Hypnosis as and adjunctive tool to increase Happiness

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Hypnosis to increase Happiness

Abstract.

Concepts of a pleasant, good, meaningful and a full life are reviewed.

With hypnosis, executive attention is increased with the control of emotions.

Positive self-hypnosis, with a focus on positive imagery, contributes to strengthening "happy pathways."

You get ideas on how to change emotions about the past, present and future, and develop different attitudes to increase your level of wellbeing.

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3. Routes to Happiness: hedonic-good-meaningful life and FULL life
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   • Developing a positive self-image
   • A meaningful life: Connection with others, something larger than ourselves.
6. Conclusion
Happiness

“I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear. Whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we all are seeking something better in life. So, I think, the very motion of our life is towards happiness.” – Dalai Lama in The Art of Happiness
Happiness

Happiness is a journey. Not a destination.

Happiness (Matthieu Ricard) – Wellbeing
- Not just mere pleasure or sensation
- A basic state of serenity and fulfillment
- State that pervades and underlies all emotional states
Positive emotions and happiness

- Mathieu Ricard. The Happiest Man in the world?

Happiness

- Happiness is a concept reflecting general satisfaction with one's life and with oneself, not necessarily congruent with objective indicators.
  - (Szymanski 2000)

Happiness

- Martin Seligman, Authentic Happiness (2002)
Determinants of Happiness

**Set Range**
- Genetically determined – research twins
- Winners of lottery – back to level before becoming rich
- Health issues – back to level before, even with life-threatening illnesses
- Hedonistic treadmill – success and pleasure – adaptation, habituation and need of new stimuli or variety to arouse reaction

**Circumstances**
- Finances
  - When people have an income to cover (basic) needs, when poverty is under control, much more money, doesn’t make people much happier
- Social life
  - Happy people have a rich social life. Marriage connected with happiness
- Age
  - Satisfaction increases with age.
- Education, training
  - Not a way to become happier; only for people with low income
- Religion?
  - Positive psychological effects of religion, more social life, hope for future.
- Health?
  - Subjective perception of health related to happiness

Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill

**Revising the Adaptation Theory of Well-Being**
- Set-points are not hedonically neutral
- People have different set points
- A single person may have multiple happiness set points
- Well-being set points can change under some conditions
- Individuals differ in their adaptation to events
  - HOPE to increase happiness!!!!
Determinants of happiness

- Why are some people happier than others?
- Self-rated happy and unhappy people have been shown to differ systematically in particular cognitive and motivational strategies they use.
  - Lyubomirsky 2001

Aspects of happiness

- Aspects of pleasant life
- Aspects of good life
- Aspects of meaningful life
- A full life
- Who experiences what?

Aspects of happiness

- What are people looking for?
  - Less work, less efforts, an easy life...retirement
  - More money
  - Nice food, drinks, sauna, massage, sensual pleasures
  - No commitment, complete freedom, lack of goals?
  - Just making fun?
- Will this bring happiness?
- What kind of life is that?
- What is the result of it?
- What are you looking for?
Pleasure and Satisfaction

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Routes to Happiness

Using all 3 routes
A FULL Life

Seligman et al, 2004 & Peterson et al, 2005
Route to a pleasant life

- Regularly stimulating senses, with respect to refractory periods
- Taste of good food
- Smell of favorite perfume
- Massage
- Sensual pleasure

Route to a pleasant life

- Added value of hypnosis?
  - Reliving experiences on an imaginary level in hypnosis
  - Intensifying sensorial experiences in hypnosis
    - Full focus
    - Eliminating distractions

Route to a good life

- To know your competencies or ‘character strengths’
- VIA Survey of Character Strengths
  - [http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx](http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx)
- 240 Questions
- 24 Strengths
- Top strength – 2nd – 3rd – 4th – 5th – all your strengths
- Competencies helpful to reach goals and involve ourselves fully
Route to a good life

