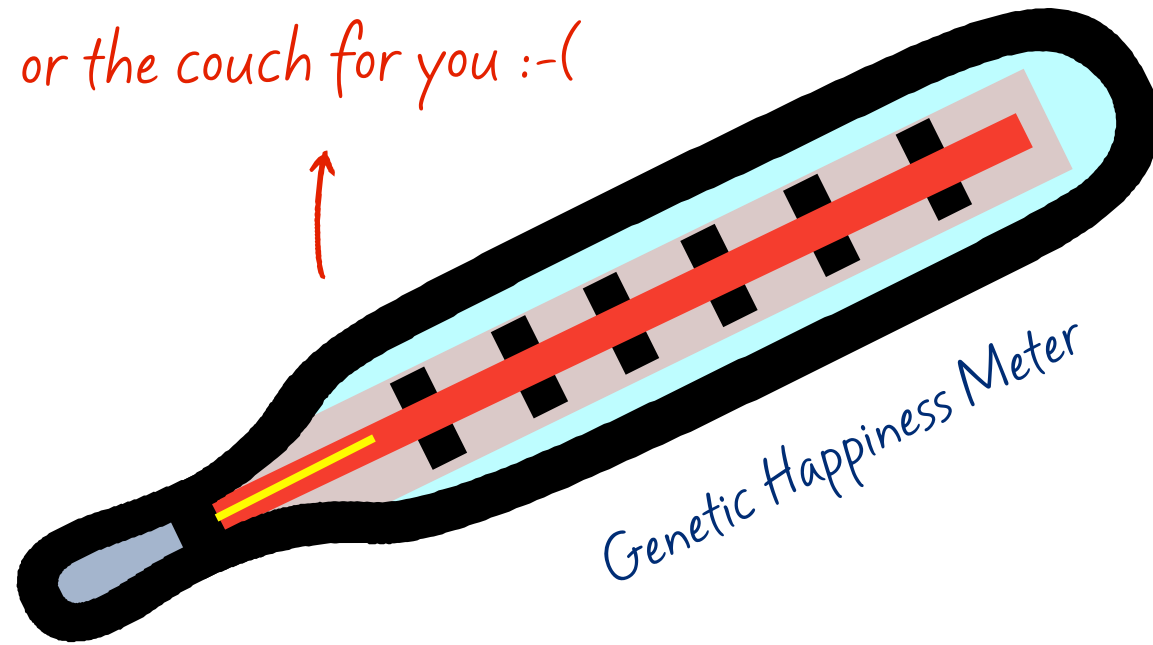
Congratulations!
You have won the Cognitive Lottery!



An individual could win the **cognitive lottery** (brain is pre-configured to see the good in the world) and have a very high set-point for happiness

$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Ouch! It's either Prozac
or the couch for you :-)



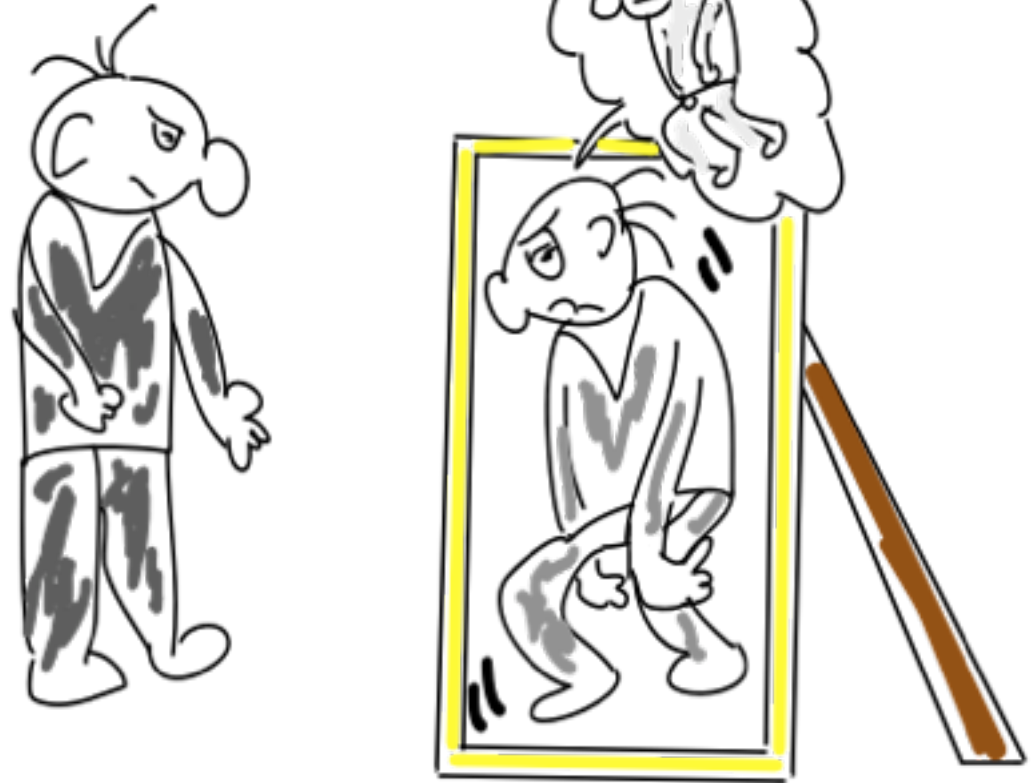
Or, the set-point could be so low that the individual
is always **depressed** (sees only the dark side of life)

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$

American psychiatrist Aaron Beck defines the
Cognitive Triad of Depression as...

Depressed people
are convinced in their
hearts of three related
beliefs,

- I am no good
- My world is bleak
- My future is hopeless



$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Haidt suggests that wherever your happiness **set-point** may be, you can **raise** it through...

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$



i) Meditation (ancient wisdom), and/or

$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

ii) Cognitive Therapy (modern science), and/or...

Cognitive therapy is a type of psychotherapy developed by Aaron Beck

It seeks to help the patient overcome difficulties by identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking, behavior, and emotional responses by developing skills for modifying beliefs, identifying distorted thinking, relating to others in different ways, and changing behaviors



$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$



iii) Prozac (modern medicine)

$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Let's now look at **Environment (E)** in the happiness equation: $H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$

Environment (E) has two components...

$$E = C + V$$



Conditions
of your Life



Voluntary or
Intentional
Activities you do

$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Conditions are Facts About Your Life

- Some you can't change (race, sex, age, disability) and some you can (wealth, marital status, where you live)
- Conditions are constant over time, or at least during a certain period of your life



$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Voluntary or Intentional activities are things that you choose to do

Like work,
meditation,
exercise, learning a
new skill or taking
a vacation



$$H = (I \Rightarrow E)$$

Let's take a deeper look at Life Conditions (C)

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Research shows that most Life Conditions (C) are subject to:

