

Chapter 6

Positive

HEALTH



Positive Health



- Health--a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being
- Theory: Imbalance of physical elements causes mental illness (e.g., Ancient Greeks and 4 humors; today neurotransmitters)
- Physical health defined as the absence of illness
- Healthy and vital physical body is important for mental health

Positive Health

Wellness

- Health is a state of physical, mental, and emotional health, not just absence of disease and infirmity (WHO, 1946)
- Encompasses the benefits of overall growth

Positive Health

Wellness (Dunn)

- Wellness is a state in which a person has:
 1. A zest for life,
 2. A way of living that maximizes potential,
 3. A sense of meaning and purpose,
 4. A sense of social responsibility
 5. Skills for adapting to the challenges of a changing environment.
- Wellness encompasses the benefits of exercise, nutrition, stress management, emotional self-regulation, social support, and personal growth.

Positive Health

- Positive Health: Absence of disease and Excellence in three measures:
 - Biological markers/Physiological (e.g., cardiac, pulmonary health)
 - Subjective experiences
 - *e.g., optimism, energization, sense of vitality*
 - Functional measures: how well daily activities are accomplished and behavioral signs (e.g., adjustment to normal aging)

Positive Health

- Goal of positive health is to describe adaptations to challenges and a better quality of life
- Thriving: enhanced psychological and physical functioning after successful adaptations... better adaptations, more potent coping skills



Positive Health

Vitality

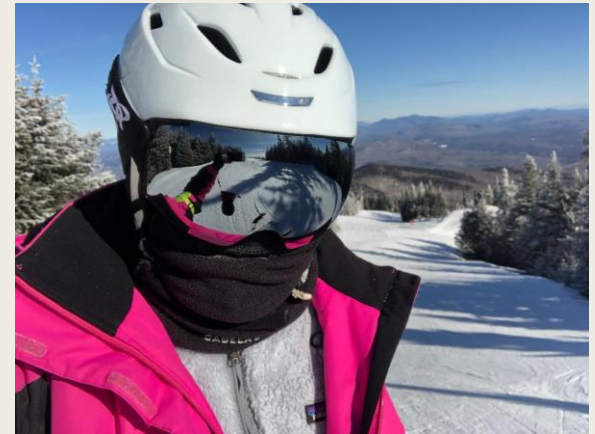
- Positive feeling of aliveness and energy
- Enhanced by activities that satisfy self-determination needs for competence, autonomy, relatedness
- Factor in longevity through its association with autonomy



Positive Health

Exercise and Positive Health

- Regular exercise healthy for both physical and psychological well-being
 - *Personal accomplishment, self-efficacy, cognitive processes, fight off colds, self-acceptance, mindfulness; anxiety, depression, better sleep*



Positive Health

Exercise and Positive Health

- Vigorous physical activity better than moderate activity for lowering mortality rate
- Overtraining a negative impact on well-being
- Positive attitude toward exercise increases motivation to exercise

Positive Health



Health Psychology and PNI

- Health psychology examines all factors that affect a person's health
- Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) examines the relationships between
 - *psychological processes (esp. emotion)*
 - *functioning of the nervous system*
 - *body's immune system*

Positive Health

Health Psychology and PNI

- Psychoneuroimmunology
 - *Stress-common cold link with buffer of social network (lower social support 4x more likely to become ill)*



Psychological Factors Important to Health

- Focus of this section is on how psychological factors can improve health status



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Positive Emotionality

- Positive people live longer than less happy people
- Happier people have healthier functioning immune systems
- Positive emotions promote positive health



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Positive Emotionality (remember Broaden and Build Theory)

- Those with more frequent positive emotionality...
 - *Perceived self as healthier (and objective measures confirmed it)*
 - *Showed more energy*
 - *Were more involved in enjoyable activities*
 - *Engaged in healthier behaviors*
 - *Had better coping skills*
 - *Had healthier immune systems*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support

- Cross et al (2018) “connections between social relationships and health are some of the strongest and most consistent psychological correlates of health in the medical literature” (p.6)
- Includes:
 - *Emotional support*
 - *Willingness of others to offer their time or other forms of tangible assistance*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support helps increase:

