

Public Abstract

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Title:The role of intentions in the pursuit of happiness

Can people purposefully and intentionally become happier by engaging in the so-called "happiness interventions"? Although Schooler, Ariely, and Lowenstein (2003) suggest that intentionally pursuing happiness is a self-defeating endeavor, the current research instead hypothesized that intentionally trying to become happier may be important to individuals' motivation towards happiness interventions. Two studies examined this hypothesis. In Study 1, participants were asked to improve their mood while listening to classical music for 10 minutes. Results show that individuals who received the "happy" music (vs. "discordant" music) and instructions to try to feel happy reported higher positive mood. Study 2 examined individuals' engagement happiness strategies over a longer period of time. In contrast to the finding in Study 1, in Study 2, having no intentions was more effective in raising happiness. Changes in happiness was mediated by increases in feelings of relatedness and autonomy. Future research directions to clarify the findings of the two studies are discussed.