

# I

## Concepts of Savoring: An Introduction

*There is no duty we so underrate  
as the duty of being happy.*

—Robert Louis Stevenson (1881)

Who are the people who truly experience well-being in their lives? Those who have fulfilled basic needs for food, shelter, sex, family, work, and health, you might say. Yet, even if basic needs are fulfilled, that does not necessarily imply that people automatically feel good about their lives. The proportion of Americans who describe themselves as “happy” has not changed since the 1950s, even though average “real income” has more than doubled during that time (Easterbrook, 2003). Even with basic needs fulfilled, some people see possible stress and misfortune looming around every corner, and they remain anxious about their lives. And even if people have the ability to weather the storms about which they are anxious, this does not necessarily help them notice or appreciate the positive aspects of their lives.

Being able to handle adversity is vital in life, but having a capacity to cope seems not to be the same as having the capacity to enjoy life. In other words, just because people are *not down*, doesn't mean they're *up*. Considering only stress, coping, and distress omits from the picture positive experiences and personal capacities that comprise the central topics of the growing field of positive psychology. What about attaining authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002a), experiencing positive feelings like joy and pleasure (Fredrickson, 2001), flourishing (Keyes & Haidt, 2003), feeling hope (Snyder, 2002) or optimism (Segerstrom, 2001) toward the future, or having a sense of satisfaction in response to what one

has done or accomplished (Diener & Diener, 1995)? Aren't these critical emotional states that also feed into people's overall well-being? Although this book is not directly about these emotional states, it features a major process by which people bring about, appreciate, and enhance these positive experiences. We call this process *savoring*.

### OUR INITIAL NOTION OF A SAVORING CONCEPT

As we noted in the preface, our earlier work on subjective mental health (Bryant & Veroff, 1984) led us to conclude that something vital was missing from the literature on psychological well-being. In particular, the process of coping with stress had no positive counterpart. But if people make self-assessments of their ability to handle negative experiences in their lives, then surely they must also make self-assessments of their ability to enjoy positive experiences. We contend that savoring is this missing process—the positive counterpart of coping.

This book and the conceptual analysis and empirical research presented in it are meant to fill this gap in the literature. We posit that people have capacities to *attend to*, *appreciate*, and *enhance the positive experiences in their lives*. This is the basic conceptual definition of savoring we use throughout this book. We call those capacities, *capacities to savor*, and the processes underlying those capacities, *savoring*.

From research on coping (see Compas, Connor, Osowiecki, & Welch, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), we know that people use a range of different types of coping strategies to handle stress. For example, people may use active problem solving, social support, prayer, cognitive reappraisal, formal help seeking, wishful thinking, escape-avoidance, denial, or substance abuse to help them cope with their problems. Some of these approaches to coping may even involve active attention to the good things in one's life, what seems like savoring, but such mechanisms were seen in the coping literature as "breathers" or "sustainers," or as ways to avoid stress, not as ways to heighten positive experiences for their own sake (Lazarus, Kanner, & Folkman, 1980). Within the mental health literature, theorists and researchers have been careful to distinguish the process of coping, that is, the thoughts and behaviors that people use to modify stressful circumstances and to minimize potential threat, from its outcome, that is, the consequences of coping. This important distinction has guided theory and research on stress management and adjustment, and it has been valuable in helping us better understand the processes involved in dealing with anxiety, depression, misfortune, and illness.

But when it comes to happiness, joy, elation, and delight; when it comes to satisfaction, gratification, meaning, and fulfillment; when it comes to pleasure,

rapture, gratitude, and bliss, there is little knowledge about the processes through which these positive states come about. As a result, we know practically nothing about the processes through which people derive joy in their lives. Clearly, people actively engage in thoughts and behaviors before, during, and after positive experiences, and these thoughts and behaviors influence how strongly these experiences are felt, just as people's thoughts and behaviors in response to stress influence their subsequent levels of distress. But there are no terms in the social science literature to denote these positive processes directly.

Just as in the literature on coping and distress, however, we must be careful to distinguish between the process of attending to joy and the joy itself. We needed a word to denote the positive counterpart of coping. This term had to refer to the *processes* rather than to the *outcome* of enjoyment, and it had to convey the dynamic, interactive, transactional nature of positive emotions. There were many words that came to mind, each of which captured a different flavor of the process. Some words were rich in meaning but narrow in scope, and were more specific to particular circumstances: rejoicing, reveling, delighting, basking, and luxuriating, for example. Other words were broader and more general, and seemed to convey more clearly the notion of a positive process: appreciating, cherishing, enjoying, relishing, and savoring, for instance.

We settled on the term *savoring* because for us it most vividly captures the active process of enjoyment, the ongoing interplay between person and environment. The word savoring also conveys metaphorically a search for the delectable, delicious, almost gustatory delights of the moment. Although the term fits more intuitively with attending to a sensory experience such as taste, we mean to extend it to attending to more complex cognitive associations. Our extension of the term savoring beyond mere sensation to include cognitive reflection is consistent with the etymology of the word "savor," which comes from the Latin word *sapere* meaning "to taste," "to have good taste," or "to be wise." Thus, we define the concept of savoring as going beyond the experience of pleasure to encompass a higher order awareness or reflective discernment on the part of the individual.

We would speak of savoring if people were attending to how much well-being they are deriving from their accomplishments or from their social connections. We would speak of savoring if people were attending to their pleasurable communion with nature or to their uplifting transcendence in God, taking pleasure from doing a difficult task, reflecting on the joy of watching their children grow up, or from countless other positive feelings. Indeed, the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989) also notes two major definitions of the verb "to savor (savour)." The first one is with regard to appreciating the enjoyment of the taste of food, but the second is with regard to appreciating the enjoyment of *any* experience. It is with that second meaning that we proceeded with our analysis of savoring.

### Earlier References to Savoring-Like Processes

We are not the first social scientists to discuss concepts related to savoring. The earliest references to a savoring-like process that we can locate come from the literature on economics. In 1789, Bentham (1789/1948) included among the determinants of subjective utility the enjoyment currently derived from anticipating future gratification. Another early acknowledgement of people's awareness of future joy is from Marshall (1891), who noted "the pleasures of expectation" (p. 178). In a similar vein, Jevons (1905) noted "three distinct ways . . . in which pleasurable or painful feelings are caused: (1) By memory of past events; (2) By the sensation of present events; (3) By anticipation of future events" (p. 3). Jevons (1905) termed the latter phenomenon *anticipal pleasure*, which he considered to be the most critical determinant of economic behavior.

