

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
Prof. Priyadarshi Patnaik
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Rekhi Centre of Excellence for the Science of Happiness
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

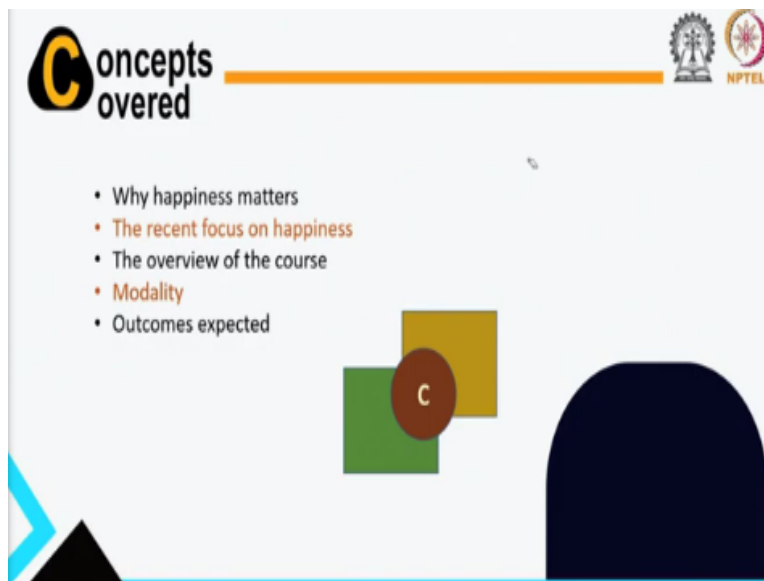
Lecture - 01

Introduction: Why Happiness Matters and How We Will Go About Exploring it

Good morning, friends, welcome to this course on the science of happiness and well-being which is being offered by the Rekhi Centre of Excellence for the Science of Happiness, IIT Kharagpur. This will be taken up by me, I am Priyadarshi Patnaik from the Rekhi Centre of Excellence as well as the department of Humanities and Social sciences. And along with me the other resource person will be Professor Manas K. Mandal, distinguished visiting professor at the Rekhi Centre of Excellence.

So, I hope that you have already seen the introductory video which gives a very quick overview and it also introduces you to both of us who are taking this course. And we assure that you will have a very exciting meaningful journey as we take this course forward along with you. So, let me quickly give you an overview of what we are going to cover in this introductory session.

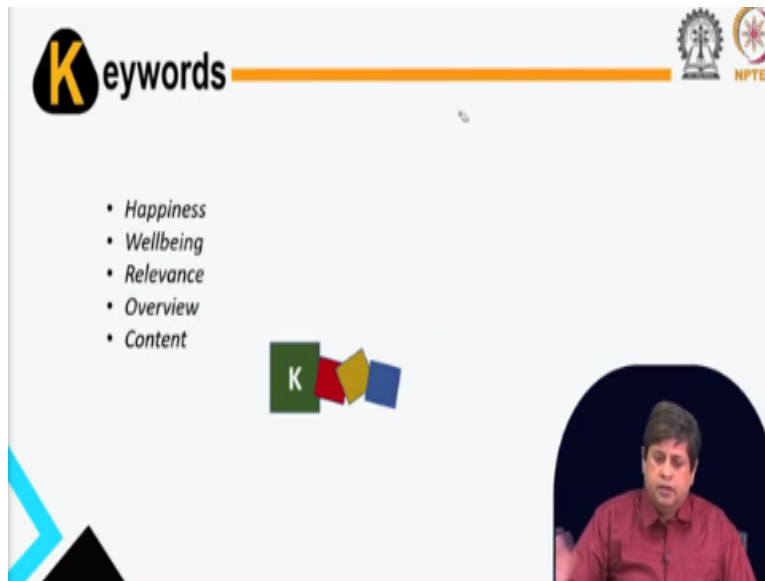
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So, these are the key concepts that will be covering why happiness matters. Then the next thing that we will cover is the recent focus on happiness. Then I will give you a quick overview of the

course the 40 sessions that we are doing together including today's session, the modality, the mechanism that we will be following and outcomes expected why you would might find the course relevant.