- a) Adaptation Principle
- b) Hedonic Treadmill

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$

a) Adaptation Principle

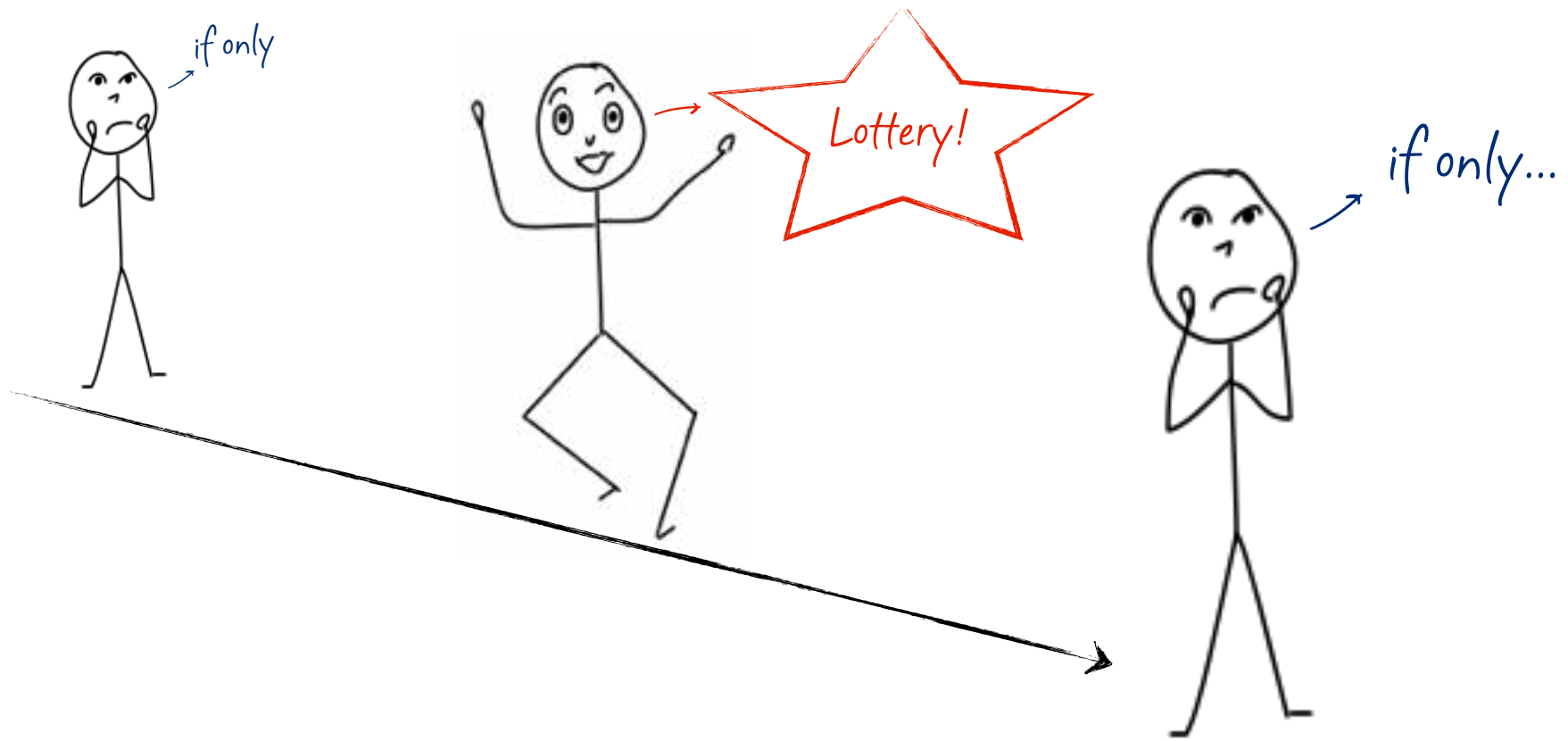
$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

We are bad at **affective forecasting** - i.e. predicting how we will feel in the future

Lottery winners or people who become disabled after an accident, return back to their happiness 'set-point' - pleasure or disconsolation, both are 'taken for granted' after a while

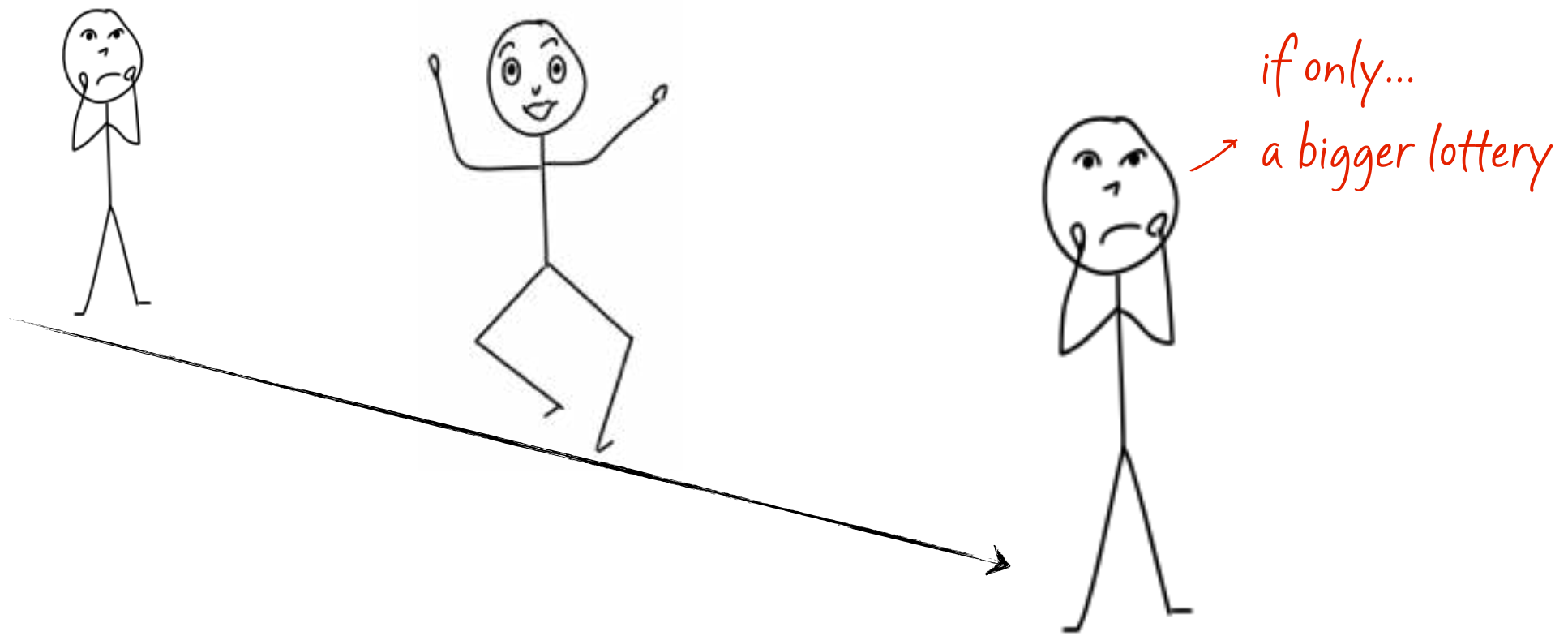
Human mind is sensitive to changes in condition but not so sensitive to absolute levels

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$



According to the Adaptation Principle, we become **habituated to our new reality** and that becomes are new baseline (e.g. the lottery winner's excitement with the new house and new car subsequently becomes the new baseline)

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$



When this happens we **recalibrate** and set new targets - new goals, new hopes, new expectations and then again feel pleasure and pain in relation to the new targets

