

The Four Levels of Happiness™

“The human heart desires joy. We all desire joy, every family, every people aspires to happiness.”



“Christianity spreads through the joy of disciples who know that they are loved and saved.”

Aristotle – *Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.*

Augustine – *We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated.*

Aquinas – *Man cannot live without joy.*

Name: _____

Date: _____

2 The foundation of the entire Spitzer Center curriculum is also foundational to human nature - namely, our universal desire for happiness.

The desire for happiness is the root and driver of all human behavior; the ultimate fulfillment of all desires; the only goal that people pursue for its own sake. It is also the fundamental catalyst for a life of holiness, the deepest longing of the human heart.

It is no accident therefore, that the Church, as an expert in humanity, is the gold standard on this subject. She offers the answer for this universal yearning. *Only in God will man find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for* (CCC).

But why *Four Levels of Happiness*? This notion was articulated by Fr. Robert Spitzer, through his study of the collective insights of more than 130 prominent theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and authors over two millennia. He identified a common thread. Human beings seem to have four levels of desire, four levels of purpose, four levels of meaning, and thus, four levels of fulfillment (or un-fulfillment). In a nutshell, four distinct levels of happiness.

Because happiness is the end goal, it is also an ideal lens for explaining why people behave as they do. The Four Levels of Happiness™ reveals the menu for all our choices. The simplicity of the model and its language is enlightening – helping people to make better choices and enjoy better relationships.

The Four Levels model also becomes a practical tool for organizational health. It's easy to grasp, profound in its implications, and practical for application. It shows members how to leverage the powerful drive for happiness toward contribution over comparison and trust over suspicion. It's a motivator for growth in virtue as well as an outstanding tool for evangelization and pastoral care.

JUST FOR FUN

A. Make a list of at least 10 things that make you happy.
(Anything counts – from chocolate to meditation)

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

B. Is happiness more: (circle one, even if it's only a 51% to 49% edge)

Our Basic, Overarching Desire	OR	One of Many Desires
A Feeling	OR	A Choice

Happiness Level One – *I lunge toward the bowl of the linguine*

(Laetum)

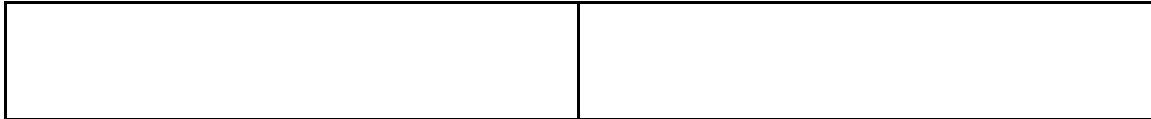
The beautiful form of material things attracts our eyes, so we are drawn to gold, silver and the like. We are powerfully influenced by the feel of things agreeable to the touch; and each of our other senses finds some quality that appeals to it individually in the variety of material objects.

Mystery Philosopher

- Goal:** Pleasure
- Means:** The physical senses
- Breadth:** Self
- Duration:** Immediate

Unhealthy

Healthy



NOTES:

- *Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do.* Ecclesiastes 9:7
- *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.* 1 Corinthians 10:31
- *Be content with little or much.* Sirach 29:23
- *The human person cannot do without the material goods that correspond to his primary needs and constitute the basic conditions for his existence.* Pius XII
- *Happiness does not consist in bodily good as its object; but bodily good can add a certain charm and perfection to Happiness.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *When a man arrives at the point of perfection in bodily pleasures, he wearies of them, and sometimes desires another kind.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Any one that chooses to look back on his past excesses, will perceive that pleasures had a sad ending.* Boethius as quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Because of this bodily dimension, however, following the wound of sin, man experiences the rebellion of his body and the perverse inclinations of his heart; he must always keep careful watch over these lest he become enslaved to them and become a victim of a purely earthly vision of life.* Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 128
- *The end and rule of temperance itself is happiness.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Temperance more than any other virtue lays claim to a certain comeliness, and the vices of intemperance excel others in disgrace.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *What we observe and seek most in temperance is the safeguarding of what is honorable, and the regard for what is beautiful.* St. Ambrose

Happiness Level Two – *Ego in the center*

(Felix)

There is appeal in worldly rank, and the possibility it offers of commanding and dominating other people; this too holds its attraction, and often provides an opportunity for settling old scores.