- 6 categories of competencies

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Wisdom knowledge</th>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Humanity</th>
<th>Justice</th>
<th>Temperance</th>
<th>Transcendence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Bravery</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Forgiveness and mercy</td>
<td>Appreciation of beauty and excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Modesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Social (emotional) Intelligence</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Prudence</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Vitality</td>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>Humor</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
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Route to a ‘good life’

- Pursuit of gratification
  - To mobilize your competencies
  - To find a life, work, life-style where your competencies can be useful
  - When challenges are in balance with skills, one floats in the zone or experiences flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)
  - Utilizing your competencies is necessary for your development

Route to a meaningful life

- Using strengths to belong to something larger than ourselves
- Using strengths in the service of something larger than ourselves
- Gives life meaning
  - Ex. volunteering
A Recipe for Happiness

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<th>Satisfaction, Fulfillment, Authentic Happiness</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hedonist</strong> - sensorial pleasure (food, massage, drink, games,...)</td>
<td>Activities with dedication, engagement, flow, loss of selfconsciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short effect</td>
<td>Long run, thinking, interpreting, planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habituation, need of neurons for new stimuli (higher, faster, more,...)</td>
<td>Less risk of habituation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic, sensorial stimuli</td>
<td>Mobilize character strengths, competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pleasant life</td>
<td>A good life – Eudaimonia – Acts matching with a positive, noble goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Psychological growth, investment in values</td>
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</table>

Santiago de Compostella?

Walking, cycling........... done, with relatives, friends; Young, not so young; other people; Healthily, disabled, sporty; A common goal, pursuit and fulfillment of succeeding; A hedonic part - dinner; A gratification - mobilizing character strengths; perseverance, appreciation of beauty; A meaningful part – connected with others and spirituality

Strategies to improve mood

- **Self-rated happy people**
  - Differ from unhappy people in cognitive and motivational strategies they use
  - Direct motivation toward goals and pursuits that foster wellbeing
  - Adopt a rather optimistic or positive thinking style to explain and cope with adversity

- (Lyubomirsky, 2001)
Strategies to improve mood

- Broaden-and-build theory of emotions
  - Usefulness of positive emotions in
    - pushing limits
    - generating interest to explore
    - finding new information and experiences
    - expanding self
    - Broaden thought-action repertoire

Strategies to improve mood

- Positive thought patterns beget positive emotions
  - Repetitive positive thinking states strengthen underlying circuits that produce positive, happy emotional states
  - (Klein, 2006)

Strategies to improve mood

- Can we “practice” happiness?
  - Positive thought patterns beget positive emotions
  - Repetitive positive thinking states strengthen the underlying circuits that produce positive, happy emotional states,
Hypnosis

- "Brain training"
  - Focus attention in hypnosis
  - Activate cognitions and emotions of happiness
  - Relive or construct elements of happiness

- Like a muscle? Strengthen circuits of happiness"
- "BRAIN-GYM"

Where is hypnosis helpful?

- Introduction: Assessment and Planting the seed
  1. Generating positive emotions in the present
     - Self-hypnosis: relaxation and active-alert hypnosis
  2. Reliving past experiences
     - Reliving being valued/loved/appreciated
     - Reliving satisfactory activities and success experiences
  3. Imaginary expression of gratitude
  4. Emotional Resources from the past
     - Counting your blessings
  5. Orienting yourself to a positive future and mobilizing hope
  6. Developing a positive self-image
  7. A meaningful life: Connection with others, something larger than ourselves.

Intro: Assessment and Planting the Seed

- Psycho-education: aspects of pleasant – hedonic, good, meaningful and full life
- Developing awareness to become aware of one's drives and values
More satisfaction? Essential values

An imaginary journey into the future – your 60 – 65 birthday.
Imagine yourself being surrounded by your family, friends, colleagues.
Some of them will give a talk, expressing their respect, appreciation and love for you.
What would you like them to say? How do you want to be remembered?
What kind of achievements will you be proud of?

