

Comfort Queh  
Eng 100  
Formal Assignment #2: Research Project  
November 26, 2018

### Introduction: My Entry into Three Good Things

I believe within my heart we all have a person that we enjoy speaking too more than once a day. If you don't believe me, pull out your phone and go through your recent calls history. As you scroll through each name on your list, ask yourself the question, "Do I enjoy speaking to this person?" When you've got your answer, count how many times their name appears in your history for the day? If you're lucky, you may have more than one, but as for me, I may not be as lucky, however, I am grateful to have that one person, who happens to be my cousin, Garley.

We talk on the phone more than three times during the day. We talk so often that it's just ordinary to us. If we were to go the entire day with just one phone call to each other, most likely a "hello" wouldn't be the greeting that follows when we get on the phone. It would most likely be "you haven't call me ALL day," A month ago if I was to ask myself the same question, I would have cold heartedly, without any doubts agree with it but a month ago I didn't realize that I was taking it for granted until the "Three Good Things" challenge.

For seven days starting at the end of October towards the beginning of November, I participated in a research assignment entitle "Three Good Things." The "Three Good Things" is an activity that encourages you to focus on the positive things that are happening in your day-to-day routines by writing down three things that you are grateful for every day for a week. By focusing on the positive, which it forces you to do, the person is able to improve their well-being; so for six days (since I missed one day), I embarked on this journey. Toward the end of

every night, I sat down for ten minutes and documented three things, big or small, that I was grateful that happened to me during the day.

During one of the days while documenting in my journey, it was a rough day. I needed to talk. So picking up my phone, I click on my call history list, and without no doubt the name “Garley” was showing up more than once, after one ring she answered. That same night as I was writing down my “Three Good Things,” I didn’t hesitate to write down that I was grateful for my cousin. The "Three Good Things" exercise has help me to appreciate my cousin more and has also help me realize that I need to learn to live in the moment more. Taking my time to complete the "Three Good Things" gratitude exercise have positively impacted my well-being.

#### Literature Review

To have a better understanding of the “Three Good Things” we must first have the same understanding of positive psychology, well-being, and gratitude. To begin, let’s first break down positive psychology.

According to Martin Seligman, who is often known as the founder of positive psychology, positive psychology is a science of what makes life worth living (Seligman, 2004). Seligman findings on positive psychology emphasizes that the three main goals of this practice are: “being concerned with human strength just as much as their weakness, being able to build on their strength while also repairing the weakness” within an individual, and positive psychology “should be just as concerned with making the lives of normal people fulfilling” and if you happen to be a genius, then the focus would be on “nurturing” that person “high talent” (Seligman, 2004). The field of psychology 60 years ago only focused on the “disease model.” Seligman, shared that the focus of the "disease model" was to find the illness, test the illness, diagnose the illness, and treat the illness (Seligman, 2004). Although he agreed that was a huge

improvement in the field of psychology, he points out that by focusing only on this model, this caused the field of psychology 60 years ago to lack the ability to make people happier since it solely focused on the negatives of humans and not at all on the positive (Seligman, 2004).” It lacked “positive intervention” so that’s why Seligman idea of positive psychology emerged, to help individuals improve their well-being.

One of the focuses of positive psychology is the well-being of human beings. According Teresa Del Pilar Rojas, well-being is an “individuals experience of affective reactions and cognitive judgments” (Rojas, 2016). Seligman illustrates the concept of well-being in five measurable element called PERMA, which stands for Positive Emotion (feeling good, optimism, pleasure and enjoyment), Engagement (fulfilling work interests and hobbies, “flow”), Relationship (social connections, love, physical interaction and intimacy), Meaning (having a purpose, finding meaning in life), and Accomplishment (ambitions, and realistic goals) (Ackerman & Pennock, 2018).

Each factors of PERMA plays a role into human flourishing and being that it’s measurable individually, each person can cultivate different techniques to increase their well-being when focusing on the five areas (Ackerman & Pennock, 2018). PERMA is a building block that helps aligned people with their values and interests to enable a flourishing life by what is meaningful to each individuals and which route they may choose to journey on (Ackerman & Pennock, 2018).

