

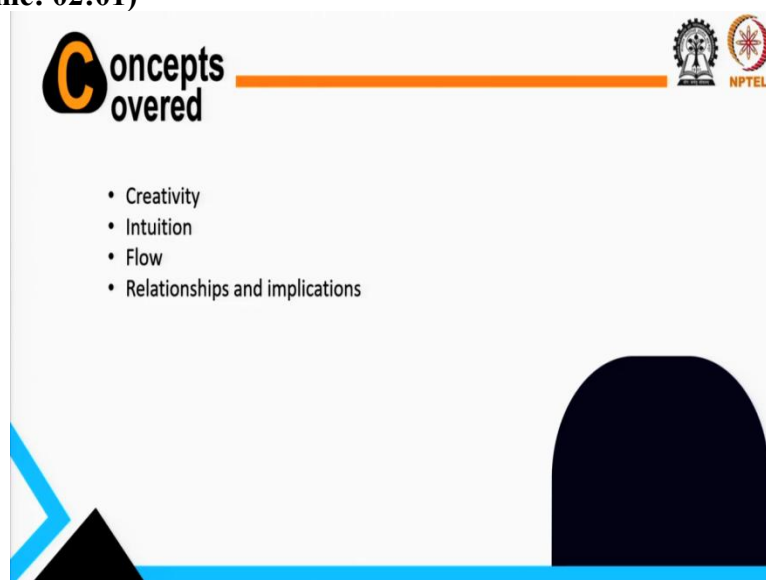
The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Lecture – 29
Creativity, Intuition and Flow

Good morning friends, so we are back again, after some sessions with Prof Mandal and there are a couple of sessions which are definitely relevant for the context that we are going to talk about and these lessons deal with innovation and some of them at a later point of time also we will deal with emotional intelligence. All these things have connectivity with the concept of creativity, intuition and flow.

At the outset the question that comes to our mind is that why talk about creativity in the context of happiness we are slowly moving towards the last phase of this course. And what we realize is that it has relevance in application in workplace as well as in our lives. True, we are talking about the science of happiness. But we have already talked a little about the significance of meditation which again relates to this particular session to mindfulness. And we realize that the practice is something which is equal important and the various contexts within which practice takes place are probably very relevant.

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So what is it that we are able to cover we are going to cover 3 basic concepts, creativity, intuition and flow. And we will go about them pretty informally, I am not going to go into the

details of it, but provide a basic orientation. But what is more important is the relationship amongst these and the way they contribute to the concept of happiness. In the session that follows, we will ask fundamental questions about if creativity is something which is specific to people or we can all be creative in our own ways and look at some applied contexts where they can be used.

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Creativity?

- The use of imagination or original ideas to create something new (Dictionary)
- Imagination - process
- Original – outcome or process
- Creation – process leading to outcome
- New – outcome or process

Applications: business, workplace, life
(apart from entertainment and the arts)
Creativity and happiness – high intensity

Schaffer O (2013), Crafting Fun User Experiences: A Method to Facilitate Flow, Human Factors International

The slide features a logo in the top right corner with the text 'NPTEL'. A graphic of a person's silhouette interacting with colorful gears is positioned to the right of the text. A video inset in the bottom right shows a man in a yellow shirt speaking.

Now, when we talk about creativity the dictionary definition goes something like this use of imagination or original ideas to create something new. What is this concept of imagination? Think about it, we will go into a little later. But when we talk about imagination, imagination is essentially a process. So, original is essentially an outcome or originally something which is which can be captured.

And when you are capturing something, this could be documenting a process, but more relevantly, the outcome which is something new and creation again is a process-centric approach. Whenever we are talking about creating something, it is a process. What are the applications, business, workplace life? Apart from the well-known areas where we talk about creativity like art, music, photography, painting, entertainment, movies, media, social media, different places where we talk about creativity.

