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English Composition 112

7 December 2018

More to Life

Introduction

It is about 7:30 p.m. My eyes roll to the back of my head in exhaustion. A half hour into the long commute home from work and I just wanted to be home already. Between classes and work I feel like I'm hardly home anymore. My attitude was sour, and I felt bad for anyone who had to deal with me that day. I finally got home and pulled into my driveway, viciously threw my car into park, and yanked my bags out of my back seat. My eyes drifted back to the driveway as I was walking towards my front door and I gained excitement as I see both of my parents' cars. I walk in and they were so thrilled to see me. I receive a hug from my mom. The hug felt like she has not seen me in weeks, but I did not mind. My mom told me to sit down as she made me a great home cooked meal. My father asked how my day was and I could tell he genuinely cared about what I had to say. All of that stress from school and work vanished completely. Like a weight was lifted off my shoulders and I had a chance to relax and enjoy myself. It is times like these that I am truly grateful for. This was the week I completed the "Three Good Things" for a week exercise. Every night before bed, I would write down three good things that happened to me that day and why I was grateful it happened. Whether it was something small or a major event that happened to me, I would write it down. After completing the "Three Good Things" for a week, I believe it had a positive impact on my well-being in many ways such as my mental health and my accomplishments.

Literature Review

Stated in the *Positive Psychology Center*, Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman is the founder of positive psychology and has written over 300 scholarly articles on this topic. Positive psychology is “the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play” (Positive Psychology Center). An aspect that takes part in positive psychology is well-being. According to the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, well-being is a positive result that is meaningful for people and for any different parts of a community, because it tells us that people see that their lives are getting better, and well-being is important for the individual. Another key aspect within positive psychology would be gratitude. Benedictine monk, Br. David Steindl-Rast, believes that gratitude can be broken down into two parts. One being appreciation and the other being that gratitude is gratis. Appreciation is when you recognize that something means something to you (Team, *The Gratefulness*). The second quality is gratitude is gratis and that is when something is given to you at no cost (Team, *The Gratefulness*). Regarding positive psychology, many people believe it is real and means something but just as many people believe it is fake and they are the only thing controlling their own happiness. As stated in the positive psychology program, the PERMA model was created by Martin Seligman. The PERMA model was made to show that our well-being consists of multiple elements and if we follow them we can live “a life of fulfillment, happiness, and meaning” (The PERMA Model). The Harvard Health Publishing blog showed that many different experiments took place to see if gratitude improves well-being. Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons and Dr. Michael E. McCullough, conducted a study that required the volunteers to write down what they were

grateful for (Harvard Health Publishing). This was similar to the “three good things” practice and they found positive feedback with this experiment but only regarding age (Harvard Health Publishing). Within the same study, they found that “middle-aged divorced women who kept gratitude journals were no more satisfied with their lives than those who did not” (Harvard Health Publishing). Through my own experiences with the “three good things” exercise, I found myself noticing things I already do that works towards improving my well-being. Whether studies show that gratitude helps one’s well-being or no, it had a positive effect on me.

Findings

In this section I will prove “three good things” improved my well-being by disusing these three points. According to the PERMA model, our happiness is determined through five categories. Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. My first point would be my accomplishments and how they made me feel. Another point would be the social relationships that I have built. Lastly, by showing positive emotion and how it has brought forth my inner optimism. I chose to talk about accomplishments because to me, there is no better feeling then handing in a test or an assignment that you worked so hard on. During the week I worked on the “three good things” I had multiple assignments due and I appreciated that feeling when I finished a task. My one entry was “Was productive: I finished a paper that is due Friday and I love the feeling of being productive and the feeling of accomplishment.” This was within the first two days of starting this project and **already** I knew what was important to me. Next, my relationships such as my family, played a big part in my well-being. They are my motivation and support through everything and this study showed me to never take them for granite. Finally, positive emotion showed throughout most of my journal entries. I looked at

things with an optimistic view and suddenly things did not seem that bad. An entry that connects with this would be “Had work: I don't love work, but I try and make the best of it.” After really learning about these five elements, I go through my days now connecting each part of it to a different element. I wish to focus more on the meaning aspect because everyone needs some meaning in their lives.

Conclusion

I have always been grateful for my parents and all the love and support they provided for me, but I chose that certain moment to add to my “three good things” journal because I looked at it differently. Sometimes you have to step back and realize things are not as bad as they seem. I never want to take that for granite and I noticed they play a big part in my happiness and well-being. Without them I would not be the person I am today. Since the end of the “three good things” gratitude process, I have continued to think about things in a different way but stopped writing in my journal. I felt that I did not need the actual motion of writing down the three things but found it was enough for me to just sit and think about them. My main take-away from this research project is I found where my well-being is coming from and it is coming from the relationships I have made. Also, I realized what is most important in my life and that is my family. This process surfaced that feeling of realization and I will never forget what I have.

Works Cited

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