Mystery Philosopher

Goal: Ego Fulfillment
Means: Personal achievement
Breadth: Self
Duration: Short-term

Unhealthy

Healthy

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NOTES:

- *Man exists as a unique and unrepeatable being, he exists as an “I” capable of self-understanding, self-possession and self-determination.* Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 131
- *Excel in all that you do.* Sirach 33:22
- *There is something great which man possesses through the gift of God.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Magnanimity and humility are not contrary to one another.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.* Philippians 2:3
- *My son, glorify yourself with humility, and ascribe to yourself honor according to your worth.* Sirach 10:28
- *When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but with the humble is wisdom.* Proverbs 11:2
- *Happiness is the perfect good. But power is most imperfect. For as Boethius says (De Consol. iii), “the power of man cannot relieve the gnawings of care, nor can it avoid the thorny path of anxiety”.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *That man desires honor above all else, arises from his natural desire for happiness.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Fame has no stability; in fact, it is easily ruined by false report. And if sometimes it endures, this is by*

Happiness Level Three – *Hardwired to love*

(Beatum)

Again, the friendship which draws human beings together in a tender bond is sweet to us because out of many minds it forges a unity.

Mystery Philosopher

Goal: Good beyond self

Means: Contribution

Breadth: Others

Duration: Long-term

Unhealthy

Healthy

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NOTES:

Happiness Level Three Sources

- 1. Being With – connecting with others*
- 2. Doing For - giving to others*

- *Man comes out of himself from the self-centered preservation of his own life, to enter into a relationship and dialogue and communion with others.*
Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 130
- *So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. For this is the Law and the Prophets.*
Matthew 7:12
- *It is better to give than to receive.* Acts 20:35
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* Mt. 5:6
- *Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.* Romans 12:15
- *Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins.* 1 Peter 3:8
- *A pleasant voice multiplies friends and softens enemies, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies.*
Sirach 6:5
- *Friendship is the source of the greatest pleasures, and without friends even the most agreeable pursuits become tedious.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he that has found one has found a treasure.* Sirach 6:14

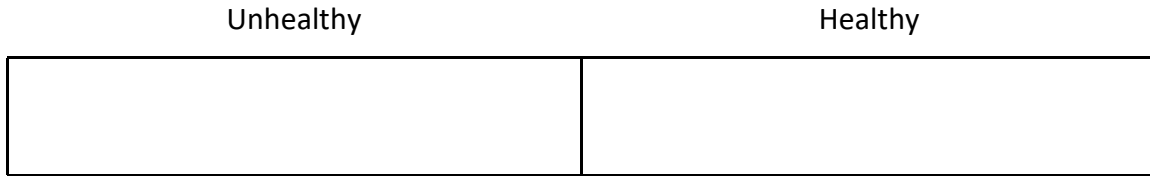
Happiness Level Four – *My mother was right*

(Gaudium)

These lowest goods hold delights for us indeed, but no such delights as does my God, who made all things; for in him the just man finds delight, and for upright souls he himself is joy.

Mystery Philosopher

Goal: Ultimate Happiness
Means: Contemplation of truth; spirituality
Breadth: Unlimited
Duration: Eternal



NOTES:

Plato's Transcendentals:

Truth, Justice, Love, Beauty, Home

Psychology: Transcendence – Strengths that forge connection to the larger universe and provide meaning