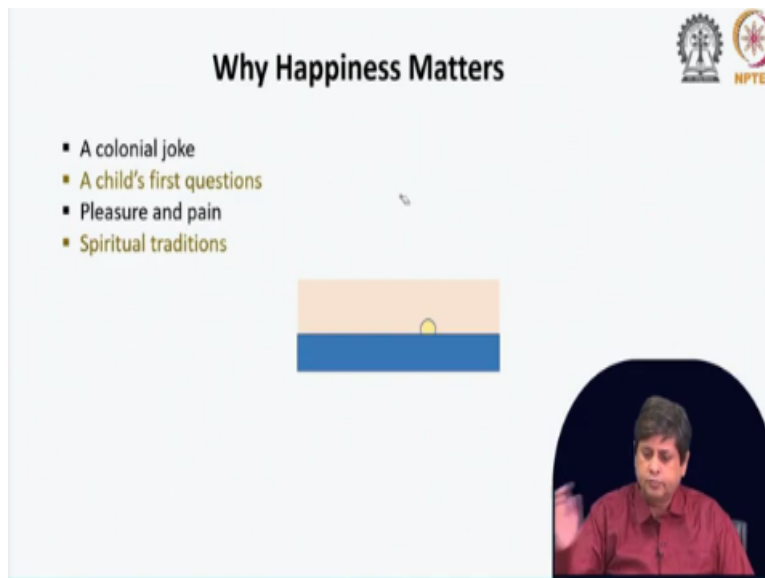
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The slide is titled "Keywords" in a large, bold, black font. Below the title, there is a list of five terms: *Happiness*, *Wellbeing*, *Relevance*, *Overview*, and *Content*. To the right of the list, there is a small graphic consisting of three overlapping squares: a green one with a white 'K', a red one, and a blue one. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular video inset showing a man in a red shirt speaking. The slide also features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

And these are the key words which are relevant and these are the fundamental concepts that will be covered as we go ahead.

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The slide is titled "Why Happiness Matters" in a bold, black font. Below the title, there is a list of four topics: *A colonial joke*, *A child's first questions*, *Pleasure and pain*, and *Spiritual traditions*. In the center of the slide, there is a simple graphic of a yellow sun partially submerged in a blue body of water. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular video inset showing the same man in a red shirt speaking. The slide also features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

Why does happiness matter? I am reminded of a joke and the fundamental quality of a joke is that a joke is something which does not have an author. So, the joke is something which is

contextualized again and again. But I am going to share this joke in a colonial context where I am going to localize it in this coastal belt of Bengal and Orissa. The British civil servant who is constructing a bridge during the early part of the day certainly discovers that there is a young man who is sleeping under a tree.

And then he feels irritated because everybody else is working. It is a bright warm winter I would say because in this part of the world we do not really have a winter. So, a very pleasant morning and this man goes and pokes this man and says hey why are you sleeping? I feel like sleeping that is why I am sleeping and again he turns his back on the Britisher. Again, this guy pokes the sleeping man and says: why do not you get up and do some work?

Everybody else is working and you are sleeping over there. And the man gets irritated and gets up and says that ok why should I work? He says that if you work then you will earn a living you will make some money. What will I do with that money? Why should I earn money? If you earn money then you can buy a house, you can set up a family, you can get married. Why should I set up a family? Why should I get married?

Then your life will be happy and it will be beautiful and you will enjoy it. Man scratches his head looks at the Britisher with an eye of wonder and says: that is exactly what I am doing right now, I am enjoying myself. Now you see that the reason for sharing this anecdote with you is to make you aware of the fact that the moment we talk about this we are discussing something which relates to happiness as opposed to success.

And as we go ahead with this course this fundamental issue of happiness and success will continually pop up. Because one would ask this question, are we really concerned with happiness? At IIT KGP when a first year student comes and we ask these people why have you joined IIT KGP? After a little bit of more pressure, you might say or asking them again and again, for many of them this is a state of bewilderment,

Where they suddenly realize as they answer this question that they probably do not really have very clear idea why they have exactly joined IIT Kharagpur. The common responses that emerge

are brand name; but what is this brand name going to keep them, are they happy with the topic or the choice of discipline that they have taken up? Well maybe in most cases the answer is no, but the reason that they have taken it up is because maybe friends have said that you must get into an IIT.

Parents have aspiration, the boy or the girl they have this aspiration. And if you go deep down again this fundamental thing is that if you are in IIT or an institute of repute in any field in India or outside, then you will be successful and if you are successful, you will make a lot of money, you will earn a lot of name. But at the root of the entire thing is that what is it this success going to give you finally.

Yes, one thing that is going to give you is a sense of security which is a very fundamental component that human beings in an existential context look forward to, but the other one is obviously sense of happiness. So, in some sense happiness and success are linked together and deep down probably happiness matters for that reason. It is obvious that when a child grows up, the child has a series of questions, a lot of questions as my friends over here who are sitting listening to me would know.

But as we grow older many of these questions become stale and probably we stop asking these questions until again maybe people start growing old maybe my age and some of the older participants who are listening to this lecture when you again ask this question that ok, I have done so many things or I have not done so many things. I have a certain small amount of time left what am I going to do with it. Is this what I started with?

