TIP Northwest 2021

Introduction to Psychology
APA IPI Tags: Theme 3
Content Area Tags: Biopsychosocial; happiness; subjective well-being (SWB); internal and external influences
Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Biopsychosocial Aspects of Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Activity Instructions

Prior to this activity, assign the Noba Project reading on Happiness: The Science of Subjective Well-Being by Edward Deiner of the University of Utah and University of Virginia

- Instruct students to pay particular attention to the table of internal and external causes on subjective well-being.

On the day planned for the activity:

- 5 minutes (for first 3 bullet points): Have students get into pairs or small groups (no more than 4)
- Hand out a copy of the interna/external influences on happiness table from the article *(included in this document as a separate page)*
- Have each group choose someone with readable writing to write down their final work (if doing this for marks, have them add the first and last names of the group members), but each member of the group is to take notes and keep track of details of the discussion and decisions the group makes
- 15 minutes: The group's task is to create a brief, fictional biography of an individual who either has or does not have sufficient internal and external factors to have a sense of high subjective well-being.
  - The biography is to be specific about the presence or absence of each of the influences and how they affect their individual.
  - Consider temperament, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education in relation to the influences
  - Also identify what influences are biological, psychological, or social
- 10 minutes (this will depend on number of groups). Create 3 columns on the board (biological, social, psychological) and have groups share their biographies; have one group member come and write on the board the biological, social, and psychological influences they incorporated into their biography
- 15 minutes: Hold a class discussion on "aha" moments, differences in biographies, subjective well-being, and how individuals in class might use the learning to increase their own SWB

Student Learning Objectives

By completing this assignment, you will be able to…

- Explain at least two internal influences and two external influences on subjective well-being
- Use examples to illustrate how different influences may or may not affect an individual's SWB
- Critically reflect upon how you might increase your own subjective well-being

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Post-Activity Focus (for Instructors Only)

1. Ask students to include some of the outcomes of high subjective well-being introduced in the Noba Project reading and then some of the potential outcomes of low subjective well-being.
2. Ask students to try incorporate at least one of the strategies in their own life, and later in the week, or in the next week, check in to see of students have been noting differences in their subjective well-being/happiness

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Credit to: Regan A. R. Gurung, Adrian Andelin

Activity Notes (for Instructors Only)

- Likely works better with small to medium-sized classes; if you have a larger class, you would simply select random groups to share their biographies
- Works with synchronous or asynchronous classes
    - Can be done live, in person
    - Can do it online synchronously through the use of breakout rooms
    - Asynchronously – this would need to be tweaked – you could have students read the Noba article and reflect upon their own life (external and internal factors present/absent in their life that influences their subjective well-being, then have them choose one to implement for a week and reflect on the impact)

Table of internal and external influences on subjective well-being/happiness. Modified from the Noba Project and it's included information from Deiner, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Lyubomirsky, 2013; Myers, 1992

Internal Factors Top-down Influences	**Description**
Inborn temperament	Studies of monozygotic (identical) twins raised apart indicate that our genes influence our happiness. Even when raised apart, identical twins tend to be similar in their levels of subjective well-being.
personality and temperament	Personality is partly inborn and partly learned, and it influences our happiness. For example: extroverts tend to have more "positive" feelings. Neurotics tend to have more "negative" feelings.
outlook	People may develop habits of noticing "good" thinking in life and interpreting ambiguous events in "positive" ways. Other people develop "negative" mental habits, leading to more unhappiness. Our culture may also influence whether we take an optimistic or pessimistic view of life.
resilience	Happy individuals tend to bounce back more quickly after losses and "negative" events.
External Factors Bottom-Up Influences	**Description**
sufficient material resources	People have enough money to meet their basic needs and fulfill their major goals.
sufficient social resources	People differ in their need for social contact, but we all tend to need supportive and trusted others: family, a friend, or a partner, or sometimes all three. We need other people to lead a fulfilled life.
desirable society	Our own efforts and circumstances influence our happiness, but so does the society in which we live. A society of hunger, war, conflict, and corruptions is much less happy then one with material resources, high levels of trust and cooperation, and people who want to help each other.

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