Train a Happy Brain!: A Human Behavioral Study on the Emotional Perception of Happiness

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It’s important to understand if a demonstration of questioning one’s definition of “happy” and “content” can change one’s perception of being “happy.” Through an educational video, I hypothesized that the self-assessment scores correlated to perceiving happiness will decrease, because they will recognize a difference in their perceived emotional state. All prepared surveys and videos are part of the Mental Health Monday EQ Initiative at Canterbury School. Voluntary participants filled out anonymous happiness ratings in the “Perception of Happiness Survey (Part #1)." The participants watched a ten minute video titled “Perception of Happiness." The participants filled out anonymous happiness ratings in the “Perception of Happiness Survey (Part #2)." The experiment was repeated with the Middle and Upper School students and the Post-Graduate faculty. Data was analyzed using a two-tailed t-test between the two surveys. When comparing the self-reflection questions, the average ratings decreased from the first and second surveys in the Middle and Upper School. When comparing the scores of ambiguous photographs, the average ratings increased from the first and second survey in the Middle and Upper School. The Middle and Upper School ratings were statistically significant, but none of the Post-Graduate ratings were. With at least a 95% confidence, there’s a significant amount of data to overcome the idea that there will be no significant difference between the two survey ratings. The change of perception shifted their focus on how they viewed themselves and others. The observed self-perception shift may be perceived as healthy, as focusing on contentment may reduce anxiety. Whereas, the focus on others may shift perception to a more optimistic outlook.

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