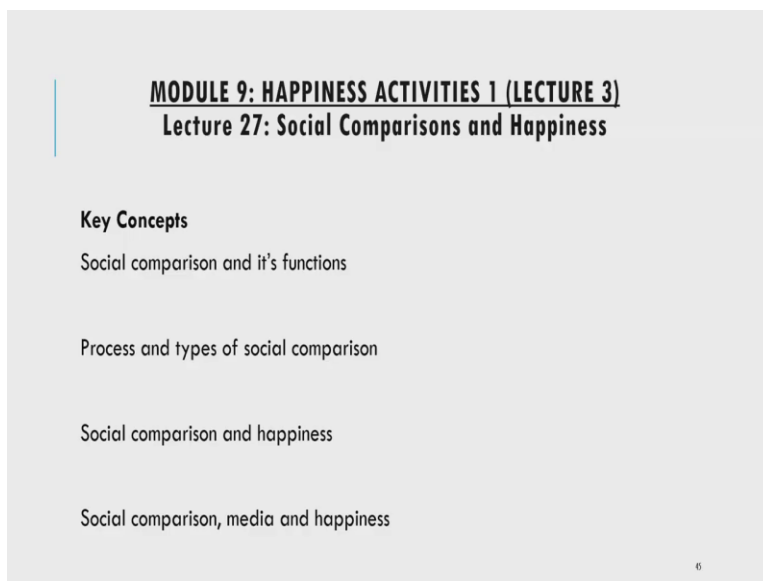


Psychology of Stress, Health, and Well-Being
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Lecture - 27
Social Comparison and Happiness

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MODULE 9: HAPPINESS ACTIVITIES 1 (LECTURE 3)
Lecture 27: Social Comparisons and Happiness

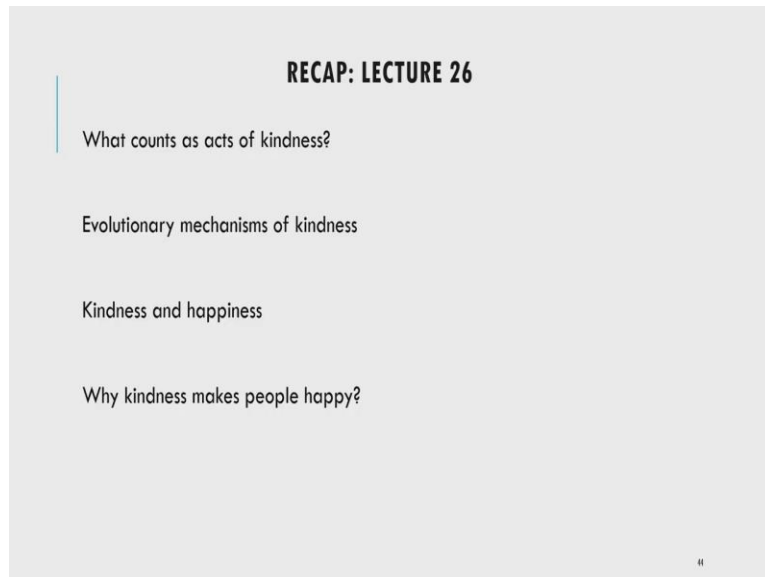
Key Concepts

- Social comparison and its functions
- Process and types of social comparison
- Social comparison and happiness
- Social comparison, media and happiness

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Hello friends, I welcome you to the lecture number 27 of the course titled psychology of stress, health and well being. So, we are discussing module 9, which is about happiness activities. And today, well, it is the third lecture of module 9 and that is last lecture of module 9, and overall it is lecture number 27. So, in today's lecture we will talk about how social comparison is connected to our happiness. So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me briefly give you, a recap of the last lecture.

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So, in the previous lecture, we discussed acts of kindness as a means of increasing happiness. As a result, we spoke about what kindness is and what acts of kindness are. As we previously stated, an act of kindness is defined as any activity taken to benefit another person. So, on the action level, it's acts of kindness, and because kindness may also have an emotional component, we refer to it as compassion on the emotional level.

Then we spoke about what constitutes acts of kindness. In general, we believe that when we speak of acts of kindness, we are referring to a significant act of charity or some kind of generous assistance. Acts of kindness, on the other hand, can be as simple as smiling, saying thank you, or, if you like, words of encouragement to someone, compassionately listening to someone's problem, rescuing stray animals, and spending time with individuals who require assistance, such as the elderly. It could involve acts of kindness toward the environment, such as planting trees. So, there are a variety of activities that fall under the category of acts of kindness, and we've looked into all of them.

Then we spoke about how kindness has evolved throughout time. We've explored how some evolutionary mechanisms or natural selection types favor acts of kindness, because acts of kindness are crucial not only for individual happiness and survival, but also for collective as well as species survival, because we can't actually survive without kindness.

So, in that context, we've spoken about several principles or evolutionary mechanisms that encourage kindness, such as kindness to families, where we show special kindness or supporting behavior toward genetically close families, which is known as the kin altruism principle. Then we spoke about being kind to group members, people that are a part of our group in some manner, so it's a little bigger than family. Mutualism, or mutualism principles, is the term for this. Then we talked about being kind to individuals who will return the favor, which is referred to as reciprocal altruism. Then we talked about competitive altruism, which is kindness to others that improves one's status. As a result, we've gone over all of these concepts in depth, with the idea that natural selection and evolutionary mechanisms encourage certain types of kindness behavior since it's crucial for the species' survival.

Then we talked about how human happiness is linked to kindness. And, when it comes to human existence, kindness can manifest itself in such a complex and refined manner that, beyond this evolutionary mechanism, human beings occasionally engage in acts of kindness simply because it makes them happy. That explains a lot of human behavior, such as when people perform a lot of charity work and other acts of kindness anonymously without expecting anything in return, and they don't even reveal their names. As a result, all of these actions are explicable.

So, why do people engage in such behavior? One simple reason is that it makes them happy. As a result, research demonstrates that numerous markers of happiness are linked to acts of kindness. And the major reason why kindness boosts happiness is that it alters self perception; when you do acts of kindness, you feel good about yourself, your self esteem rises, and your perception of others improves. Because you can't commit acts of kindness until you have a positive mindset.

