

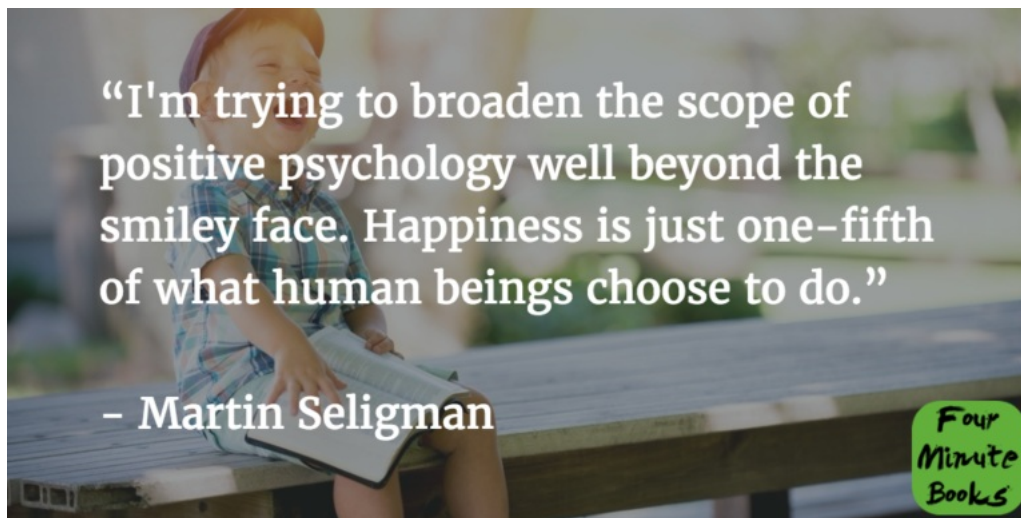
Flourish Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/flourish-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Flourish establishes a new model for well-being, rooted in positive psychology, building on five key pillars to help you create a happy life through the power of simple exercises.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Let's make a bet. I would actually put money on this. At some point in your life, you have asked yourself a variation of the following question: "How can I be happy?" Whether it was "How can I be happier?" or "How can I be happy *more often*?" or "How can I *go back to* being happy?" I'm very sure you've turned this over in your head at least a couple times.

Today's book comes from the person you should direct this question to. He's a founding father of happiness research and established the entire scientific field of positive psychology. His name is Martin Seligman. If you've heard the name before, it was likely in connection with a book called *Learned Optimism* (one of the first summaries on here, btw).

Flourish is the first book he's written in over ten years, in which he lays out a holistic model of happiness, going beyond psychology as a way to alleviate suffering and instead, use it to build a better life.

Today I learned these 3 lessons from it:

1. A life of profound fulfillment is built on PERMA.
2. Simple positivity exercises can have life-changing effects, like these two.
3. IQ isn't everything – success is based on character traits, not just intelligence.

Are you done just floating along in the river of life? Then it's time to flourish!

Lesson 1: Make PERMA your model of choice to build your life after, if you want to live a fulfilled and happy life.

The model Martin Seligman built to completely represent a happy life with all its facets and components is predicated on five key pillars. Numbers 1, 2 and 4 have been agreed upon in their importance by psychologists for a long time, 3 and 5 have been identified through Seligman, his team and their work.

1. **Positive emotion.** What you might call “happiness” in colloquial language, but is mostly pleasure. The warm feeling you get when your girlfriend hugs you, the excitement you get from dancing at a club to loud music, the comfort of a warm blanket and some hot pizza on a Winter’s day, etc.
2. **Engagement.** The flow component, which describes the state of effortless work. How much of your time do you spend absorbed in activities you love, which make you forget time, lose yourself and feel absolutely in sync with what you’re doing?
3. **Relationships.** The number one thing keeping people from becoming depressed is a strong set of great friends. Good relationships are the best, most natural anti-depressant in the world. Is your social life alive and kicking? Do you trust those around you? Do you love them?
4. **Meaning.** What’s a cause you’re willing to serve, simply because you believe in it? Where do you feel like you belong? Which community can you give your time and skills to, to make the world a better place for them? Meaning is where motivation comes from.
5. **Accomplishment.** As Seligman says: Winning for winning’s sake. It might sound silly, but as human beings, we need that. We need that push to the ego we get from climbing the mountain, hitting the sales goal, winning a tennis match, pulling off the conference organization, etc.

And there you have it – the PERMA model in a nutshell. Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. If you build your life around that, there’s not much you can do wrong after that.

Lesson 2: Positive psychology exercises don’t have to be complicated to have a profound effect, like these two.

Martin Seligman has gotten the best and most positive feedback from his students about the exercises they’ve done in class. Many of them said that in spite of taking so little effort, they ended up changing their life. Here are two of them.

1. **The “what went well” exercise.** Before you go to bed, take ten minutes to write down three things that went well that day. Then, ask yourself “Why did this happen?” for each one of them. This will show you that your choices *do* matter in making a positive change and help you do it again. Do this for a week and watch what happens.
2. **The kindness exercise.** This is great for kids, but works for anybody. Think of something

nice you can do for someone, something random, that doesn't take much, but will make their day – and go do it. Without expecting anything in return. Just observe what impact this has on your mood and you'll see how powerful this is.

See? It doesn't have to be complicated. Changing your life can happen one day, one exercise, ten minutes at a time.

Lesson 3: Success is based on more than intelligence, such as character traits, making IQ a bad way to measure it.

The accomplishment part from the PERMA model is the one where most people will pause for a second and think “but...” and then insert excuses. “But I’m not that smart.” “But I’m not that talented.” And so on.

According to Seligman however, it's really character traits that are responsible for accomplishment, not fixed abilities. Take IQ, for example. I have an IQ of over 130, which puts me in the top 5% on the planet. But it doesn't mean anything. If I want to have a successful online business, I have to figure out all of it by myself, just like everyone else who starts from zero. I didn't just show up and make a million bucks. I'm a long way from that.

Seligman says there are four things that determine accomplishment, most of which can be learned:

1. **Speed of thinking.**
2. **The ability to plan your work and revise what you've already done.**
3. **A fast learning rate.**
4. **The effort you put into the tasks you handle.**

Since IQ mainly tests the speed of thinking part, it's not all that helpful in determining someone's potential for success. So don't get hung up on what you don't have. Look at what you can learn and focus on that.

Flourish Review

Wow, *Flourish* is an awesome book, a complete look at happiness, which includes all the things I thought of when designing my own happiness formula recently. Definitely a one-stop shop, go for it!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- When drugs work, and when they stop doing so
 - Why we need science to back up positive psychology
 - How one school integrated the positive psychology exercises into their schedule
 - A better way to measure accomplishment than IQ
 - Why wealth doesn't automatically equal well-being

Who would I recommend the Flourish summary to?

The 24 year old student, who used to be happy until she started college, but lost her positive energy along the way, the 45 year old teacher, who's looking for something new to teach his kids, and anyone who thinks they don't have what it takes to be successful.