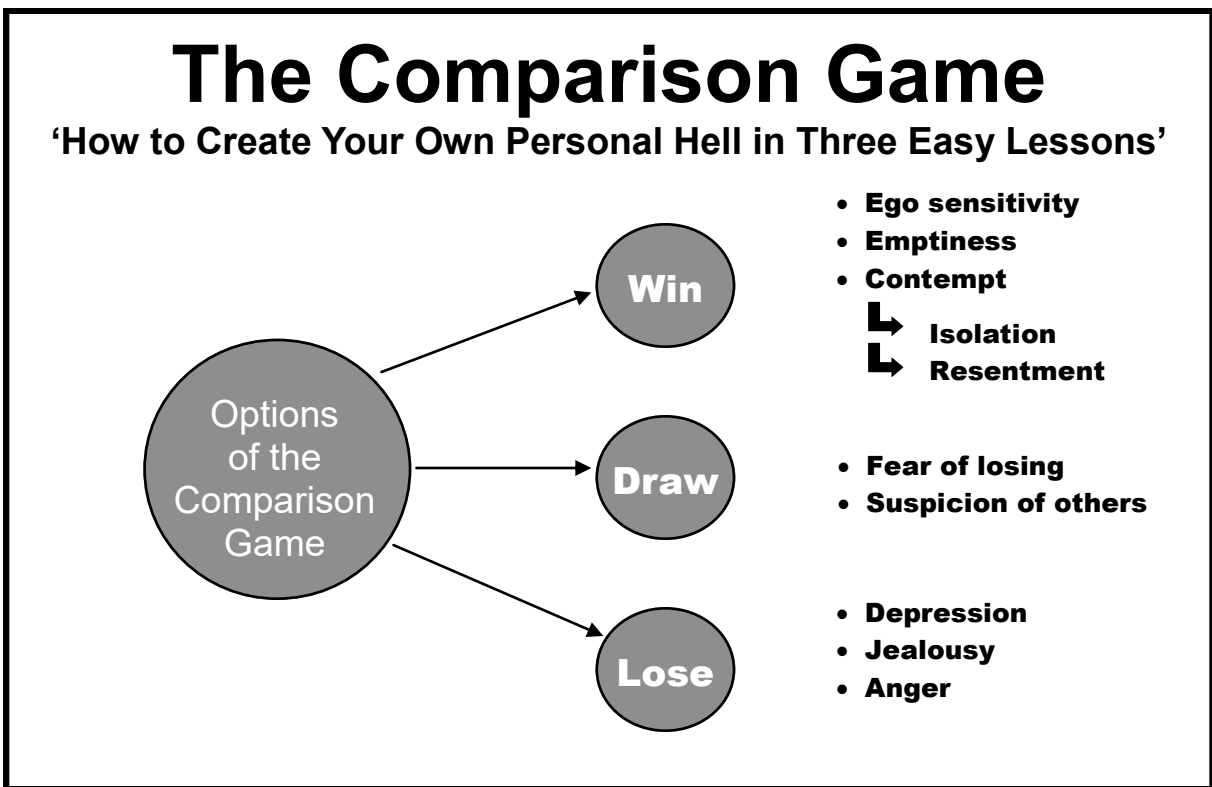
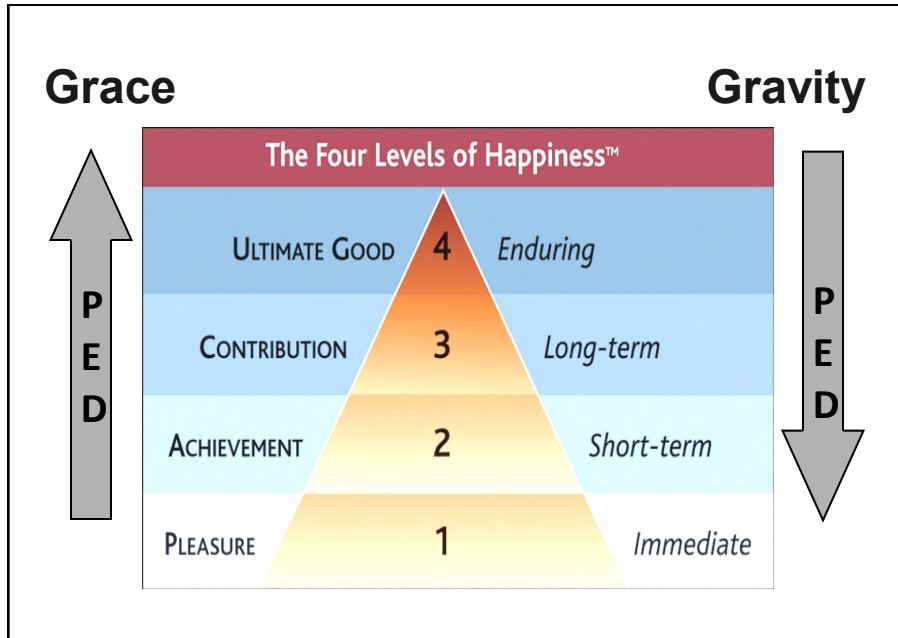
1. Appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder, elevation)
2. Gratitude
3. Hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation)
4. Humor (playfulness)
5. Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose)