Analyzing the anticipation of a planned vacation, Jevons (1905) framed several interesting psychological hypotheses about temporal changes in the intensity of anticipal pleasure:

The intensity of the anticipation will be greater the longer the holiday; greater also, the more intensely one expects to enjoy it when the time comes. In other words the amount of pleasure expected is one factor determining the intensity of anticipal pleasure. Again, the nearer the date fixed for leaving home approaches, the greater does the intensity of anticipal pleasure become: at first when the holiday is still many weeks ahead, the intensity increases slowly; then, as the time grows closer, it increases faster and faster, until it culminates on the eve of departure. (p. 64)

In a more up-to-date economic analysis of pleasure, Loewenstein (1987) specifically used the term *savoring* to refer to "positive utility derived from anticipation of future consumption" (p. 667), and provided an elaborate mathematical model of the anticipation and valuation of delayed consumption. Extending Jevons' (1905) and Loewenstein's (1987) analyses, we use the term *savoring* to denote the process of deriving pleasure in any one of the three temporal orientations, although we focus on the positive feelings that savoring evokes in the here and now. There is a paradox here: Although savoring can occur only in the moment, it may focus on past or future moments.

### ASSUMPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR A MODEL OF SAVORING

#### Distinguishing Savoring From Pleasure

By the term savoring, we mean something different from mere pleasure, although savoring and pleasure are intimately connected concepts. When one savors, one is aware of pleasure and appreciates the positive feelings one is experiencing.

But by experiencing pleasure, one does not necessarily savor. Attentive and appreciative awareness of the pleasure must also occur or we would not consider the experience to involve savoring. As we emphasize later in this chapter, some degree of mindfulness (Langer, 1989) and meta-awareness (Schooler, 2001; Schooler, Ariely, & Loewenstein, 2003) has to be attached to an experience for it to be savored, at least in our sense of the word.

In considering the concept of pleasure, Russell (2003) argued that "pleasure is the most neglected topic in psychology, at least in relation to claims about its importance" (p. 161). Although some theorists view pleasure as a unitary construct—for example, as global subjective "experience" utility in decision making (Kahneman, Wakker, & Sarin, 1997), or as the satisfaction of visceral drives in physiology (Cabanac, 1992)—other theorists have adopted a multidimensional perspective and have proposed a variety of different typologies of pleasure. For example, Duncker (1941) distinguished three basic types of pleasures: sensory pleasures derived from physical sensations (e.g., the taste of wine, the feel of a Jacuzzi); aesthetic pleasures derived from sensations expressive of reactions to natural or human-made phenomena (e.g., a panoramic vista, an orchestral symphony); and accomplishment pleasures derived from the attainment of something desirable (e.g., receiving an award, winning an athletic competition). Other writers have highlighted additional varieties of pleasure, including social pleasures derived from the company of others (Dube & Le Bel, 2003; Kubovy, 1999; Tiger, 1992), pleasures of the body versus pleasures of the mind (Kubovy, 1999; Tiger, 1992), pleasures of anticipation (Loewenstein, 1987), and pleasures of memory (Bentham, 1781/1970).

Clearly, however, we are not mindful of all our pleasures. As Brown and Ryan (2003) noted, one may be aware of stimuli without these stimuli being at the center of attention. Even eating can be pleasurable without savoring, if there is no conscious attention focused on the sensations of pleasure as they are being experienced. Savoring involves not just the awareness of pleasure, but also a conscious attention to the experience of pleasure.

It would thus be hard to speak of savoring for one of the most intense human pleasures, sexual orgasmic gratification, because in the immediacy of that sexual response, mindful elaborated attention to the experience is often relatively absent. Poets and novelists may sometimes be mindful of that fleeting elusive phenomenon, but for most people, the experience of physical release dominates awareness. Pleasure indeed, but usually not in the category of a savoring experience. In fact, mindfulness about sexual activity can interfere with continuing a pleasurable sexual response. Many men and women lose their arousal when they closely attend to what they are doing and experiencing. Much sexual savoring, however, can occur in the anticipatory buildup to sexual release and in the afterglow of sexual gratification. Indeed, sexual savoring often occurs in the sensuous enjoyment of one's own body or in looking at the female or male body, or in touching or being touched in a sensuous way. Later we discuss such experiences

as a form of savoring we term *luxuriating*. But rarely would we think of ongoing orgasm as eliciting sexual savoring.

In addition to their role in much of sexuality, the five senses give us many pleasures and at the same time easily lend themselves to savoring. Ackerman (1990), in *The Natural History of the Senses*, strives to do exactly what we wish to do in this book: make people more systematically aware of the joys of the senses, to become more mindful of them and how they operate in our experience. Ackerman (1990) presents the case of a woman who lost her capacity to smell, a sensory experience to which we generally pay little attention. When this woman recovered her sense of smell through medication, she found herself intoxicated with the smells of her everyday life, including the scent of her husband, smells of which she was unaware or that she had taken fully for granted. All of us can imagine being without one of our senses in this way, and this heightened awareness can then make us more fully conscious of the pleasurable things we see, hear, smell, touch, or taste. The process of appreciating this "missing sense" exemplifies what we mean by the term savoring.

### Domains of Savoring

Just as the domains of pleasure are infinite, so too are the domains of savoring infinite. The domains to which we direct our attention when we savor know few bounds. Bearing this out is a study by Lowe (2002) in which people were asked to describe what gave them pleasure. Lowe (2002) used the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex, in which a panel of several thousand volunteers had been recruited to respond to particular directives several times a year to write about various aspects of British life. A directive in 1993 asked these recruits about "all the nice things that happen to them and to report on ten things that gave them pleasure, from simple occasions to extravagant treats—and to describe them in detail." This directive instructed respondents to attend to what gives them pleasure, close to what we mean by savoring. An admittedly biased sample of only 387 responded. Those who did respond were mostly middle-aged or older, with only 13% under age 40. More women than men responded.

Despite the sample's lack of representativeness, the diversity of the types of things written about as sources of pleasure is startling. Men's top-ranked category was "Food and Drink," closely followed by "Music," "Reading," "Family/Children." For women, additional top-ranked sources of pleasurable experiences were "Entertainment," "Home/Garden," "Nature/Scenery." But although many of the responses can be categorized into a simple set, that set would not begin to cover what most people wrote about. A short list of some of the responses also includes: "Love/Sex," "Exercise/Sport," "Friends," all of which were mentioned relatively often, and "Memories," "Art," "Spiritual/Religious," "Smells," "Sounds," and "Humor," all of which were mentioned relatively infrequently.

If you look even more closely at what people wrote, a more diverse picture of people's "pleasures" emerges. Under food and drink, one person spoke of her "afternoon tea"; another of "fresh brown bread with cheddar cheese"; many spoke of chocolate. Here is what one respondent said about enjoying good wines:

Good wine can make me feel orgasmic. The nose, taste and glow one gets can be overwhelming. I have occasionally had wine so delicious it has almost brought tears to my eyes. The ability to taste different spices, fruits, flowers, herbs within one glass of wine differentiates good wines to bad wines for me and a good wine requires time and thought to be fully enjoyed.

