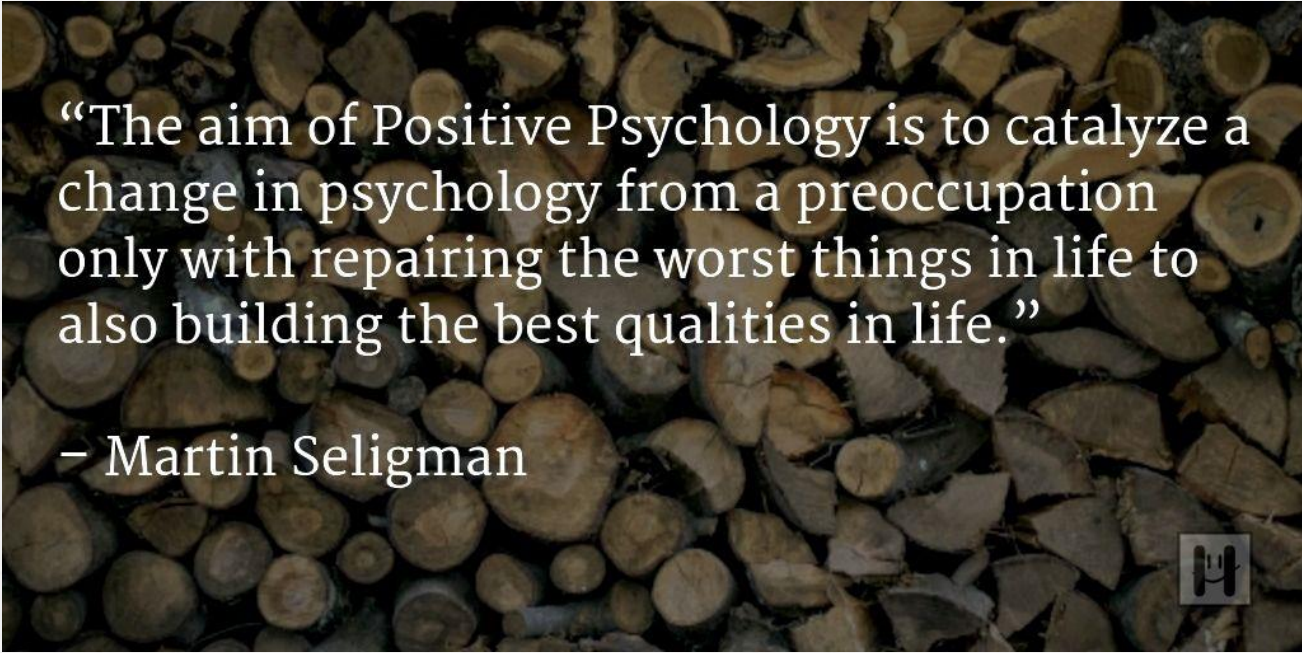




# Positive Psychology

An Introduction





“The aim of Positive Psychology is to catalyze a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life.”

– Martin Seligman



**CHANGE THE  
WAY YOU  
SEE  
EVERYTHING**

**THROUGH ASSET-BASED THINKING**

**KATHRYN D. CRAMER, Ph.D.**

*Founder & Managing Partner, The Cooper Brothers LLC*



**HANK WASIAK**

*Co-Founder, The Cooper Firm*



YOU HAVE POWER  
OVER YOUR MIND  
NOT OUTSIDE EVENTS  
REALIZE THIS, AND  
YOU WILL FIND STRENGTH

*Marcus Aurelius*



# Positive Psychology

The scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life

–Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi



# Positive Psychology

- Everyday language: The scientific study of what makes life most worth living
- Concerned with eudaimonia, or "the good life," a reflection about what holds the greatest value in life – the factors that contribute the most to a well-lived and fulfilling life.



# Historical overview

- Before World War II emphasis on curing illness, making life more fulfilling, and nurturing talent...
- 1947 NIMH shifted focus to research into pathology
- Human beings came to be seen as passive



# School Sisters of Notre Dame 1932



- Ceclia O'Payne Autobiographical sketch  
“God started my life off well by bestowing upon me grace of inestimable value...The past year which I spent as a candidate studying at Notre Dame has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of Our Lady and to a life of union with Love Divine.”

