



## The Science of Happiness

November 2009

*“Happiness is an emotion associated with feelings ranging from contentment and satisfaction to bliss and intense joy.”*

Over 3 decades of research have established clear links between specific emotional skills and our health, wealth and wellbeing. High levels of emotional intelligence lead to increased productivity. Happy people are more creative, solve problems better and more quickly, live longer and enjoy high levels of leadership influence. In summary, when we feel better, we perform better in all areas of our lives.

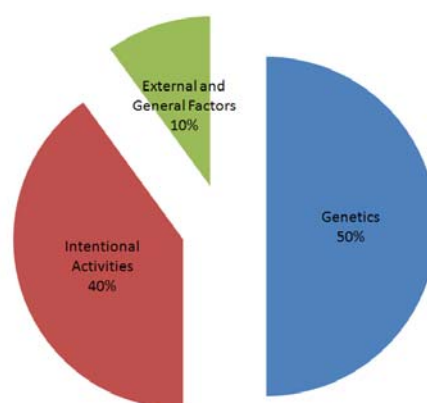


### 3 Key Discoveries

**Discovery 1: External and general factors are much less influential than we think.** These factors such as wealth, material goods etc account for no more than 10 – 15 %. This factor also includes IQ. Research suggests that neither education nor high IQ lead to greater happiness. Based on my own experience, those in high level positions often are amongst the unhappiest people, often also impacted by excess stress and depression.

**Discovery 2: 50 % of life satisfaction comes from genetic programming.** Genes can influence such traits as having a positive, easygoing personality; dealing with stress; and feeling low levels of anxiety and depression.

**Discovery 3: We can exert considerable influence on our own experience of happiness** and unhappiness by the way we live and think; how we perceive events and how we react to them. In other words we are in control of the other 40 % which means that almost half of our future happiness rests in our own hands and something we make a choice about.



Aligned with knowing that we are more in control than we think is the work of Norman Doidge (*The Brain that Changes Itself*) providing evidence that the adult brain continues to develop and change. These changes are triggered by thoughts, but even more by emotions. There, much as we can learn a new skill in sport or at work, we can train our natural aptitude for positive feelings and increase our capacity for emotional wealth.

So how does this behaviour change occur ?

**Practise, Practise and more Practise:** .You may have heard of practising a new habit for 4 – 6 weeks. There is merit behind this statement. Through this activity, we can in effect rewire our neurological pathways. In this case we are developing a series of emotional habits contributing to our happiness.



## Unconscious Potential™

**Gratitude:** Give gratitude for what you do have. Spend time each day noting three or more things for which you are grateful. Write them down, really reflect on them.

You can increase your happiness level by focusing on those areas in your life that you can control. You might choose to control your attitude, the way you choose to interpret situations, and the way you think about yourself. If you think about this, and the fact that it could be accountable for around 40% of your happiness, this could make a big difference in your life.

### ***Does happy mean you can't be sad?***

Being happy does not mean you can't experience sadness. Rather, through the experience of sadness, it makes happiness all the more meaningful.

You might even wonder whether it's possible, or OK to be happy, when there is so much suffering and injustice in the world. Happiness is natural, and it is possible to be compassionate and caring, and in tune with the sadness of the world while still experiencing happiness in your life. This awareness might even prompt you to act in a way to help improve the situation of others - an action which may actually increase your happiness.

### **Taking Action**

- What is one small step I can take today to be more in control of my happiness ?
- What is one thing I can stop doing ?
- What is one thing I can start doing ?
- How can I challenge and remind myself to practice one change for 4 – 6 weeks ?

### **Want to Know More...**

Unconscious Potential works with individuals and teams to increase levels of happiness!! Ask me how

---

Silvia de Ridder  
[silvia@unconsciouspotential.com.au](mailto:silvia@unconsciouspotential.com.au)  
[www.unconsciouspotential.com.au](http://www.unconsciouspotential.com.au)  
Phone: 0402 851 378