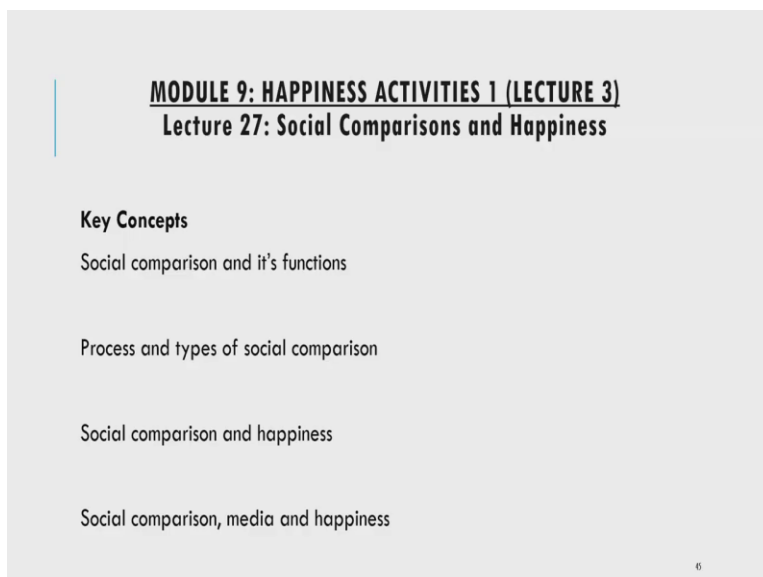
It also assists you in diverting your attention away from your own problems, issues, or difficulties. It gives you an idea of your capabilities, resources, and knowledge. It also develops a sense of purpose in your life; when you can support and assist others, your life becomes more significant.

Acts of kindness, according to research, can have a ripple effect or a cascade of positive repercussions. For example, if you help someone, you may receive help in return, and people may appreciate you. As a result of witnessing you, other people may become involved in acts of

kindness. As a result, it has a wide range of long-term benefits. Acts of kindness also satisfy a basic need for social ties and affiliations. As a result, we connect with individuals through acts of kindness, which is a basic human desire. As a result, it satisfies that basic need as well.

So, as we stated previously, one crucial aspect of practicing kindness is to be attentive to the needs of others and to have a loving attitude. So, if you're open, sensitive, and have a sense of caring in your heart, kindness will come naturally. So, in general, kindness will flow, and it will be true kindness. So, these are some of the key points that we covered in the previous lesson.

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MODULE 9: HAPPINESS ACTIVITIES 1 (LECTURE 3)
Lecture 27: Social Comparisons and Happiness

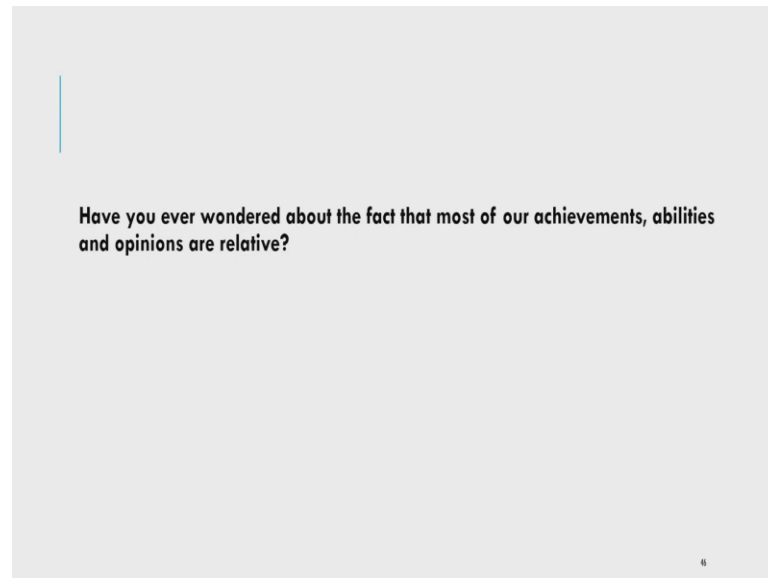
Key Concepts

- Social comparison and its functions
- Process and types of social comparison
- Social comparison and happiness
- Social comparison, media and happiness

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Today, we'll discuss about social comparison, which is a happiness activity that promotes or influences happiness. So, let's have a look at what it is, and in this lecture, we'll go over some key ideas including social comparison and its roles, the process and sorts of social comparison, and social comparison and its relationship to happiness. Then we'll discuss social comparison, social media, and happiness, and how social comparison has become increasingly complicated in recent years, particularly with the rise of social media. So, in today's class, we'll go over all of this. Let's see what happens.

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So, let me begin with a question: Have you ever considered how relative most of our achievements, abilities, and opinions are? Have you ever considered if your opinions about yourself, or the evaluations you make of yourself in terms of your accomplishments, abilities, or opinions, are absolute or relative?

When you think about it, the majority of these ratings are relative. What's the point of being relative? Because we make this assessment through social comparison, by which we mean comparing ourselves to others. So, your self-evaluation or impression is heavily influenced by comparisons with other individuals, which is referred to as social comparison. So, whether you regard yourself as an intelligent person, a smart person, a high achiever, or a good-looking person, you're deriving this evaluation from what? Obviously, there is an objective component to it, but it also has a significant social comparison component. You're referring to yourself as a smart person because you believe you're smarter than others. So you think you're smarter than everyone else. Let's imagine you're in a circumstance where you think you're less intelligent or smarter because you're comparing yourself to individuals who is smarter than you. What happens, though, when you compare yourself to someone who is far smarter than you? You could feel mediocre, but it doesn't mean you're not smart.

So, whether you do it consciously or unconsciously, a lot of this evaluation and the consequences that occur or the evaluation that we do about ourselves is primarily driven from social comparison. As a result, social comparison is an important element of our day-to-day lives and functioning, and it occurs on a regular basis.

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Social Comparisons

Social comparison refers to the tendency of people to compare themselves to others on a wide variety of dimensions.

Social comparisons provides us useful guides for our behavior, and they may also have emotional consequences, affecting our self-esteem and happiness (Herman et al. 2019).

From the psychological perspective, the social comparison theory was first proposed in 1954 by psychologist Leon Festinger. He suggested that we have an innate drive to evaluate ourselves in comparison to others i.e. self evaluation in relation to others.

As a result, social comparison is necessary. Essentially, it refers to people's propensity to compare themselves to others across a wide range of aspects. As a result, we all have a natural desire to compare ourselves to others. It also serves significant purposes. We'll have to wait and see. And this propensity exists because we are social animals; we are always connected to others, we see others all around us, and they are all operating in the same social environment. As a result, the comparison is a continuous process.

