

**The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing**  
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**Lecture - 06**  
**Basic Issues**

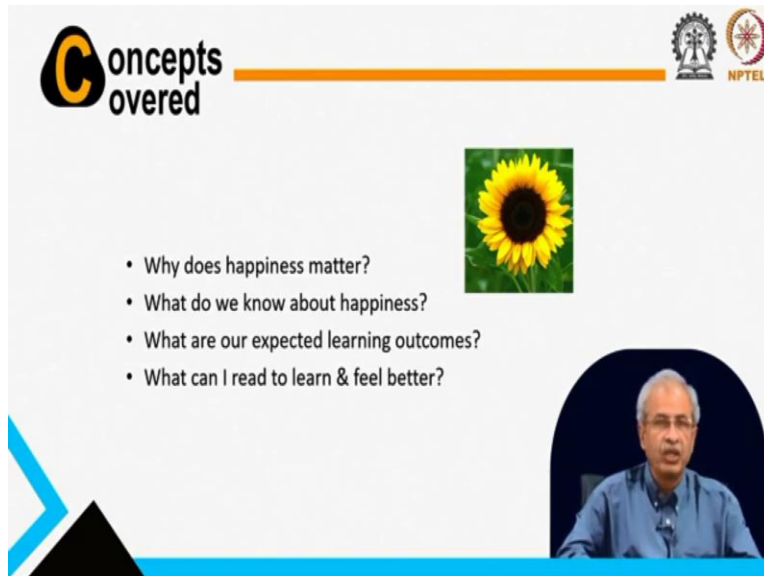
Welcome everybody, we are here to talk about the science of happiness and well-being and the very term seems incompatible and oxymoronic, in one hand it is science and in other hand it is happiness. A lot of people believe that well happiness is simply a feeling and it cannot be a science and even if it is science, it should be called as a pseudoscience. So, our discussion today would be to let you know what are the basic issues for which the status of this so-called feeling called happiness has been raised to a concept of science of happiness and well-being.

That is the primary focus of today's talk but before we go into a detail of it, we also need to understand that happiness is just not the only emotion that we have in hand like fundamental colours red, green, yellow, blue we have got fundamental emotions as well. In fact, there is a functional architecture of the brain in which all emotions have their locus. These emotions are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust.

And to speak you very frankly each of these emotions have its role in our day-to-day life. In fact, even if we do not have happiness will still survive with fear and anger because fight and flight are considered to be fundamental to human existence. We must learn how to flee or how to fight. Therefore, every emotion that we have in hand are having some survival value and happiness of course is always having so.



So, when we talk about science of happiness let us not forget that this is the only emotion and this emotion is the most emotion most important emotion for all of us. Given this notion what I am going to talk to you today let us first discuss about it.

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**C**oncepts covered

- Why does happiness matter?
- What do we know about happiness?
- What are our expected learning outcomes?
- What can I read to learn & feel better?



The slide features a logo with a large 'C' and the text 'oncepts covered'. To the right are the logos of IIT Bombay and NPTEL. A list of four bullet points is centered on the slide. A sunflower image is positioned to the right of the list. A video inset in the bottom right corner shows a man with glasses speaking.

I have some questions in hand that is, why does happiness matter? I mean if I am not happy what will happen to me. A lot of people are not happy what happens to them as well so it is a question, so when we try to understand science of happiness it must be clear in our head that why does this matter. And then the question about we all look for happiness but what we know about happiness is it a very mysterious emotion or is it something about which we all know.