- *God is happiness by His Essence.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *For where your treasure is there will be your heart also.* Matthew 6:21
- *Openness to transcendence belongs to the human person: man is open to the infinite and to all created beings.* Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 130
- *Let joy in the Lord win and go on winning.* St. Augustine
- *It is characteristic of God and His Angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances which are caused by the enemy.* St. Ignatius
- *As the soul is the life of the body, so God is man's life of happiness.* St. Augustine
- *The greatest of all pleasures consists in the contemplation of truth.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Happiness is twofold; the one is imperfect and is had in this life; the other is perfect, consisting in the vision of God.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *Happiness is the attainment of the Perfect Good. Whoever, therefore, is capable of the Perfect Good can attain Happiness.* St. Thomas Aquinas
- *For the more perfectly the sovereign good is possessed, the more it is loved, and other things despised, because the more we possess it, the more we know it.* St. Thomas Aquinas

The PED Formula

Plato cites three characteristics of the higher levels of happiness. Circle the three that you think Plato might have identified.

- a. EXPENSIVE - How much money it costs.
- b. PERVASIVE - How many people it effects.
- c. ENTICING - If it's forbidden.
- d. INTENSE - If it makes me feel really good.
- e. ENDURING - How long it lasts.
- f. IMMEDIATE - If quickly accessible.
- g. CUSTOMARY - If everybody does it.
- h. DEEP - If it engages my higher powers.
- i. EGO-BOOSTING - If it makes me popular.
- j. THRILLING - If it gets me all excited.



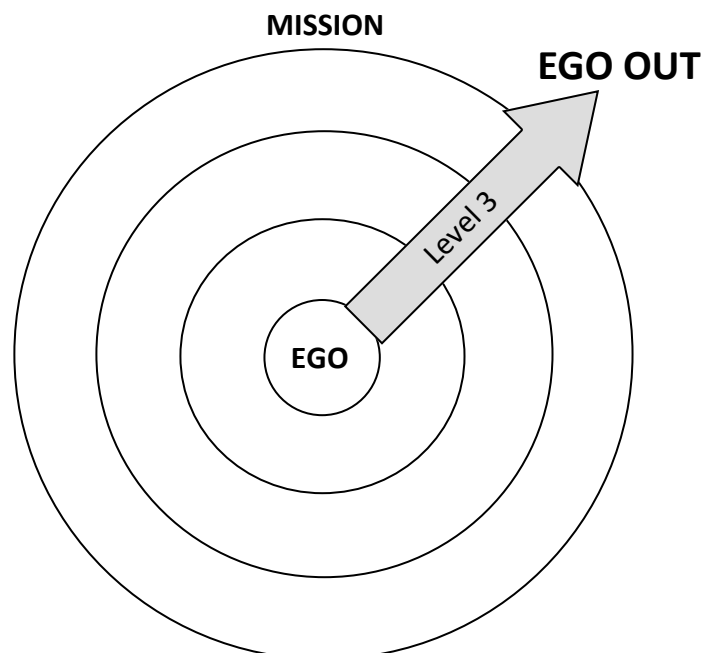
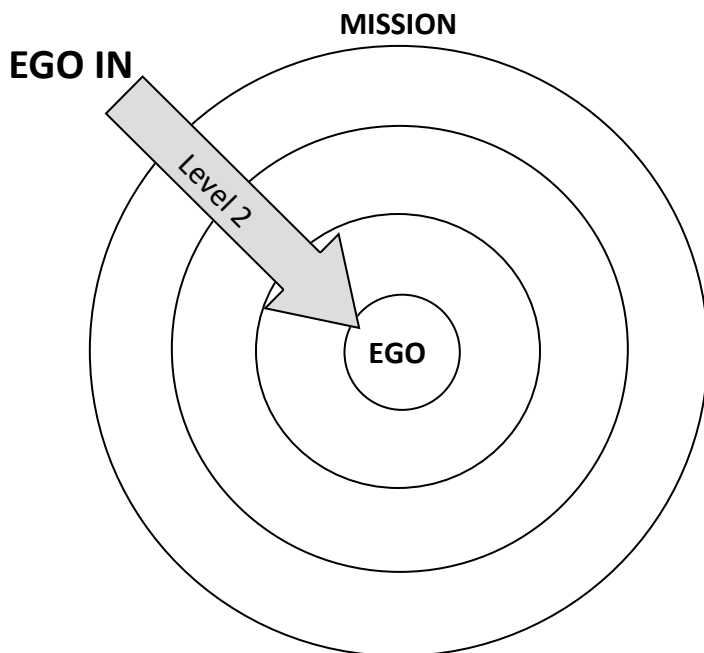
The Comparison Game Quiz