Notice how this response directly implicates savoring processes in its emphasis on a deliberate, conscious awareness of the pleasures of taste.

Some responses are not at all easily categorized. One respondent derived pleasure from taking a break:

In later life I had a friend in the scrap metal business. Some Sunday afternoons, when he was free of account books and ledgers, he would call at my door and ask if I wanted to "go lean on a gate." He would drive in his car a few miles into the country before he found a quiet lane, and then he would stop, and leave the car and quite literally "lean on a gate." Most often we found ourselves looking across a field of sheep or cows against a dark backcloth of trees, and we would smoke and stare and talk a little. My friend called this simple pleasure "taking the creases out."

That response would be hard to categorize with most of the others, but could perhaps be viewed as "Stress Reduction," "Nature/Scenery," or "Camaraderie." In other words, the types of domains for savoring can vary enormously. Individuals are highly idiosyncratic about what they find pleasurable.

So are cultures. When asking people to identify events in their lives that are positive experiences, Lindberg (2004) found that East Asian Japanese, compared to European North Americans, identify a higher proportion of interpersonal events and a lower proportion of events deemed to be leisure activities. Other research on cross-cultural differences in positive emotional experience has found that Italians report more social interactions involving talking with others and feelings of interpersonal intimacy, whereas Scots, in contrast, report more positive feelings associated with relaxation and being alone (Duncan & Grazzani-Gavazzi, 2004). It stands to reason, therefore, that it would also be hard for us to create an exhaustive categorization of what all people everywhere savor.

Along these lines, previous theorists and researchers have noted that different types of pleasure-eliciting activities are associated with different types of pleasurable experiences, and that these in turn are also associated with different personality dimensions (Berenbaum, 2002; Meadows, 1975). For example, compared to other activities, social activities are more likely to evoke cheerfulness and are more strongly linked to extraversion, and intellectual activities are more likely to evoke enchantment and are more strongly linked to openness to

experience (Berenbaum, 2002). It is not our intention to develop a comprehensive classification scheme for categorizing the variety of experiences that people savor and the correlates of these savoring responses. Nevertheless, later in this book we highlight some personality types that may be more likely to experience savoring under certain conditions.

### A Mindful Fluid Process for the Here and Now

In addition to its direct connection to pleasurable experiences, a savoring experience can also be characterized as a mindful state. In contrast to other mindful, self-regulatory activities, however, savoring is in the moment, in the here and now. Although there is a chain of associations that can be elicited in savoring, none of them necessitates a future reward. If people attend too much to the future for their social and ego needs, we argue, they are in danger of interrupting the experience of savoring and are really enhancing other goals instead.

However, we do not rule out thinking about savoring in the future as a way to enhance the savoring of the present moment. For example, while savoring an ongoing visit with a close friend, one could think about later telling family members about the visit and could anticipate savoring this in the future. That awareness of the future can augment savoring the present visit with one's friend. Or one could currently be in a neutral affective state, and the mere anticipation of savoring an upcoming event might elicit savoring in the present.

While we are on the topic of anticipating future savoring as an adjunct to present savoring, we should speak of *dreams* of savoring, or delightful fantasies that may or may not come true. These dreams themselves can be savored in the present. A wonderful example of someone savoring positive fantasies occurs in Eliza Doolittle's song "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?" from the musical *My Fair Lady*. Alone, chilled, and destitute, she relishes fantasies about the simple pleasures that are missing in her life—having her own room, a large comfortable chair, a supply of chocolates, and a fire by which to warm herself—and imagines how "lovely" it would be to possess such things.

One doesn't have to be a poor, cold, friendless flower girl like Eliza Doolittle to have such dreams, dreams that make a person feel good just to have them in one's mind. Less in the realm of fantasy, most of us know what it is like to have savoring images while planning for a vacation, looking forward to Spring during the Winter, anticipating the arrival of loved ones, and thinking about revisiting places and experiences savored at some earlier time. Most people can enjoy thinking about their own daydreams and thoughts about the future, however outrageous these fantasies may be. In the here and now, they can savor them.

As an aside, it can be noted that sometimes vacations, planned encounters, and visits with others are not as sweet or thrilling as they were imagined in one's dreams. Indeed, certain styles of (over)anticipation, such as idealizing the future experience, may well predispose people to be disappointed when the positive

event actually occurs. In chapter 6, we discuss a fascinating set of ideas and studies (Mitchell & Thompson, 1994; Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997) that focuses on the tendency people have to enjoy the present less, compared to the enjoyment they expected to experience and also compared to the enjoyment they remember later.

We suggest that people can *choose* to bring savoring processes into their future lives when they feel bereft of them in the present. Along these lines, a friend recently mentioned that he was going to teach his son to be spontaneous, which to us seems to be a contradiction in terms. In contrast, planning to savor is something different from planning to be spontaneous. We contend that planning to savor in the future may be successful. Although, more often than not, savoring comes out of the unplanned impromptu moment, we spell out ways that cognitive and behavioral processes can be invoked to set up conducive conditions for savoring to occur in the future, processes based on what people psychologically go through when they are savoring in the present.

Just as anticipating the *future* can become part of savoring in the present, reconsidering the *past* can also be brought to bear on what people are currently savoring. Many of us spend at least some time attending to and appreciating positive experiences from the past. In chapter 6, we highlight two common processes in savoring the past—namely, reminiscence and story-telling—that can augment people's savoring of ongoing positive experience.

### Freedom From Social and Esteem Needs

When do we savor our experiences in life? Joe noticed in his retirement that he had more time and inclination to savor once he was freed from his work responsibilities. He wrote the following in his notes about savoring:

*Outside the window framing my computer monitor are the lush greens of early summer mornings in Michigan. The sun gently illuminates shades of the verdant wild marsh on my left, thicker textured woods in front of me, and grazes three cedars and one small ash tree on my right. I can barely see the sky. I gaze at the scene awaiting the inevitable bird that interrupts the landscape with more flashy color. I'm not disappointed. A cardinal, solitary at the moment but sometimes with a mate, does his thing beneath the yew branches. A mourning dove perches on a dead limb of a willow in the marsh, and goes through a preening display for a good five minutes. I am savoring this ten-minute interruption from the ordinary flow of life, looking around me, and appreciating the visual blessings of the life I lead in the natural world. Had I been outside, I'm sure my appreciation of this scene would extend to the sounds and smells, and the almost erotic feel of the sun on my arms.*

*This is what it is all about, I tell myself. Savoring life. Enjoying its everyday bounty. This is what I wasn't doing in my life before retirement. This is what I'm now doing before I die. For so long I had been too busy as an academic researcher-professor-administrator at the University of Michigan to savor everyday life. Who had time to*

*savor when you led a busy, involved, responsible professional life in the United States at the turn of the 20th century?*

We assume that savoring may take a willingness to shed pressures from performance and others' evaluations and to discard one's own expectations for achievement and social well-being to let savoring happen. Given the rich boundaries that come from savoring experiences, it is surprising how committed we all seem to be to fulfilling such pressures and expectations for ourselves, even though they often impede us from either launching into savoring activities or letting our minds indulge in savoring respites from our ongoing responsibilities. Perhaps it is because savoring is so rewarding that men's and women's puritanical souls rise up in protest. It is false, we assert, that savoring comes only to those who have the leisure to savor or who have fully met all responsibilities and major needs.

