The pursuit of happiness is sometimes easier said than done. Some scientists have argued that happiness is largely determined by genetics, health and other factors mostly outside of our control. But recent research suggests people actually can take charge of their own happiness and boost it through certain practices.

"The billion-dollar question is, is it possible to become happier?" said psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky of the University of California, Riverside. "Despite the finding that happiness is partially genetically determined, and despite the finding that life situations have a smaller influence on our happiness than we think they do, we argue that still a large portion of happiness is in our power to change."

Lyubomirsky spoke here Saturday at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She and colleagues last year reviewed 51 studies that tested attempts to increase happiness through different types of positive thinking, and found that these practices can significantly enhance well-being. The results were published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology.

Here are five things that research has shown can improve happiness:

1. **Be grateful** – Some study participants were asked to write letters of gratitude to people who had helped them in some way. The study found that these people reported a lasting increase in happiness – over weeks and even months – after implementing the habit. What's even more surprising: Sending the letter is not necessary. Even when people wrote letters but never delivered them to the addressee, they still reported feeling better afterwards.

2. **Be optimistic** – Another practice that seems to help is optimistic thinking. Study participants were asked to visualize an ideal future – for example, living with a loving and supportive partner, or finding a job that was fulfilling – and describe the image in a journal entry. After doing this for a few weeks, these people too reported increased feelings of well-being.

3. **Count your blessings** – People who practice writing down three good things that have happened to them every week show significant boosts in happiness, studies have found. It seems the act of focusing on the positive helps people remember reasons to be glad.

4. **Use your strengths** – Another study asked people to identify their greatest strengths, and then to try to use these strengths in new ways. For example, someone who says they have a good sense of humor could try telling jokes to lighten up business meetings or cheer up sad friends. This habit, too, seems to heighten happiness.

5. **Commit acts of kindness** – It turns out helping others also helps ourselves. People who donate time or money to charity, or who altruistically assist people in need, report improvements in their own happiness.
SELF-CARE THROUGH STRENGTHS
Facilitated by: Roger Elrod, Laurie Morgan, Deanna Peck

Only 2 out of 10 people play to their strengths at work. Through video clips and activities we’ll help you discover your personal strengths and how to leverage them to create the life you want to live, both at work and beyond.

I. Opening - Laurie

II. Introductions – Laurie

III. Background of strengths/talents – Laurie

IV. Which parts of a person can you change? – Video – Deanna
   a. Clues to Talent – Activity

V. Where does passion fit in? – Video – Laurie
   a. What’s a passion of yours? Where does it show up? Where and how could you use it more? - Activity

VI. How do I deal with people that weaken me? – Roger

VII. How do talk about strengths without boasting? – Video - Roger

VIII. How do you talk about your weaknesses? – Roger

IX. Wrap up – Deanna
   a. Access to StrengthsFinder
   b. Strength Drops
   c. Evaluation/Feedback

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony. - Mahatma Gandhi
SELF-CARE THROUGH STRENGTHS

DSA Staff Development Day - March 2013

Roger Elrod
Individualization, Analytical, Relator, Learner, Ideation

Laurie Morgan
Strategic, Ideation, Relator, Input, Individualization

Deanna Peck
Responsibility, Connectedness, Arranger, Relator, Input
5 Things That Will Make You Happier

1. Be grateful
1. Be optimistic
1. Count your blessings
1. Use your strengths
1. Commit acts of kindness
Talent:

A naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.

It just makes perfect sense!
What is a strength?

Talent \times (Knowledge + Skills) = \text{Strength}

A strength is the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a specific activity.
You are 1 in 33.39 million with your unique strengths in the exact same order.
5 Clues to Talent
(Questions that help you identify talents):

1. **Yearning**: To what kinds of activities are you naturally drawn?

2. **Rapid Learning**: What kinds of activities do you seem to pick up quickly?

3. **Flow**: In what activities did the “steps” just come to you automatically?

4. **Glimpses of Excellence**: During what activities have you had moments of subconscious excellence, when you thought, “How did I do that?”