By the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.
Wisdom 2:24

1. He was deeply envious of his brother's offering of sacrifice.
 - a. Esau
 - b. Job
 - c. Cain
 - d. Lot
2. His father loved and openly preferred him; his brothers hated and tried to kill him.
 - a. David
 - b. Elijah
 - c. Reuben
 - d. Joseph
3. The Comparison Game is healthy in two circumstances:
 - a. If recognized
 - b. If it makes me feel better about myself
 - c. If it's pointing toward contribution
 - d. If I don't lie, cheat or steal
4. This leader was paranoid that his talented and popular subordinate was plotting to take his job.
 - a. Saul
 - b. Hezekiah
 - c. Samuel
 - d. Moses
5. Tormented by a rival because she was infertile, she finally conceived a child and composed a famous prayer of thanksgiving.
 - a. Ruth
 - b. Hannah
 - c. Rachel
 - d. Jezebel
6. In his passion to locate someone he felt threatened by, he sought the counsel of sages.
 - a. Ezra
 - b. Herod
 - c. Ananias
 - d. Simon the magician
7. Jesus condemned them for seeking the praise of men rather than the favor of God.
 - a. John the Baptist's disciples
 - b. The Pharisees
 - c. The Gentiles
 - d. The tax collectors
8. The mother of these sons requested that they sit at the right hand of their leader.
 - a. James and John
 - b. Peter and Andrew
 - c. Timothy and Titus
 - d. Tom and Jerry

WHAT AM I LOOKING (Living) FOR? - PURPOSE IN LIFE

FOUR FUNDAMENTAL ATTITUDES	DOMINANT LEVEL ONE-TWO ("Default Drive")	DOMINANT LEVEL THREE-FOUR (Choice for Something More)
PURPOSE IN LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pleasure ◆ Material Accumulation ◆ Ego-Comparative Advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Optimal contribution to family, organization, community, Church, culture, society, and Kingdom of God
VIEW OF OTHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Bad News in Others ◆ The Other is "Over-against" Me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The other is a mystery to be discovered ◆ Unconditional Positive Regard
VIEW OF SELF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Estimable Self ◆ The "Thingafied" Self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Loving Self ◆ The Lovable Self ◆ The Transcendent Self
VIEW OF FREEDOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Freedom from Restrictions ◆ Getting what I want now ◆ Avoid Constraint By and Responsibility to Others ◆ Commitment is Negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Freedom for Discovery ◆ Desire to get to the most pervasive, enduring, and deep meaning ◆ Self-Sacrifice is Acceptable ◆ Commitment is Positive



MAKING LEVEL THREE A HABIT

It takes discipline

Because Level 2 is both our default drive and reinforced by the culture, it takes discipline to make Level 3 habitual. We need to write things down and look at them every day.

What is a habit?

Habit is not just oft repeated, but is an integration of the conscious choice with the subconscious mind. A good habit is what we call a virtue.