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$

b) Hedonic Treadmill

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

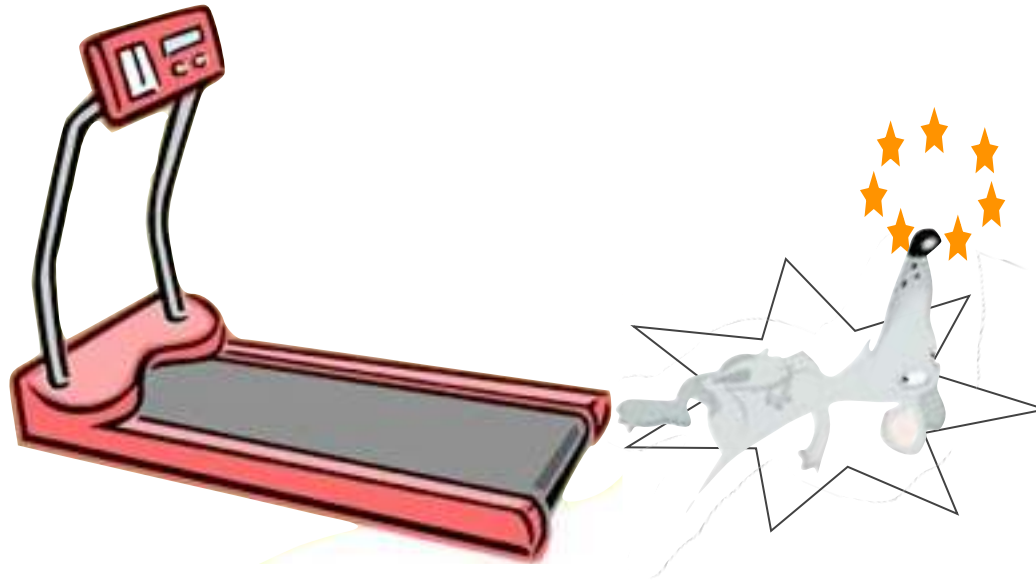
Combining adaptation principle with the genetic set-point for happiness, it seems in the **long run** it does not matter what happens, we will always **default** back to our **happiness set-point**

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$



This has been called the **Hedonic Treadmill** of life - you can run as fast as you want and accumulate all the riches you can, yet you will remain stuck at your natural and usual state of happiness, because the riches you gain will simply raise your expectations and leave you no better off than you were before

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$



Adversity usually gives you an opportunity to come off the Hedonic Treadmill, because it makes you take a pause, reflect on your life and decide if you want to hop back on the treadmill or get off it

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

जो सोचता हूँ वो
होता नहीं

जो होता है वही
सोचने लगता हूँ



What I Think
Never Happens

Whatever Happens
I Start Thinking
About That

Dialogue from an Indian soap - 'Yeh Jo Hai Jindagi'

Meditation offers another way for coming off the hedonic treadmill - meditate to train your mind to **stop 'wanting' too much, instead start 'liking' what life has made available to you**

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$



Ancient Wisdom proclaims that Conditions of your Life (C) need not determine your happiness

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$



Through meditation you can overcome any adverse life condition and be happy

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$



However, for most of us who are not master meditators, Haidt suggests that it is more practical to **change certain life situations that we don't get habituated to** because changing them will increase our happiness

These conditions include...

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

Noise or air pollution

(if you live in such an area it is better to change your location, if it is possible)

Long commute to work

Lack of control

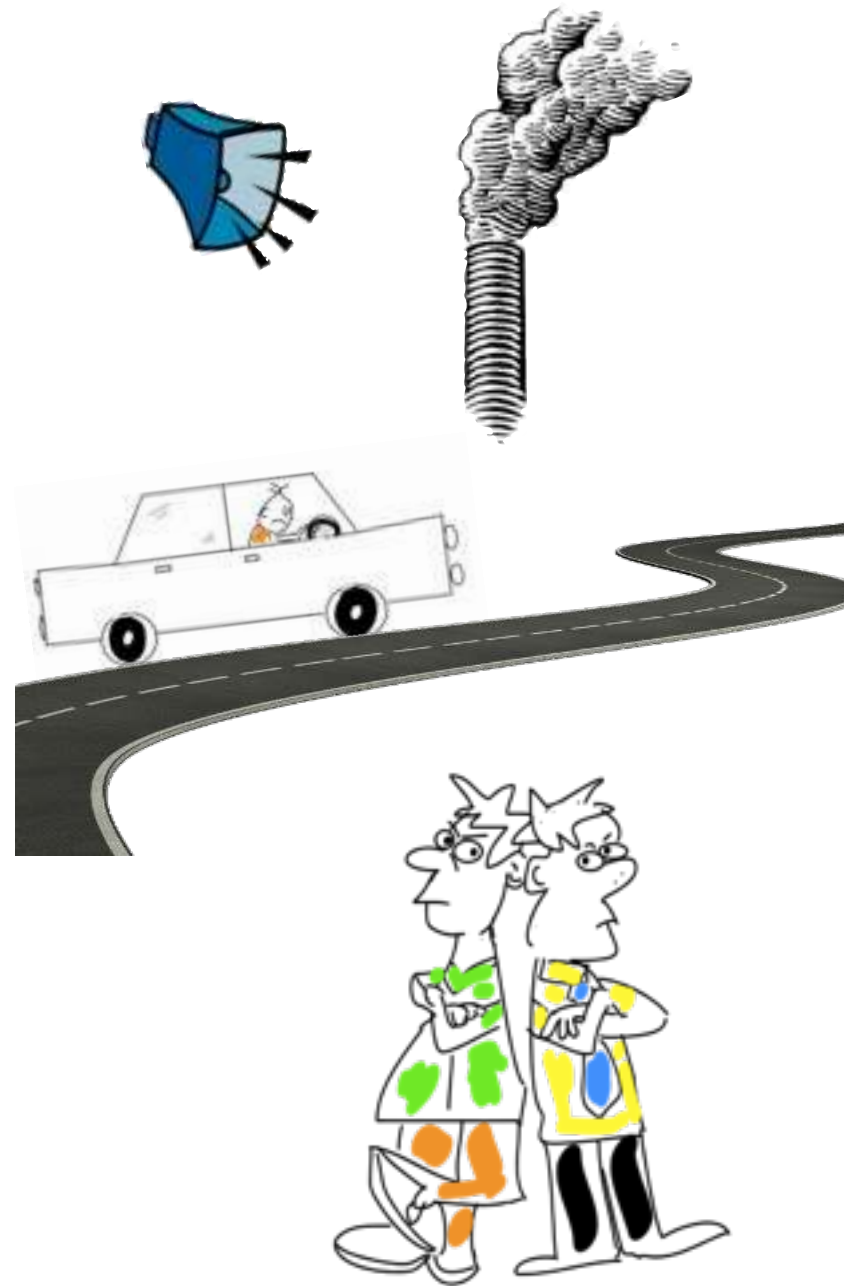
(e.g. if you feel you have no say at work)

Shame

(things we are adversely self-conscious of)

Relationships

(you never adapt to interpersonal conflict, like an annoying room mate)