We assume that a person's own sense of social responsibility or personal search for love and recognition often stand in the way of savoring experiences. Will one allow oneself to indulge in savoring when there remain so many things one *has to do* as a responsible, mature, loving adult?

A dear friend of ours rarely lets herself feast on pleasure because she is too concerned about what her family needs. Even if no one is knocking on her door for consolation or help, she imagines that they might be. Sooner than savor, she would make plans to help someone. Fred's wife, Linda, has experienced that herself in planning and preparing birthday parties for their children when they were younger. She rarely savored the games and festivities she organized for the celebration because she was so busy worrying about the social dynamics of the party. It was only the next day, when she was without external obligation, that she could watch the videotape of the party and savor the celebration retrospectively.

Obviously, there are differences in who takes on these overriding social responsibilities or other standards for performance that interfere with savoring. Perhaps we need an extended psychoanalysis of people to know the underlying root of intense concerns with social responsibility. We only wish to highlight here that we assume that concerns for doing the responsible thing often interfere with savoring, whether these concerns be moralistic, altruistic, rational, or irrational in the situations we face.

Beyond concerns for social responsibility, are there other concerns that often impede savoring? We could draw on Maslow's (1954) theory of the hierarchy of motives to understand when savoring occurs. We could suggest that not just with social responsibilities, but with every other concern in the hierarchy of motives, if a need is unmet—if we're hungry, unsuccessful, frustrated, oppressed, or unloved—then savoring cannot easily occur. Again, while there is some truth in that, we don't believe it helps explain *all* conditions of savoring. Someone in chronic pain might have trouble focusing on savoring a positive moment, but

we argue that, under certain conditions, that person could savor the pleasure of a thoughtful gift or revel in the innocent humor expressed by a child. A hungry person can savor the few morsels that he or she has or the blessings that exist in other domains of life. An unloved person can forget his or her rejection for a moment and enjoy, if not wallow in, music. Blues is a form of music that can speak to and be especially savored by those who feel unloved. At the time of the death of loved ones, most of us savor our memories of them. No doubt, people in the throes of rejection or mourning may be unable to switch to the savoring modality easily. But even in these circumstances we assume it is not impossible to savor.

Gratification of any need can of course be savored, if a person self-consciously attends to its gratification for any length of time beyond a fleeting moment. The feelings of achievement on receiving an award, the glow of good fellowship in getting together with friends, the joy of having won a point in an intellectual argument, sexual release, and many more positive experiences can be savored if people can stop to consider in some way the pleasures these gratifications give them. These gratifications can even be vicarious. If one's children, one's parents, or other loved ones experience something wonderful in their lives, most of us may vicariously experience that as something wonderful, and savor it.

In Yiddish there is a word for that vicarious savoring—one *kvells* over a loved one's accomplishment, which means that the person reaps and holds in consciousness some pleasure from what the loved one has done. There can be similar vicarious savoring from the accomplishments of a protégé, a mentor, or a colleague. A colleague's accomplishments, however, can often invite comparison to oneself, which can immediately raise concerns about one's own achievements and hence might stand in the way of savoring the colleague's accomplishment. In the same way, sibling rivalry often prevents true savoring of a brother or sister's accomplishments. The experience of *schadenfreude*, in which one takes malicious delight in the misfortunes of others (R. H. Smith, 2000), represents yet another wrinkle in the complex fabric of savoring.

In another set of notes on savoring upon retirement, Joe suggested that he wanted to grab all the savoring moments he could in retirement while he still had his capacity to get around and before physical immobilization took over. On reflection, Joe now thinks this is a short-sighted view of savoring. Even if his range of activity is depleted in the future, his capacity to savor is not diminished. Only the realm of what is savored changes. For the elderly, losses in physical capacities do not vitiate a variety of other positive experiences—for example, what the future has in store for grandchildren not yet born, great-grandchildren in the offing, music unheard, books unread.

Technically, it would be difficult to call an end to savoring unless we totally capitulate to simple stereotypes about the grim fate of the disabled in our society. To be sure, physically challenged individuals have their problems, but these difficulties do not infuse every aspect of their lives. This analysis suggests that one

of the main tasks of adaptation to disability, beyond learning to cope with one's limitations, is learning to find new ways to fulfill one's limitless capacity to savor life. As Helen Keller, who was deaf and blind, noted (Schoenbeck, 1987, p. 2):

What we once enjoyed  
We can never lose.  
All that we love deeply  
Becomes a part of us.

We return to the study of savoring among the elderly in chapters 6 and 7.

### The Focused Nature of What Is Savored

When we present our model for savoring in chapters 3 through 6, we will suggest that in savoring something, people are *focusing attention* on their subjective experience. The focused mindfulness in savoring enables people to consider their ongoing experience as being something more than just their impulsive personal feelings and sensations. The fact that savoring sometimes occurs rather spontaneously can make it feel as if such focusing is being controlled mysteriously from the outside, and it may also lead us to see the savored experience as sometimes "outside" ourselves, a phenomenon we later refer to as world-focused savoring. Consider, for example, the sudden appearance of rainbows and how awestruck people generally are at seeing them. This is not to say that to savor, one has to focus on an external object. On the contrary, the attentional focus of savoring can also be primarily on an internal thought, feeling, or sensation—a phenomenon we later refer to as self-focused savoring. We merely wish to suggest that in savoring, people partially set a positive experience apart from their immediately attending self, such that the attending self interacts more directly with the focused experience, whatever that experience might be. Along these lines, Lambie and Marcel (2002) have distinguished between the *first-order consciousness* of phenomenal experience and the *second-order consciousness* of personal awareness, or "introspective awareness or appreciation of one's emotions" (p. 220). Thus, savoring by virtue of its state of mindful meta-awareness is an experience of second-order consciousness.

Although we have said that savoring requires a kind of immediacy, we are also saying that the immediacy experienced need not be totally self-oriented. Certainly it can be an individually derived experience that no one else senses in quite the same way, but it still is something that one can "look at," as if it were an event, a circumscribed experience that involves more than just instinctive sensory experiences. Savoring daydreams and fantasies is likewise the process of enjoying internal images that have taken on some focused reality. When fantasies become the dominant experience people savor in their lives, however, this situation can raise concerns about their ability to interact with others. But for a person to savor such fantasies some of the time seems to be a very human process that we should recognize and tolerate in ourselves and others.

