

Introduction: My Entry into Three Good Things

I have always wanted to be a novelist. I have had several ideas for novels but I never really got very far in the process of actually writing them. I would get about a third of a way through and then decide it wasn't good enough and just scrap it. I did this even with the knowledge that you have to write a sloppy first draft before you got to a decent product. So I would let my work sit. I recently heard of the National Novel Writing Month event. It is an online organized event in which people challenge themselves to write a 50,000 word draft. I decided to do it. I signed up and then started writing. It felt so nice to finally really work on it. To stop making up excuses and being my own worst enemy. I felt so much creative energy as my fingers hit the keys. I put on a spotify playlist I had made for myself for writing this particular novel. The world disappeared around me as I finally immersed myself in my work. I only took breaks to sip a mug of coffee I had prepared for myself. I didn't even really taste it. Finally I was doing something for myself I was creating. I didn't even worry about the quality like I usually do. I just wrote. I wrote my self indulgent vampire novel for about 2 hours straight. When I reached a good stopping point I sat back, satisfied. I looked up the word count on my google doc and popped it into the website. The website showed me words of encouragement and motivation.

This was one of my entries in a research journal I created where I documented three good things that happened to me every day for a week. This research was to see if I could improve my feelings of happiness by documenting times during a day I felt happy. The idea behind it is that gratitude can help improve well being. The "three good things" gratitude process did have a positive impact on my well being.

Literature Review

Positive psychology is a psychology theory created by researcher Martin Seligman in the 1960s. (Ackerman) The main principle behind positive psychology is that well-being can be improved through the process of gratitude. (Ackerman) The psychological definition of well-being covers many different areas. (Joseph) Well-being is defined as feeling content and fulfilled in all aspects of your life. (Joseph) Gratitude is defined as feeling pleasure from gratefulness.(Stern)

The “Three Good Things” exercise was developed to show and help develop the connection between gratitude and well being. (Fleming) This exercise was created by the father of positive psychology himself, Martin Seligman. (Fleming) Researchers found that this exercise did in fact show a positive impact on participants well-being. (Fleming)

While most people did in fact experience a positive change in their well-being from doing this exercise some people found they experienced no change. Some people simply do not find doing a gratitude journal to be helpful for their own well-being. (Hobson) For these people, the exercise is simply not useful for them but they can find other ways of improving their own well-being. (Hobson) What works for one person will not necessarily work for another and that’s okay. That is the reason there are multiple therapy methods.

Findings

Personally, the three good things exercise worked for me. I have often struggled with the feeling that I am not doing enough. I end up being so convinced I am not doing enough I end up doing nothing at all. Because of this I found engagement being something that popped up a lot my journal entries. Engagement in positive psychology terms is defined as an activity in

which we are both enjoying ourselves and feel fulfilled as we are working towards something.

(Pascha) For me writing is an activity that I really like to engage in. I usually end up holding off thinking I'm not good enough yet but I actually ended up sitting down and writing during that week. I felt so good to finally start working towards getting the novel that's been sitting and kicking around in my brain in one way or another for about ten years. The gratitude journal really helped me to remind myself that I was working on it. It helped me to realize that working on it was enough.

Conclusion

Personally, I will definitely continue the "three good things" gratitude process. This process really helped me. I really like reminding myself that I was engaging in things even if only in small increments. I even recommended this process to the other people in my therapy group.

I do understand based on both the readings and talking to my classmates about the process that the gratitude journal does not work for everyone. I do think that everyone should at least try it at least for the one week. Even if it does not improve your well-being it will not do you any harm to try it. I would go even further to recommend that the people that did not find any results from the one week consider trying the exercise for a bit longer.

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