FLOURISH

• The Law of Seed
• How to prepare the harvest?
• Effort + patience + results
• You reap your harvest after you do the work
• Satisfaction, fulfillment, happiness are the harvest of your dedication, growth and efforts

1. Generating positive emotions

• Self-hypnosis – relaxation
  • imagery positive experiences
  • involving all sensorial aspects (synesthesia)
  • nice environment, view, smells, sensations, sounds, tastes, kineshetic experience
  • fulfilling interaction
  • enjoyable activities
  • Your “laughter” place?
• Self-hypnosis – active-alert hypnosis
  • imagery and reliving nice experiences + activation of the body
1. Generating positive emotions

- Active-Alert hypnosis in psychotherapy.
  - Positive emotional state achieved by recipients of active-alert hypnosis
  - Focus in contemporary psychology to induction of positive emotions such as love and happiness
  - Active participation of people in A-A-hypnosis in harmony with trends in psychotherapy to cultivate competence, self-actualization, establishment of positive mental health
  - A-A hypnotherapy can be a potent tool enhancing self-development,


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1. Generating positive emotions

- Hearthmath - Heart rate variability or HRV=indicator of autonomic nervous system.
  - Heartcoherence increases in hypnosis (DeBenedetti, )
  - In hypnosis you can give suggestions to focus attention to area of your heart and to practice Quick heart coherence exercise

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Step 1

The Quick Coherence® Technique

Step 1: Heart Focus

Focus your attention on the area around your heart...

The area is the center of your chest.
Step 2

The Quick Coherence Technique

Step 2: Heart Breathing

Breathe deeply but normally and feel as if your breath is coming in and out through your heart area.

Positive emotions

- Heart Breathing Protocol (after hypnotic induction, as a hypnotic induction)
- Find your heart with your breathing, (if it helps, put your hand on your chest) and do not try to change your breathing, just notice how it begins to change.
- Imagine that breath is flowing in and out through the center of your heart where your heart is, breathe slowly and steadily, breathe in slowly and gently through your breath for the same count (4-6)
- Breathe into your heart, inhale into your heart; as you exhale, breathe into your solar plexus
- Add a gratitude or gratefulness focus
- Identify a person, pet, object or place that you appreciate, Think of this as you continue, as you inhale into your heart and exhale into your solar plexus
- Identify one small contribution that you made today - a smile you gave to someone, something you said or did that made a difference. Think of your contribution as you breathe into your heart, and as you breathe out into your solar plexus
- www.heartmath.org and Maggy Philips workshop Empowering the Self
From frustration to appreciation

Positive emotions and happiness

- Research Richard Davidson
- Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard
- "MRI scans showed that he and other long-term meditators - who had completed more than 10,000 hours each - experienced a huge level of 'positive emotions' in the left pre-frontal cortex of the brain, which is associated with happiness. The right-hand side, which handles negative thoughts, is suppressed."
- "Further studies have shown that even novices who have done only a little meditation have increased levels of happiness. But Mr Ricard's abilities were head and shoulders above the others involved in the trials."
Positive emotions and happiness

- "significant increases in left-sided anterior activation, a pattern previously associated with positive affect, in the meditators compared with the non-meditators."


1. Generating positive emotions

- Affect bridge in hypnosis
  - Reliving a recent experience of (pleasure..... Satisfaction.....Meaning..... Happiness........)
  - Bridging to earlier experiences and having access to associational network

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Positive emotions and happiness

- Positive emotions
- Broaden and build
- Resilience
- Resources

Negative emotions
- Helplessness
- Depression

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Positive emotions and happiness

- Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions
- Positive emotions: useful?
- Broaden people’s thought-action repertoires
  - Joy – playing – push limits, be creative
  - Interest – explore, new information and experiences, expand self
- Augment an individual’s personal resources
- Fredrickson 2001, 2004

Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions. ~Dalai Lama
DandelionQuotes.com
2. Reliving past experiences

- Reliving being valued/loved/appreciated
  - Induction and deepening in hypnosis
  - Imaginary encounter with some meaningful person in your life (entering a room where you would like to meeting with some meaningful person)
  - Listening to what this person says, how he/she looks at you
  - Noticing how this can be warming your heart
  - Reliving the feelings, emotions you get and how you feel it in your body (being valued/loved/appreciated)
  - Feeling how this strengthens your ego, how it makes you feel good about yourself
  - "broaden en build theory of emotions"