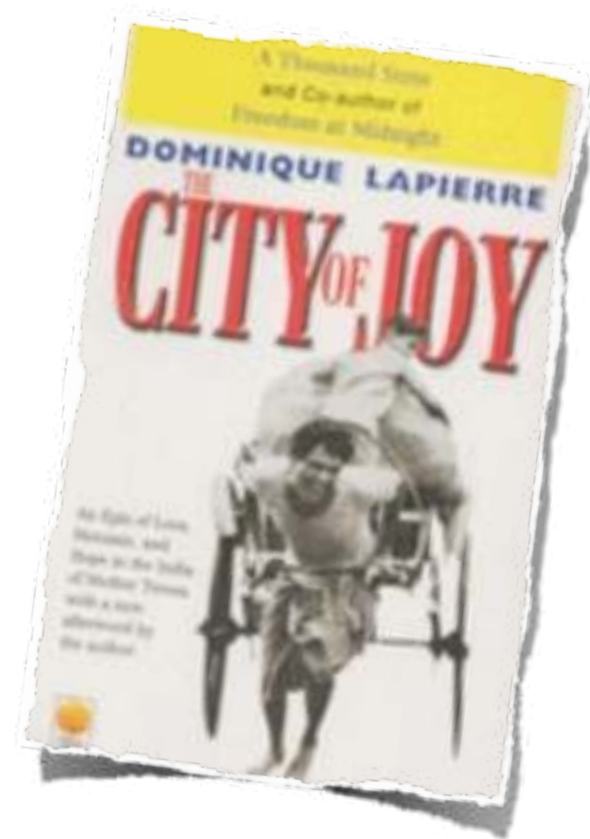


$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

While relationships that are mired with interpersonal conflicts are best changed, modern science has found that **meaningful social relationships** can be very effective in facing life conditions and increasing our happiness

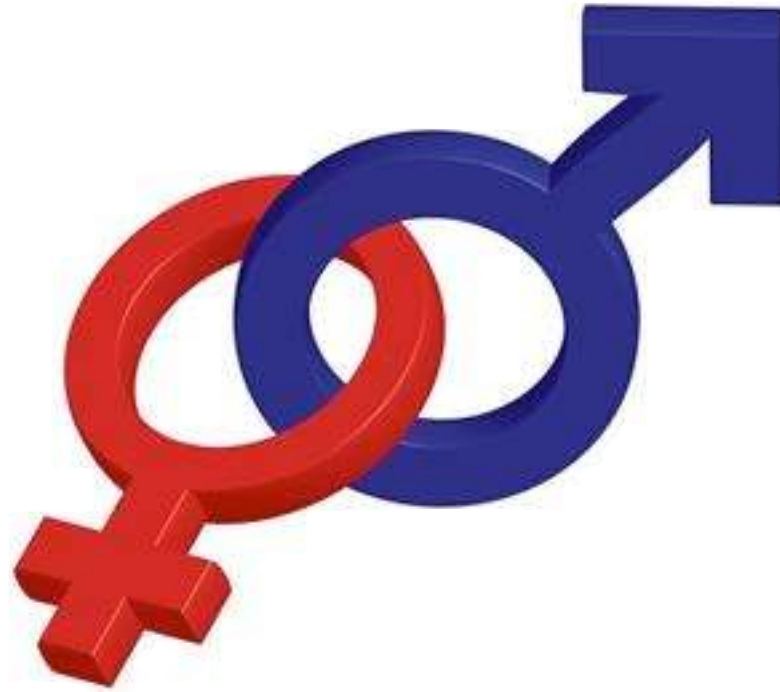
$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Robert-Biswas Diener and Ed Diener's research paper, *'Making the Best of a Bad Situation: Satisfaction in the Slums of Calcutta'* explores how one can be happy despite adverse life conditions



The paper concludes that, “The slum dwellers of Calcutta generally experience a lower sense of life satisfaction than more affluent comparison groups, but are more satisfied than one might expect. This could be due, in part, to the strong emphasis on **social relationships** and the satisfaction derived from them.”

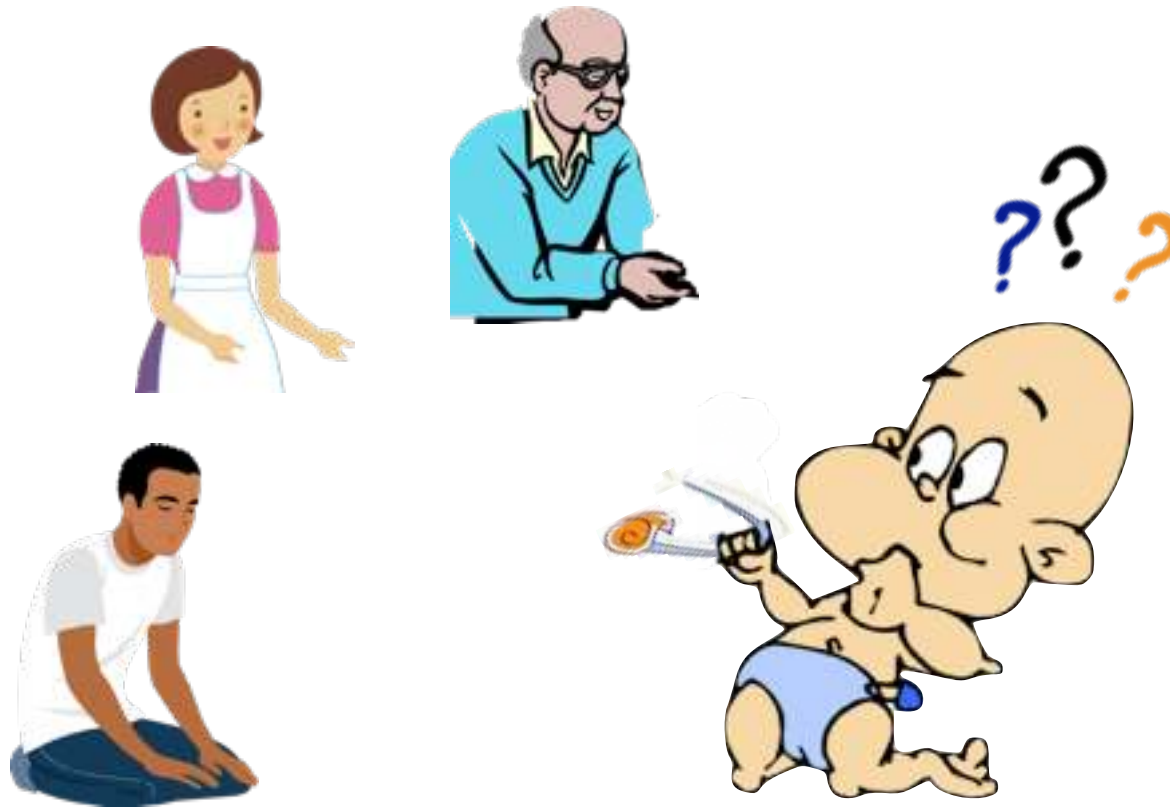
$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$



Interpersonal relationships that are characterized by intimacy, growth, and resilience can become a very positive life condition

(the 'Positive Relationships' (R) in Seligman's PERMA of Well-Being)

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$



This is based on John Bowlby's **Attachment Theory**, where he showed that infants need to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver (secure base) for social and emotional development to occur normally

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$

According to Attachment Theory, children can have -

Secure Attachment: children stop or reduce their play when their secure base leaves the room