What is the relationship between creativity and happiness? States of positivity probably are can induce innovations, when we are I mean theories and studies suggest that when they are

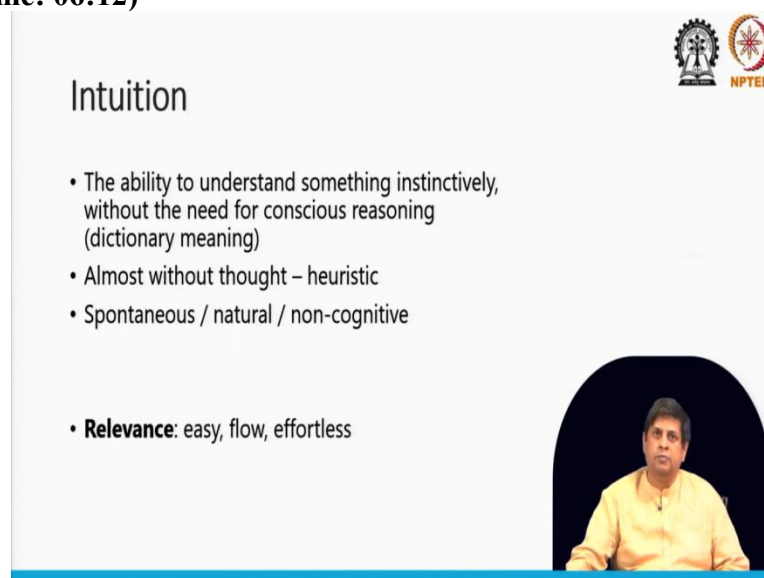
stressed, our ability to think in new ways is probably something which is reduced. That could be a reason for that, because you see that when we are stressed, either we are frozen, we are not in a position to think or if we are stressed, we are focused on a solution centric behaviour.

We want to find a solution to the problem and hence we are going for what can we call convergent thinking that we will take up in the next session. When we are relaxed. So, we are open to new ideas again studies have suggested that in a relaxed position, we are open to more ideas, more suggestions, in a tensed in a negative mind-set, we are not so happiness is conducive to creativity.

And finding suggests that when you are extremely excited and positively induced your creativity can go up and when your creativity goes up, that can induce a state which is known as flow and in a flow state by default you are happy. So, if you are looking at the relationship it is a cyclic relationship. Significant positive modes can make you feel creative and creativity is often when it is in a flow state self-rewarding.

It rewards itself and obviously, when it rewards itself, it leads to a pleasurable feeling and you are happy. Imagine how significant it is in the context of the relationship between work life balance and happiness at workplace.

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The slide is titled "Intuition" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains three bullet points: "The ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning (dictionary meaning)", "Almost without thought – heuristic", and "Spontaneous / natural / non-cognitive". A fourth bullet point, "Relevance: easy, flow, effortless", is positioned below the others. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a yellow shirt speaking.

Intuition

- The ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning (dictionary meaning)
- Almost without thought – heuristic
- Spontaneous / natural / non-cognitive
- **Relevance:** easy, flow, effortless

So, I hope that have been able to establish the significance of the concept of happiness in relationship to creativity in 2 different ways. Happiness induces creativity and creativity by

itself is self-rewarding because it very often leads to positive moods. But then you see that when we are talking about creativity there are other mood states which are very relevant to them.

We will talk about 2 of them there are many but we will focus on 2 of them. The first 1 is the concept of intuition. Why do we talk about intuition? Because if you get scientifically oriented, if you are talking about the education system, that we run through intuition is something which is kind of forbidden. In other words, the whole system of education kind of tells us to be counter-intuitive.

Heuristic thinking, thinking using gut feeling is perfectly fine when you are playing a test match or T20 cricket and taking decisions. You are taking decisions in the context of music, visual arts, films and all that you have that license, but the moment it comes to science, the moment it comes to academics, we are kind of forbidden and this orientation runs through our entire life, that we should not make intuitive decisions, it is discouraged.

Interestingly this is a western import, this tradition of education and the great degree of emphasis that we give to non-intuitive, methodical scientific thinking is something which we have borrowed significant from the west. Our tradition also has a very rich rigorous tradition of grammar, analytical thinking, but it also kind of at a higher level it provides for intuition and we will talk about that a little later.

What is it that we are talking about when we are talking about intuition and a dictionary meaning would be something that you do instinctively without thinking or conscious reasoning? This is something which can be considered a heuristic shortcut that the brain opts for when analytical thinking is something which is maybe not really possible, you are seeing 100 cars with 100 specs and at the end of the day you are confused.

