An introduction to a lecture

Listen to the introduction of a psychology lecture to practise and improve your listening skills.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task
Match the vocabulary (1–6) with the definitions (a–f).

Vocabulary	**Definitions**
1. …… perception	a. so interested in something that you do not notice anything else
2. …… to lose track of	b. the way you understand or think about something
3. …… a psychologist	c. to forget about
4. …… a state	d. the process of giving all of your attention to something
5. …… concentration	e. someone who studies the human mind
6. …… absorbed	f. the physical or mental condition of a person at a specific time

Tasks

Task 1
Write a number (1–6) to put the topics in the order they are mentioned.

_____ What makes a happy life?

_____ Csikszentmihalyi and his work

_____ An outline of the rest of the lecture

_____ The difference between psychology and positive psychology

_____ Examples of flow

_____ One definition of a happy life

Task 2
Are the sentences true or false?

		Answer	
1.	Positive psychology focuses on people's problems.	True	False
2.	The teacher asks the students to define a happy life.	True	False
3.	Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi believes that external events are the main things that make us happy or sad.	True	False
4.	Csikszentmihalyi believes that a happy life means being very focused on what you do.	True	False
5.	Csikszentmihalyi studied depression, and from there learned about happiness.	True	False
6.	Flow means being completely absorbed in what you are doing.	True	False
7.	Csikszentmihalyi was influenced by watching creative people.	True	False
8.	The rest of the lecture will look at what other psychologists think of this theory.	True	False

Discussion
Have you ever been in a 'state of flow' while doing an activity?

Transcript

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the first lecture of our new course in Positive Psychology. While some people may associate psychology with looking at what's wrong with us, and at what problems we have, there is much more to psychology than that. Positive psychology, for example, looks at how to help people become happier.

This lecture begins with a question: what makes a happy life?

Now, I'm going to give you one possible answer. A happy life is a life in which you are completely absorbed in what you do. Now, how does this compare with what you and your partner said?

This answer comes from the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and the theory of flow. Csikszentmihalyi is a psychologist who has spent much of his professional life on the study of what makes people happy and how we can find happiness.

Csikszentmihalyi suggests the theory that happiness is not caused by external events or things that happen to us. Our perception of these things and how we see these events either makes us happy or sad. In other words, if we want happiness, we have to actively look for it. However, this does not mean that we should always look for happiness! Csikszentmihalyi believed that our happiest moments happen when we are in a state of flow.

The theory of flow can be summarised like this: when we are totally involved in, or focused on, what we are doing, we are in a state of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi got the inspiration for this theory when he noticed how artists worked in a studio. They completely lost track of time, they didn't notice they were hungry or tired, and they could work for hours, even days, without stopping. Anyone I have spoken to who has experienced this state of concentration has said it's difficult to explain. The best way to explain it is that it is like being in a river and the flow of the water carries you away.

For the rest of this lecture, I will explore this theory of flow in more detail. First we will look at Csikszentmihalyi's life, and how it influenced his ideas. Then we will look at the conditions that go with a state of flow. What creates flow, exactly? Finally, we will look at activities that can help us achieve flow in our everyday lives. Will this course make you happy for life? Well, maybe. Maybe.

Right, let's get started. If you look at the next slide …

Answers

Preparation task
1. b
2. c
3. e
4. f
5. d
6. a

Task 1
1. The difference between psychology and positive psychology
2. What makes a happy life?
3. One definition of a happy life
4. Csikszentmihalyi and his work
5. Examples of flow
6. An outline of the rest of the lecture

Task 2
1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. False