And for a young child questions like is that a god. What is the meaning of my existence; all these fundamental questions come up. And very often directly or indirectly, they are linked to the concept of happiness. Now I remember as a child trying to make sense of this world if I have been created by somebody, then the next question is that who created that person? Then who created that person you have philosophical questions and musings.

And as I will share with you briefly today and in one of my later classes. These fundamental questions are all also linked to the concept of happiness. Then of course there is the concept of pleasure and pain. Why human beings most organisms have a tendency of moving away avoiding that which is unhappy and moving in the direction of that which is happening. So, we have this pleasure pain principle which constantly motivates us to move in particular directions.

In fact, in some of the sessions to follow we will be looking at the hierarchies of pleasure and pain that we categorize in our lives, because it is not a very simple thing in our life to navigate between pleasure and pain. For instance, students study hard and at the point they are studying hard it is not a very pleasurable experience. But they are probably postponing current pleasure because of the promise of a more bright, more meaningful happier future.

So, this is again another fundamental reason that why happiness matters, it is intrinsically a part of the organism itself and although we cannot ascribe the concept of happiness to other organisms animals, plants, trees. We can say that deeply imbued within all these creatures is this basic tenet which finally leads to this concept of happiness in human beings and then of course if you are looking at spiritual traditions.

The history of spiritual traditions tell us that one of the fundamental components apart from various other components is the element of happiness. That we want to be happy or what is it that will give us lasting within quotes lasting happiness. So, in that sense you see that happiness matters to us and if you have enrolled in this course then that tells us that happiness matters to us.

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The Recent Focus on Happiness




- Happiness studies has drawn a lot of attention in the last ten years, especially with focus on World Happiness Report and setting up of centres on Happiness in the top universities around the world.
- World Happiness Report
- Gross National Happiness
- Sustainable Development Goals





Images taken from respective websites through google search



But then you see that there has been a recent I would say revision or a revisiting or a relook at the entire concept of happiness. What do I exactly mean by that? You suddenly realize that there is a lot of focus on the concept of happiness if you are looking at the various things which have happened in the early part of the 21st century. Yes, true when we are talking about economists, economists constantly talk about welfare if not wellbeing and it is in that particular context,

that we realize that since the 20th century at various points of time the welfare of the people have been the concern of the economist. And we realize that the focus has been on primarily doing something in terms of the material tangible aspect of life, so that people can be happy. When we talk about measurement of happiness in the later sections of this course, we will deal with those aspects in much greater detail.

But let it be said here that you see that this element of trying to focus on happiness of the people beyond materiality is something which is a more recent phenomenon. It has kind of emerged in the early part of the 21st century. The UN has played a significant role and to a certain extent Bhutan has played a key role in the first decade of 21st century roughly 2007-2008 when the king of Bhutan came up with the concept of the alternative to GDP gross domestic product with a concept very catchy, very meaningful and revolutionary concept across national happiness.

Now what does this gross national happiness want to share with us. And here the motivating factor or the person who played a key role was the then king of Bhutan. And UN found this a very very fascinating area, and it conceived of and it desired that why not measure the happiness levels of the countries. Because if you do that, it is not just finding out who is happier and who is not so happy.

It is also about making an assessment of what makes people happy and what makes people unhappy and in the process the thing that would emerge would be probably policy decisions that can be taken in order to reduce the element of happiness. Again, what makes people happy what makes people unhappy the fundamental aspects of happiness these of course are not for today.

But it is important to realize that there was a growing interest in happiness, because in some sense the economists failed us because the economists failed to give us a formula for happiness, for sustainable happiness especially through focus on the material aspect of things only probably we needed to focus on other aspects as well and GNH with its 11 domains which we will discuss later.

Where you see that culture, environment, spirituality, subjective, mental conditions, mental health all these things were considered along with material aspects as key components that would give one a sense of happiness. And in that sense suddenly the realization came that materiality was not the only solution to happiness there were other things intangible things which were very relevant in the context of happiness.

So, goods and services based focus on happiness did not really work. The world happiness report evolved within the framework concept this concept the focus of Bhutan the focus of UN and the first report with the help of gallop came out in 2012 and it continues for the last 10 years plus the effort continues again the details of it we will be discussing at a later point of time. But this sudden renewed interest in happiness was both driven and drove a renewed interest in happiness across the world.

Probably it was driven by the fact that people were getting unhappier in spite of material well-being food security and other relevant aspects that are supposed to make people happy. They were not giving the appropriate solution. The other thing that could have been happening was that because now there was a renewed interest an alternative that would give people a sense of satisfaction and peace.