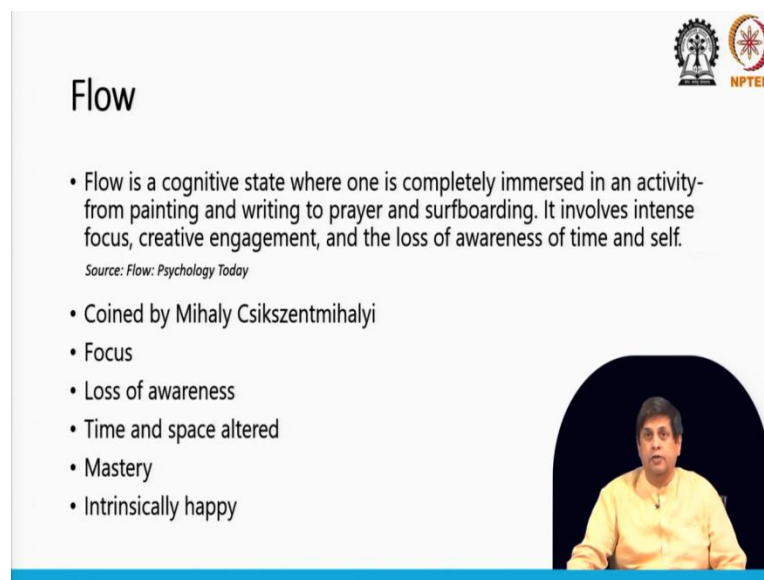
You say that, I got my gut feeling I will choose this particular car and I will buy it, that is where this kind of a thing happens. Spontaneous natural, non-cognitive these are the associations that we have in the context of intuition what is the relevance of intuition. Very often in the context of generating new ideas. Ideas are generated not by the process of analytical, systematic thinking but by just the opposite of it.

By something which can be gut feeling intuition and so the moment we move into the realm of creativity, you find that the analytical aspect of things somehow does not fit in very meaningfully as opposed to the intuitive component and that's why we are talking about intuition. It gets linked to the other concept that we are going to take up which is the flow state to effortless ease and when you do that and when you lean on your intuitive skills and it starts giving you success over a period of time you start enjoying it.

And you see that whether we take decisions which are very analytically, systematically taken or with gut feeling you will find that the probability of success and failure might in some instances be very similar not in all contexts. For instance, the choice of a partner in life the choice of a career decision, choice of making friends, choice of going, trusting somebody or not trusting somebody very often these things require us to trust our gut.

And if you do not have the habit of trusting our gut, if you have not developed that skill then it affects us both in terms of our creativity as well as in the context of taking critical decisions in life where intuition is very relevant.

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The slide is titled "Flow" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. The main content is a bulleted list of characteristics of flow, with a source citation and a video inset of a speaker in the bottom right corner.

Flow

- Flow is a cognitive state where one is completely immersed in an activity- from painting and writing to prayer and surfing. It involves intense focus, creative engagement, and the loss of awareness of time and self.

Source: Flow: Psychology Today

- Coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- Focus
- Loss of awareness
- Time and space altered
- Mastery
- Intrinsically happy



You see that the last concept that we will take up here before we try to bring them all together is the concept of flow. Flow has a wide range of connotations but from a psychological perspective it is a cognitive state where one is completely immersed in an activity painting, writing to prayer and surfing generally has been emphasized in the context of the



humanities, in context of arts, in the context of games, in the context of decisions, light decisions and work.

But you see that it is very intrinsically linked to the concept of work, because if in your workplace, there are moments of flow then your work life is very meaningful. Imagine in your adult life what is the amount of time you spent working for get out at life, even in your student would have what is the amount of time you do you spend working, which is studying roughly one third of your entire life is work is a very important component of our life.

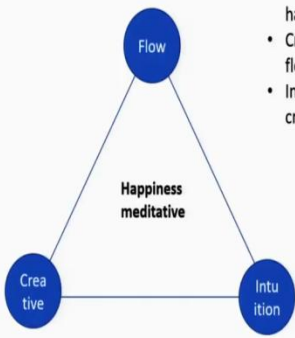
At least one third is maybe sleep and the other one third is doing other things in life. But when work is so significant, do we really enjoy the work that we are doing? Can we get into the work where we totally forget everything? Now, if you are able to do that, you find that this one third critical component of our life can be made more happy. So this concept, which has been brought in by Csikszentmihalyi, rather difficult to pronounce name says that flow is a state of focus.