- Associations in hypnosis

- Reliving some satisfactory activities – acts you performed yourself, filling you up with some positive emotions
  - Hypnosis induction – orienting
  - Results from some positive efforts, goal-setting, motivation
  - Something you did for yourself, or something you did for someone else, the community
  - What does it tell about you? How does it affect your level of satisfaction? What do you feel now? Where do you feel it in your body?
  - Anchoring the feeling
  - Deduction and reorientation
3. Imaginary expression of gratitude

- Gratitude exercise
  - College of positive psychology “The Evening of Gratefulness”
  - Choose a person who positively influenced you
  - Write a one page text where you express your respect and gratefulness
  - Invite the person – share the experiences and upcoming memories
- Experiment of Robert Emmons and Mike McCullough
  - Writing – keeping a diary and daily writing – group writing about things they were grateful about:
  - Level of satisfaction and happiness increased after 2 weeks.

3. Imaginary expression of gratitude

- Gratitude Exercise
  - Induction – deepening
  - Floating along your timeline
  - Meeting with someone you feel grateful to
  - Express your respect and gratefulness
  - Wait for an answer
  - Give the words a place in your heart or in the center of yourself
  - Float back to here and now
  - Deduction - reorientation

3. Imaginary expression of gratitude
3. Imaginary expression of gratitude

- **Experimental longitudinal intervention to boost well-being**
- Immediate and longer term effects of regularly practicing two assigned positive activities (expressing optimism and gratitude) on well-being.
- Happiness interventions are more than just placebos, but they are most successful when participants know about, endorse, and commit to the intervention.

  (Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof et al. 2011)

4. Emotional Resources from the past.

- **Counting blessings versus burdens**
  - Participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 experimental conditions (hassles, gratitude listing, and either neutral life events or social comparison); they then kept weekly (Study 1) or daily (Study 2) records of their moods, coping behaviors, health behaviors, physical symptoms, and overall life appraisals. In a 3rd study, persons with neuromuscular disease were randomly assigned to either the gratitude condition or to a control condition.
  - Results suggest that a conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.

  (Emmons and McCullough 2003)

4. Emotional Resources from the past.

- Hypnosis induction and deepening
  - In your mind’s eye bringing up your “blessings” – images? Words? Sounds? Feelings? Location in your body?
  - Utilizing experience to associate to other experiences, positive affect bridge
  - Anchoring positive feelings/emotions
  - Deduction and Reorientation
5. Orienting yourself to a positive future and mobilizing hope

- Positive emotions about the future
  - Mobilizing hope: “The Miracle Question”
  - Imagine succeeding, performance enhancement, mastering
  - Imagine a problem being solved, seeing beyond the problem or the obstacles, and what your future self tells you about what you can do to get there!
  - Imagine a better future to attract positive events in your life (self-fulfilling prophecy)

- Positive emotions about future?
  - Optimism
  - Self-fulfilling prophecy....
    - Successful people focus on what they want, not on what you don't want...........

- A journey to the future
  - Celebrate success, and experience the satisfaction of having succeeded
  - Which sensations, emotions do you get from that?
  - What kind of appreciation do you get?
  - Which energy does it give you?

  - Creating memories of the future!
  - Brain can't distinguish emotions from real facts, from emotions from imaginary facts!
Client’s history
- “The Pregnant Man”
- Always check the "positive future" and ideal self image!