There was a renewed interest and people suddenly on their own also started realizing that happiness mattered to them. And it is within this context that in the last 20 years with the advent of positive psychology as also a very powerful force where you no longer focus on diseases, but look at qualities of mind, qualities of experience that give you a sense of pleasure and happiness. Why that happens and all that?

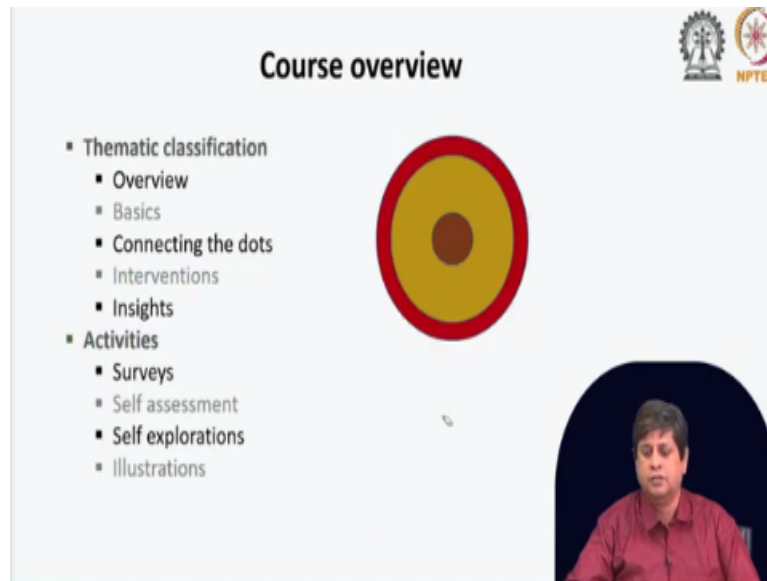
It is in that context that the focus on happiness emerged and then of course the UN's sustainable development goals which was conceived of in 2015 and apart from the tangible components we will quickly talk about it at a later point of time. Tangible components like food security you also have to focus on mental health, you focused on environment, you focused on ecology, focused on giving everybody a good education, you focused on so many things where both tangible and intangible where happiness was probably the underlying goal.

And so, you suddenly realize that many centres across the world, many courses across the world on happiness popped up, came up last 10 years or even less than that. Last 6 to 7 years Harvard, we have happiness in India we started at IIT there are number of other institutes now which have come up with centres which deal with happiness, the Madhya Pradesh government came up with Anand Sansthan which focused on the happiness of the people.

So, you see that both across the world in big universities Pennsylvania University, Oxford, Cambridge everywhere there were courses or focuses speech either emphasized mindfulness and different practices which led to happiness or on happiness per se. So, there were a flurry of activities a lot of things happening which suddenly brought happiness to the forefront. Probably in many cases you have wondered about happiness.

And then probably have realized that this is something which matters. And here we have suddenly courses that are now coming up in the context of happiness.

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Now having said that I would like to share with you that this course has been designed specifically for you who do not necessarily have a background in happiness studies or in positive psychology or on the neurological aspects or the biological parameters which are related to happiness. It is meant for everybody it is a course which provides an overview as well as basic introduction to some very very relevant aspects of happiness and well-being studies.

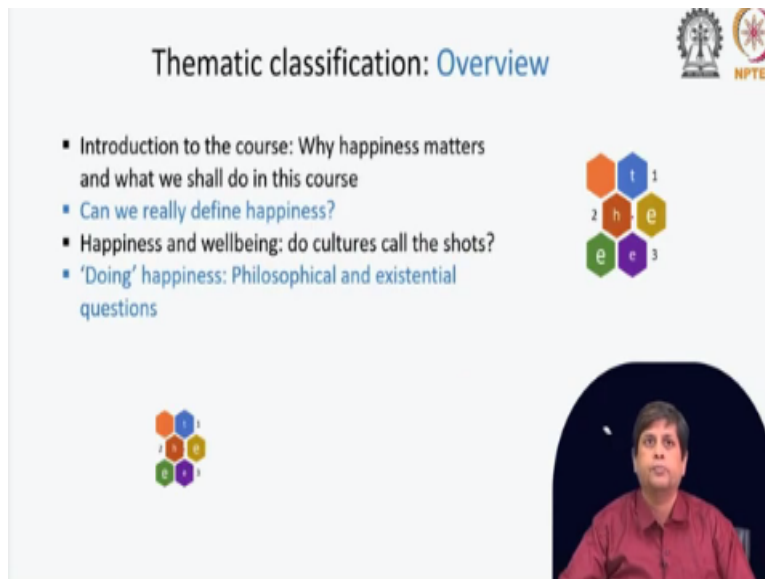
Both from a theoretical orientation the emphasis is on that that is why we call it the science of happiness as well as on the applied aspect of it which may actually make it practically meaningful for all of you. So, the way that I will quickly go over the different topics that we would be covering during this course. So, we have an overview section four to five talks which will cover some of the fundamental concepts provide an overview.