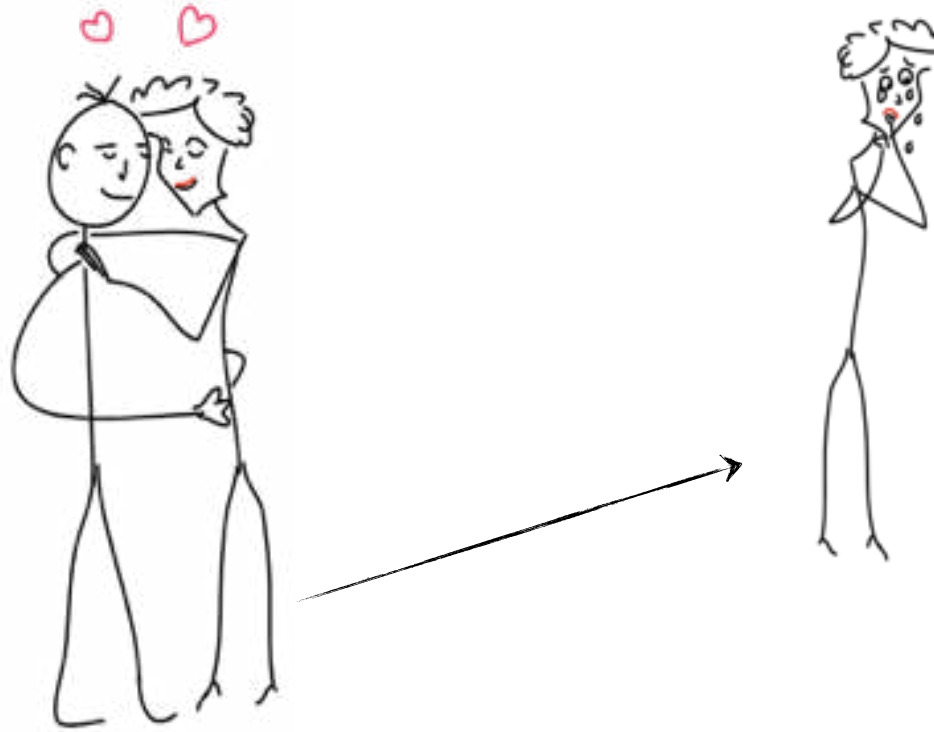
Avoidant Attachment: these children don't care whether secure base comes or goes, they try to distress manage themselves (usually not very well)

Resistant Attachment: these children become anxious, clingy or extremely upset when separated from their secure base

Hazan and Shaver's research extends the **Attachment Theory** to **adult romantic relationships**

They noticed that interactions between adult romantic partners shared similarities to interactions between children and caregivers

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$



For example, romantic partners desire to be close to one another

Romantic partners feel comforted when their partners are present and anxious or lonely when their partners are absent

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C+V)$$

Romantic relationships serve as a secure base that help partners face the surprises, opportunities, and challenges life presents

Research by Pascal Vrticka shows that avoidantly attached adults are three times more likely to be solitary at the age of seventy



$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

However, **early attachment does not determine a life course**

People with a resilient temperament can overcome early disadvantages

Meaningful social relationships are a life condition that have a significant impact on your happiness

If you have someone in your life who will listen to your woes at 4 a.m. you will live longer!

I anyway can't sleep after 4 a.m.



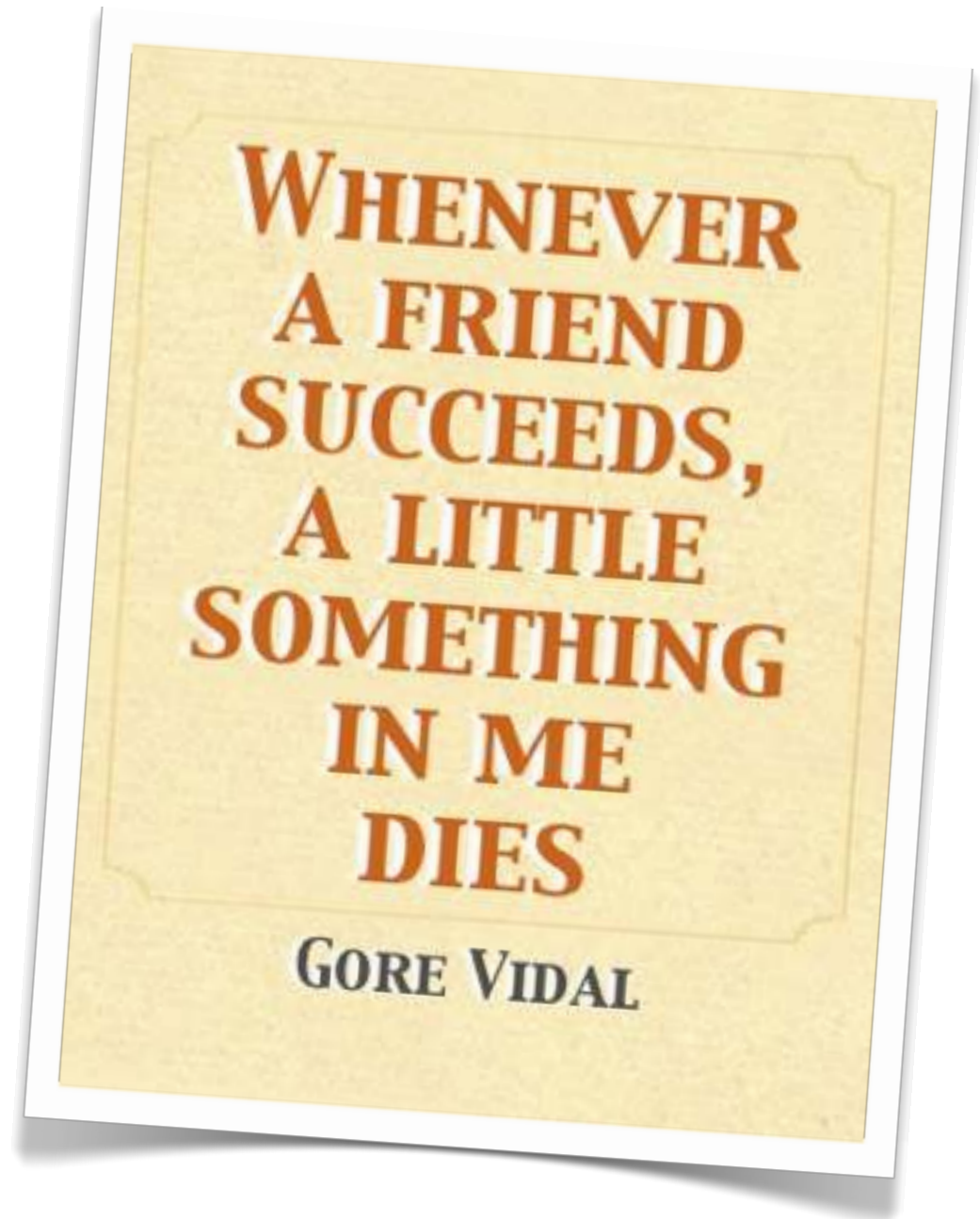
$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

Meaningful is the operative word in social relationships that positively impact your happiness