*Authentic Happiness by Seligman (2002)*



# School Sisters of Notre Dame 1932



- Marguerite Donnelly Autobiographical sketch

“I was born on September 26, 1909, the eldest of seven children, five girls and two boys...My candidate year was spent in the motherhouse, teaching chemistry and second year Latin at Notre Dame Institute. With God’s grace, I intend to do my best for our Order, for the spread of religion and for my personal sanctification.”

*Authentic Happiness by Seligman (2002)*

# 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
- Cecilia O'Payne (lived over 98 years)
- Marguerite Donnelly (died at 59)

*Authentic Happiness by Seligman (2002)*



# PsycInfo Research Papers

## Clinical Psychology

Anger

31,260

Anxiety

243,516

Depression 299,809



As of July 2018

## Positive Psychology

Joy

8,762

Happiness 17,716

Life satisfaction 22,436

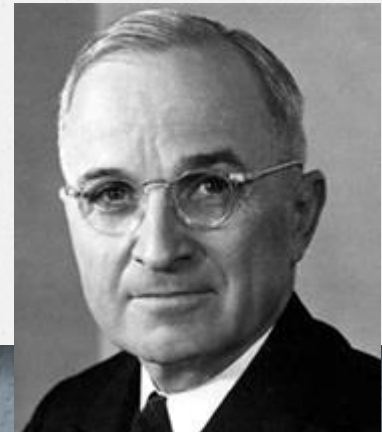
Mindfulness 11,414

- Note: Mindfulness increased the most in the last year...21% increase vs 6-8% in other categories

# Thoughts from Seligman

- o Need a psychology of rising to the occasion...thought of this as a missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle of predicting human behavior
- o We measure behavior in absence of real-world challenges, and try to predict what a person *would* do
  - o Correlation between IQ and performance...but some people with high IQ fail, and some with lower IQ succeed life challenges
- o Harry Truman effect
  - o We have all strengths we may not even know about until we are challenged

*Authentic Happiness by Seligman (2002)*





# Guiding Theories in Positive Psychology

- Seligman's PERMA
- Seligman and Peterson's Character Strengths and Virtues
- Csikszentmihalyi's theory of Flow

# Seligman's shift

- Where did the shift from pathology to prevention come from?
- Seligman known for research on learned helplessness
  - BUT...not all rats and dogs became helpless, not all people became helpless with insolvable problems or inescapable noise
    - 1 out of 3 never gives up!
    - And...1 out of 8 is helpless to begin with



# What Is Positive Psychology?

## ❖ Balancing foci of Applied Psychology:

What is wrong with  
people  
(study of deficits)

What is right with people  
(study of assets)

## Martin Seligman on the State of Psychology

- ❖ (See “Building Human Strength: Psychology’s Forgotten Mission” by Seligman, p. 4-5)



PERMA



## The **PERMA** Model of Well-Being

### *Positive Emotion*

Positive emotions are an essential part of our well-being. Happy people look back on the past with gladness; look into the future with hope; and they enjoy and cherish the present.

### *Relationships*

Everyone needs someone. We enhance our well-being and share it with others by building strong relationships with the people around us - family, friends, coworkers, neighbours.

### *Accomplishment*

Everyone needs to win sometimes. To achieve well-being and happiness, we must be able to look back on our lives with a sense of accomplishment: 'I did it, and I did it well'.

### *Engagement*

When we focus on doing the things we truly enjoy and care about, we can begin to engage completely with the present moment and enter the state of being known as 'flow'.

### *Meaning*

We are at our best when we dedicate time to something greater than ourselves. This might be religious faith, community work, family, politics, a charity, a professional or creative goal.

From Martin Seligman's *Flourish*, 2011

# 5 INGREDIENTS TO A Flourishing Life

**P**

## Positive Emotions

-experience happiness, joy, hope, love gratitude, etc.

**E**

## Engagement

-use your strengths to meet challenges; be in the moment.

**R**

## Relationships

-connect with others; love and be loved.

**M**

## Meaning

-connect to meaning; find your purpose.

**A**

## Accomplishment

-pursue and accomplish goals; strive for greatness.



