

# MAPP Alumni Magazine

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## A Country In Pursuit of Happiness

by Jaclyn Gaffaney, MAPP 2017

The Kingdom of Bhutan has been a trailblazer in nationwide happiness research and integration. Dasho Karma Ura, the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies & Gross National Happiness Research, traveled across the world to provide MAPP with an overview of how Bhutan has integrated happiness into the country's fabric via research, policy, and programs.

Bhutan delivers the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Survey to some 7,142 residents over the course of nine months. The questions span everything from sleep cycles to loneliness to a sense of belonging to subjective wellbeing – all in the pursuit of happiness. Ura outlined many survey results, providing context along the way.

The survey has been utilized to create a framework of nine categories. (Sometimes this framework is referred to as the 'Gross National Happiness Index'). The categories include:

- Psychological well-being
- Health
- Time use
- Education
- Cultural diversity and resilience



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## HAPPINESS continued



- Good governance
- Community vitality
- Ecological diversity and resilience
- Living standards

The survey is utilized as a basis for policy changes. Every five years, the planning ministry utilizes the criteria framework to make a new plan, shift budgets, and devise new policy and programs, both in the public and private business sector. He said that in every cycle, on average one to two fail, whereas two to three new policies or programs move forward. He clarified that some portion of the budget always goes to happiness measures to demonstrate that the government indeed values this subject.

He explained that at a fundamental level, the four roots of good health include sleep, right

food, exercise, and mindfulness. During the closing Q&A, he expanded upon this and answered a question relating to personal happiness. He said that he did not have a profound answer. Instead he suggested that we simply integrate a series of small meaningful things that will improve our happiness daily (e.g. integrate something that strikes us aesthetically) and take care of our bodies since we are all embodied (e.g. integrate exercise and mindfulness). We can carry the advice of Karma Ura forward: it is all about the little things.

**Additional Resource** can be found on the [MAPP Alumni portal](#) for alumni members. These include: movie clips outlining how the survey is conducted. A chapter Karma Ura wrote entitled “Dialog on the Destinies of Nations” is a metaphor outlining the various perspectives that need understanding in order to grapple with the purpose and future of nations. Additionally, “The Experience of Gross National Happiness as a Developmental Framework” distills how the Gross National Survey leads towards policy decisions and outcomes.

Dasho Karma Ura is the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies & Gross National Happiness Research, an institute dedicated to promoting His Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s globally influential development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, and conducting multidisciplinary research on culture and history of Bhutan and policy studies. The Centre for Bhutan Studies is currently engaged in creating a conceptually new facility for Thimphu city called the Library of Mind, Sound and Body, to connect these three aspects of being with wellbeing and happiness.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jaclyn Gaffaney, MAPP, is a positive psychology practitioner with a passion for collective, systems-level well-being and the human experience. She is currently an associate at Wharton People Analytics and also works as an independent consultant. In addition to her MAPP degree, she has a BA in Communication from the University of Southern California.



Aren Cohen MAPP 2007

## Strength-Based Parenting: A Resource for Flourishing Families

The MAPP community was fortunate to have Lea Waters, president-elect of IPPA and the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne, serve as the first plenary speaker at the 2017 MAPP Summit. During the well-attended presentation, Professor Waters shared her personal story and the research that led to the publication of her 2017 book, *The Strengths Switch*. Professor Waters originally studied Organizational Psychology and Positive Organizations, and worked on Positive Education in Australia. After an influential conversation with Marty, Professor Waters decided to start researching parenting and families within the context of Positive Psychology. Professor Waters explained that as she worked with schools on implementing Positive Psychology, she frequently heard the question, “How do we get the parents on board?”

Upon examining the literature on parenting and families in psychological research, Dr. Waters found that the majority of it was deficit based. Additionally, parenting books for the layperson had information but little academic research regarding parenting. Dr. Waters initial research on Positive Psychology and Parenting drew upon the “broaden and build” research of Dr. Barbara Fredrickson and the passion research of Dr. Robert Vallerand. Eventually she turned to the various Strengths Inventories (VIA, Gallup, Character Lab and Realise2) to start building a body of research around Strengths-Based Parenting. Her research has found that Strengths-Based parenting has positive effects on students’ life satisfaction, subjective well being and decreases children’s stress levels. Dr. Waters has created a Strengths-Based training program/intervention for parents that include a strengths survey, strengths spotting, strengths diary and strengths mapping (including a strengths “family tree”) to help parents put Strengths-Based Parenting into practice.

