

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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Attention: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Is 2012 your year to get happy?

A new study at UTAS is aiming to prove whether a famed American psychologist's shortcuts to happiness actually work.

Rosalind Woodworth, a Doctor of Psychology student in the UTAS School of Psychology, needs participants for an internet-based study that will test the "interventions" recommended by American psychologist Martin Seligman.

According to Seligman, these interventions are easy ways to increase the happiness of the ordinary person.

Rosalind has already completed one study previously based on recommendations from Seligman. She followed 17 people who applied some of the interventions Seligman proposed for 10 weeks.

"Seligman had five interventions and he found that three showed particularly good results," she said.

One of these interventions focused on building gratitude, two focused on increasing awareness of what is most positive about oneself, and two focused on identifying strengths of character. It remains unclear as to why Seligman believes that these particular interventions work.

Rosalind's first study didn't produce any clear results.

"My participants didn't report any real difference in their happiness levels."

Rosalind's second study will investigate whether a problem exists with the interventions themselves or whether other factors may be influencing the results.

"I'm interested in finding out why Seligman had such strong, positive results – I'm also interested in seeing whether it might be a cultural difference, as Seligman's studies are US-based.

"Those positive results may be a result of Seligman's status in America as a big-name researcher," she said.

"He has quite a big following and a series of popular books. It may be that his profile is attracting people who already believe in his teachings on optimism."

Seligman remains silent in his research as to why the interventions he has developed should work. Part of Rosalind's research is to further explore this issue.

Participating in the study:

Participants will take part in the study via an internet-based program.

Rosalind would prefer the participants to be living in Australia in order to compare her results with those of Seligman.

Ideally, she would like 500 people to be involved.

To take part in the study, please visit: www.happiness-study.org

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