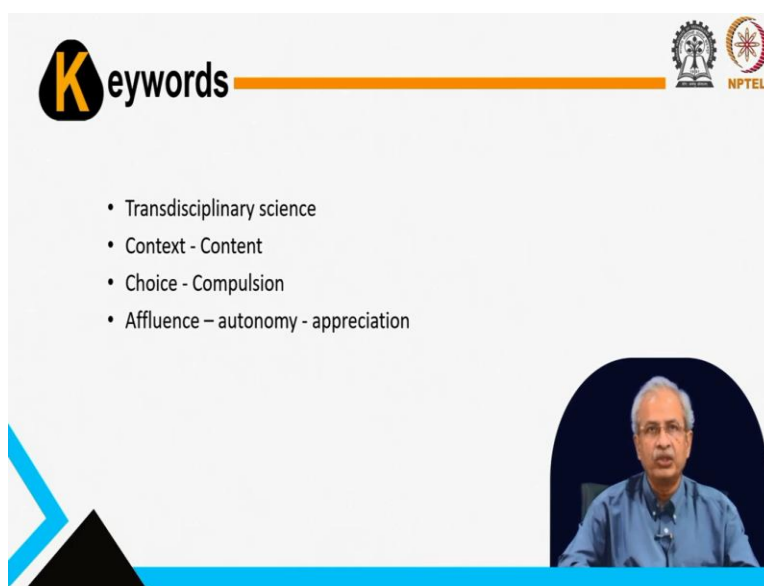
Our grandmas our mothers parents everybody has been talking to us be happy be happy and be happy. Without really realizing what is the science behind it because as long it is not a science probably we will not be able to replicate the principles of happiness. So, the effort here is to understand what are the principles behind happiness, what are the myths behind it and what are the questions that remain unanswered in following talks we will be talking about it.

Then question is even if we learn about happiness and the basic issues related to it how does it help me in which way, I am going to be benefited why one should read and learn about happiness. And then of course finally I will be talking about what are the sources through which I can read and feel better. We will talk about all this but before we go into the next slide let us clarify for all of you that happiness is a science where we try to develop more insight, awareness and orientation towards life.

Rather than just try to be peaceful, comfortable and having some pleasurable experiences. We believe that happiness is a process, never a target, it is a journey, never a destination. Therefore, our effort here would be to let you know about the process behind it instead of just helping you try to achieve a target and finally of course as I said we all want to be happy, we want to feel better but probably will never be able to feel better as long we try to be happy for ourselves only.

If we try to make others or create happiness for others probably will remain amongst the ambience of happy people and in the process, we can have perpetual happiness.

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The slide features a large 'K' in a black circle followed by the word 'eywords' in a bold, sans-serif font. An orange horizontal line extends from the 'K'. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, a bulleted list contains the following items:

- Transdisciplinary science
- Context - Content
- Choice - Compulsion
- Affluence – autonomy - appreciation

In the bottom right corner, there is a circular video inset showing a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, speaking. The slide has a light blue background with a dark blue and white geometric shape in the bottom left corner.

With this idea and notion, you need to be aware of some keywords that we are going to make use of. That is happiness we consider is a transdisciplinary science and when I talk about transdisciplinarity let us remember that it does not depend on one science. Lot of people believe that it is only part of social science but actually all kinds of sciences take advantage of it and in particular neuroscience, computational science, behavioural science and social science in general take lot of advantage from it.

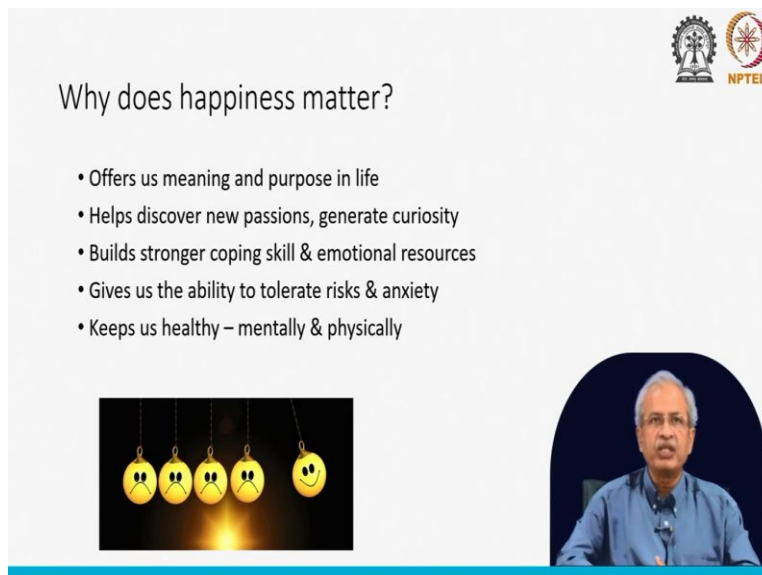
We also take advantage of the formal sciences which is a mathematical sciences where we try to develop a model for each and every theory that we propose. So, transdisciplinary means where we not only share the findings of two studies or two disciplines or three disciplines, we not only share

the methodologies of multiple disciplines, we actually create a new discipline. Therefore, transdisciplinarity is so important.