<http://psychologyofwellbeing.com> © 2012

**The Psychology of Wellbeing**

*Advancing the science of holistic well-being.*

PERMA Theory from Martin Seligman's

"Flourish: A Virtually New Understanding

of Happiness & Well-Being." (2012). Atlas Books



# Positive Emotions

- o AKA Pleasant Life
- o Contributes to well-being (In Authentic Happiness Theory, it was the cornerstone of the theory)
- o Happiness and life satisfaction
- o Measured subjectively
  - o Includes variables of pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth, and the like

# Quote

- o “Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.”  
— Mother Teresa

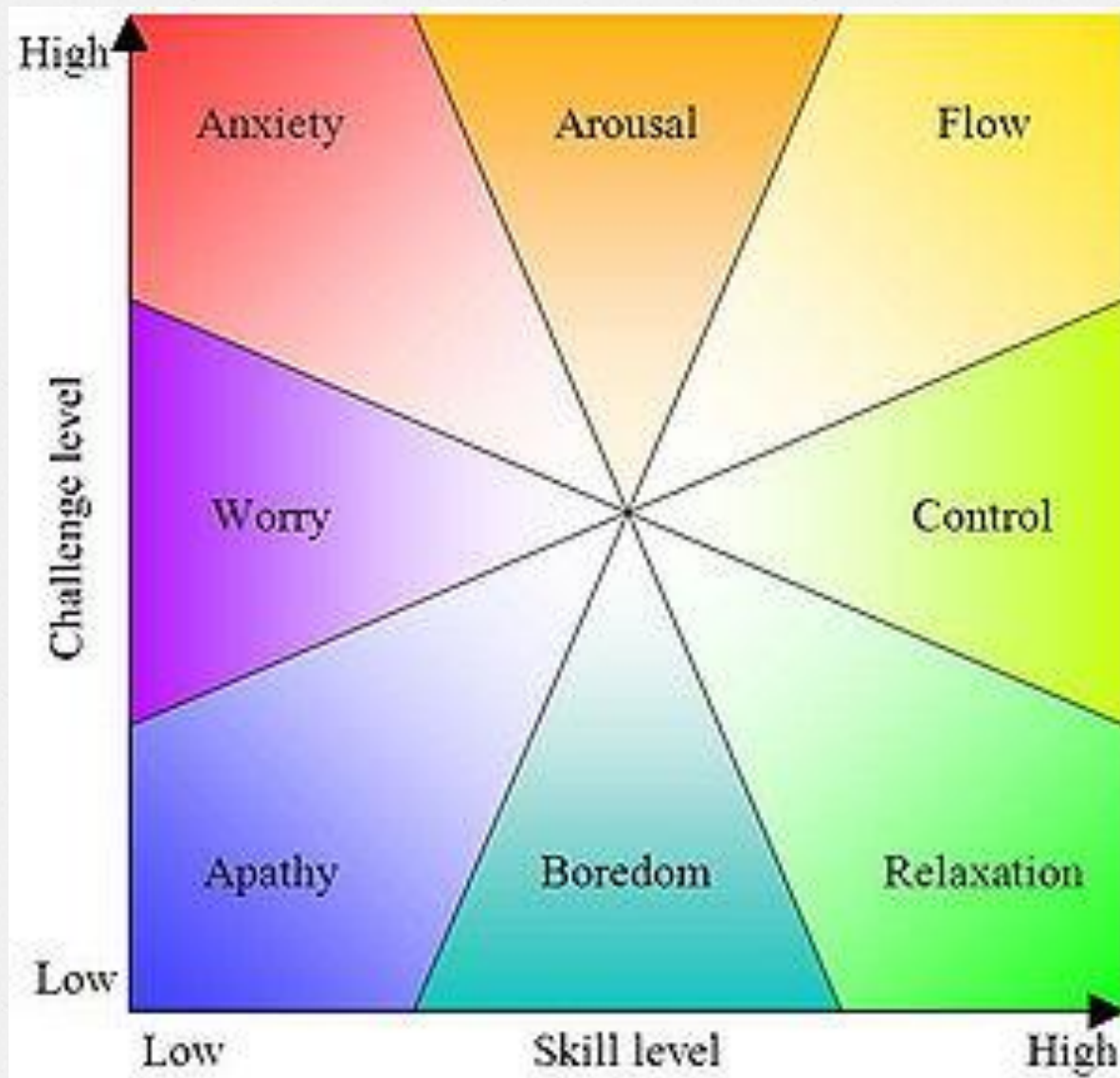




# Engagement

- o AKA Flow
- o Measured subjectively
  - o Did time stop for you?
  - o Were you completely absorbed by the task?
  - o Did you lose self-consciousness?
- o Subjective state for engagement is retrospective...since when we are in a flow state
- o Flow: when our skills are challenged







