

Positive Psychology 9:00

Dr. Ferguson

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Reflection Paper

I took this class at the recommendation of Carly Klynsma, and I'm very glad that I listened to her advice. I wasn't quite sure what to expect from Positive Psychology, but I have to say that I learned more than I thought I would. It wasn't even necessarily one turning moment, but a gradual shift and change in my life. I think one of the most interesting ideas for me was that of autonomy. I always assumed that simply meant being able to function on your own, but knowing that it is choosing to do things you like makes me feel like autonomy is an easier goal to achieve in well-being. The most beneficial theory was that of self-compassion. We had always discussed self-esteem in school and how making mistakes is okay, but we had never talked about what to do when you do make those mistakes.

One of the most important things I learned in this class is that nothing is a fixed habit. If we can't adjust our lives, then there's no point in studying Positive Psychology. Because of this, I feel like I can apply the things I have learned in this class to my life. As an anxious person, there were a lot of things that seemed doomed from the beginning like traits such as neuroticism and extraversion. But even if these traits are harder to adjust, that doesn't mean there aren't other things I can't control in my life. For instance, the look at strategic optimism versus defensive pessimism perfectly summed up how I approach situations. I like being able to have a term for it, and it

makes me feel less like a negative person and more like someone who can use her personality to her advantage.

The other thing that I will carry into my future life is something I touched on earlier: self-compassion. I really believe in this idea and think it is something we need to explore and encourage in society. So many students are hard on themselves and feel they cannot live up to the expectations of themselves or others. It can be detrimental when something goes wrong in a student's life like getting a bad grade or not receiving a position she wanted in her organization. Self-compassion is the best way I know to deal with these disappointments. It isn't entirely upbeat like the advice people sometimes get after failing, encouraging you to pick yourself up and carry on and learn from it. Instead, it allows people to feel those emotions and be upset and hurt. The difference is that self-compassion encourages people to love themselves while being hurt and reminds them that everyone goes through disappointment. By treating ourselves how we treat our best friends when they fail, we can adopt a more self-loving society.

I have a few pieces of advice for students taking this class in the future. The most important thing is to make sure that you read all of the articles and readings. Not only do you have to do the discussion questions and paragraphs, you also need to be able to actually discuss things in class and show you are knowledgeable in the topic. Additionally, many of the topics show up on the test and reading them ahead of time gives you a good basis to build on when it is time to study for the tests.

In addition to completing the readings, another good study tip for this class is practicing the essay questions in as detailed of a way as possible. While there are many questions and it's tempting to brush over them to get a general idea, it's very important to get into the specifics. While a general overview might get you through an essay question with partial credit, a short answer question may cover a specific area that you will only understand if you go in depth over the essay questions.