



As you might expect, happiness receives plenty of positive press for its impacts on both mental and physical well-being. But, it's not as uniformly wonderful as it seems.

Up until the 90's, happiness and what is called "positive psychology" were rarely the focus of psychological research. For every study focused on happiness, there were at least a dozen more addressing mental health problems, meaning we were far more interested in what ails the mind than what makes it healthy. That's changed, and, today, the benefits of a happy mind are widely extolled. Multiple studies show happy people feel better about their lives and themselves, have more fulfilling relationships, and enjoy longer and healthier lives.

However, recent research indicates there is an emotional condition that conveys even stronger mental and physical health benefits — emotional diversity, or, as some call it, "emodiversity." Analogously, we know that biodiversity is good for the environment, meaning a rich mix of different species promotes greater ecological well-being than an impoverished one (think of a wild wetland versus your chemically groomed lawn). Well, it appears the same holds true for one's emotional environment.

Does that mean folks who are a hornets' nest of divergent feelings, ranging from content to crazed, are better off than those who usually languish in a garden of happy feelings and thoughts? No. But, it does mean that having a broad and diverse range of non-destructive emotions seems the ticket to greater psychological well-being and physical wellness than happiness alone.

So, what sort of feelings make that happen? Well, in addition to a modicum of happiness, emodiversity includes such diverse feeling states as determination, resilience, enthusiasm, compassion, inspiration, empathy, and satisfaction, among others. Not all of these emotional states are uniformly positive. For example, resilience is often a response to challenges and adversity. What's more, empathy and compassion sometimes focus on negative feelings and situations,

although from a caring and kind mindset. Also, determination may arise from frustration, failure or loss.

Obviously, someone who's emodiversity is primarily populated with negative emotions, or who suffers wild mood swings across a broad range of feelings, is not on the road to better well-being. Absent that, however, it appears that a variety of emotional states, rather than persistent happiness alone, is the ticket to greater life satisfaction.

It's said that variety is the spice of life.

And, part of that spice consists of emodiversity.

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