6. Developing a positive self-image
- "Happiness is a concept reflecting general satisfaction with one's life and with oneself, not necessarily congruent with objective indicators."
- A most important ingredient is a positive self-image, depending, in turn, on positive perception of self as compared to one's peers and to the expectations of important figures in one's life.
- This requires understanding of personal strengths and constructive acceptance of limitations. Helping individuals develop subjective self-satisfaction should be the goal in any treatment program, achieved through direct therapeutic interventions as well as environmental supports (e.g., provision of opportunities for success). Szymanski LS (2000) Happiness as a Treatment Goal

Reliving a meaningful experience from the past (Work? Personal life?)
- Describe the situation – circumstances – event – people around...
- What comes up in your mind?
- What do you feel, affects, emotions?
- Which bodily sensations go along with that?
- You can up-regulate this positive affect, and filling up your whole body, your whole mind with it.
- When satisfied, you can anchor the experience
- With that anchor you get access to the positive affect whenever you want or need it
6. Developing a positive self-image

- Tree Metaphor (Phyllis Krystal)
  - Symbol of strength, resistance and resilience
  - Observe the tree, and become aware of it's power, development, history
  - Connection with energy coming from the sun. (father)
  - Connection with food supplies from the earth (mother)
  - Stability, 'grounding', resistance to storms, flexibility without disruption.

Exercise

Positive emotions and happiness

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7. A meaningful life: Connection with others, something larger than ourselves.

- Experiential exercise
  - A circle of connections – who are you/do you feel connected to?
  - How do you feel the connection?
  - Do you feel happy about that connection?
  - How can you increase these feelings? Aspects of the representation – V/A/K/O/G
  - How can you anchor these feelings?

Making sense?

- Where/how do I feel part of a greater community?
  - Volunteering
  - Engagement to realize something beneficial
  - Giving something – money/time/energy

Spiritual connections?

- "spiritual awareness"
- "quantum physics"

I HAVE A DREAM

- ABBA
- [YouTube video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX7yVxZj4g&feature=fvwrel)
- [YouTube video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8f5Ob8F5w)
Happiness and Hypnosis

- Considering
  - Brain plasticity
  - Effect of training (meditation, mindfulness)
  - High hypnotizability improves access to emotional states
  - Effect of positive emotions about past, present, future on level of happiness
  - Effect of alert hypnosis in generating positive mood
- Plenty of hypnosis exercises can be designed and become focus of research in hypnosis and its contribution to mood improvement.

Conclusion

- Planting seed – becoming aware of deeper values and needs is the first step
- Positive (self) hypnosis with focus on positive imagery contributes to strengthening happy pathways
- Imagery in hypnosis, having access to emotional states is helpful to relive experiences of each part of a full life
  - A pleasant or hedonic life
  - A good life, achievements, mobilizing character strengths
  - A meaningful life and connection with others, something larger than ourselves
- Emotional (affective) changes promoted via broaden-and-built theory – result in behavioural changes (and vice versa)

Happiness

- May you seed, cultivate all the flowers of happiness you like
- May they find the stimulating environment to grow and flourish
- May you flourish like a flower!
- Thank you for your attention!
- Nicole Ruysschaert
- President European Society of Hypnosis
- Nicole.ruysschaert@skynet.be
Biography

Dr. Nicole Buyssechaert M.D. is psychiatrist-psychotherapist who has been trained in Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Hypnosis, EMDR and Coaching. She is President of the European Society of Hypnosis. She has been on the ESH BOD since 10 years. She is past-president of the Flemish Scientific Hypnosis Society in Belgium and after 25 years still active in the board, now being responsible for the Public Relations of this society.

She works in a private practice and has a lot of experience in individual and group psychotherapy. She is a supervisor and trainer in hypnosis and in psycho-traumatology. She has lectured and has given workshops in many international hypnosis congresses. She was invited to give workshops and training in many hypnosis societies all over the world. She teaches in European institutions on stress and time management and personal development.

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More information and bibliography

DOI: 10.1080/00029157.2013.846845

Lady bug in other languages

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<tr>
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<th>Deutsch</th>
<th>Hungarian</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>Greek</th>
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<td>Glückskäfer</td>
<td>Katicabogár</td>
<td>Booya Kopoloska</td>
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<td>Coccinelle</td>
<td>Marienkafer</td>
<td>Lieveheersbeestje</td>
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<td>Ladybug</td>
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<td>Katicabogár</td>
<td>Booya Kopoloska</td>
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