5. **Satisfaction**: What activities get you energized; either while doing them or immediately after finishing them, and you think, “When can I do that again?”
Resources

- www.strengthsquest.com

- www.sjsu.edu/wellness (see strengths)

- Books
  - StrengthsQuest
  - How Full Is Your Bucket?
  - Strengths Based Leadership
  - Vital Friends
  - StrengthsFinder 2.0
Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.

– Albert Schweitzer
## Five Clues to Talent

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<th>Yearning</th>
<th>Rapid Learning</th>
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<td>In what activities did you automatically know the steps to be taken?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Glimpses of Excellence</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
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<td>During what activities have you had moments of subconscious excellence when you thought, “How did I do that?”</td>
<td>What activities give you a kick, either while doing them or immediately after finishing them, and you think, “When can I do that again?”</td>
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The Clifton StrengthsFinder measures talent in the following 34 Signature Themes:

**Achiever** People especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

**Activator** People especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

**Adaptability** People especially talented in the Adaptability theme prefer to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

**Analytical** People especially talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

**Arranger** People especially talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

**Belief** People especially talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.

**Command** People especially talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

**Communication** People especially talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

**Competition** People especially talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

**Connectedness** People especially talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.

**Consistency** People especially talented in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.

**Context** People especially talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

**Deliberative** People especially talented in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.

**Developer** People especially talented in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.

**Discipline** People especially talented in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

**Empathy** People especially talented in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others’ lives or others’ situations.

**Focus** People especially talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.
**Futuristic** People especially talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

**Harmony** People especially talented in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don’t enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

**Ideation** People especially talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

**Includer** People especially talented in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

**Individualization** People especially talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

**Input** People especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

**Intellection** People especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

**Learner** People especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

**Maximizer** People especially talented in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something especially talented into something superb.

**Positivity** People especially talented in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

**Relator** People who are especially talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

**Responsibility** People especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

**Restorative** People especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

**Self-assurance** People especially talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

**Significance** People especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

**Strategic** People especially talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

**Woo** People especially talented in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.
Using Your Strengths

As with anything we learn, if we don’t use it, we lose it. Therefore, we have provided seven activities for you to learn more about your strengths, to apply your strengths, and to maintain your awareness of the positive sides of you and others.

**Talent Journal** – For one week, keep track of anytime you see a clue to talent. At the end of the week, go back and re-read your journal. Where can you spend more time using these strengths? Discuss your ideas with your supervisor, friends, significant others, etc.

**Approach a Challenge** – Create a circle and put a challenge that you are currently facing in the middle of the circle. Around the circle draw 5 lines. On each line write a strength and then write how you can use that strength to approach your challenge.

**Arranger** – Look at how I am spending my time and re-arrange things so I can clean the kitchen when I have more energy.

**Connectedness** – When I am cleaning, think of the privilege I have in having this kitchen and how I could use it to bake for others especially in times of need.

**Relator** – Ask my partner and daughter to join me in cleaning the kitchen so we can do it together quicker and then spend more quality time together after.

**Input** – Research tools or techniques that may assist with maintenance of a clean kitchen. Scooba is a great idea.

**Responsibility** – I owe my family a clean kitchen and I told them I would do this.

**Strengths in Entertainment** – Consider a tv show, movie, or book that you enjoy. What is it that you enjoy so much? Is it related to one of your strengths? What are the strengths of the characters in the show, movie, or book? How did the characters use their strengths to achieve excellence/joy?

**Fishbowl of Strengths** – similar to the journal where you wrote down the clues of talent that you saw in one week, the fishbowl is meant to keep it going throughout the year. Get a bowl/bag/box and each time you do something you are proud of write it down and put it in your special place. When you are having a rough day, pull out one, two, or three of the special moments and remember where your strengths lie.

**Strength Drops** – When you see others using their strengths or doing something positive, send them a Strength Drop. These little notes of inspiration/thanks go a long way. They make the other person feel good and you feel even better.

**Theme for a Week** – Review the Strengths Reference Card and pick a theme. Look around you for the next week and notice anything that may be related to that strength whether it is within yourself or another. Point out those these realizations and have a conversation about them with others.

**Creativity with your Strengths** – Create a song, image (painting/drawing/photograph), poem, object (pottery/stained glass/knitting), tweet, etc. around one of your strengths and share it with others.