What is Positive Psychology?

The scientific study of what makes life worth living. It is concerned with people knowing their strengths and using them both in their personal and professional life, but it doesn’t mean forgetting about your weaknesses. It means building a strong foundation and a sense of self to be able to work through the weaknesses.

Positive Psychology is Psychology with a positive orientation, concerned with authentic happiness and the good life. Positive Psychology focuses on well-being, contentment, excitement, cheerfulness, the pursuit of happiness and meaning in life.

It means looking at what is working in your life. What is going right but not forgetting about the things that are not working. Its just looking at life from a different perspective. It is knowing we can’t live a stress-free life and that we will have a mix of both bad and good times in life.

Its knowing which character traits lead to happiness and using them in different settings such as work, school, relationships, etc.

The founding father of Positive Psychology is Dr. Martin Seligman Dr. Seligman was the president of the American Psychology Association. He runs the Graduate School of Positive Psychology (MAPP) and is the director of the Positive Psychology Center at UPenn.

**Perma Model of Well-Being**

1. **Positive Emotions**
2. **Engagement – Flow**
3. **Relationship and Social Connections**
4. **Meaning – Our Purpose**
5. **Accomplishments – mastery, goals, ambition, intrinsic goals**

**PERMA**

**Positive Emotions** - our emotions affect how we see the world. A positive emotion allows us to see connections, opportunities, hope, joy, etc.

If I feel good, I will do well. If I’m feeling a negative emotion like anger, hurt, frustration, etc. I will not remember the positive in my lie. If I’m feeling positive emotions, I can remember positive memories. Our emotions affect what we recall.

A great one for academics is Curiosity. Curiosity creates an interest in something, a desire to know, to learn more. Curiosity boosts achievement and participation in school while making it more enjoyable.

Showing curiosity to others makes the other person feel better. They feel like the person is interested. If you show your in curious in someone, you appear more attractive and warmer. It also expands our empathy. It allows us to ask more questions to people, to learn about them and understand who they are and what they are going through.

When doctors show a genuine curiosity about their patient’s feelings, the patient feels less anger and frustration.

Other positive emotions: Love, Joy, Gratitude, Interest/curiosity, Hope, Inspiration, pride, amusement, awe/wonderment

**Engagement “Flow”** – Psychology of Flow is feeling immersed in an activity that nothing else matters. They forget about everything even eating and/or sleeping. Where do you find flow? Students/People can find it in Music, Robotics, Sports, Art, Writing, Creative activities.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – coined the term “Psychology of Flow” and did most of the research on the topic.

What’s involved in flow- it’s challenging but not too much that you can’t do it at all.

You have full concentration, immediate feedback, our sense of self vanishes, time stops, deep involvement, we are using our skills.

Flows help us to stretch and grow. The activity that causes flow challenges you but your able to meet the task.

When you’re in flow you don’t think about the stress and bad situations in your life.

**Relationships** - we are social beings. Socialization is the #1 factor of happiness.

Friendships/relationships, teamwork, empathy

For parents/teachers – treat kids as individuals with caring and kindness. A child will do more work for a teacher that is nice and kind. Recognizing the good in the child, their strengths. Praise and positive reinforcement.

How do you react to the students? Being in control. Watching your non-verbal emotions.

For everyone – recognize, acknowledge and apologize for your mistakes

Behave with integrity

Emotional detox – removing the toxic

Moods/emotions are contagious

**Meaning & Purpose**

In academics – having students helping other students gives them a purpose. Allowing students to play a role in their education. Let them have a voice. Be involved in decisions.

Have students find where they belong – what groups? This brings community. Volunteering, Social Responsibility

Discussion – what gives them purpose and meaning in life?

Finding something in life that makes a difference, that is bigger then themselves. Random acts of kindness.

Find and build your strengths/passions – what do you care about? What’s your “Caring”

**Accomplishments** – a sense of moving forward. Setting Intrinsic goals- goals that have personal meaning. No comparing yourself to others or aiming for perfection, just a desire to improve and do our best. Perseverance –the ability to continue. Resiliency – seeing the big picture.

A sense of connection- working well with others, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence.

A sense of autonomy- a sense of independence and being themselves. Living a self-chosen life.

A sense of competency- the ability to do something successful. Mastering skills.

How do you define happiness?

Vision map - look at the areas of your life – which areas bring happiness? Which areas are you successful in?

Career

Finances

School

Health

Family

Socialization

Relationships

Religion/Spirituality

Fun/Play

Is their balance? Which areas are lacking?

**Benefits of using Positive Psychology**

1. **Better academic performance, 11% higher than students in a traditional classroom that didn’t receive Positive Psychology instruction.**
2. **Improved attitude and motivation towards learning**
3. **Increased time devoted to schoolwork**
4. **Better attendance**
5. **Fewer negative behaviors in school**
6. **Less stress and anxiety in the classroom**
7. **People who express gratitude on a daily basis have better physical health, optimism, progress towards goals, well-being and helping others (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000)**
8. **People who witness others perform good deeds experience an emotional called “elevation” and this motivates them to perform their own good deeds. (Haidt, 2000)**
9. **People who repeat more positive emotions in young adulthood live longer and healthier lives. (Danner, Snowden & Friesen, 2001)**
10. **Optimism can protect people from mental and physical illness (Taylor et al.,2000)**
11. **People who are optimistic or happy have better performance in work, school and sports, are less depressed, have fewer health problems, and have better relationships with other people. Further, optimism can be measures and it can be learned. (Seligman, 1991, Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005)**
12. **Today’s average age of onset of depression is 15 years old compared to 30 years old many years ago. (McGuire, 1998)**

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