

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 by reminding me how much I was engaged in my passions.

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)

One of my journal entries was; “was on time for both of my classes I have had issues with time management before and was proud of myself”. A similar entry was; “got homework done on time”. Normally I would be happy about these accomplishments the day of but would then forget about them. I have a bad habit of just remembering when I mess up and not when I don’t. As a result, I tend to convince myself that I’m doing a lot worse than I am. Journaling reminded me that I am doing better and will continue to do better.

Another theme that emerged in my journal was self care. One example of this was the entry; “I went to therapy and had a really good session. I have lifelong issues with depression and anxiety and am on a journey of self care.”. Another example of this was; “took a bath for relaxation”. Journaling about these events helped me to remind myself that I both need and deserve to take care of myself to help improve my overall well-being.

Engagement in hobbies and passions was another big theme that emerged in my journaling. One example of these was; “Halloween is my favorite holiday and my club was having a bake sale so I wore a costume for it. The sale went really well and we made our goal.” Another example of this was; “worked on November novel”, this example is one I expanded on in my intro. The process of writing down these times reminded me how much I like to be productive. As someone with depression who often has no motivation to do anything this is really helpful.

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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