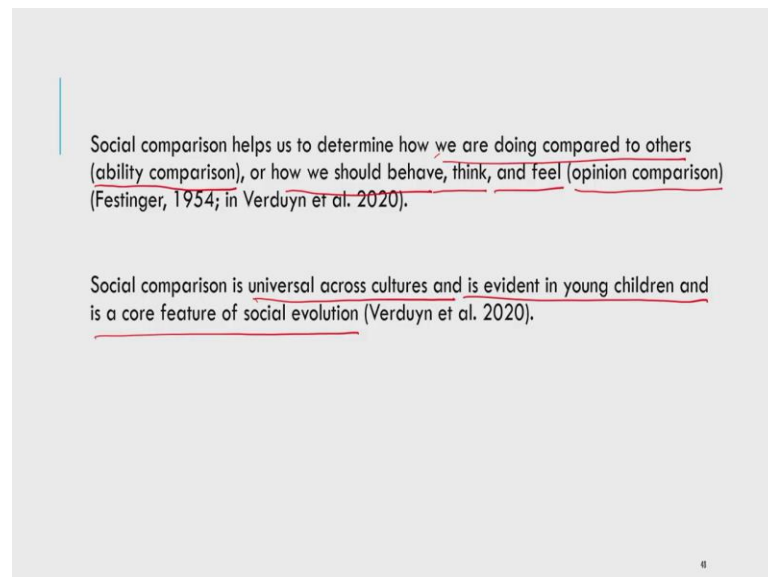
Now, we have a useful guidance for our behavior thanks to this social comparison. It performs a variety of tasks. So, by comparing ourselves to others, we can determine whether we are doing the right thing or not, whether we are moving in the correct path, and thus it directs our behavior in terms of what direction to go and whether we are going in the right direction or not. So, through seeing other people and their conduct, we are able to make meaning of our own behavior or pass judgment on it. They may also have emotional ramifications. So, we'll see if this

has any emotional consequences. And there's a huge emotional component to social comparison. As a result, it is linked to happiness in this way. We will notice how it affects our self-esteem and happiness. As a result, it performs certain critical processes and has significant implications for our emotional well-being.

Now, from a psychological standpoint, or if you look at the literature in psychology, social comparison theory was originally developed by psychologist Leon Festinger, who was one of the first to discuss social comparison in detail. He began by discussing social comparison theory, in which he proposed that humans have an intrinsic desire to evaluate ourselves in relation to others.

So, he explained, we all have an innate need, an innate urge to compare ourselves to others in order to evaluate ourselves. We prefer to compare ourselves to others for self-evaluation, i.e., how am I doing in terms of maybe abilities, maybe opinions, maybe decision making. And, according to Leon Festinger, this is an intrinsic desire. So, self-evaluation in comparison to others is the goal. As a result, this is an essential concept that he stated in 1954.

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Now, social comparison can also assist us figure out how we are doing compared to others. As a result, it also assists us in determining how we are performing in comparison to others, and whether we are performing well or poorly. As a result, all of this social comparison aids us in

determining that. As a result, it assists us in determining our ability in contrast to others. Furthermore, social comparison aids us in determining how we should act. We learn how to behave in various situations by studying other people; we learn from our parents, from the people around us, and we tend to learn by looking at other people.

We also learn how to think, what to think about in a variety of situations, and how to feel. So, social comparison influences all of these dimensions, which are basically various perspectives that we acquire about life and various attitudes that we have about various things in our lives. By observing others, we can learn about them and determine what is the appropriate thing to do, think, and feel, among other things.

So, according to study, social comparison is universal across cultures, is visible in young children, and is a key aspect of social evolution. As a result, social comparison is a global phenomenon. It is not about a single culture or people who belong to that culture; rather, it is universal and may be found in all civilizations.

It can also be found in very young children, who, as soon as they begin to learn about their environment, begin comparing themselves to others. So, this is something that is deeply entrenched in us, and it plays a critical function and has critical repercussions.

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Functions of social comparison

Social comparison seems to be a fundamental human drive. It serves a variety of functions (in Vogel et al., 2014)-

- fulfilling affiliation needs (Schachter, 1959),
- evaluating the self (Festinger, 1954),
- making decisions (Camerer & Lovallo, 1999),
- being inspired (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997),
- regulating emotions and well-being (Taylor & Brown, 1988)

So, what are the functions of social comparison? Let us look at some additional significant elements in terms of social comparison. We've already looked at some important functions. The social comparison appears to be a basic human desire, and it is a very significant basic human urge. It serves a multitude of purposes, according to Festinger. One advantage is that it can meet affiliation needs. As a result, in a sense, social comparisons assist us in connecting with others. Because when you compare yourself to someone else, you are, in a sense, forming a bond with that person. In that sense, it motivates us to connect with others, and in that sense, it satisfies our need for affiliation to connect with others, which is one of the most basic human needs. Finally, as we have already stated, social comparison is vital for self-evaluation.

One of the most important functions of social comparison is that it allows us to assess ourselves in terms of our abilities and opinions, and to determine whether we are doing things correctly or incorrectly. Many of the judgments we make are aided by social comparison; many of the decisions we make are aided by looking at or asking other individuals. As a result, other people's life choices may have an impact on our own. As a result, it has the potential to influence how we make or make decisions. So, in a nutshell, it affects our thinking process, which in turn affects our decision-making process.

We can also be inspired by comparing ourselves to others. So, many times, we receive inspiration from looking at other people, comparing ourselves to others, especially people who are performing better than us in various areas. Then we look at their lives and what they accomplished, and we are inspired to think, "Well, if that person can do it, why can't I?" As a result, you gain inspiration from comparing yourself to others, particularly those who are performing better than you in specific areas. As a result, social comparison might encourage creativity.

Comparing yourself to others might also help you manage your emotions and well-being. So, in this section, we'll get more into how it can assist you, particularly in terms of emotional components. So, in essence, we learn how to manage and express emotions through comparison. As a result, it has an impact on your well-being; emotion is linked to your well-being. As a result, we'll learn a little more about this element as well. As a result, social comparison is a deeply rooted motivation in all of us. We do it deliberately and unconsciously, and it serves critical purposes in self-evaluation in a variety of ways.

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Social Comparison Process

Central to the social comparison process are-

- (1) Upward versus downward social comparison and
- (2) Assimilative versus contrastive social comparison.

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Let us now examine what the process of social comparison entails, as well as the elements that go into it. As a result, we'll take a closer look at it. Now, when we compare social situations, there may be a number of crucial factors to consider. As a result, the social comparison process may have two key elements, one of which is based on the comparison's aim. We can have upward vs downward social comparisons depending on who you are comparing yourself to. As a result, we'll look at what constitutes an upward and downward social comparison. So, depending on who you're comparing with, you'll know whether you're comparing on an upward or downward social scale.