And in happiness studies we also talk about context and content we will talk about it later on as well. But let me clarify at this point that it is not a content based study, it is a context-based study, therefore it would be very easy for you to amalgamate your thought along with your experience. So, it is more context dependent. A lot of people also believe that probably we need to be happy and this becomes a very compulsive feature, we say that happiness is a choice.

So, the words like choice and compulsion will repeatedly come to your our discussions as well. Finally, there are three technical terms we will talk and will try to operationalize the concept through affluence, autonomy and appreciation will follow gradually.

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The slide is titled "Why does happiness matter?" and features a list of five bullet points. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. At the bottom left, there is an illustration of five yellow smiley face emojis hanging from strings, with the one on the right being the only one that is smiling. At the bottom right, there is a video inset showing a man with grey hair and a blue shirt speaking.

Why does happiness matter?

- Offers us meaning and purpose in life
- Helps discover new passions, generate curiosity
- Builds stronger coping skill & emotional resources
- Gives us the ability to tolerate risks & anxiety
- Keeps us healthy – mentally & physically

So, our first question, why does happiness matter? As I said that happiness offers some kind of meaning why I should live, what is the purpose of life, what is that I want to achieve in my span of experience or life. It actually helps in that way and not only that it gives us the curiosity, new passion, new ideas, new images, new experiences. So, anything that novel that attracts our attention.

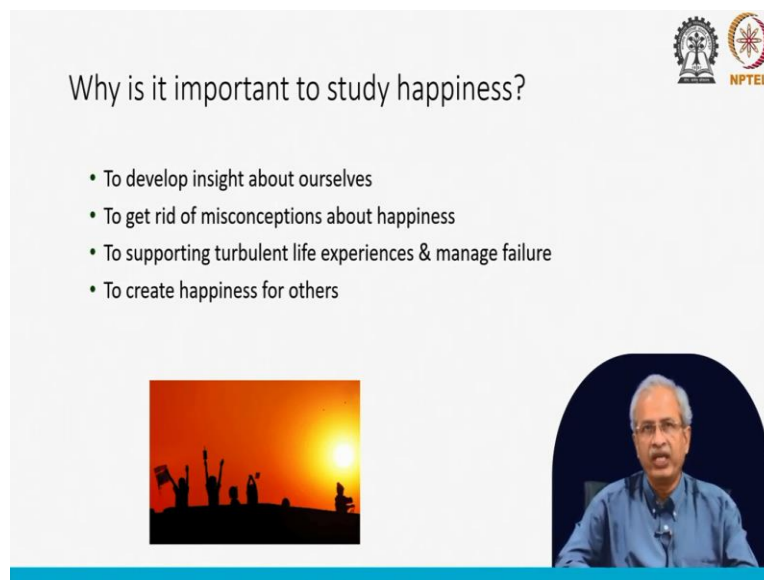
So, if you study happiness, you would be able to generate new curiosity about life, new curiosity about environment and new curiosity about others. Therefore, it is so important for us. And when you develop new curiosity, you try to meet new sets of people and in the process, you learn how to make use of your emotional resources, how to cope with the new people whom you have never met and at the process you develop a very strong coping skill.

This will help you get rid of the risk of meeting people, the anxiety that you develop and you would be able to tolerate the situations that you face in everyday life in a better way. So, it keeps us very healthy mentally and physically.

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Why is it important to study happiness?

- To develop insight about ourselves
- To get rid of misconceptions about happiness
- To supporting turbulent life experiences & manage failure
- To create happiness for others



Now why it is so important to study happiness? First of all, thus far we have just talked about why does it matter but if I want to study it scientifically why, what is the reason behind it. The first of course as I just mentioned that idea is to develop more insight about ourselves more often, we try to understand others, less often we try to understand ourselves, we believe that understanding others is very easy yes, it is easy as long you do not understand yourself.