And so focussed that you forget about yourself, you forget about time and place, do not remember, you suddenly feel that way it was just felt like 2 minutes, but 2 hours have passed. But they are also linked with a sense of mastery, where you are doing something which you are good at and there is new challenge which makes the work all the more exciting and you have the confidence that you are able to handle the challenge and it is self-rewarding. It is intrinsically happy, so, we know that flow is very relevant and flow very often is linked to the element of creativity the process of creativity and not the product of creativity.


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Relationship



- Flow – intrinsically happy – autotelic, happy with work
- Creativity – mastery, control, leading to flow
- Intuitive – natural, effortless, leading to creativity, creating conditions for flow



So, if we start looking at the relationship amongst these three, we have flow, we have creativity, we have intuition. Flow is a state which is intrinsically happy with something which is known as autotelic activity itself rewarding activity. So, imagine a place or a state of work which you enjoy brings him happiness. Flow is related to creativity, because the element of mastery, which is so very important in flow, is also a significant component in the context of creativity, ability to control lead to flow state.

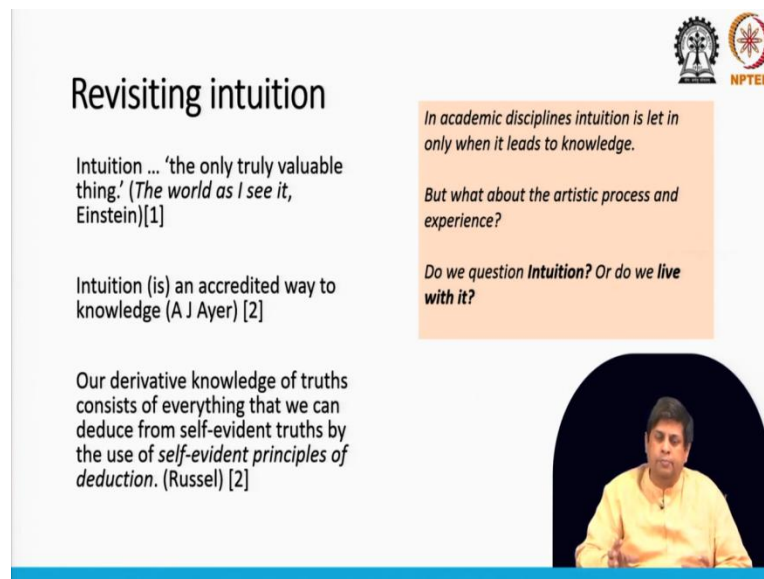
Because there are processes which are creative the outcome might be creative, but there are processes which are creative where you are innovating and that is where intuition comes in because one of the significant components of intuition happens to be improvisations as well, we will talk a little more about it as we go ahead. Intuitive state is a natural, effortless, leading to creativity, creating conditions for flow.

So you find the distinct concepts are very closely linked with one and another and they lead to happiness and they have significance in the context of one of the I would say blissful states, I mean permit if we are permitted to make categorization long term contemplative state which is very good for our well-being a meditative state. The combination of these 3 are very significant for those.

Because you see that flow happens when we have mastery and control flows and flow states are states which by themselves are meditative states, contemplative states, 4 states where we forget our self, forget our own identity and when we have stopped thinking, we have stopped

reasoning, the intuitive brain kicks in and very often we are told that it is in the intuitive state that we achieve wisdom, we achieve insights and this happens for science as well.

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The slide features the title "Revisiting intuition" at the top left. In the top right corner, there are logos for IIT Bombay and NPTEL. The main text on the slide includes three paragraphs: "Intuition ... 'the only truly valuable thing.' (The world as I see it, Einstein)[1]", "Intuition (is) an accredited way to knowledge (A J Ayer) [2]", and "Our derivative knowledge of truths consists of everything that we can deduce from self-evident truths by the use of self-evident principles of deduction. (Russel) [2]". An orange callout box on the right contains the text: "In academic disciplines intuition is let in only when it leads to knowledge. But what about the artistic process and experience? Do we question Intuition? Or do we live with it?". In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a yellow shirt speaking.


So, now we revisit the concepts again so, we are revisiting the concept of intuition and if you are looking at some of the leading analytical thinkers and scientific thinkers, they emphasize intuition. For Einstein, intuition is the most important thing truly valuable thing for the analytical fields of A J Ayer it is a way of knowledge. So, there are different ways of knowing and from knowledge to wisdom probably that.