# Flow

o Flow Talk on Ted



# Positive Relationships

- Research: doing a kind thing for another produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise tested
- Seligman stamp example
- George Valliant: master strength is the capacity to be loved



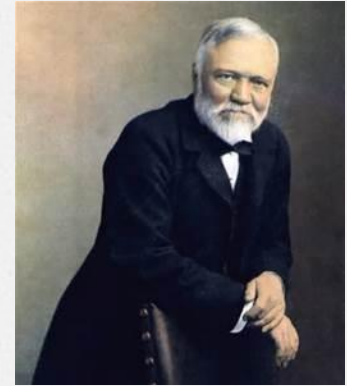


# Meaning

- AKA Meaningful Life
- Belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self



# Accomplishment



- o AKA Achieving Life
- o Idea that we pursue success, accomplishment, winning, achievement and mastery for their own sakes
- o Pursuit may not bring positive emotion or meaning, or positive relationships
- o Tycoons turned philanthropists: Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Bill Gates (created meaning later in life)
- o “accumulators” or play to win





# Flourishing and Strengths

# Flourish and Strengths

- o 24 Strengths
- o Strengths underpin all five elements
- o Deploying your highest strengths leads to more positive emotion, to more meaning, to more accomplishment, and to better relationships



# Strengths

- <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification>





# VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

*The Character Strengths of a Flourishing Life*

## WISDOM

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### Creativity

Originality; adaptive; ingenuity

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### Curiosity

Interest; novelty-seeking; exploration; openness to experience

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### Judgment

Critical thinking; thinking things through; open-minded

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### Love of Learning

Mastering new skills & topics; systematically adding to knowledge

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### Perspective

Wisdom; providing wise counsel; taking the big picture view

## COURAGE

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### Bravery

Valor; not shrinking from fear; speaking up for what's right

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### Perseverance

Persistence; industry; finishing what one starts

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### Honesty

Authenticity; integrity

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### Zest

Vitality; enthusiasm; vigor; energy; feeling alive and activated

## HUMANITY

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### Love

Both loving and being loved; valuing close relations with others

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### Kindness

Generosity; nurturance; care; compassion; altruism; "niceness"

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### Social Intelligence

Emotional intelligence; aware of the motives/feelings of self/others; knowing what makes other people tick

## JUSTICE

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### Teamwork

Citizenship; social responsibility; loyalty

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### Fairness

Just; not letting feelings bias decisions about others

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### Leadership

Organizing group activities; encouraging a group to get things done

## TEMPERANCE

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### Forgiveness

Mercy; accepting others' shortcomings; giving people a second chance

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### Humility

Modesty; letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves

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### Prudence

Careful; cautious; not taking undue risks

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### Self-Regulation

Self-control; disciplined; managing impulses & emotions

## TRANSCENDENCE

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### Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

Awe; wonder; elevation

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### Gratitude

Thankful for the good; expressing thanks; feeling blessed

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### Hope

Optimism; future-mindedness; future orientation

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### Humor

Playfulness; bringing smiles to others; lighthearted

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### Spirituality

Religiousness; faith; purpose; meaning



{where the world finds strength}

[www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)





# Martin Seligman

o [Martin Seligman Ted Talk](#)





# Positive Psychotherapy Exercises and Tools

Gratitude  
Journal

Design a  
Beautiful  
Day

Self  
Esteem  
Journal

Values in  
Action  
Survey

Mindfulness  
Meditation

# Gratitude Journal

Write in journal up to 5 things for which you are grateful

Can be small in importance (e.g., sunshine) to large (e.g., I got my dream job)

- o Be specific
- o Focus on people
- o See good things as gifts
- o Savor surprises
- o Revise if you repeat something
- o Write regularly (some recent research suggests 3x/week is ideal)



# Mindfulness



# Mindfulness

- The practice has moved from a largely obscure Buddhist concept founded about 2,600 years ago to a mainstream psychotherapy construct today ([apa.org](http://apa.org))





“Mindfulness means  
paying attention  
in a particular way;  
On purpose, in  
the present moment,  
and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

# Benefits of Mindfulness

- Self-control
- Objectivity
- Attention
- Memory
- Emotional intelligence
- Less anxiety
- Improved concentration and mental clarity
- The ability to relate to others and one's self with kindness, acceptance and compassion.



