



DEAR READER

This is not a typical Introduction to Psychology textbook. The book is organized into eight units or modules examining answers to this **Big Question: What are the characteristics of happy people?**¹ The first module examines research methods from the perspective of “how do we study happy people?” The next seven modules examine a specific characteristic of happy people. Happy people have:

- Enough safe air, land, food, and water
- Enough money
- Meaningful relationships
- Meaningful work
- Good physical health
- Good mental health
- Avoid the Happiness Imposter: Recreational Drugs

Although this structure is atypical for an Introduction to Psychology textbook, much of the content is consistent with other textbooks. For example, module 2 “Enough safe air, land, food, and water” examines how what is known about attitudes and attitude change can be applied to convincing humans to change their behavior to address global climate change. Module 3 “Enough money” examines principles in the emerging field of behavioral economics. Module 4 examines observational learning and operant conditioning as tools one can use in meaningful relationships (e.g., between parents and children). Module 5 examines theories of career development. Modules 6 and 7 examine Alzheimer’s disease and psychological disorders. Module 8 applies basic neuroscience to understanding how recreational drugs affect the brain and behavior.

There are several other important differences between this book and a typical textbook. Most important, the reading assignments are neither the whole nor the heart of the textbook. Instead, each reading assignment is followed by one or more activities that students complete in class. These activities are key to team-based learning, the teaching paradigm I use. Team-based learning (Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink, 2002) is a teaching paradigm in which students are assigned to permanent teams and students are required to apply class material to complex tasks. The activities in this book to help students learn the material, practice their critical thinking skills, and practice working with diverse others on complex tasks. The activities also make class time fun and engaging. If you are an instructor, you do not have to use team-based learning to use these activities. Most of them can be completed by individual students (in class or as homework) as well as by student teams.

Other differences between this book and typical textbooks are also noticeable. For example, I deliberately use an informal, conversational tone in the reading assignments. I also avoid heavy use of research citations. Although this style is unconventional in Introductory Psychology textbooks, I use it to maintain a focus on how psychology appears in people’s everyday lives.

Also, most of the reading assignments include a feature called “What Does This Have To Do With Psychology?” I include this feature as it is a reasonable question for students to ask about some of the topics in the book, like

¹I chose happiness because I hope undergraduates will find it inherently interesting, important or beautiful (see research on the best college teachers by Dr. Ken Bain, 2004).

global climate change. In addition, this feature may help correct students' naïve mental model of psychology, namely that psychology is just about mental illness and therapy.

Introduction to Psychology is arguably the most important undergraduate psychology course. Every year tens of thousands of students enroll in an Introduction to Psychology course. For most of those students, it will be their only (or last) exposure to the discipline of psychology. I wrote this book to help students understand how the science of psychology applies to their daily lives. I hope you enjoy it!