If there is a social comparison, it may also involve assimilative vs contrast. So, which basically means social, what is your relationship, what is your psychological identification with the individual with whom you are comparing? Are you gravitating towards that person because you like them, or are you gravitating away from them because they are a contrast, or are you putting more gap between you and the target? As a result, the social comparison can be assimilative or contrastive. So, let's take a closer look at what these are.

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Upward vs Downward Social Comparisons

There are generally two types of social comparisons: Upward and downward social comparisons

Upward social comparison occurs when comparing oneself with someone better or superior and have positive characteristics (Vogel et al., 2014).

Downward social comparison occurs when comparing oneself with someone inferior and have negative characteristics (Vogel et al., 2014).

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So, what is the difference between upward and downward social comparison? So, depending on the nature of the target with whom you are comparing, there are generally two types of social comparisons. As a result, there are two types of social comparisons: upward and downward. As the term implies, upward social comparison occurs when you compare yourself to someone who is better or superior or has good attributes, someone who is better in certain dimensions than you. I mean, when we say someone is better than you, it doesn't mean he or she is better in every way; he or she may be better in some areas, such as intelligence, academics, sports, or anything. As a result, anytime we make a comparison with someone who is better than me in certain dimensions, it is referred to as upward, because you are comparing someone on the higher rung of the ladder. As a result, it is referred to as an upward social comparison. For example, if you compare yourself to someone in your class who is academically superior to you, this is an example of upward social comparison. Because you're comparing yourself to someone who is superior to you in some way, whether it's academic achievement or something else. As a result, this is referred to as an upward social comparison.

The downward social comparison is the polar opposite. It also happens when one compares oneself to someone who is inferior or has negative characteristics. So, when you say downward,

you're comparing someone who is lower on the ladder to you in some ways. So, if you're comparing yourself to someone in your class who isn't quite as excellent as you, who is a bit below you academically, it's an example of downward social comparison. So, depending on the situation, we make upward social comparisons or downward social comparisons, and both might have distinct outcomes.

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Upward social comparison generally causes people to feel inadequate, have poorer self-evaluations, and experience negative affect (Marsh & Parker, 1984). However, sometimes it may inspire people to become like the target (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Downward social comparison generally causes improvements in affect and self-evaluation (Wills, 1981). However, sometimes it may make people feel negative because it reveals how things could be worse (Aspinwall, 1997).

Both upward and downward social comparison can result in negative and positive effects on self-evaluation depending on contrastive and assimilative comparisons.

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As a result, upward social comparison makes people feel insecure, lowers their self-esteem, and has a negative impact. When we make upward social comparisons, we often feel inadequate because we are comparing ourselves to someone who is better than us. So you feel bad, you feel insufficient, you have worse self-evaluations, your self-esteem decreases, and you have a lot of negative emotions. You don't feel good because, in that way, he's better than me. That is the case in general. As a result, when we make upward comparisons in general, we feel inadequate, have a low self-esteem, and are more likely to experience negative emotions. According to research, this is the case. However, upward social comparison can sometimes inspire people to follow the target and become like them. So, in certain circumstances, upward social comparison involves comparing yourself to someone who is better than you, but rather than making you feel inferior, it may encourage you. That's also a possibility. Many times, we will be inspired by persons who are superior to us in specific areas. As a result, depending on other aspects that we shall describe, upward social comparison can have both positive and bad repercussions.

Now, research demonstrates that downward social comparison improves affect and self-evaluation in most cases. When you make a downward social comparison, comparing yourself to someone who is lower or poorer in some way than you, most people feel good about themselves since you are at least better than that person. As a result, positive emotions are more likely to be felt in such situation. In that situation, you may have a greater self-evaluation or self-esteem. However, because it illustrates how things may be worse, it can sometimes make individuals feel negative. However, in certain cases, downward social comparison may make you feel bad as well, because you are looking at someone who is doing worse than you, and you may believe that it demonstrates how bad things are for some people or that you may be in that situation as well. As a result, it may make you feel bad as well. So, just like upward social comparison, downward social comparison can have positive influence as well as negative influence on your self-evaluation, depending on the context. What is that context? Context is the next part that we will discuss. So, both upward and downward social comparison can result in negative and positive effects on self-evaluation, depending on whether you are making contrastive or assimilative comparison. So, let us see what is contrastive and what is assimilative comparison.

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Assimilation vs Contrast

Assimilation: It refers to the comparer's self-evaluation changing towards the comparison target (Verduyn et al. 2020).

Contrast: It refers to the comparer's self-evaluation changing away from the comparison target (Verduyn et al. 2020).

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Assimilation fundamentally relates to how the comparer's self-evaluation shifts toward the comparison target. So what happens in assimilation is that you minimize the gap between you and the target. As a result, you're identifying with the target, and you like the target. As a result,

the gap between you and the target become smaller, and you begin to identify with that individual. So there is a liking for that individual and a sense of intimacy with them. So, that's what assimilation means: you're self-assimilating with that individual, and the distance between you and target has reduced. So, whichever the comparison target is, you're heading toward means in terms of liking, closeness, and shrinking the gap. Assimilation is the term for this process.

So, in the case of contrast, you're doing the exact opposite, widening the gap between you and the goal. So, by contrasting yourself with the comparison target, you are really moving away from it. So, because you don't particularly like the target, there isn't much closeness between you and the target; there is a significant gap between you and the target; there is a lack of closeness.

As a result, it's a contrast in that you're moving away from the target. You were heading towards the target during assimilation, and you liked the target. Such, when you are comparing with someone else, whether you are sort of like or assimilating with that person or you are comparing in a contrasting fashion so that you were kind of going away from the goal, social comparison may be in this aspect as well.

So, how might these two dimensions of upward and downward social comparison, as well as assimilate and contrast social comparison, interact to influence our self-evaluation? Let's see what happens.

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Social Comparison and Self-evaluations		
	Upward comparison	Downward comparison
Assimilation	Positive self-evaluation <i>My boss inspires me. He works so hard & achieved so much. I can also do same.</i>	Negative self-evaluation <i>My colleague has been fired from the job. I may be in the same situation.</i>
Contrast	Negative self-evaluation <i>I feel sad & worried that I don't earn as much as my neighbors.</i>	Positive self-evaluation <i>I am happy that I scored higher than 'x' in my class.</i>

As a result, this is a matrix that depicts the interaction of upward/downward social comparison with assimilative and contrastive social comparison. So, what happens when we make an upward social comparison of ourselves with someone who is better than us in some element or dimension, and we are doing an upward social comparison but it is in an assimilative way or we are doing an assimilative kind of comparison? So, in essence, you're comparing yourself to someone who is superior to you, but in an assimilative manner.