Based on my individual measure of the different factors of PERMA going back through my "Three Good Thing" journal, most of the things i was grateful for fell into the positive emotion, relationships and accomplishment categories. It made me realized that I need to increase my engagement and meaning categories to improve my well-being. On the first day of

writing in my gratitude journal, I wrote that I was grateful for composing a complete poem which I have done in a while. While I was writing my poem I didn't realize that I was experiencing "flow"(the idea of enjoying and focusing on what it is that you are doing, in my case creating, that you nothing else around you matters) but as I go back into my entries, that was the only time I experience "flow". Knowing this allowed me to measure that I am lacking in the Engagement area of PERMA and need to find other techniques that will help me improve in this area.

One of the techniques that people can use cultivate into their everyday lives to increase their well-being is by practicing gratitude. To understand my purpose going forward, I will be using professors of Psychiatry and Internal Medicine, Dr. Randy A. Sansone and Medicine Physician Lori A. Sansone, who defines gratitude as “the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself and represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation” (Sansone, 2010).

There is much research that suggests that cultivating gratitude into your life improves well-being. In a 2003 gratitude-focused study conducted by Robert A. Emmons and Michael E McCollough, showed that “gratitude-focused participant exhibited increased well-being and concluded that a conscious focus on blessing may have emotional interpersonal benefits” (Brandt, 2018). According to Andrea Brandt, having gratitude stimulates two important parts of the brain, the hypothalamus which regulates stress and the ventral tegmental area which is responsible for producing pleasure (Brandt, 2018).

Another gratitude study that is recommending and conducted by Seligman to improve well-being by making people happier and less depressed is the “Gratitude Visit” (Seligman,

2004). In this exercise, individuals are asked to write a 300-word testimonial to one person that has impacted their life and then visit the person to read what they have written (Seligman, 2004).

Research also suggests that gratitude may not come as easy to others because of differences rooted in the brain, genes, and our personalities (Allen, 2018). One study done by Sara Algoe and colleagues found that differences in CD38 gene secretion were associated with the quality and frequency of expressions of gratitude toward a romantic partner in both the lab and in regular daily life (Allen, 2018).

Another study done with genetic to help explain why some people express gratitude easier than others was done by Michael Stager and colleague on fraternal and identical twins (Allen, 2018). The study showed that identical twins had similar level of gratitude than fraternal twin who only shared 50 percent of their DNA (Allen, 2018).

When it comes to the brain and how it plays a role in gratitude, research suggests that the difference in brain structure and activity could be responsible for the amount or lack of gratitude in people (Allen, 2018). One study showed that people with more gratitude tend to have more gray matters in their right inferior temporal cortex, an area linked to interpreting others intentions (Allen, 2018).

Although, there are researched proven that others may lack gratitude, however with more practice and techniques we are able to cultivate gratitude into our life. One research base study that helped cultivate gratitude into my life and improved my well-being was the "Three Good Things" exercise.

### Findings

I will now explore my findings and views of the "Three Good Things" exercise. As I explained above, every day for six days, I timed myself for 10 minutes and wrote three things

into my journal every night before heading to bed. The first day I completed my journal it seemed really simply and easy to write down things I was grateful for, so I felt as if I really didn't need the exercise. Although, I felt like that, I still continued on. Fast forwarded to couple of days, since I was going through some personal struggles I wasn't as excited to take 10 minutes out of my day to sit and write in my journal; the idea just seemed a bit irritating to me because I knew that I was grateful simply because I felt it; for me that was enough but I still continued on with the exercise because I was curious to see what would happen at the end of the seven day even though I would miss a day.