It is important to consider how clearly focused the experience of savoring is. This is an important dimension we consider in the next chapters. The savoring process is somewhat like treating a personal internal feeling as if it were an external object. A person can go from merely tasting a glass of wine as an undefined positive experience, to something much more complex, attending to what is being tasted, appreciating that good taste, and thereby savoring the experience. The tasting has then become more clearly focused, albeit still a reaction to a subjective experience. A proposition that we consider is that the most clearly focused experiences of savoring are those most easily prolonged and most easily reinvented at later times, while those savoring experiences that are least clearly focused are short-lived and least available for future reflection in other contexts.

In focusing attention, a person is being mindful; and in being mindful, according to Langer (1989), one is open to new ways of perceiving and categorizing experience. In the case of a savoring experience, this means being complexly aware of the experience of pleasure, delight, joy, contentment, awe, pride, or other positive feelings. Sometimes people can deliberately adopt a conscious strategy to pay attention to their pleasures, but more often they find themselves just attending in a savoring way without any strategic deliberation about it. In summary, besides being a mindful enjoyment and appreciation of a positive experience, savoring also involves: (a) a sense of immediacy, of something occurring in the here and now; (b) freedom from social and esteem needs as major, motivating concerns; and (c) some focused and mindful connection to the experience, and not just the experience of hedonistic pleasure or various ego gratifications. This triad of characteristics forms the core assumptive foundation of savoring processes.

### DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTUAL TERMS RELATED TO SAVORING

In explicating the nature of savoring, we use three interrelated conceptual terms, the definitions of which are important to specify and distinguish clearly and precisely. These key terms are: savoring experiences, savoring processes, and savoring responses or strategies. At the broadest level, a savoring experience represents the totality of a person's sensations, perceptions, thoughts, behaviors, and emotions when mindfully attending to and appreciating a positive stimulus, outcome, or event, along with the accompanying environmental or situational features of that encounter. Examples of savoring experiences include a tourist viewing the Egyptian Pyramids from the back of a camel, a diner tasting an exotic dish in a gourmet restaurant, and a hiker soaking in a hot tub under the stars after a long day of backpacking.

At the intermediate level, a savoring process is a sequence of mental or physical operations that unfolds over time and transforms a positive stimulus, outcome, or event into positive feelings to which a person then attends and savors. Savoring processes involve noticing and attending to something positive,

interpreting and responding cognitively or behaviorally to this stimulus (with savoring responses or strategies), experiencing positive emotional reactions as a consequence, attending to these positive feelings in an appreciative way, and often repeating this sequence of operations iteratively over time in a dynamic transactional cycle. Along these same lines, Folkman and Lazarus (1985) have distinguished between coping processes (that change over time as people transact with the environment) and coping responses or strategies (which are specific cognitions or behaviors that influence the coping process).

Different savoring processes regulate different positive emotional states. For example, the savoring process of marveling regulates awe, thanksgiving regulates gratitude, basking regulates pride, and luxuriating regulates physical pleasure. Within negative psychology lie parallels to the concept of savoring processes in positive psychology, such as the coping processes of mourning in response to grief and psychosocial adjustment in response to a disabling injury or accident.

At the microlevel, a savoring response or strategy is a specific, concrete thought or behavior in which a person engages in reaction to a positive stimulus, outcome, or event. These cognitive or behavioral responses moderate the impact of positive events on positive emotions by amplifying or dampening the intensity, or prolonging or curtailing the duration, of positive feelings. Savoring responses are operational components of the savoring process. For example, the savoring process of basking often entails specific cognitive savoring responses reflecting self-congratulation, in which one thinks about how impressed others are by one's personal accomplishments or how long one has worked for the particular outcome. Paralleling the concept of savoring responses, the coping literature includes the concept of specific coping responses, such as talking to others about one's feelings, trying not to think about one's problems, or making a plan to change the situation, each of which may be part of several different coping processes.

Relating these three key savoring-related terms to one another, we believe that different savoring experiences initiate different savoring processes, which themselves include different types of savoring responses moderating different positive emotions. In chapter 4, we distinguish a variety of different types of savoring responses or strategies in exploring the structure of savoring. In chapter 5, we explicate several basic savoring processes and present an integrative conceptual framework for understanding these phenomena.

#### SAVORING PROCESSES CONTRASTED WITH SIMILAR PHENOMENA

We have argued that savoring requires three important preconditions: a sense of immediacy in the here and now; freedom from social and esteem needs as motivations; and focused mindful attention to positive experience. These three

prerequisite criteria for the occurrence of savoring are the building blocks of the model of savoring that we explicate more fully in the next few chapters. Before we begin, however, we recognize that these assumptive criteria raise questions about how to distinguish savoring processes from other processes that have emerged in similar conceptual spheres of positive psychology. In broadly staking out what we mean by savoring, we realize we share common conceptual ground with at least nine related but different phenomena currently in the positive psychology literature: mindfulness, meditation, daydreaming, emotional intelligence, time work, positive emotions per se, aesthetic responses, intrinsic motivation, and flow. Let us briefly highlight the similarities and differences between savoring processes and these related phenomena.

#### Savoring and Mindfulness

In her book, *Mindfulness*, Langer (1989) put psychologists in touch with a way of thinking about consciousness that had previously been neglected — namely, the way people gear themselves to being alert about their changing environmental contexts. According to Langer, when people are mindful, they are open to generating new ways of looking at the world and are not controlled by routines and habitual ways of observing. Along these lines, Thera (1972) described mindfulness as “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception” (p. 5). Other theorists have defined mindfulness as “an enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality” (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822), typically characterized by “open” or receptive consciousness (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997).

When people savor, they too are mindful of their experience, but their attention does not remain totally open to incoming or internal stimuli. Instead, the savoring process involves a more restrictive focus on internal and external stimuli associated with positive affect. In that sense, savoring is a narrower concept than mindfulness.

Increased mindfulness has been linked to positive emotional states and increased well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). There is also experimental evidence to support the connection between focused attention and savoring. For example, instructing people to attend to the physical sensations they experience while eating chocolate produces greater reported pleasure, compared to performing a distraction task while eating chocolate (Le Bel & Dube, 2001). Indeed, an increased awareness of pleasurable sensations lies at the very heart of savoring.