Then we will move on to basics then we will try to connect the dots which link different other components to happiness then we will address intervention strategies that can reduce probably unhappiness and enhance your sense of happiness. And then of course insights which also can be

alternately interpreted as frontier areas where work is getting done. The course is online and there would be surveys there would be self-assessment.

There would be self-explorations as well as illustrations provided during the course and beyond the course hours. And I will quickly touch upon these areas in the next few slides and in the next few minutes.

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The slide is titled "Thematic classification: Overview" in blue text. In the top right corner, there are two logos: a circular institutional seal and the NPTEL logo. The main content is a bulleted list of topics:

- Introduction to the course: Why happiness matters and what we shall do in this course
- Can we really define happiness?
- Happiness and wellbeing: do cultures call the shots?
- 'Doing' happiness: Philosophical and existential questions

To the right of the list is a diagram consisting of six colored hexagons arranged in a larger hexagonal shape. Each hexagon contains a letter and a number: 't' with '1' (orange), 'h' with '2' (yellow), 'e' with '3' (green), 'e' with '4' (purple), 'n' with '5' (blue), and 'g' with '6' (red). The letters spell out "the eng". In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a red shirt, speaking.

So, when we talk about the thematic classification, we have raw broadly six thematic classifications. The first four lectures provide you an overview like today's talk is providing an overview of what we are going to do in these classes and prior to that why there is so much of importance being given to happiness. And why is it that happiness is something which is relevant to explore.

Beyond that obviously the next obvious question would be that we all talk about happiness we all talk about life but can it be defined so we will try to look into that. And then of course you see that all definitions are within frameworks which are culturally determined. So, is it something which is natural or is it something which is culturally oriented. And then of course you see that we cannot make any progress without quickly touching upon the fact that people wonder about different aspects of life and happiness.

As I told you earlier is one fundamental area where thinkers throughout the ages for the last five thousand years, I would say have been thinking about it so we will provide a very quick overview of those aspects of things.

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The slide is titled "Thematic classification: Basics" in blue text. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, there is a bulleted list of topics in blue text:

- Happiness – antecedents and implications
- Are we happy? The Science of Happiness
- Myths that keep us from finding happiness
- Is there an evolutionary purpose of happiness?
- Is happiness genetically determined?
- How empathy makes us happier?
- Can money buy us happiness?
- Pro-sociality and happiness – Virtues and strengths
- Pro-sociality and happiness – Generosity, give and take
- Exploring the self and the other

To the right of the list is a graphic consisting of five grey hexagons arranged in a cluster. The hexagons contain the letters 't', 'h', 'e', 'e', and 't' in a way that they spell out 'the' twice. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 are placed next to the top 't', the 'h', and the bottom 't' respectively.

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with short dark hair, wearing a red shirt, speaking.

Now the second category of classification that we are looking at are basic concepts that we need in order to understand what this happiness study is all about what this focus on well-being is all about. What causes happiness and what are the implications in our lives if we are happy would be one of the areas that we will focus on followed by are we happy the science of happiness. So, asking this interrogation asking this question interrogating ourselves about whether we are happy or not.

And the science behind it. One of the other aspects is the myths that keep us from finding happiness because you see that sometimes in the process of trying to reach the destination of happiness the beauty of the journey is something which is lost. So, that is one of the aspects that we will be looking at. Is there an evolutionary purpose of happiness because you see that a lot of studies that we have today are linked to evolution to genetics.

In fact, genetics today has become a very very powerful tool including the recent Nobel prize which again deals with in physiology medicine and physiology which again deals with genetics. So, the entire process of our survival our evolution and how are all that is linked to happiness.

Similarly linked to that is happiness something which is natural which is genetically determined or is it that we have some control over our happiness.

Are we born with the predisposition of being happy or unhappy? Or is it that it is something which we can inculcate cultivate and actually makes a difference in our own lives? And in that particular context beyond that empathy the concept of empathy whether and the way it is linked to our sense of happiness or un-happiness. If we are concerned about others if we put ourselves in other people's shoes does that make us happier necessarily.



Then the material aspect the relationship between money and happiness we are told that when we have money in fact, I was telling you a little earlier that the entire concept of success is also very strongly linked to materiality material aspect of life. And of course, in that context money but if you have too much of money or we have money beyond a particular point does that necessarily make us happier.