As a result, you're moving closer to the objective, and you like it, so the gap between you and the target is shrinking. As a result, there is a closer proximity to the target. As a result, there is a greater affinity for and identification with that goal. Then, even if you're making upward social comparisons, you'll have a positive self-evaluation because you're assimilating, and you like that target.

As a result, in such a comparison, you will have a positive self-evaluation; you will not feel bad, but rather good or inspired. So, much of the upward social comparison from which we receive inspiration is this scenario, where we were doing upward social comparison in an assimilative manner. As a result, all of the inspiration, as well as situations of social comparison, fall under this category. So, suppose, someone says, "My boss inspires me since he has worked so hard and accomplished so much in his life". So it's an upward social comparison because your boss is at the top of the corporate ladder and has accomplished more than you have. As a result, you're establishing a social comparison with someone who is superior to you in various areas, particularly in terms of success. And you like your boss, so it's an assimilative comparison. So you say, "My boss inspires me," because you like whatever life he has lived and are inspired by it. He worked quite hard and accomplished a great deal in his life. And you become inspired by it, and you think to yourself, "If he can do it, why can't I?" As a result, his life serves as an inspiration to you.

This is an example of a social comparison that is upward assimilative. So you're comparing yourself to someone who is better than you, but you're receiving inspiration from it because you like the target and are moving toward it.

In the instance of upward social comparison, if you do it in a contrasting way, you will have negative self-evaluation. So, you're making an upward social comparison with someone who is better than you, but you're doing it in a contrastive way, which means you're moving away from the target because you don't like the target, so you're putting some distance between you and the target. So, in the event of upward social comparison, contrastive comparison will lead to negative self-evaluation, you will feel awful about yourself, you will feel envy, and you will feel anger.

So, in the case of an upward contrasting social comparison, all of these feelings may surface. As an example, let's imagine someone says, "I'm upset and worried since I don't earn as much as my neighbor." So you're comparing yourself to a neighbor who makes more money than you. So he owns a lot more and earns a lot more than you. As a result, he earns more than you do. So, you're making an upward social comparison in terms of earnings, but you're doing it in a negative light, which means you don't like it. You're putting distance between yourself and the target; you don't like the fact that your neighbor earns more than you. So you're making a contrasting comparison, moving away from the goal, and you don't like that person. So you're depressed and concerned about it. As a result, you may experience feelings of envy, resentment, and other negative emotions. When you undertake upward social comparison in a contrastive way, this is an example of negative self-evaluation or it may have a negative impact on our self-evaluation or self-esteem.

Let us now turn our attention to the downward social comparison. As a result, depending on whether it is assimilative or contrastive, downward social comparison can have both positive and negative consequences. As a result, when downward social comparison is done in an assimilative manner, we may experience negative self-evaluation. So you're making a downward social comparison with someone who is lower than you, or at least in some ways lower than you, and you're comparing with them. However, you were assimilating with that individual. You can relate to such person and his life circumstances. You will also have a negative self-evaluation in that instance since you do not enjoy the fact that the person is doing worse in his life, is poor, or is failing in various elements of his life. Because you will identify with that person, and you will feel guilty if he does anything bad. So that's what identifying means. So, if you're making an assimilative comparison with a person that is, in some ways, inferior to you, you'll feel horrible

about it. As a result, this is referred to as a negative self-evaluation. For instance, let me give you an example. Someone informs me that my coworker has been sacked. It's possible that I'm in the same boat as that person. So, someone is working in the same organization, and one of his coworkers in the same organization, at the same employment level, is fired for whatever reason. And you're feeling awful about it because being fired implies a downward contrast. Someone who is in a worse situation than you is dismissed, but you are still not fired, but you are upset because you empathize with that person and his life circumstances, which are extremely similar to yours. You could be fired tomorrow if he gets fired today. Your self-evolution is becoming negative in that sense, and you may experience sadness.

The third and last category is a contrastive downward social comparison. So you're comparing yourself to someone who is inferior to you in some ways, but you're doing so in a contrastive way. So, if you dislike the target and move away from it, it will have a positive self-evaluation, and you will have, and you will experience happiness. And you'll be pleased with yourself. Because you are pleased that someone is lower than you. Because you might not be able to relate to the target. As a result, there is a sense of competitiveness with that individual. As a result, you will feel good about yourself if you perform better than the other individual. That is the definition of positive self-evolution in this context. For example, if someone says, "I am happy that I scored higher than x individual, whoever he or she is in my class." As a result, there will be a sense of competition in your class. So, whatever the target is, you are not identifying with him or her, and you may dislike him or her. As a result, there is a contrast. So you outperform that individual, and you're pleased with yourself. As a result, you now feel superior. So, your assessment is now favorable or positive. As a result, this is an example of social comparison with a downward contrast.

As you can see, downward and upward social comparisons can have both positive and negative effects dependent on assimilation or contrastive comparison. And we usually make assimilative comparisons with persons we like. It might be our siblings, family members, or someone with whom we have a strong bond and like spending time. So, if they succeed and become better than us, we feel good and go through the experience of basking in reflected glory.

Assimilation occurs most often with people we like, with whom we have a certain level of intimacy, whether it is a very good friend, family members, or whoever it is. Contrast usually

occurs in a competitive context, when you don't like the target or there's a competitive sense of jealousy with that individual. In these circumstances, a contrastive evaluation or comparison takes place.

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Studies indicate that social comparisons are more likely when the comparison dimension is relevant to the self, and when the comparison target is similar to the self (Verduyn et al. 2020).

