

Title: Positive Psychology Experience Improves Healthcare Worker Happiness

Authors and Credentials: Nancy Dunn, MS, RN, Salem Health, nancy.dunn@salemhealth.org ; Paul Howard, MLES, PhD, Salem Health; Sara Nash, BSN, RN, SMSRN, NE-BC, Salem Health; Frieda Ryan Anzur, BSN, RN, OCN, CHPN, Salem Health; Elizabeth Whitney, BA, Salem Health

Purpose: The goal was to utilize learnings from cohort experiments and generate new knowledge on how to improve healthcare worker (HCW) subjective happiness during the pandemic.

Relevance/Significance: A 2020 study of 21,000 HCWs resulted in 49% reporting burnout. A 2021 survey of 1,327 HCWs resulted in up to 69% reporting burnout. Studies show improvement in happiness is achievable and can reduce burnout. Emotional recovery from burnout is higher among HCWs who engage in self-care behaviors. The research hypothesis asked “*Will HCW who engage in a positive psychology experience (PPE) improve and sustain happiness?*”

Methods: Investigators conducted a randomized controlled trial with 183 HCWs. Participants consented, submitted data, including demographics, 8 evidence-based behaviors known to improve happiness, and current happiness using the validated Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS). Intervention subjects (IS, N=93) read *The Happiness Advantage* by Shawn Achor, then engaged in a 21- day challenge to start and/or improve the 8 behaviors. Control subjects (CS, N=78) were asked to “lead their normal lives” for 6 months. SHS and behaviors were re-measured post challenge and 6 months later for both groups.

Outcomes: Participants were mostly female (89%), were registered nurses (41%) who worked on the frontline (64%) and primarily on the day shift (79%). Chi-square and t-tests determined baseline equivalency. Reliability for the SHS was excellent ($\alpha = .90$). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) within the intervention group showed the SHS significantly increased 17% on average (p -value $< .001$) from baseline to the 6-month post challenge follow-up assessment. Sample attrition rate was 25%, 40% for ISs and 9% for CSs. No significant moderator had condition effects (all p -values $> .337$).

Implications for Practice: The PPE should be offered to HCWs. The study design can be improved by comparing the IS intervention with CSs who only read the book. This may balance the attrition rate and improve validity of the results.