#### Savoring and Meditation

We can draw a similar distinction between savoring and another conscious process: *meditation*. Both are processes involving how people focus their attention, but there is a crucial difference. Savoring focuses attention on the consciousness



attainment of personal goals" (p. 1726). Research has found that the emotional consequences of positive daydreaming depend on an individual's level of fear of failure. For those high in fear of failure, a positive daydream can actually signify the likely absence rather than presence of future positive outcomes. For these people, becoming aware of the absence of desired goals in this way can ultimately produce a negative mood and some goal disengagement as a form of mood repair (Langens & Schmalt, 2002). For people low in fear of failure, in contrast, daydreaming about attaining personal goals signifies the likely presence of future positive outcomes and provides a motivational incentive to strive toward those goals, thereby increasing goal commitment (Langens & Schmalt, 2002).

Clearly, people may or may not savor positive daydreams, depending on their characteristic expectations regarding failure. Indeed, anticipating future positive outcomes may well make people feel demoralized or depressed if they believe that they are unlikely to attain these outcomes (MacLeod, Pankhania, Lee, & Mitchell, 1997). To savor a positive daydream, one must be mindfully aware of the feelings of pride, joy, pleasure, or fulfillment that it provides and must consciously reflect on these good feelings. Thus, just because one is daydreaming does not mean that one actually savors the experience.

### Savoring and Emotional Intelligence

As a process underlying the management of positive emotions, savoring shares some connections with emotional intelligence, or "the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, p. 433). Higher levels of emotional intelligence have been linked to greater positive affect and psychological well-being (Goleman, 1995; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995; Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002). Savoring, like emotional intelligence, involves awareness and regulation of emotions, as well as the use of emotional cues to direct thoughts and behaviors.

Savoring also shares common ground with the narrower constructs of *mood attention* (Salovey et al., 1995) and *mood awareness* (Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995), which encompass both mood monitoring and mood labeling. However, although savoring requires people to be aware of their positive feelings, people may or may not explicitly label these feelings. Nonetheless, just as the ability to understand what one is feeling facilitates the regulation of negative emotion (Barrett, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001), we expect that the ability to discriminate among different types of positive feelings—for example, joy, awe, pride, serenity, or gratitude—facilitates savoring.

Although previous theorists and researchers have devoted a great deal of attention to the self-control of negative emotion, little work has been done on the regulation of positive emotion (Gross, 1999). The prevailing assumption has been that people are generally motivated to avoid, prevent, or curtail bad

of feelings or the arrangement of ideas that elicit feelings. Meditation, according to Shapiro (1980), focuses attention in a nonanalytic way, either on a single object (concentrative meditation) or on all possible internal or external stimuli (mindfulness meditation). In either kind of meditation, people consciously intend to transcend themselves and to enter into the flow of consciousness. Shapiro, Schwartz, and Santerre (2002) noted a third category of meditation, contemplative meditation, that involves opening up to a "larger self." One can see, therefore, that, like the process of mindfulness, meditation of any sort focuses less deliberately on feelings as the target of attention. Feelings are not always directly involved in meditation as they are in savoring. People who meditate may feel good after the process, but during the process their feelings are not necessarily the focus of their attention. People who savor, by contrast, deliberately attend to positive feelings and to those experiences that are making them feel good.

For example, transcendental meditation (TM) allows one to experience a relaxed and enjoyable state that draws attention inward and quiets the mind while also increasing one's level of alertness (Bloomfield, Cain, & Jaffe, 1975). Although TM practitioners experience thoughts and feelings while meditating, they are taught to disengage from these sensations in order to achieve a state of pure awareness, which consists of being alert without being aware of anything except awareness itself. Indeed, one is taught "never to interrupt the ongoing process of meditation by analyzing thoughts which arise during the practice" (Bloomfield et al., 1975, pp. 25–26).

Savoring, on the other hand, entails a deliberate contemplation of one's own inner experience. Rather than turning away from positive thoughts and feelings that arise in the moment, when one savors, one intentionally reflects on these experiences, mulling them over, "swishing them around" in one's mind, so to speak, as one would savor a fine wine on one's palate. In the process, one explicitly acknowledges associated thoughts and feelings that arise, further enhancing enjoyment.

### Savoring and Daydreaming

Earlier, we noted that when people savor daydreams and fantasies, they are enjoying internal images that have taken on some "objective" reality. But this is not to say that daydreaming is necessarily a form of savoring. On the contrary, daydreaming is characterized by a stream of thought that turns attention inward and that is no longer determined by one's immediate surroundings or current task (Singer, 1981). Furthermore, daydreaming has been conceptualized as unpremeditated and without goal or purpose (Klinger, 1990), whereas savoring has the clear, deliberate goal of amplifying or prolonging positive emotional experience.

Consider the special case of "positive daydreaming" (Langens & Schmalt, 2002), in which people generate cognitive imagery that "enacts the successful

feelings and to obtain, generate, or prolong good feelings (Klinger, 1982; Kokkonen & Pulkkinen, 1999; Zillmann, 1988), resulting in what has been termed "a unidirectional effort to achieve a pleasurable state of mind" (Erber, Wegner, & Theriault, 1996, p. 757). The scant evidence that does exist suggests that happy people tend to avoid things that would reduce their positive feelings (Freedman, 1978; Isen, 2000; Wegener & Petty, 1994).

Emotional intelligence involves the adaptive harnessing of emotions in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1989–1990; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, et al., 1998). Likewise, savoring may be either adaptive or maladaptive depending on the contexts in which it occurs. To devote attention to savoring a landscape while driving in fast-moving, bumper-to-bumper traffic, for example, may not be adaptive. Thus, people may savor in emotionally intelligent or unintelligent ways, and they can learn healthier ways of savoring their lives. Indeed, deficits in the separate domains of monitoring, understanding, or regulating positive emotions might well require different therapeutic interventions. We return to this point in chapter 8 when we discuss how to enhance savoring.

### Savoring and Time Work

A relatively new concept that relates closely to savoring is the notion of *time work*, or the management of temporal experience. Characterized by purposeful, agentive self-determination, time work has been defined as individual or interpersonal efforts to create or regulate particular kinds of temporal experience (Flaherty, 1999, 2003; Garfinkel, 1967). Flaherty (2003) identified five main forms of time work in which people engage, involving attempts to control or manipulate the duration, frequency, sequence, timing, or allocation of temporal experience. The deliberate effort to control perception through time work resembles the mindful customizing of positive experience through savoring.

The temporal variable of duration is a case in point. In particular, Flaherty (2003) noted that "some individuals find themselves in (or anticipate) pleasurable circumstances, and they want to prolong the experience" (p. 22). Clearly, this represents one kind of savoring, in which people consciously strive to hold onto positive experiences and make them last longer. For example, Flaherty (2003) interviewed a young female respondent who described how she savors a weekend:

I always try to make the good days last a little longer by spacing [out] the things I'm going to do . . . so that there's always something waiting to be done. I'll also try to make the days seem longer by making it a point to stop in the middle of it and think about what I am doing and what I still have left to do, and for a while at least, put time on hold. (p. 22).