However, on the fifth day of the exercise, it was a really "shitty day" and I don't say that too often, but I needed to talk to somebody, as I explained above, that day I called my cousin Garley, like I usually do when I just want to talk and like most days she was there to answer my call. We spoke for a while on the phone, even though I was crying most of the time. However, that night when I was writing in my journal, I didn't hesitate to write down what I was grateful for her, because like I said before, it something that comes naturally to me. However, as I wrote that night, it dawned on me that while in the moment, I had taken the phone and many phones that I shared with my cousin for granted. I realized that night, that in the moment of crying and sharing how I was feeling about the struggles I was going through, I was only focus on what I was going through. I realized that my "shitty day" had become a bunch of noise that I was hearing, so much that I got consumed with it. That night when I was writing down about being grateful for my cousin, I realized that if I was not going to be partaking in the "Three Good Things" exercise I wasn't going to be vigilant of my behavior.

I realized that my behavior was that the things I was grateful for was background noises in my daily life, and although I feel that I was living in the moment, I really wasn't the moment

was instead living me. I was living in the noise of my struggles and it was affecting my well-being unnoticeable. For example, on the six day of journaling, I was having a very rough morning so I had forgotten to eat, however that morning my ex-boyfriend mother had taken me for breakfast, but being that my rough morning was all that was on my mind I didn't realize how fatigue and hunger I was until I had eaten the cinnamon bagel and drink the cranberry juice that she had brought for me. As I write this now, I can still taste the warm buttery, sweet crispy bite the cinnamon bagel with a hence of strawberry jelly layer on top of the butter. That night when I was writing in my journal, that was one of the moment I was grateful but it wasn't until that night, remembering the moment, I realize that maybe If I was in the moment while it was happen, maybe I would have enjoyed and appreciated it more. So many moments like those makes believe that the "Three Good Things" helped change my perspective in a more positive way. I have come to the conclusion that thing that I am grateful needs to be a consisting voice in my ears and not just background noises. A lot of times we get so consume in our routines that we forget to just live in our individual appreciation of life.

### Conclusion

Although some may read this and feel that the "Three Good Things" is not their cup of tea, or some may try it and get a different result; however, I say to them, that there are many other research base exercise to cultivate gratitude into your life and the "Three Good Things" doesn't have to be your journey, but it is worth trying. Studies encourages individuals to participate in the "Three Good Things" journey exercise for more than just a week if one week was not an improvement to your well-being.

Although my life has not change drastically; however, my perspective has shifted in a more positive way. I've realized that I need to live in the moment more, and for me that's

enjoying that hugs that I give to a family or friend, and maybe even a stranger in need of one. It's also me realizing that smile on my face when my cousins take the time of her day to chat with me. For me that a great deal of meaning in my every life. The "Three Good Thing" has been a true eye-opening process, but I want to find other research exercises that can help me improve in other meaningful areas of my life. However, if I find myself slipping back to my old ungrateful ways, I will always have the "Three Good Things" process to come back to.



## Work Cited

- Ackerman, Courtney and Pennock, Fontane Seph. "What is Positive Psychology & Why is it Important? Definition + Examples." *Positive Psychology Program*, 20 Apr. 2018, <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-positive-psychology-definition/#definition-positive-psychology>. Accessed 25, Nov. 2018.
- Allen, Summer. "Why Is Gratitude So Hard for Some People?" Greater Good Science Center, 10 May. 2018. [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_is\\_gratitude\\_so\\_hard\\_for\\_some\\_people](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_is_gratitude_so_hard_for_some_people). Accessed 8 Dec. 2018.
- Brandt, Adrea. "Science Proves that Gratitude is Key to Well-Being." *Psychology Today*, 30 Jul. 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindful-anger/201807/science-proves-gratitude-is-key-well-being>. Accessed 25 Nov. 2018.
- Rojas, Teresa Del Pilar. "Subjective Well-Being: Your Life, Your Happiness." *Positive Psychology Program*, 24 Feb. 2016, <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/subjective-well-being/>. Accessed 26 Nov. 2018.
- Seligman, Martin. "The New Era of Positive Psychology." *TED*, Feb. 2004, [https://www.ted.com/talks/martin\\_seligman\\_on\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_psychology?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare).
- Sanson, Randy A and Sansone, Lori A. "Gratitude and Well-Being: The Benefits of Appreciation." *Psychiatry*, vol. 7, no. 11, 2010, pp. 18-22. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3010965/>. Accessed 26 Nov.