And Russell, the very eminent philosopher of mathematics is that the focus on the concept of the self-evident, which is not arrived at through analytical thinking, but through intuitive thinking and as I told you historically academics emphasizes non-intuitive thinking and this opens up this question that, and that is the reason I have taken 2 sessions on this, that intuitive thinking intuitive practices are probably very important.


And because of their so great significance in the context of happiness and in the context of academics, because I am talking to either academicians or people who are in in the context of education. This is something which can make our reading, studying education, as well as research, happy the workplace happy so that is the context within which I am trying to formulate this.

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Intuition: all pervasive




- Buddhist: Progression: Study born discernment (learning/knowledge) – meditative concentration (discipline) – contemplation born discernment (intuition) (*Samadhi*)
- Yoga: *dharana, dhyana, samadhi – jnana* (intuition)



'a man, undoubtedly wise and a philosopher and intelligent . . . he studies a single blade of grass. But this blade of grass leads him to draw all the plants – then the seasons, the broad features of landscapes, finally animals, and then the human figure', [he wrote]

Letter to Theo: Van Gogh Museum




If you are looking at some of the same contemplative traditions, they give discrete degree of significance to the concept of intuition. If you are looking at the Hindu tradition of the yoga tradition, *dharana, dhyana, samadhi*, finally culminating in *jnana* and in *jnana*, it is no longer analytical, logical knowledge of things but intuitive knowledge of things in the Buddhist tradition, also, we talk about it.


When we are talking about *samadhi*, so related to the systems we had earlier and see how they also get connected to contemplative practices and hence how they are relevant and if you are looking at one of the beautiful letters of the Van Gogh to his brother, you find a similar thing happening over here. He says that a man undoubtedly wise and a philosopher intelligent, he studies a single blade of grass.

But this blade of grass leads him to draw all the plants, then the seasons, the broad features of the landscape, finally animals and then human beings. You practice something where you reach a state of unthinking and it is in that state that the intuitive component culminates.


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- The perceiver (Abhinavagupta)
- Disinterested, sympathetic attention – an experience of enjoyment that is freed from I and samsara, cause and effect, practical interest



- The artist /(sic) creator (Pt Ajoy Chakravarti)
 - Discovery
 - Visualization
 - Realization
 - Reconstruction



In our creative tradition Abhinavagupta talks about the experience, whether it is the creative experience of doing something or the creative experience of perceiving something, enjoying something where you are disinterested in the sense that the self is no longer identifiable. You are so very much immersed in the work either as a perceiver of that work or as the doer of the work, that you cannot differentiate yourself from the work, your identity is lost there.

And when we talk about the eminent musician, Padmahusen, Pt Ajoy Cakravarthi in his pedagogy also so we discovered, we find that he talks about these elements of discovery visualization realization and reconstruction and here I will bring in one relevant concept which have not mention here in words, which is the concept of improvisation, because when we are talking about creativity, creativity involves open-ended thinking, creativity also involves the ability of making things out of nothing just like that, impromptu.

That is a very important aspect of creativity and is linked to workplace creativity and that is why we are discussing it here that's the significance. Why? Because the ability to improvise, which is a very creative process, the ability to think out of the box is something which is very relevant in places where we are in a fixed or in workplace contexts, which are ever changing where new challenges are coming up.

And they are linked to a very key concept that I will take up later in the next lesson, which is problem solving because these lessons are as I told you related to our life as well as to our workplace and when we are talking about workplace context, whether it is academics, studies,

or going and working somewhere, there are challenges and his ability to solve the challenges on the go, is improvisation, a very interesting component of Hindustani, classical music.

And something which is embedded in the concept of flow the mastery, where anything that is happening you feel that you are up to navigating negotiating it and being able to handle it.

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Flow: Revisited

- Clear goal
- Immediate feedback
- Match – skill and challenge
- *Knowing what to do*
- *Knowing how to do it*
- *Knowing how well one is doing*
- *Knowing where to go (if navigation is involved)*
- *High perceived challenges*
- *High perceived skills*
- *Freedom from distractions*

Schaffer O (2013), *Crafting Fun User Experiences. A Method to Facilitate Flow*, Human Factors International

Now let us revisit flow and find out how again it is linked. You have a clear goal, you have an immediate feedback this is very relevant you are able to get better feedback immediately and you have the matching skills and are you enjoying the challenge to accept it. So you have if you are looking at a matrix of emotions, that you have high level of skill levels, high level of challenge, high level of arousal, control and if you are looking at the yellow section that gives rise to a sense of flow.