However, people may also compare sometime with irrelevant targets (Gilbert, Giesler & Morris, 1995)

Recent meta-analysis showed that in offline contexts, individuals mostly tend to compare to someone who outperforms them (upward comparison) in a contrasting manner, resulting in lowered self-evaluations, envy and overall worsened mood . (Gerber, Wheeler, & Suls, 2018)

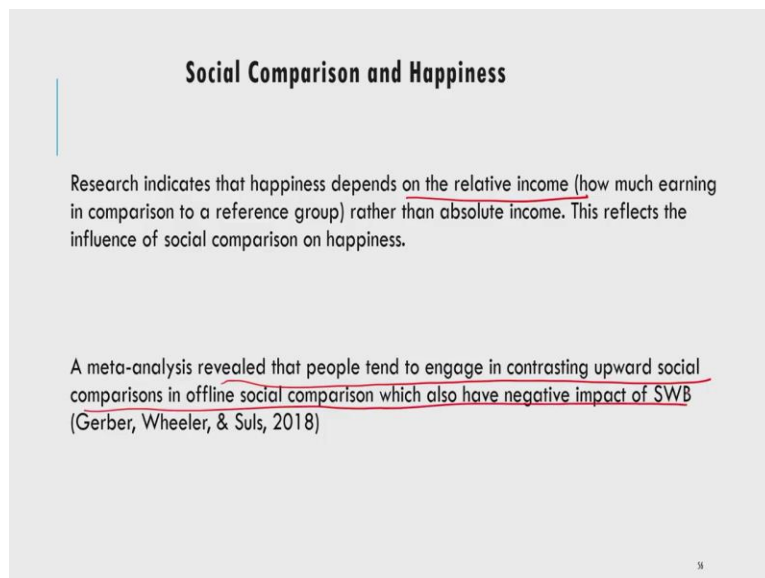
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As a result, research show that social comparison is more frequent when the comparison dimension is relevant to one's self and the comparison target is comparable to one's self. We usually compare ourselves to persons who are similar to us. In general, we do not compare ourselves to just anyone; we compare ourselves to individuals who are quite similar to us, such as those in our neighborhood, those in the same socioeconomic category, those in my class, and those in the same job. We frequently compare ourselves to persons who are similar to us and for whom the dimension is significant in my life. As a result, we compare ourselves to others.

However, research demonstrates that people make decisions, which are sometimes compared to irrelevant targets. As a result, human beings are capable of doing anything, even comparing themselves to irrelevant people. Someone from the middle class, for example, may compare himself to a billionaire and become depressed as a result. It's possible, but we don't usually do that since he's so different from us, someone comparing a middle-class person to a millionaire. And he is feeling sad, which makes no sense. However, they can still do so. However, we frequently compare ourselves to those who are similar to us. In the offline context, in the

general life situation, individuals mostly tend to compare to someone who outperforms them, according to a recent meta analysis, which is essentially a summary of a lot of research in a particular area, we call it analysis of the analysis of various studies called meta analysis. That is, upward social comparison in a contrasting manner, with lower self-evaluation envy and a worsened mood as a result. People, according to research, tend to make more upward contrasting social comparisons. You equate it to feelings of envy and jealousy toward individuals who are better than you, but you are envious of them, therefore it's a different purpose. And we had decreased self-esteem, envy, as well as other negative emotions. This type of comparison is common among people. They can also make various comparisons, but upward contrasting comparisons are far more common. As a result, it can have a significant impact on our happiness; we may get depressed as a result of such comparisons.

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Social Comparison and Happiness

Research indicates that happiness depends on the relative income (how much earning in comparison to a reference group) rather than absolute income. This reflects the influence of social comparison on happiness.

A meta-analysis revealed that people tend to engage in contrasting upward social comparisons in offline social comparison which also have negative impact of SWB (Gerber, Wheeler, & Suls, 2018)

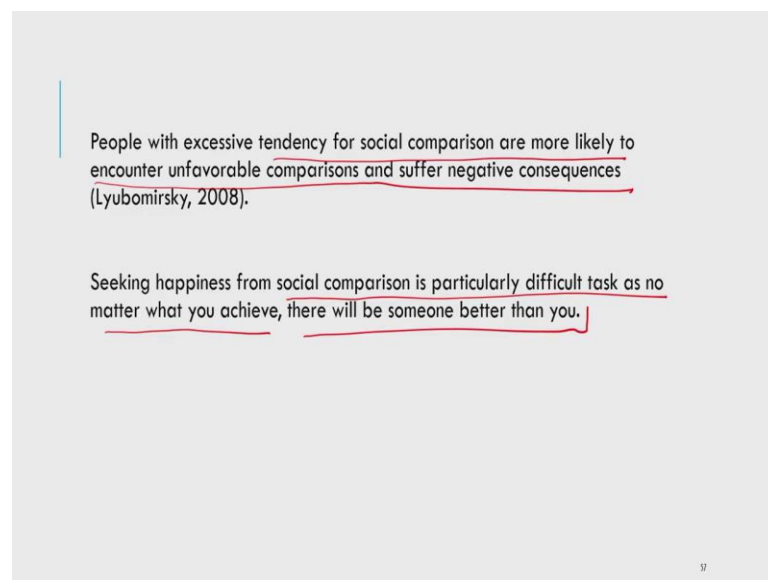
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So, what's the link between social comparison and happiness, exactly? Some of these topics have already been discussed. As a result, studies show that happiness is related to relative income. You may recall that in a presentation about socio demographic characteristics and happiness, we highlighted how happiness is more likely to derive from relative income than than absolute income. So, when we talk about relative income, we're talking about how much you earn in

comparison to someone else. As a result, you receive happiness from comparing your earnings to those of others. As a result, this supports the idea that social comparison plays a significant influence in our happiness. So, no matter how much money and income you have, you will only be happy if you make more than someone else. As a result, relative income appears to play a significant effect in happiness. As a result, there is also an indirect type of evidence that social comparison has a significant role in people's happiness.

People who engage in contrasted upward social comparison in offline social comparison have a detrimental influence on social or subjective well-being, according to a meta-analysis. As previously said, the majority of people engage in upward contrastive social comparison, which has a detrimental impact on our self-esteem and happiness.

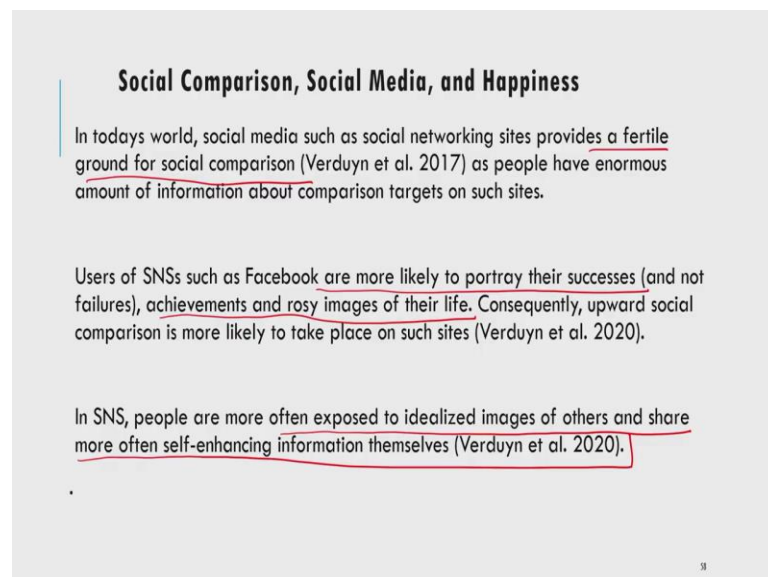
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People who have a strong social comparison propensity are more likely to face unfavorable comparisons and suffer negative outcomes as a result. People who have a strong tendency to compare themselves frequently may be seen. So, this temptation is extremely powerful, that if we compare ourselves to others too much, we will become very unstable and, most of the time, very depressed. Simply because it will have negative consequences and people have a natural tendency to compare upward contrastive fashion.