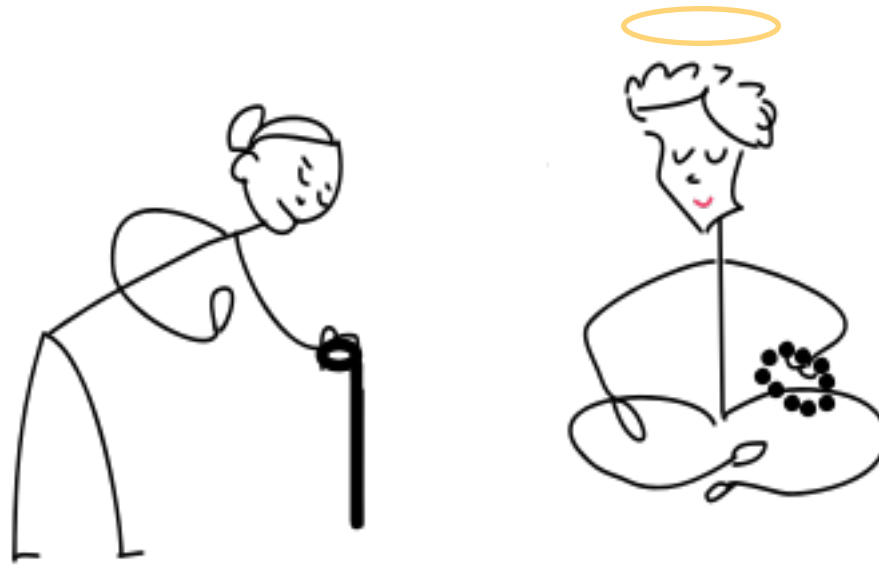
$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Social relationship can also have an adverse impact on your happiness

Alain de Botton explains in his book **Status Anxiety** - a school reunion can easily become the place that makes you most anxious because of the torment of comparison with people who were your equals!



$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$



A **meaningful relationship** is one which helps us learn to be - comfortable in our own skin, **saving us from anxious comparisons** and instead encouraging us to **focus on self-improvement**

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C+V)$$

RECAP

- Happiness (H) is a relationship between Individual (I) and Environment (E); $H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$
- Individual (I) has a genetic set-point for happiness
- This set-point can be raised through Meditation, Cognitive Therapy, or Prozac
- Environment (E) has two components, Life Conditions (C) and Voluntary Activities (V);
 $E = C + V$

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

- Ancient Wisdom maintains that through meditation one can face any life conditions (C)
- However, since most of us can't become master meditators, it is better for us to change some life conditions that adversely impact our happiness like, long commute, polluted surroundings and lack of control
- Some social relationships like interpersonal-conflicts or those which trigger unhealthy social comparisons reduce our well-being
- But meaningful social relationships that help us focus on self-improvement can significantly increase our happiness and well-being

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

In the equation ($E = C + V$) let's now look at
Voluntary or Intentional Activities (V)

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Recall that Happiness (H) is a relationship between Individual (I) and Environment (E)

$$H = (I \rightleftharpoons E)$$



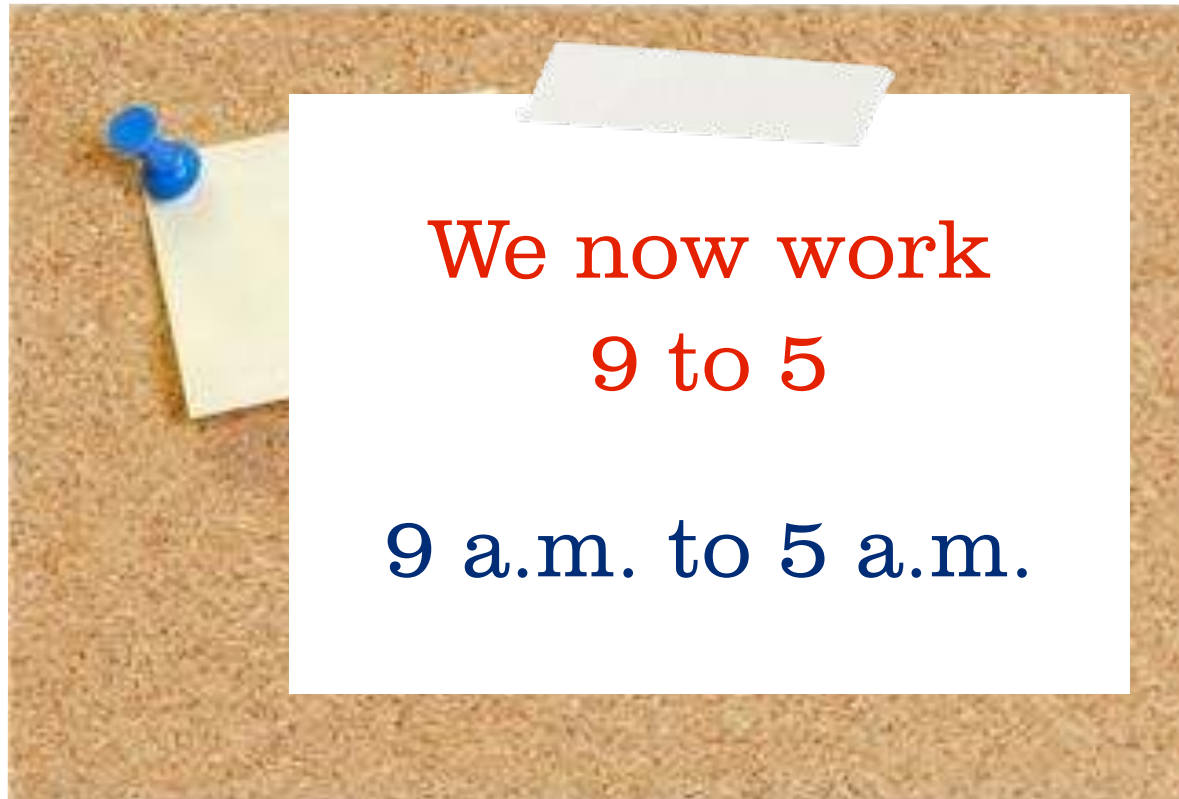
$$E = C + V$$



Conditions
of your Life

Voluntary
Activities you do

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$



Work is perhaps the most important element of voluntary or intentional activities for most of us, simply because so many hours are spent at the work place

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Work - Job, Career or Calling?

- Work is a job when the primary drive is money
- Work is a career when it is pursued for advancement, promotion and prestige
- Work is a calling when it is intrinsically fulfilling
(think of a home maker who finds intrinsic joy and does the work for no other reward)

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

Story goes...

A man came across three masons who were chipping chunks of granite from large blocks.

The first seemed unhappy at his job, chipping away and frequently looking at his watch.

When the man asked what it was that he was doing, the first mason responded, rather curtly, “I’m hammering this stupid rock, and I can’t wait till 5 when I can go home. Oh, what all I have to endure to make a little money”

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

A second mason, seemingly more interested in his work, was hammering diligently.

When the man asked what it was that he was doing he answered, “Well, I’m molding this block of rock so that it can be used with others to construct a wall. It’s not bad work, but I’ll sure be glad when it’s done.”

A third mason was hammering at his block fervently, taking time to stand back and admire his work. He chipped off small pieces until he was satisfied that it was the best he could do.

When the man questioned him about his work he stopped, gazed skyward and proudly proclaimed, “I am building a cathedral!”