Pro-sociality particular kinds of behaviour which are socially benign like virtues and strengths generosity the desire to give or to take how these are linked to happiness. And in that context, you see that all this happens within the framework of our self-identity and how we connect with others.

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Thematic classification: **Connecting the dots**

- Relationship and networking I
- Relationship and networking II
- How does optimism affect happiness?
- Does between-ness make us happy?
- Which body language shows happiness?
- Why is social innovation important for happiness?
- How does failure make us resilient?
- Why are we unhappy?



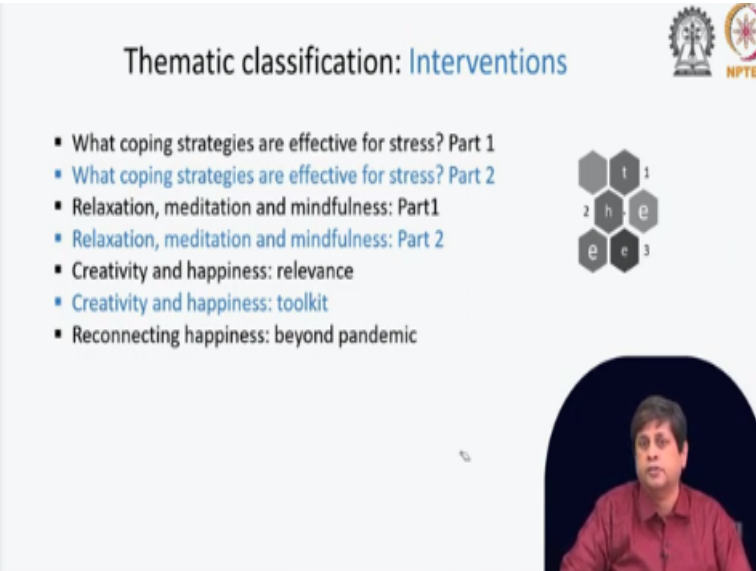
Logos of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and NPTEL are visible in the top right corner of the slide.

So, this would be the basic concept that we will be dealing with during the course then of course we will be trying to connect the dots. That well there are things which look to be at the periphery apparently not connected directly with the concept of happiness but do they lead to happiness. Like relationships networking our predisposition of optimism and how it may be positively may be counted intuitively negatively affects our happiness.

Again, link to the concept of relatedness, betweenness is going beyond the self and exploring the space between people and its relation to happiness. Then the kind of expressivity that are linked to happiness and what are it what are their implications I mean let us look at it this way do I smile and after smiling I become happy or is it that because I am happy, I am smiling. As a very complex relationships as well as the way we manifest them is another interesting aspect.

And it is connected intrinsically to certain cause and effect relationships and that is something which would be explored. Social innovation doing creative things, things which are creative but from a societal perspective meaningful, failure, resilience as opposed to success we talked about success a little earlier and the relationship with happiness. And one of the fundamental concepts then in spite of everything that we might possess why are we unhappy. And linking these concepts together trying to find out fundamentally how they can be related.

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The slide is titled "Thematic classification: Interventions" in blue text. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, there is a list of topics in blue text:

- What coping strategies are effective for stress? Part 1
- What coping strategies are effective for stress? Part 2
- Relaxation, meditation and mindfulness: Part1
- Relaxation, meditation and mindfulness: Part 2
- Creativity and happiness: relevance
- Creativity and happiness: toolkit
- Reconnecting happiness: beyond pandemic

To the right of the list is a graphic of three overlapping hexagons containing the letters 't', 'h', and 'e' in a triangular arrangement, with numbers 1, 2, and 3 next to them. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a red shirt speaking.

The next thematic focus would be interventions. Interventions we talked about the science of happiness cause and effect basic concepts but then we would be talking about strategies which can probably help some of us if not all of us become happier or become less unhappy. So, there could be coping strategies related to stress there could be relaxation, meditation, mindfulness which have been there for ages and centuries their relevance in the context of happiness.

Creativity doing something which you love doing and, in the process, getting into sense of flow happiness linked to that and a very, very relevant context which is a very, very contemporary context is we are still not adjusted beyond the pandemic and after the pandemic to ourselves. There has been a total transformation at various levels certain traditions certain behavioural certain ways of functioning this traditions or rituals are gone.

And new rituals have replaced them and probably some of the ways of life will never come back again. Coping under these circumstances beyond the pandemic with an Amnesia of certain skills social skills that we have developed is also another aspect we will touch upon. And try to see how we will be able to cope with such contexts.