As a result, they will inadvertently bring a lot of grief and suffering into their lives. It's especially tough to find satisfaction through social comparison because comparing yourself to someone else is really challenging. Why? Because no matter what you achieve, you will always find someone who is better than you. And you'll find reasons to be dissatisfied. So, achieving happiness through social comparison is actually quite difficult, because our minds are continuously looking for a better target and feeling sad about it.

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Social Comparison, Social Media, and Happiness

In today's world, social media such as social networking sites provides a fertile ground for social comparison (Verduyn et al. 2017) as people have enormous amount of information about comparison targets on such sites.

Users of SNSs such as Facebook are more likely to portray their successes (and not failures), achievements and rosy images of their life. Consequently, upward social comparison is more likely to take place on such sites (Verduyn et al. 2020).

In SNS, people are more often exposed to idealized images of others and share more often self-enhancing information themselves (Verduyn et al. 2020).

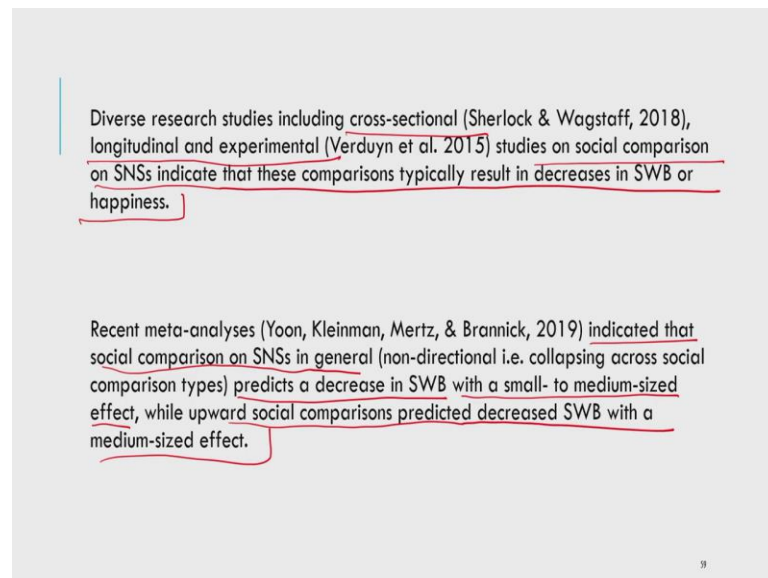
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Now, consider how social comparison is becoming increasingly complex as a result of the rise of social media, particularly social networking sites. Things are growing increasingly complex nowadays, and it is having a significant impact on our emotions and happiness. Let's take a look at some of the research findings. Social media, such as social networking sites like Facebook, provide fertile ground for social comparison in today's society. We used to make social comparisons with only people in our immediate vicinity in an offline setting. As a result, you may have ten to fifteen persons in mind as potential targets for your social comparison. With the advent of social networking sites, you now have hundreds of people in your friend list on the social networking site. They're all now the subject of social comparison. As a result, it is growing considerably more complicated and exerting a much bigger influence. Previously, you had a

small number of individuals; today, you have a large number of people whose lives, whatever is going on in their lives, is coming to you. And you find yourself comparing your life to theirs on a regular basis. And it has a constant influence on them. As a result, members of social networking sites like Facebook are more inclined to exaggerate their accomplishments and paint rosy images of their lives. When you look at social networking sites, you'll notice that most people are always displaying the best side of their lives. Whatever good things are happening in their lives, they are constantly posting images and images about that aspect, their achievements, their successes, their awards, whatever it is they are receiving, the good pictures of vacations, holidaying, and all of this rosy pictures, which people generally post in social networking sites. In general, no one wants to reveal their dark side.

So what happens is that on social networking sites, upward social comparison is getting much more evident, because you can see all the beautiful things in other people's lives and think, "My life isn't good." Other people appear to be having a good time all of the time because you have complete control over what you publish. As a result, people spend the majority of their time posting all of the positive aspects of their lives. And you can find yourself constantly comparing yourself to others and feeling insufficient, as if your life isn't exciting enough or something. In that sense, it has a significant impact on you. As a result, on social networking sites, people are frequently exposed to idealized pictures of others and are more likely to provide self-enhancing information. People always submit information that promotes their self-esteem and self-image. And if you are always comparing yourself to their lives, it will have a significant impact on you, and you may become sad and depressed as a result.

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So, a variety of research studies, including cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and other types of studies, reveal that social comparison on social networking sites often leads to a decrease in subjective well-being or happiness. In general, too much social comparison and those who are overly interested in social networking sites diminishes people's subjective well-being and happiness. That is supported by the majority of investigations. People are prone to making upward social comparisons. When they see someone else doing a better job than me, they will do it in a way that makes them feel bad about themselves. You'll feel inferior because my life isn't all that great. Because this is a natural human tendency, you unconsciously do it.

According to a recent meta analysis published in 2019, social comparison on social networking sites predicts a decrease in subjective well-being, also known as happiness, with a small to medium effect size, whereas upward social comparison predicts a decrease in social, subjective well-being with a medium effect size. So, in general, social comparison, even in meta analyses, demonstrates that it tends to diminish people's subjective wellbeing or satisfaction.

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However, some studies also revealed that social comparisons in SNSs may not always decrease happiness or SWB.

Social comparison on SNSs is not associated with negative emotional consequences when-

-comparison is focused on opinions rather than ability (Yang, Holden, & Carter, 2018)

-there is a downward social comparison (Feltman, & Szymanski, 2018)

-assimilation (rather than contrast) to an upward comparison target (increases SWB and leads to feelings of inspiration) (Park & Baek, 2018).

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However, several research have found that social comparison on social networking sites does not reduce happiness in specific situations. What do these situations entail? The comparison is based on opinions rather than abilities in one context. So, if you're comparing your viewpoints, whether my viewpoint is correct or incorrect may not have as big of an impact. However, comparing your abilities, someone else's abilities, and your own ability, especially in an upward, contrasting manner, has a much greater impact on your emotions. As a result, focusing on opinions rather than skills may not have much of an impact. If you want to perform a downward social comparison, you can do it on a social networking site by looking at some people whose lives aren't as excellent as yours. In some circumstances, for example, people may do so; in that case, obviously, it will not reduce your happiness.

