

 **Introduction to Positive Psychology**



An introduction to Positive Psychology:
Supporting positive change in youth

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 **Introduction to Positive Psychology**



In 1998 Martin Seligman, American Psychological Association President, suggested that psychology should turn toward understanding and building the human strengths to complement our emphasis on healing damage.

 **What is Positive Psychology?**

- › The purpose of Positive Psychology is to understand and promote the human strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive.
- › Founded on the belief that individuals want to lead **meaningful** and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within ourselves and to enhance our experiences of **love and work**.
- › Positive Psychology works to promote optimal functioning across the full range of human functioning, from disorder and distress to health and fulfilment.

 **History....**

- › Humanistic Psychology.
- › Maslow (1954) first used the term to describe his emphasis on creativity & self-actualisation.
- › Also Rogers - fully functioning individual.
- › Positive Psychology has strong focus on evidence to evaluate theories.

 **Is it just about happiness?**



- › Whilst happiness and well-being are researched within PP, positive psychologists also study characteristics such as kindness, curiosity and the ability to work as a team amongst other things.
- › Also study social institutions that enable the good life: friendship, marriage, family, education, religion, workplace.

 **3 Pillars of Positive Psychology**

- › Positive Subjective Experiences
 - i.e. happiness, pleasure, fulfillment: about how one feels.
- › Positive Individual Traits
 - i.e. strengths, talents, values.
- › Positive institutions
 - i.e. families, schools, businesses, communities, societies.



What is Positive Psychology

The study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions

The scientific study of the conditions and processes that lead to optimal human functioning

Gable & Haidt, 2005

- › Strengths
- › Optimal functioning
- › Well-being
 - Physical, Emotional, Social, Psychological and Organisational



positive emotion engagement relationships meaning accomplishments

Why Positive Psychology?



- › Mental health prevention & promotion.
- › Building positive emotions as a buffer against negative emotions.
- › Evidence-based strategies to enhance psychological resilience.
- › Mental health immunisation!

Mental Health Spectrum

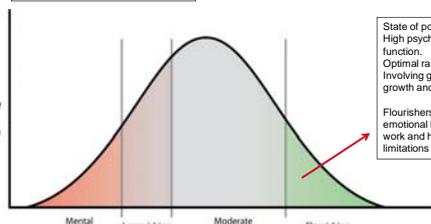
(Well-being Institute, University of Cambridge, 2011)

State devoid of positive emotion. Low psychological or social function. No recent depression (1 year).

Not mentally ill nor mentally healthy. Emotional distress and psychosocial impairment comparable to major depressive episode.

State of positive emotion toward life. High psychological and social function. Optimal range of human functioning. Involving goodness, generativity, growth and resilience.

Flourishers experience excellent emotional health, miss fewer days of work and have fewer physical limitations in their daily lives.



Percentage of Population

Mental Disorder Languishing Moderate Mental Health Flourishing

Psychological Resources

Mental health & well-being!

Three Roads to the Good Life

- › Pleasure (Positive Emotions)
- › Engagement
- › Meaning



Broaden & Build Theory of Positive Emotion

(Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)



- › Concerned with the individual experience of positive emotions such as, joy, interest, contentment, play, love and other similar emotions.

- 1) Broadening: Positive emotions broaden attention, focus, and cognitions,
- 2) Building: That this builds positive resources for future adaptability.
- 3) Spirals towards flourishing: That this broadening and building can lead to a positive feedback loop.
- 4) Undoing Hypothesis: in which positive emotions can actually negate and protect an individual from the effects of negative emotions.

Positive Emotions: The Yearbook Study



(Harker & Keltner, 2001)

Positive Emotions: The Nun Study
(Danner, Snowdon & Friesen, 2001)

POSITIVE EMOTIONS IN EARLY LIFE

Probability of Survival

Age

- 1% more in positive sentences = 1.4% decreased mortality.
- Happiest lived 10 years longer than the least happy.
- Cheerful nuns 80% chance to reach age 85, vs. least cheerful 54%.
- 54% of the happy nuns reached 94 vs. 15% of the least happy.

