Critique of *Flourishing Through Leisure and the Upward Spiral Theory of Lifestyle Change*

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The article I decided to review for this critique is from the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* and is called, *Flourishing Through Leisure and the Upward Spiral Theory of Lifestyle Change*. The following paragraphs will summarize the article, explain its strengths and weaknesses, provide an application for the real world, and explain my reaction to the article itself.

**Article Summary**

The article *Flourishing Through Leisure and the Upward Spiral Theory of Lifestyle Change*, focused on the upward spiral theory and its impact in broadening and building positive emotions in life in order to foster positive life change. It emphasized the distinction between liking versus wanting and pleasure versus enjoyment. Liking is “the actual pleasure component of a reward or something desired”, while wanting is “the motivation or willingness to work for a reward”. The difference is that liking produces pleasure, while wanting is not a production of pleasure, but a yearning for such pleasure. Pleasure “relates to satisfying needs like hunger or experiencing positive sensations, while enjoyment “comes from intellectual stimulation and creativity”. These differences are key in understanding how to foster positive lifestyle change.

The more priority positivity becomes in one’s life, the more willing individuals are to work and put effort into all aspects of life, not just the things that bring enjoyment. The article spoke of the “broaden and build theory” in relation to cultivating a flourishing and positive lifestyle change. The broaden aspect deals with what happens in the moment, and the build aspect is the long term idea that helps us grow into better versions of ourselves through frequent positive experiences. The main idea behind the “Upward Spiral Theory”, was that this theory allows for positive emotions to create non-conscious and increasing motives for wellness.
behavior, all while being rooted in enduring biological changes. This theory builds upon the idea of flourishing, and how through leisure, an individual can identify and build their own strengths and knowledge. As the article stated, “leisure is a strength in and of itself and a context to build other strengths”.

**Article Strength**

The strength of this article was that it articulated all of its ideas concisely and orderly. It would mention a concept and then it would explain the concept. For example, the article mentioned the importance of well-being in life, and then it spent a page and a half explaining the five dimensions of well-being and its importance in fostering positivity in life. The flow of ideas and transitions were smooth, so the article seemed to build on itself as you read through it. The article also provided four tables/graphs to help the reader visualize the ideas it was presenting, which added to the orderliness and clarity of the information being presented.

**Article Weakness**

A weakness of this article was that it missed a sense of reality, as in it spoke of all the things you should do, theoretically, but didn’t give any real world examples. I wanted to read about an example of a recreational therapist using the upward spiral theory and how that had affected his/her client’s life. Those personal anecdotes would have given me some greater understanding of the process and impact of this new theory.

**Application of Article**

This article can be used for students like myself, who are looking for more ways to understand the basis of positive emotion and how to foster it in the lives of others. It is easy to figure out what makes oneself happy, but it is more difficult to help another person develop more positivity, as everyone is different. This article’s distinction between enjoyment and pleasure, in
particular, was very helpful for me in understanding what to tell a person to continue or stop doing in their life. If someone’s life is only based on pleasure, their current level of happiness will be temporary, but enjoyment grows and will not become stagnant like states of pleasure tend to become. As such, I would inform the person to include more things in their life that bring more enjoyment and eliminate those things that are just done for pleasure, but all in moderation. Balance is the key to creating a positive lifestyle change.

**Personal Reaction**

I loved reading this article and found it intellectually stimulating and enjoyable. There are two key takeaways that I received from this article. One, I learned about the upward spiral theory and its role in fostering positive emotions in order to create a more positive life environment. This helped me better grasp the differences between joy and pleasure, leisure and play, liking and wanting, and passion and emotion. I did not know about these differences before, and am now excited to use this knowledge when giving advice and working with others. Two, I now understand the importance of creating well-being through positive experiences in order to create purposeful leisure activities. It is not just play that fosters positive change, but it is purposeful leisure activities that include elements of joy, passion and nonconscious inventive salience that foster that change. This information made me analyze my life and what I do with my leisure time. As I evaluate what I do with my time now, I consider the amount of joy I receive from such activity, and adjust what I do in accordance with my willingness to have a life that is spiraling upward in positivity.
References