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Research Project: Draft #2

ENG112

27 November 2018

*Flourishing your Happiness and Well-Being with Gratitude*

Introduction:

I sigh loudly in disbelief. There are so many things I felt like I needed to study before my Communications exam at nine in the morning. My anxiety twists my stomach when I think of the worst outcome of the test. I value my grades but I waited until the last minute to study. I kept myself up with coffee and tears, feeling overwhelmed and distressed. I would reflect on my notes and create flash-cards for material and terms. After creating them, I go over the notes in highlighter and group them. My bed is stained from pen marks and crowded by papers. Even though I've been up all night studying the material, I still feel so anxious about it. My eyes begin to burn and I notice it is two in the morning. I decide to sleep and review my progress in the morning before class. My mother walks in my room and gives me a motivational pep-talk to get me through the day and I get ready. Then, nine rolls around and it's time for all of my studying to go to work. I nervously check off each answer and complete the assignment. After the exam, the classroom remained silent and I was still anticipating my results. Turns out, after the class reviewed the test scores, I got a 100%! I also managed to get the extra credit points achieving a 53/50. It felt amazing to accomplish and I felt relieved I got it over with and could rely on myself.

Everyone desires to live life to the fullest and find what makes life worth living. There are science-based practices and resources to explore this desire. The “Three Good Things” gratitude process is a qualitative study within a week’s span. Every day for a week you list a detailed three moments you are thankful for and then analyze the data to impact your person or well-being in a manner. A moment of gratitude can be overlooked in the moment. However, be re-evaluated and create a deeper meaning with reflection.

Thesis:

The “Three Good Things” process is effective by positively impacts a person’s life with improvement within themselves and, or on a larger scale. Recognizing gratitude personally had a positive impact on my well being because I remained positive through the experiment, felt social belonging, and achieved more accomplishments than I would’ve during a regular week. The intervention helped me focus on the positive moments and learn from my struggles. It’s proven I’ve been focused on the wrong aspects of life and things are always better than they seem.

Literary Review:

There are many aspects to self-growth and improvement that can be enhanced by using positive psychology. “*Positive psychology* is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living” (Peterson 2008). It can be used as a tool to stay optimistic and find what makes life most valuable. The main focus is to enhance and build positivity that will be beneficial to your life. According to the University Of Pennsylvania-Psychology Center, “The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.”

Positive psychology is genuinely focused on the healthier perspective of life and situations that can affect well-being, which is a “state of happiness, being pleased and content, low degrees of anguish, generally positive physical and cognitive health and attitude, or good quality of life” (Psychology Dictionary 2018). It can be related to satisfaction or happiness, but is essential to a person’s overall health. A website *familydoctors.org* stated, “People who have good emotional health are aware of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They have learned healthy ways to cope with the stress and problems that are a normal part of life. They feel good about themselves and have healthy relationships”. Having stable mental health is fundamental to life which allows people to live strong and confidently.

In addition, psychologists have found gratitude plays a major role in well-being. Gratitude can be conceptualized in various ways. But, I define gratitude as the “appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself; it is a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation” (A. Sanson 2010). Gratitude serves as positive reinforcement throughout life. It spreads positivity, boosts meaning, and builds a foundation of values.

The “Three Good Things” scientific study is an outlet to explore whether gratitude improves well-being or not. Psychiatry MMC explains, “Experiencing gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation tends to foster positive feelings, which in turn, contribute to one's overall sense of well being”. The same article also elaborates on other experiments and as well as explain the counterfactuals of the study. Although it is related to positive feelings, it does not cause that effect for all participants. Not all people are fit for the process due to their coping mechanisms. Committing to a new coping method can be difficult and stressful. Personally, I think it requires a lot of thought to accurately measure how your gratitude entries can affect your well-being.

## Findings:

In this section I will prove “three good things” positively impacted and improved my well-being by discussing these few points. Starting with doubt, the process, then how applying the “P.E.R.M.A” Model. Also, how the process helped me recognize some of the most special, simple moments that mean the most. Moments that ensure happiness or strengthen your well-being.

In the beginning, I doubted the process. I felt it was annoying to write every day. But when applying the “P.E.R.M.A” model, I was able to analyze and distinguish my gratitude moments from each other. The model is a scientific theory used in Positive Psychology and is composed of five components. Each letter represents its own meaning. P, is for positive emotion, pleasure and enjoyment. E, mainly for engagement or flow. R, meaning relationships, social belonging, and connections. M, for meaning, purpose, or fulfillment. Finally, A for accomplishments, and achievement.

That also contributed to my positive reflection process. It was required to document three moments of gratitude every day for a week and reflect on them. I was given the opportunity to improve my relationships, become more involved in activities and experience less stress. Also to improve my happiness overall by revealing the light of my week and taking away stressors that affected me more in the moment negatively.

Importantly, the “P.E.R.M.A” model can be implemented into the gratitude process to create a different perspective. It provides different lenses for viewing gratitude differently. This gave me a deeper understanding behind them. The model does this by organizing gratitude moments and defining their importance. In addition, it identifies which components were most

applicable to my journal entries. Which gave me a deeper knowledge of myself by indicating what I most value within a short span of time.

#### Conclusion:

Reflecting on my personal experience with the gratitude process I was able to recognize my weakness' and learn from them. Viewing the scene through a different lense gave me strength and confidence within myself. Even after being satisfied with my results, I still wanted to approach the process in a positive, alternative way. I used the process as a tool to realize where my actions were hurting me, which gave me positive intentions and goals to handle stressful situations in a less damaging way. I demonstrated this when I reflected on my exam gratitude journal entry. I learned from my detrimental actions after reviewing how worked up I got myself. As I passed the exam, I felt foolish for being so hard on myself. It led me to create new goals and have a positive alternative than upsetting myself.

After going through this negative experience my reflection readdressed the situation and led to self growth. Through my own experience with this exercise, I've been using my weakness' to learn and grow. Participating in a qualitative study forced me to recognize my bad habits that were damaging me and avoid them. Also, to adopt additional coping methods and value life from another perspective.

I have not attempted this process again but, I plan to for my benefit. I believe it would influence me to be thankful, optimistic and stronger. I've recommended it to many people and have learned majorly from research and personal experience. It gave me hope throughout my stressful week. Shown the values that contribute to my happiness. But most importantly, It taught me to focus on what makes life worth living.

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