- *compliance with medical treatments*
- *reduce levels of medication*
- *adoption of health-promoting behaviors*
- *positive emotions*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support

- *perceived closeness to one's ethnic or racial group as well as a positive racial identity can serve to reduce health risks*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Friendship and Confidant Relationships

- Aristotle: Three types of friendship
 - *Utility*
 - *Pleasure*
 - *Virtue (emotional concern and compassionate care)*



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Friendship and Confidant Relationships

- Adler: Presence of friends is important for child's emotional well-being
- Having a trusted friend lowers virtually all forms of risky and self-destructive behavior
- People who have a confidant have better overall health
- Show greater psychological resiliency and less vulnerability to depression

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Internet Use and Positive Relationships

- Excessive time on Internet slightly decreases well-being
- The impact of the Internet on well-being dependent on
 - *Type of use*
 - *Time spent online*
 - *When people are online*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Internet Use and Positive Relationships

- Human need for a trusting bond strengthened by shared feelings seems timeless

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Social Support and the Immune System

- Social support brings measurable changes in the immune system
- Loneliness can have negative effects on immune functioning
- Loneliness can also have negative effects on psychological well-being

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Social Support From Pets?

- Pets enhances people's health
- Levels of oxytocin increase when people petted their dogs
- People can gain health benefits by caring for a variety of pets



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Social Support: Restorative Nature Experiences

- Nature affiliation evokes both pleasure and a deeper sense of meaning
- Forest bathing allows mind to become clearer and sharper
- Nature is not only restorative for people emotionally, but cognitively beneficial too



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Love and Positive Health

- Married men benefit physiologically from marriage
- Women need a good marriage to show increased health benefits

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Love and Positive Health: Touch

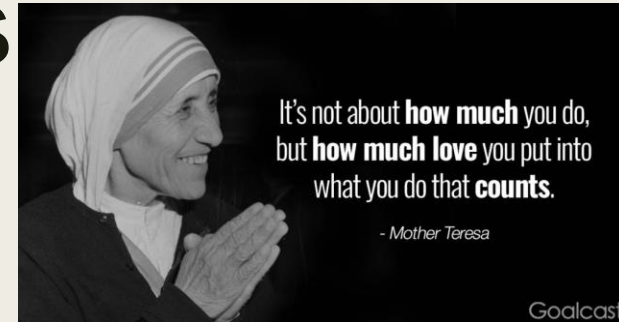
- Associated with positive health
- A caring touch releases oxytocin
- Increases feelings of caring and empathy
- Helps reduce pain and in treatment of psychological disorders
- Reduces fatigue of leukemia patients
- Helps people make better decisions

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Love and
Positive Health:
Touch



Psychological Factors Important to Health



Love, Positive Health: Compassion and Health

- People who are kind and sympathetic to others influence changes in our immune system responses.
 - *Shown film about the life of Mother Teresa as she worked among the sick and dying in India. Immediately after seeing the film on Mother Teresa, all participants showed increased immune system functioning.*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Love and Positive Health: Altruism

- Higher volunteering associated with increased longevity
- Helping others related to well-being
- Altruism seems to take a person away from their own concerns
- Altruism increases social bonds and promotes positive emotions



Psychological Factors Important to Health



Humor and Positive Health

- Defense mechanism of humor related to greater personal adjustment and well-being
- Good sense of humor helps people recover more quickly from illness
- Enhance immune system functioning
- Reduce the psychological experience of pain

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Humor and Positive Health: Laugh Clubs!