A 54-year-old female respondent used a similar strategy to prolong enjoyment of a vacation: "I try to slow down my breathing, visually take in my sur-

roundings, be aware of being in the present moment, be grateful for this time to be peaceful and relaxed, and enjoy my surroundings or activity" (Flaherty, 2003, pp. 22–23). As Flaherty (2003) observed, "Whereas those who want to accelerate the perceived passage of time imagine or remember other circumstances, those who wish to prolong their experiences concentrate on the here-and-now of the current situation" (p. 23). Clearly, savoring by prolonging or lingering in happy moments represents a way of increasing the perceived duration of positive experience. But savoring can also entail thoughts and behavior aimed at intensifying positive experience, independent of its duration. Thus, savoring may involve time work, but not necessarily.

### Savoring and Positive Emotions

If the distinction between savoring and both mindfulness and meditation rests on the fact that the process of savoring deals with positive feelings, then how do we distinguish savoring from positive feelings or emotions themselves? As we said earlier in distinguishing savoring and pleasure, savoring is a mindful process that attends to the pleasurable affect, but it is not identical to pleasure, however closely tied it is to positive affect. Fredrickson (2001) developed an elegant theory of positive emotions (e.g., joy, contentment, pride) that involve people's entire thought-action repertoire, including attention to and curiosity about the world around them. Nevertheless, in Fredrickson's conceptualization of positive emotions, the focus is on the elicitation and strength of the feeling and its consequence. She does posit, however, that a positive emotion broadens what we may attend to. In a certain sense, we are suggesting that such broadening may involve savoring processes that amplify positive emotions. If a savoring process is elicited when a positive emotion is experienced, then savoring could very well be the mediating mechanism through which a person's cognitive repertoire is expanded when a positive emotion is experienced. Furthermore, when people savor, they often broaden the range of feelings they can have and the contexts in which these feelings occur. At any rate, savoring processes and positive emotions are closely allied, but we should be careful to distinguish them as being distinctly separate phenomena.

### Savoring and the Aesthetic Response

Let us consider in some detail aesthetic pleasures, or positive feelings people have in the presence of naturally occurring or creatively formed beauty. Philosophers call these experiences *aesthetic reactions*. Analysts of aesthetics have defined the *aesthetic response* in many different ways. The definition we prefer is: to receive a communication of feelings through the arrangement of visual, auditory, and other sensory modes or through the arrangement of words and ideas in written or oral forms. It is a very human response to be moved by a painting,

experience. Sometimes a person perceives a landscape in a more aesthetic way, and we humorously call it “nature imitating art.” Ansel Adams photographed, however, might reflect the artist’s savored appreciation of the formal aspects of nature. Indeed, some critics have suggested that in photographing a landscape, Ansel Adams purposefully captured his experience of a moment in time in a setting, as if he were trying to communicate what he savored about the scene. Therefore, when observers aesthetically appreciate one of his photographs, they may well experience the same savoring Adams experienced in appreciating the formal structure of the landscape he caught on film and brought to life in the darkroom.

Empathy or identification with characters in plays and novels can also lead to savoring, if the characters are having positive feelings. In literature, on the stage, or in a film, if a character experiences a triumphant moment after overcoming adversity, we may be particularly moved by vicarious joy. Indeed, many people report being especially choked up at those times, particularly if the words used to convey the feelings have a grand sweep. We might term it “delicious schmalztz.” The familiar “lump in the throat” (known as *globus hystericus* in medical terms) reflects this type of vicarious response. Humor in literature can also be savored, as can the pleasure in just getting to know a character more fully. Indeed, many people savor the mere pleasure of reading, even sad stories, because it takes them out of their everyday world for a brief while. “Addicted” readers are often let down when a particularly good read is finished. Addicted film buffs might say the same about the end of a well-crafted, engrossing movie. Thus, in many ways, savoring and having aesthetic responses can be overlapping experiences.

We do not wish to suggest, however, that all aesthetic reactions involve savoring. The buildup and release of tension in reading or viewing tragedies may involve savoring processes, but it is unlikely. Aristotle long ago posited that in good tragedies there is a purging of emotions that comes from experiencing the drama. It would be hard to coordinate this view with our conception of savoring as a process of mindfully appreciating a positive experience. Nevertheless, if the emotional purging in a tragedy brought a pleasurable sense of relief that one could mindfully appreciate, then one might well be able to savor this positive state.

### Savoring and Intrinsic Motivation

In motivational psychology, there is a body of literature suggesting that human beings often behave as if there were no clear external reward for their activity other than a sense of their own competence (White, 1959) with a clear internal attribution for their behavior, or what has been termed *intrinsic motivation* (Deci, 1975). In response to our explication of savoring, the reader might begin to think of this concept as either a set of processes that have no external motivating agents or a set of activities that are intrinsically motivated.

a song, a poem, or other works where the person who created the work intends to reveal and communicate feelings. There does not have to be a one-to-one correspondence between the feelings that the creative person intended and the feelings the observer experiences. What is important is that there is a transfer of feelings in the process of communication.

When such an aesthetic response occurs, can one speak of the person who has that response as savoring? We say “yes,” if the person is being mindful of the experience and not simply reacting with emotion. People can be aesthetically overwhelmed with deep emotional awe when hearing a Bach chorale without attending to the various nuances of the sound that inspired that awe. However, when people become mindful of the nuances of the experience as they are listening, we say they are savoring the music. In many instances, aesthetic responses are savored in this way, but in many instances they are not. Humans are often moved by a work of art and indeed profoundly affected by it, perhaps experiencing awe and transcendence, without having the mindfulness required for savoring.

Consider the following excerpt from the collected writings of Richard Feynman, perhaps the finest physicist of our time, in which an artist and a scientist each contemplate the beauty of a flower:

I have a friend who’s an artist and he’s sometimes taken a view which I don’t agree with very well. He’ll hold up a flower and say, “Look how beautiful it is,” and I’ll agree, I think. And he says — “you see, I as an artist can see how beautiful this is, but you as a scientist, oh, take this all apart and it becomes a dull thing.” And I think he’s kind of nutty. First of all, the beauty that he sees is available to other people and to me, too, I believe, although I might not be quite as refined aesthetically as he is; but I can appreciate the beauty of a flower. At the same time I see much more about the flower than he sees. I can imagine the cells in there, the complicated actions inside which also have beauty. . . . Also the processes, the fact that the colors in the flower evolved in order to attract insects to pollinate it is interesting — it means that insects can see the color. It adds a question: Does this aesthetic sense also exist in lower forms? Why is it aesthetic? All kinds of interesting questions which shows that a science knowledge only adds to the excitement and mystery and the awe of a flower. (Robbins, 1999, p. 2).