# Welcome to Positive Psychology

- o Scientific study of ordinary human strength and virtues
- o Helps people find what is best within themselves
- o Enhances their experiences in work and relations

# The Dimensions of Positive Psychology: 3 Levels

- Subjective level

- Focuses on positive emotions and constructive thoughts

- Individual level

- Focuses on positive behavior pattern and individual creative potential.

- Society level

- Work on development of civic virtues as well as support and nurture citizens.



# The Scope of Positive Psychology

## ○ List of interests

- Building enriching communities, compassion, creativity, and empathy
- Enhancement of immune system and functioning
- Life span models of positive personality development
- Psychological benefits of Zen meditation

# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

**The Good Life** (Combination of three elements)

- Connections with others
- Positive individual traits
  - e.g., Integrity, creativity, courage
- Life regulation qualities
  - Regulate behavior to accomplish goals while interacting with the world



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## Positive Emotions Are Important

- Focus working on positive emotions rather than negative emotions
- Helps people emerge from debilitating psychological problems...use adaptive coping
- Self-help interventions based on positive psychology

# Importance of Positive Emotions

- o Positive emotions related to...
  - o Attaining goals
  - o Physically healthier
  - o More resistant to illness
  - o Live longer!



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## People Can Flourish and Thrive

- Classification of mental health

- Flourishing

- Struggling

- Floundering

- Languishing

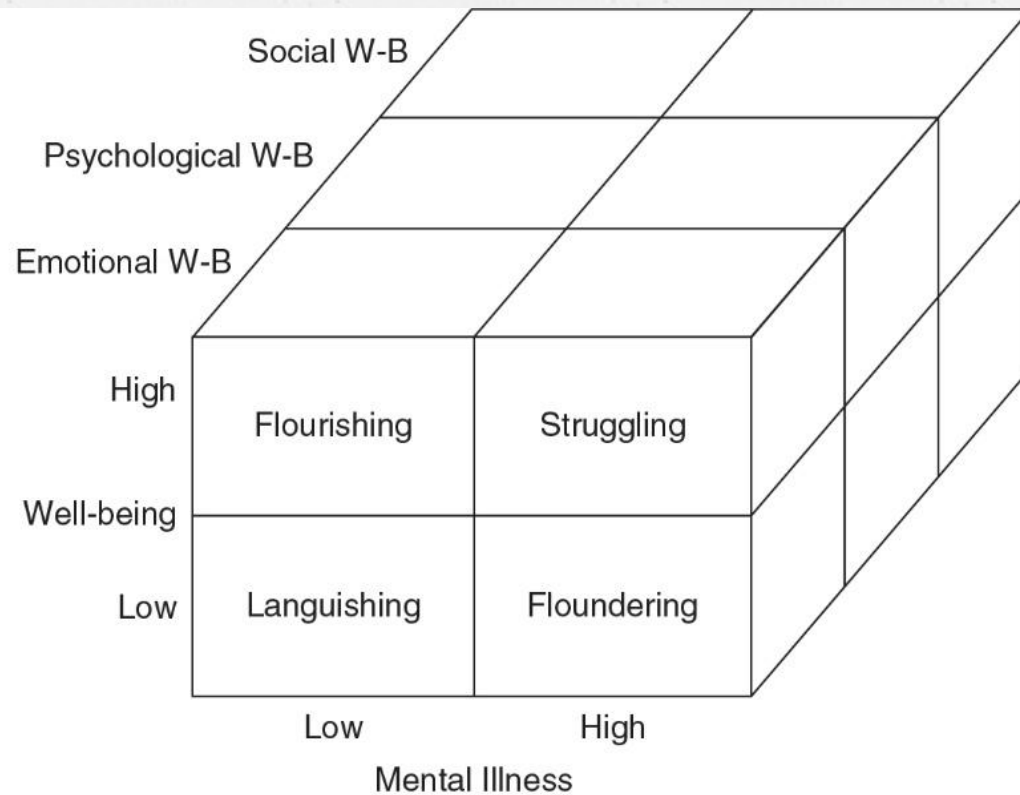
# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## People Can Flourish and Thrive

- Complete health comprises
  - High emotional well-being
  - High psychological well-being
  - High social well-being
  - Low mental illness



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology



*Compton, Positive Psychology, 3e. © Sage Publications, 2020.*

Source: Courtesy of William C. Compton, PhD.

# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## People Need Positive Social Relationships

- Teach children about nature of happiness, good life
- Consider happiness achievable through individual effort
- Enhance understanding of how people experience psychological well-being



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## Strengths and Virtues Are Important

- Values like courage, fidelity, and honesty
- Scientifically discover values that enhance the quality of life

# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## Compassion and Empathy Are Important

- Capacity for empathy associated with life satisfaction and positive relationships
- Motivate people to overcome low self-esteem by helping others



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## Independence of Positive and Negative Emotions

- Optimism and pessimism have differential effects on a person's self-reported well-being
- Dynamic model of affect...independence of positive and negative emotions depends on the situation
  - Sometimes positive and negative emotions “fuse,” such as when we are under stress or uncertainty

# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## Negative Emotions Are Still Important

- Negative emotions are vital to self-understanding and personal growth
- Research says happiness may be necessary to the good life but not sufficient
- Increase one's quality of life is to help others increase their level of happiness and life satisfaction.



# Basic Themes of Positive Psychology

## The Science of Well-being

- Study healthy personality development and optimal states of well-being
- Need to build an experimental knowledge base in the psychological laboratory

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

## Hedonism

- Only pleasure or displeasure motivates us
- Arguments for psychological hedonism
- Arguments against psychological hedonism

## The Early Hebrews

- Influenced Western culture--along with Greek civilization and Christianity



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

## The Greeks

- Set the stage for developments in philosophy, science, art, and psychology

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

## The Greeks: Socrates

- True happiness could be achieved only through self-knowledge
- Know the good or the core elements of the good life



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The Greeks: Plato

- Ancient Greek philosopher;
- Student of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle.
- Theme of research--
  - Conflict between nature and convention
  - Role of heredity and environment on human intelligence

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

## The Greeks: Aristotle

- Work influenced by Socrates
- Discussion of principle of eudemonia
- Proposition of 12 basic virtues leads to virtue theory



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

## The Greeks: The Epicureans

- Founders of school of  
Epicureanism

- Pleasures can be achieved by  
avoiding unnecessary pains

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The Greeks: The Summary of Greek Ideas  
on the Good Life

- Four major theories

  - The contemplative life

  - The active life

  - The fatalistic life

  - Hedonism



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The Greeks: The Summary of Greek  
Ideas on the Good Life

- Two additional perspectives on the  
good life

- The heroic life

- The saintly life

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

Early Christianity and the Middle Ages

- Christianity also transformed the meaning of religious devotion in the West

The Virtue Theory in the Middle Ages

- Seven deadly sins
- Four cardinal virtues and three theological virtues



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

Early Christianity and the Middle Ages: Moses  
Maimonides

- Renowned Jewish religious leader,  
philosopher, and physician in Egypt
- Advocated the practice of mindfulness as  
vital to healthy functioning
- Encouraged the development of positive  
character traits

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The Renaissance to the Age of  
Enlightenment: The Rise of Science

- Universe as a whole is one vast machine
- Western intellectual life became modern in mood, temper, purpose, and presupposition



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The Renaissance to the Age of  
Enlightenment: The Rise of Democracy

○ All men are created equal: they are  
endowed by their Creator with certain  
inalienable rights

○ The action of happiness became a right  
as well as a personal choice

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

Romanticism and the 19th Century: Emotion  
and the Romantics

- Express individualism
- The Romantic movement
- Ability to feel emotions intensely was  
important to living a full and significant life



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

Romanticism and the 19th Century:  
Love in the Romantic Period

○ The romantic love in different  
countries

# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

Romanticism and the 19th Century:

Celebrating Childhood Experience

- Emphasizes the importance of exposing children to nature and encouraging their individual self-expression



# A Short History of Well-being in the Western World

The 20th Century: Humanistic  
Psychology

- Differences between humanistic psychology and positive psychology
- Western psychology and Eastern psychology in the 20th century

# Positive Psychology Today

- Positive psychology extensively covered in professional journals
- Special focus on studying topics relevant to positive human functioning
- Positive psychology has a permanent place in scientific psychology