If there is anxiety, if there is relaxation, worry, apathy, boredom, you do not get into flow. So if you are looking at the two, the orange and the light green section you find that arousal and control, the capability to handle things are linked to the concept of flow and something which is there at the background is positive emotions. So, that is how flow is relevant and that is how I would after having connected it with creativity link it here.

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What next?

- Creativity: insights from our day to day lives
- Is creativity the privilege of only a few?



Flow can be considered as a subsection of the creative process. It is a state of being creative, being losing yourself in the process of being creative and hence we can boldly say that being creative is in itself a default state of happiness. Having said that, what is it that we are going to focus on next, we are going to focus on creativity insights from our day to day lives and that will not come as a lecture, I will be talking to some of my junior friends, some of the scholars over here.

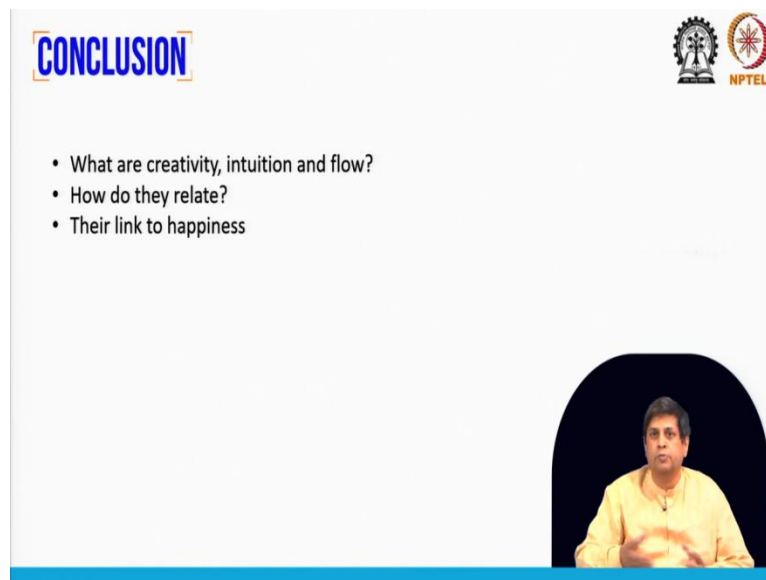
And their insights will be very relatable to your insights about these concepts and that will be attached as an appendix during the week that you are going to view this and you will be able to relate to that. So that is one of the things and we will take up a much more important concept because there is a feeling that creativity is something which is exclusive to a group of people, they are geniuses, they are exceptional, they are creative not everybody can be creative.

Now my feeling is that this is a myth. My experience is that creativity is very often very narrowly defined. We can be creative, even involving very small things the small things that we enjoy we do in our own different ways starting from arranging your drawing room or even arranging your table scribbling something writing sort essay or a short answer that you enjoyed writing a paper or designing research or just planning out your holidays or cooking food.

Every process, every small act can be creative even taking a more daily morning walk, in each of these cases there is potential for creativity and it is probably a myth to say that we

cannot be creative. So, the focus of this session has been on emphasizing the relevance and the significance of creativity and the focus in the next session will be to ask this question, can we be creative with special focus on the concept of problem solving.

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The slide features the word "CONCLUSION" in a blue, outlined font at the top left. 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 three items:

- What are creativity, intuition and flow?
- How do they relate?
- Their link to happiness

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man in a yellow shirt speaking. The slide has a blue footer bar.

So to sum up, we have talked about the relationship we have talked about creativity, intuition and flow. We have talked about how they are related and I hope that we have been able to establish discrete degree of significance in the context of happiness. Creativity is a large concept and when we talk about it, we just do not talk about the product, we must emphasize the process itself, which is so very satisfying and fulfilling.

If we can make our very act of living creative then we can be happier. So you see that it that sense that this concept is a very large concept this creativity is not just about some products, getting applause, appreciation from somebody creating doing small things, getting involved in the process and self-appreciation. Take appreciating taking cognizance to the small acts which are innovative and new.

That is the key or that is one of the keys to a meaningful and happy life and I hope that to a certain extent we will be convinced that we need to move into the direction of intuitive thinking as opposed to cognitively logically oriented thinking that we have been taught so far.

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Thank you very much, friends. In the next session we will take up the relationship between creativity and problem solving. Thank you.