While Strengths-Based parenting does not ignore weaknesses, it is designed to examine what parents can do to create protective and enhancing factors for their children’s psychological health and well-being. Dr. Waters also shared with MAPPsters areas that she sees a need of additional research including: 1. In what ways is Strengths-Based Parenting good for parents? 2. How does Strengths Based Parenting help parents and children work on their weaknesses? And 3. Do children raised with Strengths Based Parenting see strengths more? All in all, Dr. Waters plenary talk was exciting and illuminating regarding the growing body of research and actionable interventions in Positive Psychology for parents and families.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aren is a learning specialist working with academically, motivationally and emotionally challenged students in the leading private schools in New York City. Aren uses the tenets of positive psychology to teach her students to use their strengths of character to change educational challenges into educational triumphs.



Rosalinda Ballesteros Valdés

## ROSALINDA BALLESTEROS VALDÉS BUILDS COMPETENCIES FOR WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS

by Jim Rink

As director of the Institute of Wellbeing and Happiness at Universidad Tecmilenio, with 29 campuses throughout Mexico, Rosalinda Ballesteros Valdés (MAPP 2015) is making very good use of her advanced degree in positive psychology.

Her job entails education, strategic planning and building competencies for happiness across the university, which has several programs, including a master's in Positive Leadership and several continuing education programs. The Master's in Positive Leadership (MLP) seeks to train professionals capable of leading the implementation of positive interventions in their sphere of influence in Mexico and the world, to increase levels of well-being and satisfaction, both in the organizations in which they work and in their community. It is a program that attracts a variety of professions, which enriches points of view, learning dynamics and diversity.

"In 2012, the university started looking into happiness and wellbeing as a way to develop competencies for life, and I have a background with a doctorate in Ethics," said Ballesteros Valdés. "The relationship between philosophy and happiness was the first thing that got me interested; also I had been working with Peace Education and I found some relationships between Positive Psychology and the field of Peace Studies."

According to Ballesteros Valdés, the Institute works via four "lines of action:"

1. Teaching about well-being through courses, degree programs and postgraduate courses in Positive Psychology.
2. Live well-being, applying what we know about well-being in our daily life at Universidad Tecmilenio.
3. Providing services for well-being; offering training, coaching, and consulting based on Positive Psychology for schools, enterprises and organizations.
4. Researching well-being and generating more knowledge about happiness and how to make the most of it.

Also, the University and the Institute embrace and extoll the idea of Life Purpose: the belief that if more people reflect on this topic both at the personal and organizational levels, there would be more life satisfaction and less conflict, as well as less stress and better health.

In terms of general issues facing Positive Psychology as an evolving field, Ballesteros Valdés believes that "it is still a challenge to set boundaries and be able to present evidence-based approaches that practitioners can use."

### A GLOBAL NEED

"This issue will become more and more important as more people start offering services and there are schools, companies and organizations looking for answers to the negative mindsets that we often see in



## **BALLESTEROS VALDÉS** continued

the world today,” she added. “We can greatly benefit from Positive Education and should be discussing how to expand its benefits to more children around the globe. This is very relevant in the context of the world today since we are looking at recurring discourse on the risks that other groups present to ours and this rhetoric is based on negativity and not understanding the other.”

During her early career, Ballesteros Valdés was greatly influenced by James Pawelski, who was a key stakeholder, not only in her own work but in the development of the Institute.

“He first visited Tecmilenio in 2013,” she said, “and we had a long conversation about Aristotle. “A couple of years later when he called to let me know I was admitted to the MAPP program, I was really moved. He is someone that I frequently ask for advice on several topics. James loves Mexico and understands our culture and challenges. Others in the field may have also experienced this, but he has a particular way of asking questions to change the focus of the ideas that I am sharing towards the positive — a true strengths-based approach.”

