

Week 5 Reading Response: Adversity

Watch “The Pursuit of Happiness” and analyze it using ideas from Haidt’s “The Uses of Adversity” (chapter 7 of *The Happiness Hypothesis*).

Note: You can use any other hero/underdog film, as long as it is appropriate for discussion in a university environment.

1. What is the adversity hypothesis? Is the weak, strong, or very weak version most fitting of the main character arc?
2. Use Haidt’s three-level framework of the personality to describe the character. Give specific examples of their behaviors or things they say as evidence of their “elephant,” “rider,” and “life-story.”
3. Haidt finds post-traumatic growth (PTG) appearing in three primary ways (three benefits, p. 138-41). Does the character achieve “vertical coherence” in weaving together their personality, short-term, and long-term goals? Does the character have a “commitment story” or a “contamination story”? Does the character achieve PTG? How are they transformed (refer to the three primary ways)?
4. Does the character’s adversity occur in the prime timing that Haidt’s research identifies—mid-teen to early twenties? What mental qualities or situational qualities might it be about this time that makes people better able experience PTG?