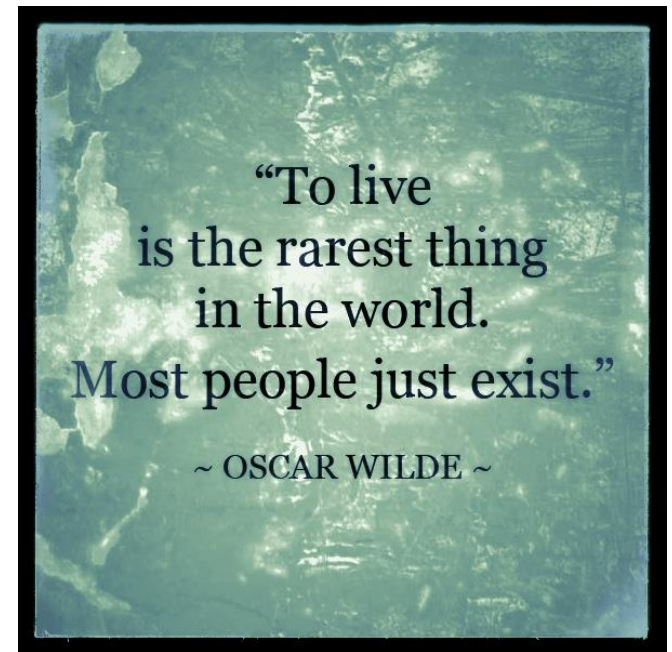


Chapter 12

A Look Toward the Future of Positive Psychology

How Do We Recognize a Life Well-Lived?

- Past research has assumed happiness and life satisfaction are the major criteria for understanding the good life
- Allport believed that well-being is achieved through a willingness and eagerness to experience all that life has to offer plus the drive to expand one's sense of self.



How Do We Recognize a Life Well-Lived?

- Researchers agree positive emotionality should be part of life well-lived, and should also include things such as prosocial values and working toward socially desirable goals
- Keep in mind the independent predictors of well-being such as positive thinking, optimism, compassion, and forgiveness can be either adaptive or problematic depending on the social context in which they operate
- Happiness should never be a goal, but rather a probable consequence of full involvement in life

Theories That Integrate Multiple Perspectives

Dov Shmotkin and Well-Being Modules

- Model of subjective WB in adulthood that addresses both positive and negative emotions
- Sense of well-being
 - Created out of a dynamic system designed to foster “a favorable psychological environment in the face of an actually or potentially hostile world.”

Theories That Integrate Multiple Perspectives

Dov Shmotkin and Well-Being Modules

- Subjective well-being is built from various modules
 - Self-awareness of WB
 - Influenced by need fulfillment, ratio of pos to neg thoughts, attainment of important goals
 - How we report WB to others (this second module is a factor in self-awareness of WB too)

Theories That Integrate Multiple Perspectives

Dov Shmotkin and Well-Being Modules

- Subjective well-being is built from various modules
 - Relationships among evaluative dimensions of well-being
 - Positive-negative emotions
 - Life satisfaction-affect balance
 - Dispositional optimism
 - How we define our place on these dimensions and combine them creates our definitions of happiness and WB
 - Narrative well-being
 - Stories we tell about our own lives

New Research Methods

- WB needs to be studied with multiple measurement instruments and newer research strategies that better represent the complexity of human behavior
- SUMM
 - Scientific understanding through multiple methodologies
- Action research
 - Involves participation of both researchers and participants in collaborative problem-solving, often involving multiple interventions

New Research Methods

Qualitative Research

- Use of unstructured or semi-structured techniques to gather data
 - Interviews, focus groups, case studies, participant observation
- Book notes example of meditation research where researcher engages in meditation and then self-reflects
 - Sounds much like introspection in early 1900s that was heavily criticized because no empirical way to see what was in the mind (and this led to rise of behaviorism)

New Research Methods

Qualitative Research

- Examining the impact of historical time period and sociocultural contexts
 - Constructivist methods: e.g., how people interpret their world when seeking WB
- Useful in developing conceptions of healthy individual and group functioning
- Ideal for exploring under-researched areas

New Research Methods

Systems Theory

- Integrated systems of mind
 - View people more holistically
 - Integrated systems of mind, body, emotions and cognition
 - See humans as integrated organisms described by subsystems: physical, emotional, intellectual, behavioral and spiritual
- Describes complex causal relationships among a variety of different factors

New Research Methods

Systems Theory: The "Billiard Ball" model of causality

- Explaining behavior as stimulus-response
- Start exercise → enhanced mood → meet people who provide positive feedback → more positive mood, greater self-esteem; decreases stress → greater sense of WB

New Research Methods

Systems Theory: Beyond the Billiard Ball

- Reciprocal determinism
 - Enhanced mood, self-esteem could increase probability that exercise will continue...does exercise cause better mood or does better mood cause more exercise
- Causality is no longer unidirectional
- Causality is at least bidirectional (A causes B) and possibly transactional (causality is function of relationship between A and B)
- A holistic perspective on psychological well-being

New Research Methods

Systems Theory: Personality Integration

- Human systems model of personality integration
- Emotion is a function of all the subsystems
 - Biochemical, physiological, precognitive (e.g., dreams), cognitive, person to person, person to environment
- Holism

New Research Methods

Systems Theory: Kennon Sheldon and Systems Theory

- Discusses biological processes, influence of society and culture on behavior
- Different levels of cultural influences on well-being

Integrate Positive Psychology With Psychology

- Focus on working on both strengths and weaknesses
- Changing one's thought patterns from negative to positive interpretations
- Need to bring positive psychology into greater collaboration with other areas of psychology

The Question of Values

- Values should be removed as much as possible from science
- Conceptualizations of well-being rest on beliefs
- Science of values
- Scientific choice limits how well-being will be defined and measured

From Compton's grandmother's bedside table...throughout the coming year, may you have:

- Enough happiness to keep you sweet
- Enough trials to keep you strong
- Enough sorrow to keep you human
- Enough hope to keep you happy
- Enough failure to keep you humble
- Enough success to keep you eager
- Enough friends to give you comfort
- Enough wealth to meet your needs
- Enough faith to banish depression
- Enough determination to make each day better than yesterday