If you use assimilation rather than contrast and set an upward comparison goal, your happiness may not suffer. Because you like that target at that point. And because you like and are close to that person, you may not feel bad about it if they are doing good. As a result, it may not have a harmful impact in certain circumstances.

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Verduyn et al. (2020) noted that the positive consequences of social comparison on SNSs are exceptions rather than the rule.

Online social comparison have a general negative impact of SWB as revealed by meta-analysis (Yoon et al., 2019).

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However, evidence indicates that they are the exceptions, not the rule. According to the studies conducted by Verduyn and his colleagues this year only, in the year 2020, positive effects of social comparison on social networking sites are the exception rather than the rule. So, while these favorable results may occur in specific circumstances, the majority of individuals prefer to compare upwards assimilative ways because of the mind's tendency. And they are envious, jealous, or whatever it is that is causing them to be unhappy. Some people may become depressed as a result of spending too much time on social networking sites. As a result, as indicated by meta analysis, online social comparison has a general detrimental influence on social subjective well-being. So, the point is not that we are belittling social networking sites; they have many benefits and have truly altered our method of connecting with others, as well as many advantages. However, the trouble arises when you engage in excessive upward social comparison and feel horrible about it, as a result of observing others' lives. Excessive social comparison is the issue. Social networking sites, like any other item, have a lot of values in them and a lot of functions to perform. So, the issue is not with the social networking site; rather, it is with how we engage in excessive social comparison. As a result, we must exercise caution when using social networking sites in order to comprehend how our minds play tricks on us, making us miserable and depressed.

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How to Avoid Social Comparison?

If one only wished to be happy, this could be easily accomplished; but we wish to be happier than other people, and this is always difficult, for we believe others to be happier than they are.

-Montesquieu

Comparison is the thief of joy .

-Theodore Roosevelt

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So, how do we avoid comparing ourselves to others? I'll just read a few quotes from famous people. Montesquieu once remarked that happiness could be easily obtained if one merely desired it. Happiness is quite simple to achieve; in fact, most human beings are naturally happy; happiness is something that is deeply ingrained in us. So, getting it is actually quite simple. But the issue is that we want to be happier than others. So, that's the issue: you're unhappy in your own life because you're constantly comparing yourself to others. So, when you notice that someone is performing better than you or has more than you, it makes you sad. So, that's the issue, and it's the primary reason why people can't achieve happiness. And he explained that this is tough since we are conditioned to assume that others are happier than we are. We always assume that others are doing better than us or that something in their lives is better than mine. This social comparison process is robbing you of a great deal of your joy. So, if you want to be happy, all you have to do is critically evaluate and examine your own life. People, on the other hand, are constantly finding themselves unstable in their lives as a result of social comparison. And they are constantly looking for reasons to be miserable by comparing themselves to others. Comparison, according to Theodore Roosevelt, is the thief of joy, as it robs us of all our delights in life. If we create too many comparisons between ourselves and other individuals.

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Be aware of the negative consequences of unnecessary social comparison and avoid it. Too much social comparison makes people highly insecure and vulnerable.

Practice gratitude and be grateful to what you have and resist envy (happiness and envy can not stay together).

Use social comparison as inspiration and motivation

Use self evaluations using self-set internal standards (I should improve public speaking skills and become better in future) rather than others performances influencing your feelings.

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So, the main principle is to be mindful of the negative effects of doing things that aren't essential. Because we've already discussed how it might have negative implications in your life in this class. So, first and foremost, you must comprehend how it affects your life; comprehension is critical. As a result, be aware of the dangers of unnecessary social comparison and avoid them. You are comparing unnecessarily without any relevance, and it will not benefit you in any way; it will only make you miserable. So, try to prevent this as much as possible; but, it may be essential at times, which is fine. However, unwanted social comparison is something that will always drain all of our joy, all of our joys in life. As a result, try to stay away from it. So, too much social comparison makes people feel uneasy and vulnerable; you'll always feel unstable and anxious because you'll see a lot of others doing this, and you'll think to yourself, "I should do that too." As a result, we will always be guided by external aims and things. You will become unstable and susceptible as a result of this. Another key aspect is to cultivate gratitude and be appreciative for what you have rather than becoming envious of others. So, this is critical, and we already gave a comprehensive lecture on gratitude, in which we stressed the importance of practicing gratitude and being grateful for what you have. Obviously, try to improve whatever you can, but you don't have to constantly compare yourself to others and try to outperform them. Be grateful for what you have, practice gratitude, and be thankful for what you have. As a result, all envy and hatred will evaporate instantly. Only people who lack gratitude complain constantly

and exhibit features or qualities of jealousy and anger. As a result, happiness and jealousy cannot coexist, and practicing gratitude can assist you in this endeavor. As a result, we've already got a whole lecture on the subject. You can attend the lecture to learn more about how to practice.

You can use social comparison to motivate and inspire yourself. This is something we can accomplish as well. If someone is performing better than you, rather than being envious, you can take inspiration from it. So, rather than hating or disliking someone, you may always make an assimilative social comparison. And use it as a source of inspiration. As a result, this is critical. You can perform social comparisons since they are around all of the time. However, you can use it for inspiration in an upward assimilative manner. As a result, that is also highly crucial. It is more vital to employ self-evaluation with self-set standard goals. If that is your incentive, rather than thinking I should do better than that person, you will always fall short of your goal of becoming happier. Because that individual may move ahead of you at that point, and there may be others ahead of you as well. As a result, it is always preferable to create your own internal standard. These are some of my life's issues or flaws; I set this bar for myself, and I need to improve. As a result, you labor toward it and strive to meet your own high expectations. For example, if you want to enhance your public speaking skills and believe they are lacking, you can work on them. But if the criterion is your own set of standards, rather than believing that I should be able to talk better than that person, it's a recipe for despair and misery. So, if you want to compare yourself, compare yourself to your own internal standards; this is the current standard, and I want to improve upon it. Instead of expressing that I should be doing better than that individual, a negative social comparison will be made. And it won't help you at all; instead, it'll make you sad and miserable. So, those are some thoughts on social comparison and how it affects our pleasure. So, with this thought, I'll conclude today's lesson, and then we'll discuss some more key happiness activities in the following module. I'll conclude today's presentation with this. Thank you very much.