**YOU MAXIMIZE YOUR HAPPINESS IF
YOU PURSUE YOUR CALLING IN LIFE**

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

*Ever since I was a kid I knew one day
I would be selling credit cards!*



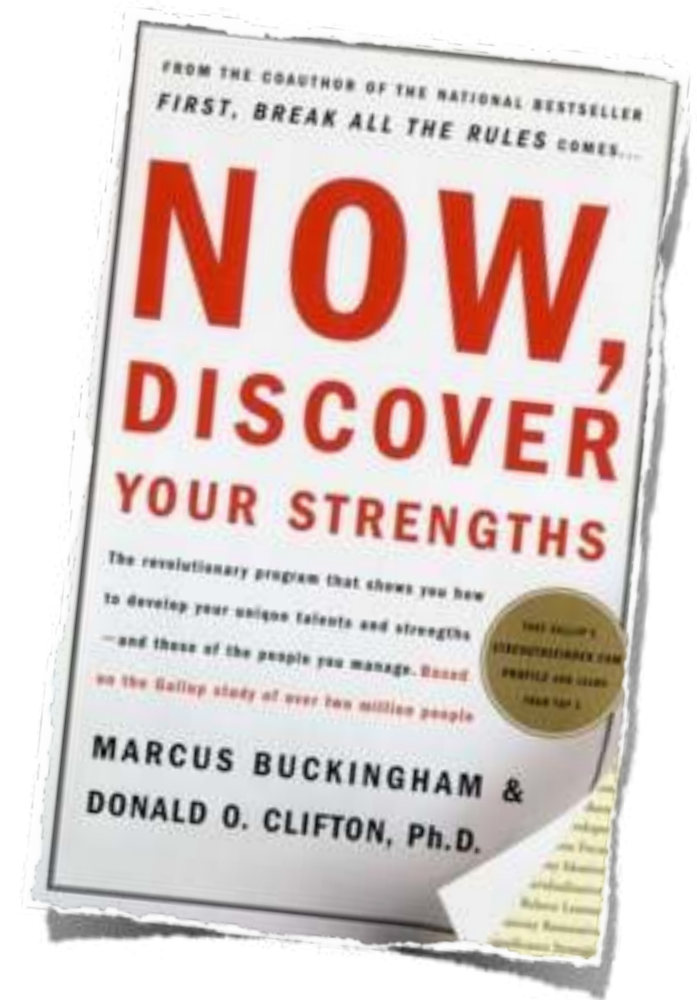
But pursuing a 'calling in life' is a tad difficult,
especially because even finding what is your calling
can be a challenge!

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

According to positive psychologists, a better way is to first **find your strengths and then create goals** that make use of these strengths

Ideal is if your work allows you to pursue your strengths

If not, then pursue other activities that do so



$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C+V)$$

How do you find out if the activities you are doing will increase your happiness?

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

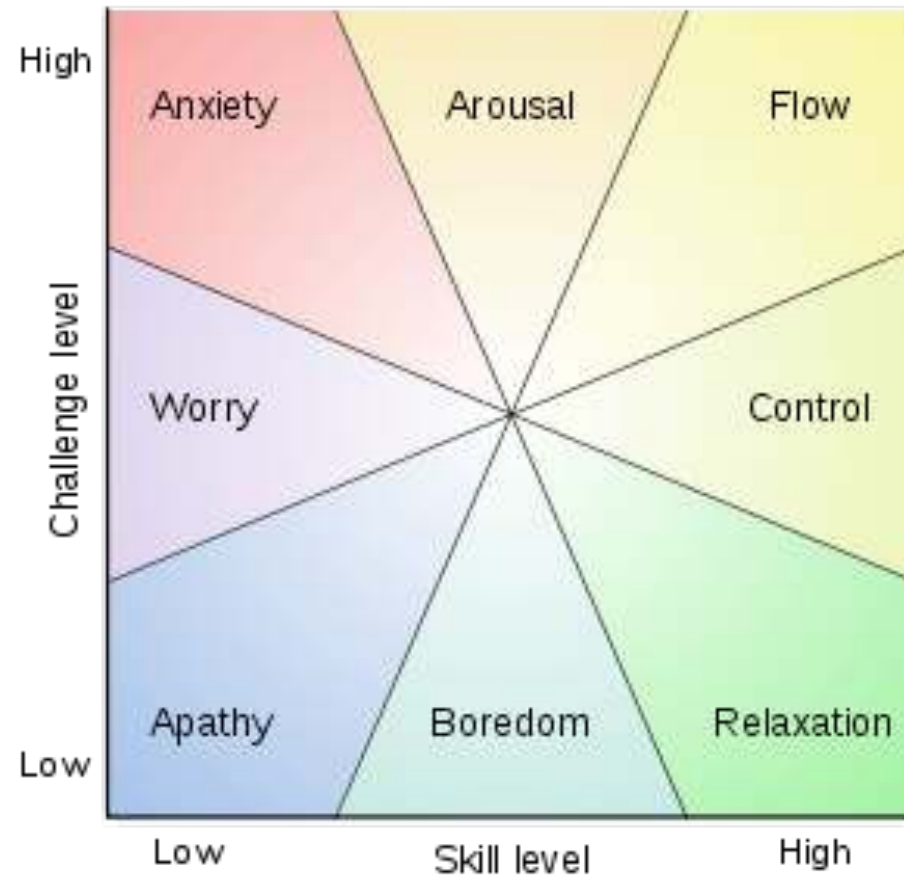
If you **experience** the following in your work, chances are you are deploying your strengths and your work will lead to enhancement in your well-being:

- a) Flow
- b) Limerence
- c) Vital Engagement
- d) Effectance

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

a) FLOW

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$



Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defines **flow** as a state of total immersion in a task that is challenging yet closely matched to one's abilities

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

You get into a state of flow when

- There is a **clear challenge** that fully engages your attention,
- You have the **skills** to meet the challenge
- You get **immediate feedback** on each step

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

b) LIMERENCE

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

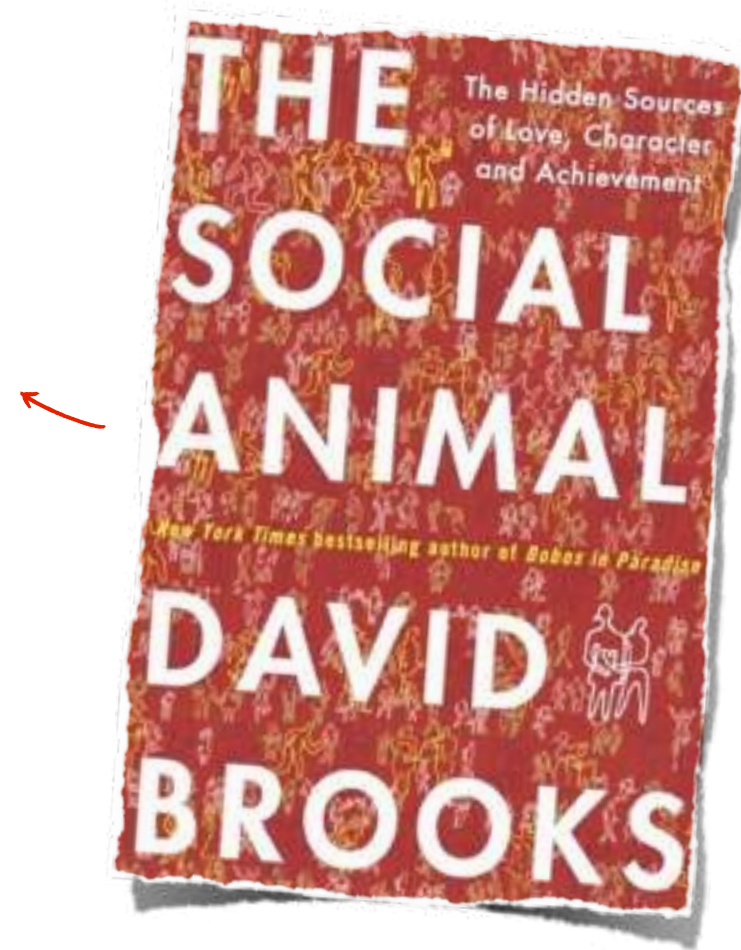
In his book 'Social Animal', David Brooks writes

