

THE ROLE OF INTENTIONS IN THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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ABSTRACT

Are intentions to become happier through interventions helpful or detrimental to the pursuit of happiness? Although Schooler, Ariely, and Lowenstein (2003) suggest that intentionally pursuing happiness is a self-defeating endeavor, the current research instead predicts that conscious intentions to become happier may be important to individuals' successful engagement with happiness strategies. Study 1 examines the short-term hedonic effects of listening to music. 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 using a longitudinal design. 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 studies are discussed.