- Laugh clubs: People laugh as hard as they can for 15–20 min in groups
- Physical act of laughing is healing in itself

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Music and Health

- Music can help the healing process
- Relaxing sounds lower stress hormones and BP, raise endorphin levels, increase positive moods



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Music and Health

- Music improves health and well-being through the engagement of neurochemical systems involving these four aspects: reward, motivation, and pleasure; stress and arousal; immunity; and social affiliation



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Emotional Expression and Health: Writing About Our Lives

- Act of writing down one's thoughts about a traumatic event is beneficial
 - *Lower BP, less distress*
 - *Greatest improvement in those who had not shared their traumatic event before*
- Sharing negative emotions is more helpful than focusing only on positive emotions
- Those low in expressiveness may have increased anxiety when asked to engage in expressive writing

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Emotional Expression and Health: Writing About Our Lives

- Suggestions for using writing to deal with stress and painful memories
 - *Write about an issue current to you*
 - *Choose location special and unique, quiet*
 - *Ignore spelling, grammar, prose*
 - *Write about what happened and feelings about what happened*
 - *Plan to keep it private, destroy if you want*
 - *Realistic to feel sad after writing, but sadness usually fades; if persists, seek professional counseling*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Emotional Expression and Health: Regrets

- Biggest regrets: education, career, romance
- Regret *actions* or *inactions*
 - *Regrets over actions tend to elicit primarily “hot” emotions (e.g., anger)*
 - Immediately clear
 - *Regrets over inaction generate feelings of wistfulness or despair*
 - Becomes clear over time

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Emotional Expression and Health: Regrets

- Severe regret leads to low subjective well-being
- Life longings highly related to studies of regret
 - *A strong feeling that life is incomplete or imperfect, coupled with a desire for ideal, alternative states and experiences of life. The emotions associated with life longings are often ambivalent, bittersweet, and alert us to both gains and losses in life*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

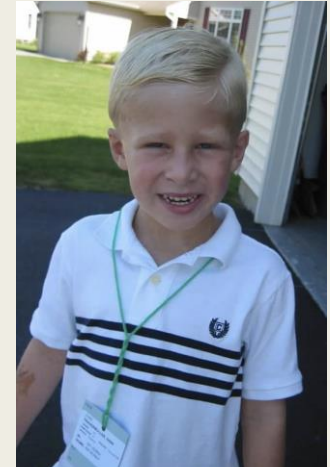
Emotional Expression and Health: Crying: Tears of Hurt

- Crying does not benefit everyone
 - *Social and emotionally stable people find relief and feel better after crying*
- Good cry is not universally helpful

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Emotional Expression and Health: Crying: Tears of Joy

- Crying in response to positive events is associated with empathy, compassion, gratitude
- More research needed



Psychological Factors Important to Health

Cognition and Thinking: Optimism, Hope, and Control

- Cognitive mediation approach is the meaning we bring to a situation
 - *How we think about the event, and the outcomes of events*
- Cognitive styles are very important for positive coping

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Cognition and Thinking: Optimism, Hope, and
Control: Optimism

- Generalized expectancy that good things will happen in the future is related to better health outcomes
 - *e.g., recover faster from surgery*
- Optimists tend to use problem-focused coping and seek social support
- A significant factor in better health status
- Deal with challenges and stress
- Seligman and learned optimism

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Cognition and Thinking: Optimism, Hope, and
Control: Perceived Control

- Internal LOC related to better outcomes for those with asthma, chronic back pain, and cardiovascular disease
- Longitudinal study in UK
 - *Measured LOC at age 10*
 - *At age 30, internal LOC in childhood...reduced risk for obesity, fair or poor self-rated health, and psy'l distress*

Psychological Factors Important to Health

Cognition and Thinking: Optimism, Hope, and
Control: Perceived Control

- Internals...more adaptive coping styles and positive health-related behaviors, where control is actually possible
- *Psychological flexibility*: an ability to adapt to changing circumstances

Psychological Factors Important to Health



Cognition and Thinking: Optimism, Hope, and Control: Self-Efficacy

- Self-efficacy: belief one has in his/her capability to perform a specific behavior
- High in self-efficacy brings more control over health
- *Problem-solving appraisals*: beliefs about one's problem solving abilities
 - *Associated with psy'l adjustment, better health status, and use of more effective coping skills*

Hardiness and Mindfulness Meditation

This section focuses on the individual personality factors that relate to health

Hardiness and Mindfulness Meditation

Hardiness

- Combination of three cognitive factors involved with how people interpret life events

Hardiness



The tree survives not because it stands up rigidly to the weather, but because it bends with the wind

Control – Hardy people see themselves as being in charge of their life, not controlled by outside factors which they cannot control.

