

Course Syllabus

I. Course Information

- Cultivating Joy
- 6-week course, 2-hour sessions
- Can be provided live, on zoom, or hybrid

II. Instructor Information

- Sara Orem, Ph.D.
- sara@saraorem.com, 510-459-0239
- Over 10 years' experience developing and delivering adult courses focused on topics related to aging and positive psychology, primarily through Osher Lifelong Learning institutions.

III. Course Description and Objectives

- The course grew out of the Greater Good Science Center's Big Joy program. That program is a free, online, voluntary series of activities that may enhance one's ability to experience joy. According to the data collected so far (the program is ongoing), people who participate seem to feel happier, improve their relationships, and sleep better.
- While there is no expectation that participants in the course will do activities suggested by the course between each session, there will be invitations to try these activities and to report back to the course as to their usefulness.

IV. Session by Session Description

- Session 1: Introduction to Course and its Topics. Topics include Positive Psychology and the Science of Joy, Understanding joy compared to happiness, The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and its mission, The Big Joy Project, the 7 Micro-actions suggested in the Joy Project and how they will be integrated into the course, Invitation to do something kind for someone else.
- Session 2: Mindfulness and its relationship to Joy. Topics include Definition of Mindfulness, An Eastern and Western view of Mindfulness, Mindful practices including meditation, Several experiential samplings of Mindfulness, Research on the impact of Mindfulness and its relationship to joy, Invitation to find a quiet 5-15 minutes in nature to reflect on its beauty.
- Session 3: Practicing Gratitude. Topics include Definition of Gratitude, Work of Robert Emmons at UC Davis about Gratitude, What does it mean to have an attitude of gratitude, Relationship between Gratitude and Joy, Gratitude practices including keeping a Gratitude Journal and writing a Gratitude letter, a Review of what we've learned so far, Invitation to keep a log of 3 things daily for which you are grateful.

- Session 4: Resilience and Growth Mindset: Topics include Definition of Resilience and its importance to wellbeing, Need for resilience in older age, Strategies to increase resilience, Growth Mindset; the work of Carol Dweck, How Growth Mindset relates to resilience, Self-compassion and positive self-talk in resilience, Invitation to reflect on an example of resilience/Growth Mindset in yourself or someone you know.
- Session 5: Finding Meaning and Purpose; The Path to Deeper Joy. Topics include a Definition of Meaning and Purpose and their Difference, How Meaning and Purpose change over life's journey, Shifting components of meaning, Individual stories of finding and revising one's purpose over time, How to revise and renew your purpose, Invitation to find or create something that expresses your purpose—a note, a poem, a picture, something you find in a magazine—anything.
- Session 6: Awe, the latest research in Joy, and How to Integrate Joy into your Daily Life. Topics include a Review of all topics we've covered in the course, Awe; its definition and current research into Awe, Flavors of Awe, Physical and Psychological Effects of Awe, Your own experiences of Awe, Developing a personal joy practice, Making and keeping a Joy List, Overcoming obstacles to joy.

V. Suggested Resources for the Course

- There is no required reading list for the course but resources for each session will be listed in the last PowerPoint slide of that session. In addition, The Greater Good Science Center's Magazine https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/?_ga=2.115693382.151097541.1717281252-894621658.1715460254 is a chronicle of topics and practical suggestions and stories illustrating ways to enhance happiness and joy in daily life.
- Supplementary readings for anyone interested in exploring any of these topics.
 - The Book of Joy, 2016, The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams, Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.
 - The Anxious Generation, 2024, Jonathan Haidt, Chapter 8: Spiritual Elevation and Degradation, Penguin.
 - The Happiness Hypothesis, 2006, Jonathan Haidt, Basic Books.