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The slide is titled "Thematic classification: Insights" in blue text. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, there is a list of eight bullet points, each preceded by a blue square icon. To the right of the list, there is a graphic consisting of six hexagons arranged in a 2x3 grid, with the letters 't', 'h', 'e' in the top row and 'e', 'e', 'e' in the bottom row, and numbers 1, 2, 3 next to them. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a red shirt speaking.

- What makes us happy at work?
- Are emotionally intelligent people happier?
- How much can we nudge for happiness?
- Can we measure happiness? Part 1
- Can we measure happiness? Part 2
- Happiness and leadership traits
- Consumerism, happiness and wellbeing
- Technology, happiness and wellbeing
- Doing research on happiness

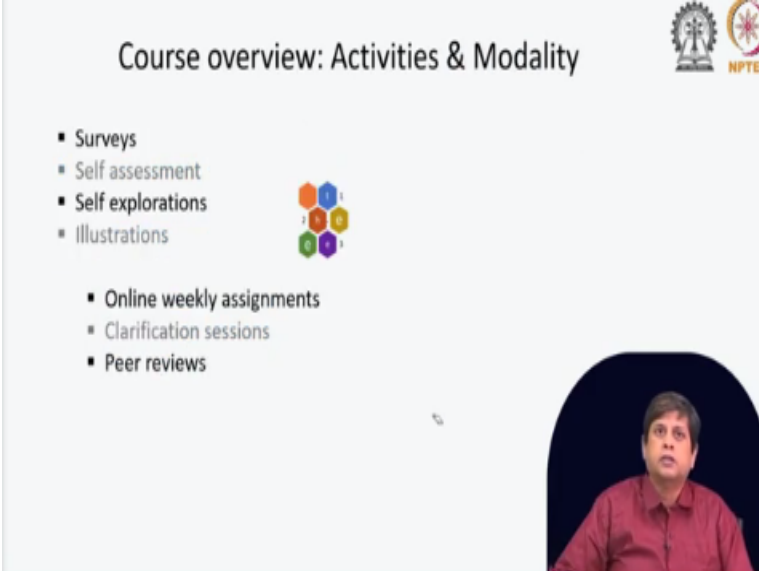
Insights is probably one of the last areas that we will be touching upon and these are I would I should say more sophisticated more detailed more analytical aspects and based on the earlier parts of the course. You would have a better understanding of these as to the relationship

between happiness and work, emotional intelligence and happiness the concept of nudge which is a fairly recent concept.

And the way that it can be used for happiness aspects related to how we try to measure happiness whether it is at a physical physiological level at a very subjective level or at the level of a state or a country. Relationship of happiness with leadership traits especially in the context of work culture consumerism consumer happiness and well-being the paradoxes involved there technology which can drive in the direction of happiness.

As so far technology has also driven in the direction of destruction because it is a double edged sword and then of course for the fun of it doing small research on happiness not necessarily in an academic context but for the sheer joy of it and for of course those of you who are academically oriented how you can do that. And that is where we would definitely connect with you we will be connected to you our team would be interacting with you and we will try to address these issues.

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The slide is titled "Course overview: Activities & Modality" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It lists the following activities:

- Surveys
- Self assessment
- Self explorations
- Illustrations
- Online weekly assignments
- Clarification sessions
- Peer reviews

A central graphic consists of six colored hexagons (blue, orange, green, purple, yellow, and red) arranged in a circular pattern. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a red shirt speaking.

So, you see that the other aspect of the course overview is activities and modalities we would be having periodic surveys and we would love you to complete those and we will be sharing the results with you. Self-assessment tools will be provided self-exploration activities and techniques

would be shared with you and there will be ample illustrations during the course and even beyond the course which will be shared with you.

There would be online weekly assignments clarification sessions and we might also explore peer review so that there is a greater degree of interactivity. And all this within the framework of the course and of course exams would be there for those of you who are looking aspiring for a certificate in this field and that would be something that would be available the details would be provided by the competent people in the NPTEL course.

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The slide is titled "Outcomes Expected" in bold black text. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, there is a list of five bullet points in blue text:

- One realizes the relevance of happiness in one's life
- The science behind happiness leads to ...
- Conviction in the practices of happiness
- One learns to focus not only on one's own happiness but the happiness of others
- One learns to put happiness lessons to practice in one's workplace