Commitment– Hardy people are involved in the world around them and have a sense of purpose.

Challenge– Hardy people see challenges as problems to be overcome rather than as stressors.

Hardiness and Mindfulness

Hardiness

- Combination of three cognitive factors involved with how people interpret life events
 - *Control: decisional and cognitive control, and greater variety of coping methods*
 - Transformational coping: actively determine the direction change will take
 - *Challenge: challenge rather than crisis*
 - *Commitment: meaningfulness, sense of purpose, involvement with others*

Hardiness and Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness Meditation

- Helps reduce anxiety, stress, worry by promoting cognitive, emotional, and physiological regulatory mechanisms
- Help increase immune system functioning
- MBSR
- Effective adjunctive therapy
- Preventative method for ensuring emotional well-being and stability

Positive Aging

Zestful Old Age

- Surviving into late adulthood with considerable physical and mental well-being
- Peak aging (Erik Erikson) encompasses three broad dimensions
 - *Insight*
 - *Wisdom*
 - *Playfulness*



Positive Aging

Zestful Old Age

- Peak aging encompasses three broad dimensions
- Insight: "Discernment" and the perception of "heightened reality," a quality often linked to intuition and nurtured through sensory experience and empathy.
- Wisdom: A blend of emotional maturity, sound judgment, and able reasoning.
- Playfulness: A vital quality of elder living, and tersely stated that, "The opposite of play is death."

Positive Aging

Longevity

- Positive health is associated with longevity

Longevity: Positive emotions

- More positive and less negative emotions lead to longer life
- Boost immunity and longevity in healthy people

School Sisters of Notre Dame 1932



- Sketches were rated in the amount of positive feeling
 - Most cheerful quarter: 90% alive at age 85, 54% at age 94
 - Least cheerful quarter: 34% alive at age 85, 11% at age 94

Positive Aging

Longevity: Positive Relationships

- Greatest psychological influence on longevity
- Positive social ties are a major factor in longevity
- Positive relationships are extremely important to female well-being, positive health, and longevity

Positive Aging

Longevity: Competence, Optimism, and Other Positive Beliefs

- Optimistic people live longer
- People with more positive beliefs about aging bounce back from illness better

Positive Aging

Longevity: The Blue Zones

- Areas where people live the longest
- People in the blue zones shared nine characteristics summed into:
 - *Move naturally*
 - *Keep the right outlook and attitude*
 - *Eat wisely*
 - *Connect with others*

Positive Coping

A Definition of Positive Coping

- Response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional, and psychological burden
- Effective coping should reduce the burden of challenges from stress
- Contributes to the relief of longer-term stress
- Relief by building resources that inhibit or buffer future challenges

Positive Coping

The Importance of Daily Hassles

- Smaller, daily hassles more detrimental to well-being than significant life events
- Daily hassles more likely to impact a person's current mood and persistent negative mood is likely to affect well-being

Positive Coping

Dimensions of Positive Coping

- Positive coping strategies follow two approaches:
 - *Focus on the external environment, physical health, and health behavior*
 - *Focus on psychological factors*
 - Attitudes, beliefs, expectations by which we interpret and give meaning to life events
- Good stress mgt programs have both of above

Positive Coping

Coping Styles

- Coping styles can be grouped into three subtypes

1. *Emotion focused* (attempt to change emotions)

- Emotional processing
 - *understand reaction to stressor*
- Emotional expression
 - *express emotions related to stress*

Positive Coping

Coping Styles

- Coping styles can be grouped into three subtypes

2. Problem focused (attempt to change situation that caused the stress)

- *Behavioral: take action to fix*
- *Cognitive: change thinking to fix*

3. Emotional avoidance (avoidance of the challenge presented by a stressor)

Summary

- Total well-being
- Psychological factors influence certain physical processes
- Psychological factors impact health, positive emotionality, social support, optimism
- Confidence in one's ability to bounce back from difficulty
- Positive coping strategies involve interpretation of our life events