The challenge of forming Level 3 habits

- The subconscious mind lags behind the conscious mind in the choosing process at least 6 months to a year.
- Subconscious likes the old self, old habits.
- When we try to change, we meet frustration. This is normal, as the conscious mind requires more psychic energy.
- When we are weary or tired we naturally return to Level 2 habits.

Three stages to build a habit

1. *Tension*

In this stage you are intentionally choosing a Level 3 habit (looking for goods news, contribution and freedom for). Expect frequent failure, frequent reversion, particularly when tired. Why? Because the intentional choice is being directly opposed by the subconscious and the conscious intention requires more psychic energy than the efficient subconscious.

2. *Proclivity*

Here the new choice is getting more integrated with the subconscious. There will be some gestalt, some confusion, and when tired, reversions to Level 2. But making progress.

3. *Habit*

Finally where the dominant Level 3 view becomes habitual. Be careful however. In danger or with exhaustion or near-depression, the lower self-conscious can return with a vengeance.

Four essential techniques

1. *Daily remembrance*

Contemplation. Don't force Level 3 onto yourself. The subconscious will push back and not allow. Rather, take time for contemplation. Admire the beauty of Level 3. Look at the Level 3 lists you wrote. Take five to ten minutes a day. It will also add to your efficiency. The practical will never be undermined by the contemplative.

2. *Watch your self-talk*

Lou Tice describes how your subconscious talks to you. Write down a series of affirmations into your life. Write down what you really want and who you really are. Requires exercise and discipline. "I'm the kind of person who..."

3. *Manage your failures*

Reject the myth of Sisyphus who could never make progress because the rock fell back upon him as he climbed the hill. Perfect description of hell. The myth is not true. With every effort our subconscious is getting patterned through contemplation, self-talk affirmations. It's actually getting etched. The rock rolls back a few feet even though we fall to the bottom. Get up, dust off and go back to the rock. You're not starting over again. It will roll down again but it gets higher as long as you contemplate and affirm. With the right notion of failure don't talk yourself out of the transition you desire.

4. *Leverage your successes*

Leverage past changes for good outcomes. See what's working and when you make progress take a minute and positively reinforce with feelings.

The Four Levels of Happiness Personal and Pastoral Application

- Seek to achieve a balanced portfolio of happiness in your own life (Personal Inventory Chart, Daily Reflection Card, Examen Prayer, etc.)
- Build the discipline of core habits for healthy happiness at all Four Levels (Four essential techniques – pg. 10)
- Maintain wise self-care and supportive relationships
- Demonstrate good cheer; keep a sense of humor; do your _____ best
- Frequently promote/preach the notion of happiness
- Unleash the power of a common language
- Strive to achieve quality experiences at all Four Levels (liturgy, music, special occasions, regular gatherings, etc.), with particular attention to Level Four
- Counter the cultural propaganda
 - Unmask the seduction and false promises of Levels One and Two
 - Promote the truth, beauty and desirability of Levels Three and Four
- Learn to connect the dots with Level Four – conversion, Beatitudes, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, Theological and Cardinal Virtues, Scripture, Prayers, Lives of the Saints, Liturgical seasons
- In counseling, try using the Four Levels as a framework for better self-understanding

My Insights

What practical applications of the Four Levels come to mind for my life and ministry?

Four Levels of Happiness™

4

Ultimate Good

Objective: Participate in giving and receiving ultimate meaning, goodness, ideals, and love.

Characteristics: Good is ultimatized. Principles include ultimate Truth, Love, Justice, and Beauty.

Gratification: Eternal

3

Good Beyond Self

Objective: Do good beyond self.

Characteristics: Principles include Justice, Love, and Community. Intrinsic goodness is an end in itself. Decisions are focused on the greater good.

Gratification: Long-term

2

Personal Achievement/Ego

Objective: Ego Centeredness, better than, gain advantage.

Characteristics: Promotion of self is primary. Personal power and control are key. Jealousy, fear of failure, contempt, isolation, loneliness, and cynicism.

Gratification: Short-term

1

Immediate Gratification

Objective: Maximize pleasure and minimize pain.

Characteristics: Obligation is to self alone. No desire for common, intrinsic, or ultimate good. Lack of self-worth, fear of tangible loss/harm, boredom.

Gratification: Immediate