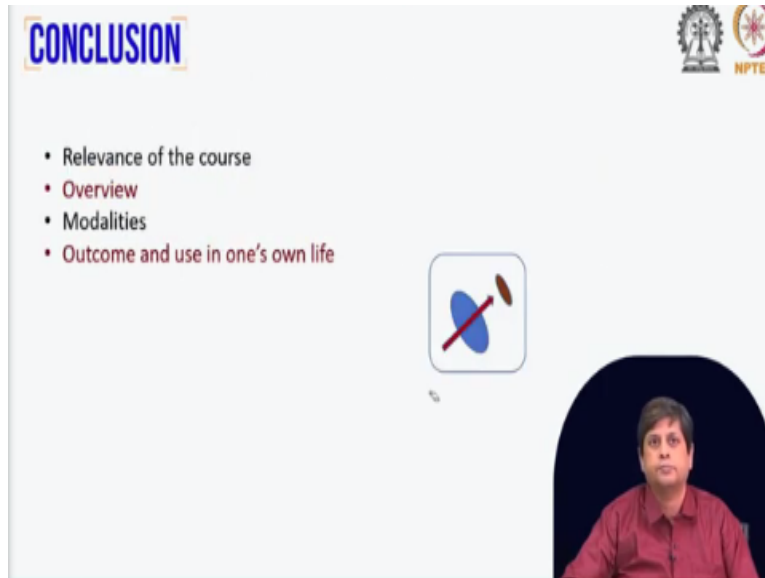
To the right of the list is a diagram consisting of a blue oval with a red arrow pointing to the right. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man with short dark hair, wearing a maroon shirt, speaking.

Outcomes expected why is it that you are doing this course. At the end of it what is it that you are going to gain obviously you would have gain knowledge in a particular area. But other than that, what is it the relevance of being happier in one's life. Is it is it worth it to be happy in our life? Although apparently; it seems like a redundant question friends a significant number of us very often given up give up our happiness for other things like success and various other family values lot of things.

So, asking this question which is more significant. Then of course you get to know the science behind all this and you may gain the conviction that well practice practical tools that are indicated actually some of them make sense. And can transform your lives into more happy lives you not only learn to focus on your own happiness but also that of other people. And then also

you get an opportunity and you might be able to use it in your workplace which can make even your work life much more meaningful.

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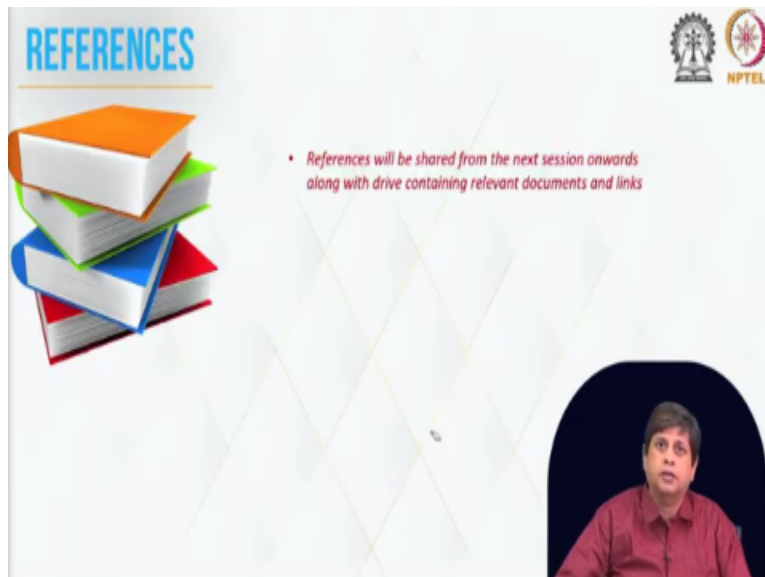


The slide is titled "CONCLUSION" in blue text. It features a bulleted list with four items: "Relevance of the course", "Overview", "Modalities", and "Outcome and use in one's own life". The words "Overview", "Modalities", and "Outcome" are in red. To the right of the list is a small icon of a blue sphere with a red line passing through it. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a man in a red shirt speaking.

- Relevance of the course
- Overview
- Modalities
- Outcome and use in one's own life

So, at the end of this introductory session I would summarize by saying that we have touched upon the relevance of the course provide you an overview of the course talked about the modalities through which this course should be run and the way we would interact with you. and the relevance of this course in our own lives.

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The slide is titled "REFERENCES" in blue text. On the left side, there is a 3D illustration of a stack of four books with orange, green, blue, and red covers. To the right of the books is a bulleted list with one item: "References will be shared from the next session onwards along with drive containing relevant documents and links". The text "References will be shared from the next session onwards" is in red. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a man in a red shirt speaking.

- References will be shared from the next session onwards along with drive containing relevant documents and links

This particular session does not use any references but in the courses to in the classes and the modules to follow. Relevant reading material and links will be provided along with assessment tools and surveys. So, that those of you are interested can learn a lot more and discover a lot more about yourself and happiness as we go ahead. Thank you, friends, for giving me this opportunity to introduce this course to you. I hope that I will enjoy these sessions to come.