

# Module 1.2: Positive Prevention & Positive Therapy

## The CONTEXT:

- Before WW-II the Mission of Psychology was:

1. Curing Mental Illness
2. Making Lives of people more productive
3. Fulfilling, Identifying, & Nurturing high talent.

- However, after WW-II for economic reasons; second & third mission got neglected, though Psychology is not just about illness or health, it is also about work, education, insight, love, growth, play, etc.

## Positive Prevention

- Prevention of Psychological D.O. is concern for last 2 decades.
- How can problems like depression, Eating disorder or Substance abuse in young people be prevented?
- How can murderous schoolyard violence in children who have poor parental supervision, weak character, access to weapon be prevented? (US).

- **The Disease model** (correcting weakness) didn't help in prevention of these problems.
- However, perspective focused on systematically building competency (rather than correcting weakness) has major strides in prevention.
- What are the Human Strengths that act as buffers (reduces shocks) against mental illness?

**Courage**

**Future-mindedness**

**Optimism**

**Interpersonal skills**

**Faith**

**Work Ethics**

**Hope**

**Honesty**

**Perseverance**

**The capacity for flow & insight**

**New Century Mission: How to foster these virtues in Young People?**

## How to foster/develop virtues?

(Example: Learned Optimism by Saligman M.)

• **An external person, who is a rival for your job, accuses you falsely of failing at your job & not deserving your position, what would be your reaction (actually) ?.....**

➤ Reaction 1: *‘ You will marshall all the evidence that you do your job very well’-you will dispute.*

OR

➤ Reaction 2: *‘You accuse yourself falsely of not deserving your job’ (automatic thought of pessimist)-you will not dispute . If it issues from inside, you tend to believe it’.*

**Can disputing skills help? (all possess it but usually deploy in wrong place).**

## **Use of Disputing is at the heart of “Learned optimism”.**

- In Learned Optimism training programs children & adults are trained to recognize their own catastrophic thinking ( excessive worst case thinking ) & to become skilled disputer.
- This skill works, & even becomes self-reinforcing
- Learned optimism can even prevent depression/anxiety.

- Thus, building a strength (in this case *optimism*) & teaching people when to use it, rather than repairing damage, effectively prevents depression & anxiety.
- Similarly, drug abuse in teenagers who grow up in neighbourhood that puts them at risk, the effective prevention is not remedial (curative/ correctional).
- Rather it consists of identifying & amplifying the strengths that these teens already have. A teenager who is future-minded, who is interpersonally skilled, who derives flow from sports, is not at risk for substance abuse.

- Similarly, if a young person (at genetic predisposition) is to be prevented from 'Schizophrenia', repairing of damage is not going to work.
- Rather, a young person who learns effective **interpersonal skills**, who has a strong **work ethic**, and who has **learned persistence** under diversity is at lessened risk for Schizophrenia.



Thus, the general stance of Positive Psychology towards Prevention is that:

a) “There are set of buffers against psychopathology: Positive human traits.

- Identifying, amplifying, & concentrating on these strengths in people at risk, is effective prevention”

b) “Amplify clients’ strengths rather than repair their weaknesses”.

c ) “No longer individual is passive vessel “responding” to “stimuli”, rather they are seen as decision maker” with choice, preference, & capable of becoming masterful.

d) Science & Practice of Positive Psychology may have direct effect on preventing many of the major emotional disorders & making lives of clients physically healthier.

**e) Thus, neglected missions of psychology can be addressed: Making normal people stronger, more productive & making human potential actual.**

## POSITIVE THERAPY

- Positive therapy suggests following 'deep strategies' called as techniques of positive psychology to help clients/patients:

1. **Instilling Hope:** 15% change (improvement) in client can be attributed to engendering Hope.

2. **Building of Buffering Strengths:** First identify & then help patients/clients build a large variety of strengths, rather than just delivering specific damage-healing techniques.

The following strengths are built in client/individual:

Courage,	Interpersonal skills,	Rationality,
Insight,	Optimism,	Honesty,
Perseverance,	Realism,	Capacity for pleasure, Future-
mindfulness,	Finding purpose,	Putting troubles into perspective.

### 3. Narration:

- Telling the stories of our lives, making sense of what otherwise seems chaotic, distilling, & discovering a trajectory in our lives, & viewing our lives with a sense of **agency** rather than victimhood are all powerfully positive

### CONCLUSION

- ❖ PS has come to understand & build those factors (qualities/traits) that allow individuals, communities, & societies to flourish besides preventing & treating mental illnesses as well as some physical illnesses.