Another mentor was Margaret Greenberg, who Ballesteros Valdés met in 2014. “My husband and I had the opportunity to visit Margaret and Neal in their house in 2016. I remember one particular conversation where I had just remarried as I started MAPP and I remember meeting her in September of that year and talking to her about my concern of having my children staying with their stepfather over the weekends when I went to Philadelphia. Her advice was to change my focus from the problem solving thought of *how should I address this problem* to see this situation as an opportunity for the boys to develop their own relationship with their stepdad. Just by changing my thoughts about the issue my anxiety disappeared and I was able to set the conditions for those relationships to develop. Today, the men in the family have an excellent relationship and I will always be grateful to Margaret for this advice.”

Ballesteros Valdés jokes that her divorce in 2011 and subsequent remarriage in 2014 are the “ultimate proof” of her optimistic explanatory style, explaining that she now makes positive approaches part of her marriage and family life. Part of her style has even rubbed off on her former therapist, who is now a Positive Psychology enthusiast.

### **ABOUT ROSALINDA BALLESTEROS VALDÉS**

Rosalinda Ballesteros Valdés has a Ph.D. in Humanistic Studies from Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, México. She has also undertaken Appreciative Inquiry training at Case Western Reserve University. Prior to her current position, she was an educator and professor of Ethics and International Negotiations.



## Cascading Health and Wellness Everyday, for Yourself and Others

By Frawn Morgan, MAPP 2017

Natalya Pestalozzi and Sinthu Natesan start this 2017 Fete breakout session by asking two questions –

1. What is one thing I can do to prioritize my health?
2. What is one thing I can do to improve the health of someone else?



Frawn Morgan

With these two questions in the minds of the group of 9 or 10 participants, Pestalozzi and Natesan explained their influential model of mental and physical health. They asked the group to consider their own ring of influence, beginning with themselves at the center, those they interact with on a daily basis as the first ring (personal influence), those who they don't influence daily but would like to as the second ring, and everyone else outside these rings.

As a way of priming the discussion, Pestalozzi and Natesan then asked the group if they lived mental and physical well-being as a requirement or an option. After some discussion in the group, the general consensus was that living mental and physical well-being was less a requirement than it was a skill. There were several components identified, including exercise, mindfulness and meditation, social interaction and connections, and energy management. By making small changes in these components, the result can be a noticeable increase in well-being. One of the most inventive ideas from the group was the concept of rebranding (and rethinking) activities like exercise. By rebranding exercise from a chore to a pathway to well-being, the relationship to exercise can be positively changed.

As a wrap-up exercise, the group brainstormed its three most important ideas or concepts to come out of the discussion of improving our daily experience of mental and physical well-being. Those ideas/concepts were:

1. The importance of self-care for daily well-being.
2. Rebranding activities like exercise to view them as pathways to well-being.
3. The reality that when we take care of ourselves and attend to our daily well-being, it has a positive effect on those around us, increasing the well-being of others in our rings of influence.

The realization of the group that the well-being of each individual impacts their rings of influence, and that we can individually spread well-being by caring for our own well-being ended up being the point of the exercise. Pestalozzi and Natesan took the group through the steps allowing the group to identify this for themselves, as well as identify specific ideas or concepts they could use to increase their individual well-being.





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Scott Asalone, MAPP 2008

Have you ever seen what happens to a house without a foundation? It's not pretty.

In 2007, Robert and I purchased an 1897 Victorian house in Asbury Park, NJ. We love old houses and made sure we had an engineer closely examine this one before we purchased it. So, we were totally stunned a few years later when we were working on the front porch and discovered there was no foundation under the porch. Not only that, but the turret above the porch started listing badly and pulling at the framework of the house. Luckily, we caught it in time, propped up the turret and rebuilt the foundation, but it was a strong reminder how important a good foundation is.

The MAPP Alumni Association is in the process of shoring up its foundation so alumni can continue doing amazing things. We will release our new vision and mission soon along with new structures to

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make the board more efficient to serve your needs. More importantly we hope to create a strong structure to encourage more alumni to join us and most especially to continue changing the world for good.

Here is where we need your assistance. We want to know how we can help you change the world. We want your ideas, suggestions and feedback. How can we be the foundation you need to do your good work? What resources, support, encouragement can we, as an alumni group, provide so that you can be successful?

Foundation work, as Robert and I discovered, is costly and time-consuming. And no one really sees all the work you have done. But the work is critical to the growth of any structure. Thank you to all the alumni who have worked on the vision/mission, the structure and the by-laws. We are in your debt because with a strong foundation we can change the world for good.

— Scott