“ Often there's tension between the inner models and the outer world. So we try to come up with concepts that will help us understand the world, or changes in behaviour that will help us live in harmony with it.

When we grasp some situation, or master some task, there's a surge of pleasure. Its not living in harmony that produces the surge. If that were so, we'd be happy living on the beach all our lives. It's the moment some tension is erased.

So a happy life has its recurring set of rhythms: difficulty to harmony, difficulty to harmony.

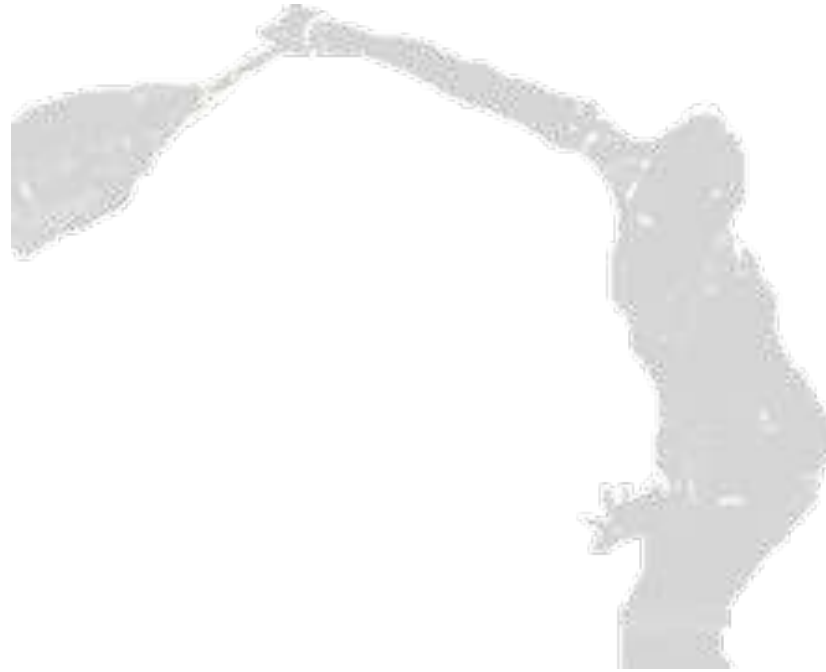
And it is all propelled by the desire for limerence, the desire for the moment when the inner and outer patterns mesh.



$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

c) VITAL ENGAGEMENT

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$



According to Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, people enjoy **longer period of flow** as their **interest** in the flow activity **intensifies** and their **relationship** to people, practices and values in that domain **deepens**

$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$



This they call **Vital Engagement**

- a relationship to the world characterized both by experiences of **flow** (enjoyed absorption) and by **meaning** (subjective significance)

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

d) EFFECTANCE

$$H = I \rightleftharpoons (C + V)$$

Effectance Motivation

Organisms have a tendency to explore and influence the environment and the **master reinforcer for humans is personal competence** (competence is the ability to interact effectively with the environment)

- *Psychologist Robert White*

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$



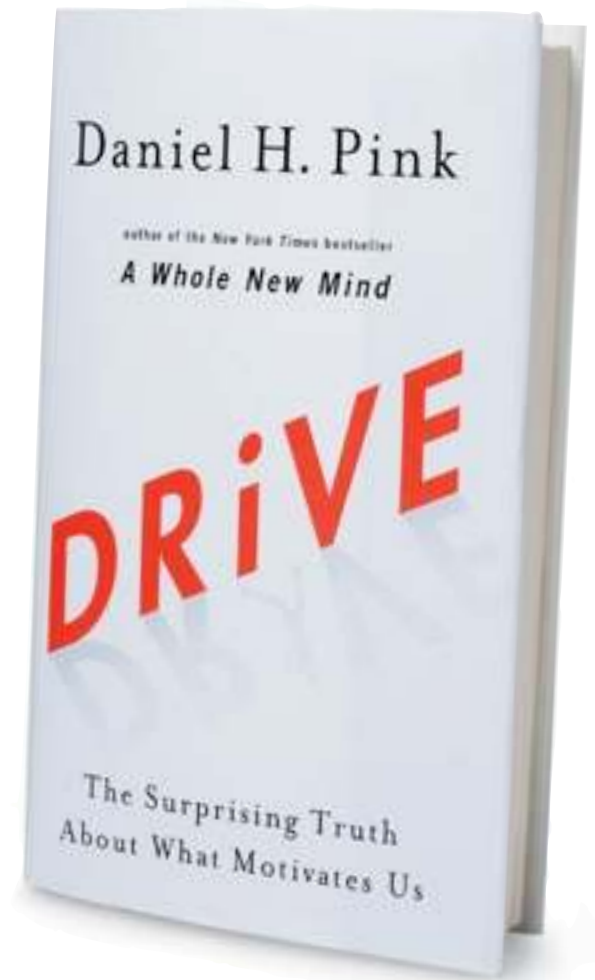
Effectance helps an organism **improve** itself

People like a subject or a game that plays to their strengths because it makes them **feel competent**

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

In his book 'Drive - The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us' author Daniel Pink suggests that the **new operating system for the 21st century**, or Motivation 3.0, has three components:

- **Autonomy**: the urge to direct our own lives
- **Mastery**: the desire to get better and better on something that matters
- **Purpose**: a yearning to do something larger than our self-interest



$$H = I \Leftrightarrow (C + V)$$

Progress Principle

Remember that
happiness comes
comes from making
progress towards goals
than from achieving
them



$$H = I \Rightarrow (C + V)$$

Happiness and Well-Being in Summary

- Happiness is a relationship between Individual and Environment
- The individual has a genetic set-point for happiness, which can be increased through - meditation, cognitive therapy or prozac
- Environment has two components, Life Conditions you face and Voluntary or Intentional Activities you choose to do

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

- To enhance happiness, some life conditions that you can't get habituated to are best changed
 - Meaningful social relationships can significantly improve your well-being
 - Intentional activities, like work, where you can put your strengths to maximum use and experience 'flow' are the ones that most improve well-being
-

$$H = I \Rightarrow (C+V)$$

More **referral**
resources on
'Learning to Be'
have been
compiled here -



<http://www.diigo.com/list/atulpant/Learning-to-Be>

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Author & Illustrator

Atul Pant