Brown Ethical Inquiry Program

Sonja Lyubomirsky, UC Riverside, presents “Happiness: Science, Practice, and Myths”

Wednesday, March 18, 2015
12-2 p.m.
Salomon Center 001
79 Waterman Street
Providence, RI

Abstract

Happiness not only feels good; it is good. Relative to their less happy peers, happy people are more creative, productive, and helpful; have more stable marriages and higher incomes; and boast stronger immune systems. Until recently, however, many scientists were pessimistic about the very notion that happiness can be lastingly increased. First, happiness is heritable and very stable over the life course, and, second, we have a remarkable capacity to adapt to any positive changes in our lives. These observations have contributed both to skepticism about the pursuit of happiness and misconceptions about what life changes will make us truly miserable or truly happy. In this presentation, Lyubomirsky will describe the ideas and findings from her scholarly articles and her two books, *The How of Happiness* and *The Myths of Happiness*, debunking the misconceptions that we have about happiness. Drawing on her two decades of research with thousands of participants, she will introduce a program to boost health, productivity, and happiness in our day-to-day lives by describing a dozen uniquely formulated “happiness strategies” that we can practice on a regular basis. In particular, she will focus on randomized longitudinal experimental studies – and their implications – of practicing kindness, optimism, and gratitude in optimal ways. She will also discuss the critical factors that bolster our likelihood of success – for example, how to find the right fit between the happiness activities and our personalities, interests, and goals, as well as how to understand the obstacles to happiness and how to overcome them. In sum, emphasizing how much of our happiness is within our control, Lyubomirsky will address the scientific “how” of her happiness research, demystifying the many myths that unnecessarily complicate its pursuit. Her findings have significant implications for increasing happiness in the workplace, as well as in other life domains and settings.