Feynman’s observations clearly illustrate the difference between a purely aesthetic response to the flower’s beauty and the deliberate process of savoring that beauty.

But how about the reverse question? When people are savoring, can we automatically say that they are having an aesthetic experience? We say “no” in answer to that question. Savoring does not mean that a person is necessarily mindful of the arrangement of stimulation. In contrast to aesthetic responses — such as enjoying a painting or being moved by a play — when savoring, the form of our associations is not critical. When people rather randomly consider the beauties of the landscape they are viewing, they may be savoring but not having an aesthetic

One could ask why people savor, and possible answers would seem to include that they feel competent when they savor, or that they like being guided not by external rewards but by their own appreciative reactions to what they are experiencing.

These answers to the question of why people savor do not cover the heart of the experience of savoring. Competence may be involved in savoring experiences, but many other human needs can also be part of savoring. As noted earlier, people can savor their sociability as well as their mastery; they can savor their aesthetic reactions to external stimuli as well as their own internally generated experiences. Furthermore, if competence reigns as the basis for behavior, then concerns about competence may well interfere with savoring, just as when any other ego or esteem needs become dominant.

In addition, important to the idea of intrinsic motivation is the notion that one attributes the particular activity not externally, but to oneself. As far as we can tell, the attribution of causes of positive experiences that one savors is irrelevant to whether savoring processes occur in the first place. For instance, one might savor a spectacular sunrise as it slowly tinges the clouds crimson with alpenglow—a positive experience for which one might feel absolutely no personal responsibility. Nevertheless, it may very well be that one can better prolong savoring in settings where one is intrinsically motivated to act. In any event, savoring is a phenomenon distinctly separate from intrinsic motivation.

### Savoring and Flow

Finally, we should consider the conceptual overlap between savoring and Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1990, 2002) conception of *flow experiences*. In a brilliant analysis of what humans truly find gratifying in their activities, Csikszentmihalyi has argued and presented considerable evidence that optimal "flow" experiences occur when people engage in activities that provide persistent but not overwhelming challenges to their efficacy. In such activities, people lose both themselves and a sense of time passing; and their attention is totally centered on the task at hand. Hobbyists, artists, and writers often have that experience when they become engrossed in what they are trying to create. Even at work or in everyday life, one can have these flow experiences if one is challenged appropriately, but at the same time feels that he or she is being efficacious.

When people lose themselves in their activities in that way, we could easily say they are savoring their activity. And yet we hesitate to call these flow experiences "savoring." Compared with a savoring experience, flow activity implies far less conscious attention to the experience. It is almost as if flow has its own self-generating motivation without the intervention of any extraneous mindfulness, much like many sexual activities. Mindfulness seems not to be a necessary condition for flow. Indeed, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) contend that intense self-awareness disrupts the process of flow.

More importantly, as Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 2002) speaks of flow, it involves issues of efficacy and challenge that keep the person engrossed in the experience. Flow occurs when a person's skills perfectly match the demands of the task at hand; when task demands exceed one's skills, the result is anxiety, and when the person's skills exceed task demands, the result is boredom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990). Accomplishing a task or solving a problem is thus part of flow experiences. When concerns about performance dominate one's attention, however, they can interfere with flow. Likewise, we have explicitly argued that concentration on any ego needs, including mastery or competence, as mentioned earlier, can also interfere with savoring. Thus, the processes that maintain flow and the processes that maintain savoring may well have some similarity.

Finally, we recognize that one can savor a flow experience if one can focus one's attention on the experience as it is happening or just after it has happened. And yet we caution that if one is savoring a flow experience, then the process of focusing on the positive feelings that flow engenders while it is occurring might undermine the ongoing experience of flow. Research on flow suggests that people are not explicitly aware of the pleasure they are feeling at the time that flow occurs. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) has argued that awareness of pleasure in flow activities may only happen afterwards:

Strictly speaking, during the experience of [flow] people are not necessarily happy because they are too involved in the task to have the luxury to reflect on their subjective states. . . . But afterwards, when the experience is over, people report having been in as positive a state as it is possible to feel. (p. 825)

Further linking savoring and flow, there is evidence that individuals high in trait absorption—that is, the "disposition to enter under conducive circumstances psychological states that are characterized by marked restructuring of the phenomenal self and world" (Tellegen, 1992, p. 1)—experience stronger aesthetic responses than those low in trait absorption (Wild, Kuiken, & Schopflocher, 1995). Along these lines, Wild et al. (1995) speculated that people high in absorption prefer to devote more attention to affect than to other attentional objects, a tendency that might well facilitate the process of savoring. Thus, people more prone to absorptive flow experiences may also be more adept at savoring. We return to the concept of flow in chapter 4, when we discuss absorption as a type of savoring strategy.

### PREVIEW OF UPCOMING CHAPTERS

In this chapter, we staked out what the concept of savoring is generally about and we examined a number of other concepts to which savoring is related. We noted how savoring is both alike and different from these other concepts. In the next four chapters, we get to the heart of the psychology of savoring. We begin by

presenting the critical issues that a model of savoring must confront (chapter 2), and in so doing, we highlight several reports of savoring experiences that illustrate these issues. We then discuss the central premises of the model (chapter 3); report the results of research on the various types of cognitive and behavioral savoring strategies that people use in response to positive events (chapter 4); and present an integrative conceptual framework for understanding different kinds of savoring processes, including four primary forms of savoring (i.e., marveling, thanksgiving, basking, and luxuriating) that people encounter in their lives (chapter 5). We then consider the role of time in relation to savoring (chapter 6) and discuss how savoring relates to a variety of vital human concerns, including love, marriage, friendship, mental and physical health, creativity, meaning, and spirituality (chapter 7). Finally, in chapter 8, we consider the model's implications for helping people enhance savoring in their lives.

# 2

## Critical Issues for a Psychology of Savoring

*The most visible joy can only reveal itself  
to us when we've transformed it, within.*

—Rainier Rilke (1923/2005)

What should constitute a psychology of savoring? That most everyone savors at one time or another seems incontrovertible. But when does savoring happen? Can a person control when or how it happens? Can people savor the past or the future? Are there different kinds of savoring experiences? What processes go on when it happens? What influences the intensity of the experience? Can other people be involved in what seems to be a very private experience? Indeed, are there cultural differences in savoring processes? These are a few of the conceptual questions any formal model for the psychology of savoring must address. Beyond these concerns is an important pragmatic issue for us as social scientists: How should we go about measuring features of the savoring process for systematic study? In this chapter, we first discuss important conceptual issues relevant to a psychology of savoring and then in a final section address the need to establish means of measurement.

### CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

In this introductory section, we highlight six major conceptual issues raised by the questions just asked, issues we address more fully in the model for savoring we develop in the next four chapters of this book. Clearly, these are not the only