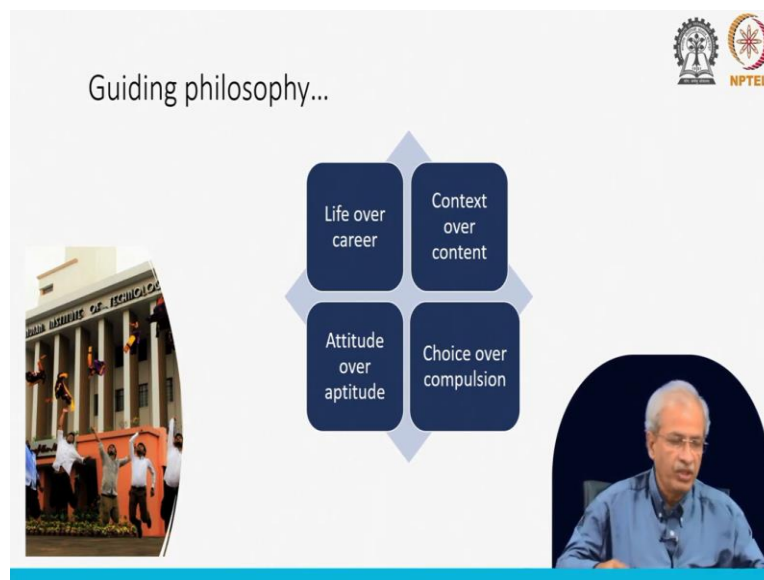
When you try to understand yourself, you find it very difficult. So, the study of happiness actually helps you learn better insight. So, insight awareness reorientation is something which you will get through this study. Secondly, lot of us are unhappy simply because we have lot of misconceptions as well. More often, I have found that if you can get rid of the misconceptions about life if you get

rid of misconceptions about carrier, about people, about certain stereotype, certain prejudices certain notions which are not verified then you become unhappy.

So, it is very important for all of us to understand what are the misconceptions and how to get rid of it we will talk about it and then comes the life experience its truly difficult to have a happy life all through. We will have some failures, we will have difficulties, will have stresses and these turbulent life experiences need to be supported, need to be adjusted, need to be adaptive and the failures that we get how best we can get back?

How best we can bounce back with our sense of resilience? We will actually be taken care of in this study. So, the final aim is just not to be happy, is to create happiness for others.

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As I said that the guiding philosophy behind happiness studies has got four fundamental philosophies, one is that well life and career more often we confuse between life and career. We believe that probably carrier is everything and once carrier is built life is automatically built that is not true probably because carrier is within life, life is not within carrier. So, life is much bigger and carrier actually is also important but not as big as life is all about.

Therefore, in this course we will talk more about life and less about a carrier of course it can be a career too. Then of course we just talked about context and content that this is one course where

we do not follow a very strict content, of course for the purpose of examination and appraisal we need to follow certain content. But more importantly we have to follow a context and that context is your life experience.

We believe that context content and intent when they come together, we get the best of our experience which we remember lifelong. The third specialty about this course is about attitude and aptitude. More often we believe that if we have got the aptitude probably, we can achieve everything. We tell that aptitude is important but attitude is probably even more important because attitude creates a mindset either to meet somebody, either to face stress, either to surmount difficulty or either to achieve a greater height.

For everything you require a mindset mind is very important, all of us have got good mind but what is more important is our mindset as well. The template for developing growing and progressing we require in good attitude. So, attitude we would give you more importance over aptitude in this study course and finally choice over compulsion. Now as I said if you compel yourself to be happy probably you will never be happy.

If you compel yourself to forget a negative event probably you will remember it more often. Therefore, choice is equally important and we believe that if you have got the choice for happiness, you would be able to actually experience the myriad of all emotions. Because as I said every emotion is important happy, sad, fear, anger, surprise, disgust not that happiness is only important.

If all other emotions are not there probably will not understand what happiness is all about. Therefore, happiness must be a choice so in this study or in this course we will refer more about the choice.

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## Great Institutions...

*in pursuit of happiness*

- Yale University: *Psychology & the Good Life* - getting scientific strategies to be happy
- McGill University: *Lessons of community & compassion* - Building social connectedness through policy & program
- Stanford University: *Designing life: Life design Lab* - Adding 'life' to the college experience
- University of Berkeley: *Strong social ties, greater good*
- Harvard University: *Life-long happiness*
- University of Pennsylvania: *Helplessness to Hope*



There are many institutions actually which are now pursuing happiness a lot of people earlier used to believe that it is only the hard sciences where great institutions are really trying to excel. But if you see university like Yale, McGill, Stanford, Berkeley, Harvard, Pennsylvania all great institutions mostly in US, McGill of course in Canada you will find they all have started running happiness program with a particular purpose.