Positive Affect and Health

› Trait PA Findings

- less likely to develop cold when exposed to virus
- Lower stroke rate
- Lower hospitalisation for coronary problems
- Fewer injuries

(Cohen et al., 2003)

- Buffer us from Stress and Cortisol related tissue damage.

(lowe et al., 2011)

- May play a protective role in disease development

(Choo & Bauer, 2005)

- And may even help us to live longer

(Koopmans, et al., 2010)

Positive Psychology In Education

Why?

25% Australian young experience a mental disorder, 1/3 experience high degrees of mental distress.

Positive Psychology may be able to provide the tools to help individuals buffer themselves from life's ups and downs.

Positive Psychology In Education

The findings:

Positive Psych Interventions in schools

- Significantly related to student wellbeing, relationships and academic performance. (Waters, 2011)
- Gratitude found to relate to positive Emotion, life satisfaction, social support and prosocial behaviour. (Froh et al., 2009)
- Positive Education found to lead to increased perspective taking and hope. (O'Connor & Green, 2015)

Quality of Connections

The quality of our conversations determines the quality of our relationships ...

and the quality of our relationship determines the quality of the systems and organisations we live and work in ...

Ratios of **Positivity** over **Negativity** are important in many aspects of our lives!

Such as:

Team performance, Marital Satisfaction, Engagement, Coping, Adjustment, Recovery, Sociability, Empathy.

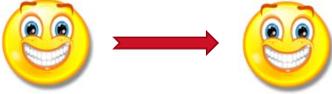
You think because you understand “1” you must understand “2” because “1” and “1” make “2”.

But you must also understand “and”.

• Sufi Saying.

Well-Being and Quality Connections in Networks

› Emotions are contagious



RIOTS



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Well-Being and Quality Connections in Networks

The happiness of others in your network!



Within 1.6km who become happy increase the chance you will become happy

- Friend **25%**
- Co-resident spouse **8%**
- Sibling **14%**
- Next door Neighbour **34%**

- It turns out that your happiness is influenced by up to **3 degrees** of separation by those in your network or relationships.

- (Fowler & Christakis, 2008)

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Well-Being and Quality Connections in Networks

Money doesn't buy happiness but quality relationships can!



You need to quadruple your salary in order to get the same effect on happiness as caused through getting married.

Double to get the same effects as volunteering monthly or through fortnightly church attendance

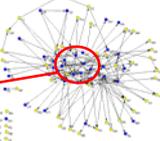
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Energising and de-energising relationships

Energising relationships



Employees find interactions with these individuals to be energising



Employees find interactions with these individuals to be de-energising

Cross & Parker (2004)

Energy self-assessment

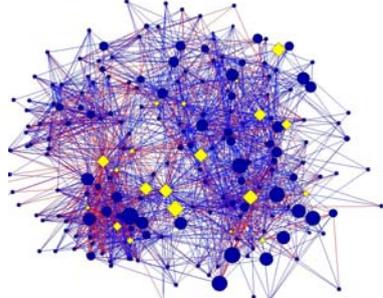
- Is relationship development a daily priority?
- Do you follow through on things?
- Do you address tough issues with integrity?
- Do you look mainly for possibilities or constraints?
- Do you focus attention on issues or people?
- Are you fully focused in conversations?
- Are you flexible or dogmatic about your viewpoints?
- Do you use your expertise appropriately?



(Cross & Parker, 2004)

The Ripple Effect

Interaction Networks and change in wellbeing



KEY

- Negative Interaction
- Positive Interaction
- Node size indicates degree of wellbeing change over the intervention period.

(O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013)



So what can you do?

Positive Psych Interventions that work:

- Gratitude Visits
- Keep a diary of "Three good things"
- Use your signature strengths
www.authentichappiness.com

- Random acts of Kindness
- Make time for positive emotions
- Interact more positively and build quality relationships
- Set goals, make them specific and have multiple pathways to reach them.



WHAT WILL YOU DO THIS WEEK?