The purpose is to build carrier because building a carrier requires mental aperture to be open. And that mental aperture depends how much your aperture would open depends on your experiences how best you experience a particular subject matter. If the experience is poor your mental aperture will definitely go down. Therefore, most of these universities have started having some kind of course.

Yale university started psychology and good life, how what are the scientific strategies to be happy. McGill university is doing it for the community, they are doing happiness research through policy and program, they are trying to develop betweenness and social connectedness amongst people. Stanford university have developed a life design lab. They are trying to add life to college students.

Because the very meaning of life is not very clear to newcomers who are into the career building system like colleges, schools or maybe in big universities. Berkeley university depends I mean happiness course they try to underscore strong social ties and for greater good what we can offer.




Basically, they are trying to create happiness for others, the greater good has become more important than our personal good.

So, Berkeley university has been trying for that. Harvard university talks about lifelong happiness in fact Harvard university has started undertaking a research on happiness since 1938 and it is still continuing over several decades. And if you are interested you can actually read about this research which is going for last 8 or 9 decades and they have a finding and the finding they have found that it is the connectedness is the relationship which matters for happiness.



And finally, university of Pennsylvania they are also talking about how we can reach to hope from a sense of helplessness.

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What makes us happy...?

- affluence in bio-psycho-social resource that determine the quality of living & prosperity
- autonomy in freedom to choose or in meaningful physical & mental engagements
- appreciation for life-as-a-whole that determine life satisfaction [subjective well-being]



Well, there are three major constituents of happiness, we will talk about and in the keywords section we said about affluence, autonomy and appreciation. Lot of people believe that probably affluence gives you all the happiness you have got biological resource means you are I mean strongly built psychological resource that you have got a lot of stamina, you have got social resource that, you have got lot of support around you.

So, if you have got everything, then your quality of life improves and you will develop and prosper which we call affluence. So, affluence is one facet of happiness. The second facet of happiness is


autonomy, by autonomy we mean that you have got everything but you do not have the freedom to use it meaningfully. That is, you have got a lot of money but you cannot use it or you have got a good health but you cannot make use of your health anywhere.

Or you have got a lot of psychological stamina but you do not have the resilience. So, autonomy is something that is where you get the freedom to whatever resource you do have. So, that is the second pillar. And the third pillar is appreciation that someone has to appreciate the life as a whole because life may be having, a lot of difficulties, a lot of stress, lot of trauma it must be there because we always say pain is inevitable but suffering is your personal choice.

Therefore, if someone does not have anything either resource or autonomy but still appreciate life, I call it we call it appreciation. So, it is called subjective well-being as well, so life has a whole you decide how happy you are. You may not have very little you may have very little in life but ultimately when I ask you this question how happy you are you say no life is good, I think God has blessed me with a good life.


So, as long these pillars are not with us probably will not be able to understand what happiness is all about.

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### Happiness: an unknown territory

- **Science or Practice:** Does science explain happiness?
- **Genotype or Phenotype:** Do we have a gene for happiness?
- **Process or Outcome:** When do we feel happy?
- **Thinking or Blinking:** Is it a feeling or cognition?
- **Mind or Mindset:** What sort of world is this?



Question is when we enter into the science of it thus far whatever we have discussed is the philosophy behind it. When we try to understand the science behind it, it appears to be an unknown territory. People ask this question, is it a science or a practice? Does science explain happiness that is the question? So, a lot of people say that probably it is a pseudoscience because you cannot replicate all principles of science in laboratory.

Therefore, people say that yes, it is both a science as well as a practice because there are scientific explanations for every behaviour that we have. Anything that enter into my mind find an expression in our behaviour. If it is a happy thought enter into my mind it will find a different expression. If I have a unhappy experience in my life it will find a different experience or expression, so we tell the science as well as the practice about it.

Then the question comes whether is genotype or phenotype? Do we have a gene for happiness or there is no such gene, it is just a ordinary magic that is some people are happy because of their life experience and some people are not happy. This is a very scientific question and in one of our talks, we will talk about the biology of belief where we will talk how far genes and gene expression depends on your state of mind.


Then the question comes whether it is a process or an outcome? If it is a process then we have to think it differently. If it is just an outcome then we have to think it differently because if it is an outcome then you have to fix the target the moment you understand or get your target your outcome is obtained are you happy in that process probably not. Therefore, it is very important that our outcome or the target that we set keeps on changing in life.

So, at what point we are happy? Is it a moment where we are happy or is it the memory where we are happy? If it is a moment, it is a outcome orientation, if it is a memory then it is a process. So, we debate about process and outcome. Then we debate about the thinking and blinking that is, is it a reasoning I can use my cognitive or aptitude power to think differently in order to be happy or is just a blinking, that is it's just an intuition.

Some people are intuitively happy and they find some kind of happiness without applying any logic or cognition behind it probably it is a mix of both. But we have to debate about it because science is all about debating argument not just of agreement. And finally, the question comes, whether it is a mind or a mindset? Some people believe that this world is a hostile world, some people believe that this world is a beautiful world, right from the onset of their experiences.



The idea is that what is your primal belief? If your primal belief is that this world is hostile people are around bad then in such case you will call it as a mindset issue. If some people believe that no despite all these difficulties this world is a good world then you have a different mindset. So, do we bank exclusively on mind or do we bank exclusively on the mindset? That is also a question about happiness.

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### Conclusions ...

- Insight (for self) & awareness (about others)
- Sustain (positive feeling) & adapt (to stressful experience)
- Between-ness (with interpersonal skill) & within-ness (to develop wisdom)
- Enable (the weak) & evolve (with the sense of satisfaction)



In conclusion we have to discuss about the achievements that we can make in this process. We can develop insight for ourselves and we can develop awareness about others, both. They actually can coexist within your happy life. So, insight for self, awareness about others gives us special capacity. Most of us who believe that happiness is just a moment, we believe that no you can sustain it, you can sustain your positive feeling.

You can be happy for longer period and if there is no happiness you should be able to adapt, both are part of your happiness. So, sustenance and adaptation to stressful experience it will give you

both. The third thing is about your betweenness versus within-ness, your interpersonal skill versus the skill to develop wisdom because wisdom comes from understanding self. And interpersonal skill develops understanding others.

The study of happiness will actually help you gain both and of course finally through this you would be able to enable the weak because your job is to create happiness for others by enabling the weak. And evolve with the sense of satisfaction and you would like to live among the happy people because the ambience of the happy people will make you perpetually happy.

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**REFERENCES**

**The Science of Happiness**  
DANIEL GILBERT  
How is happiness generated in our brains?  
What biological purpose it serves?

**Stumbling on Happiness**  
DANIEL GILBERT  
Why do we imagine future poorly?  
Is there a healthy psychological immune system?

**THE HOW OF HAPPINESS**  
Sonja Lyubomirsky  
How to attain real & lasting experience?  
What are the secrets of happiness?

**Flourish**  
MARTIN E.P. SELIGMAN  
What are the core components of well-being?  
Is there a Model of Happiness (PERMA)?

**NPTEL**

So, with all these advantages of this course I would suggest you to go for certain books which are very important for the understanding of happiness. These books are of course having certain specific issues but I would strongly recommend you to get any one of these books in order to understand what happiness is all about. The most important book probably I would recommend flourish by Martin Seligman from university of Pennsylvania, he is considered to be the father of positive psychology or happiness research.

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Ted Talks: Happiness

- Dan Gilbert:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_gilbert\\_asks\\_why\\_are\\_we\\_happy?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy?language=en)
- Robert Waldinger:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/robert\\_waldinger\\_what\\_makes\\_a\\_good\\_life\\_lessons\\_from\\_the\\_longest\\_study\\_on\\_happiness?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness?language=en)
- Shaun anchor:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en)
- Emily E Smith:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/emily\\_esfahani\\_smith\\_there\\_s\\_more\\_to\\_life\\_than\\_being\\_happy?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/emily_esfahani_smith_there_s_more_to_life_than_being_happy?language=en)



There are certain ted talks as well you can follow this ted talks as well whenever you feel like that will give you an idea about the special features. Each one of these authors have tried to highlight in their understanding of happiness. Thank you.