

Positive Psychology: Five Building Blocks to Decrease Stress, Increase Resilience and Develop Well Being



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What is Positive Psychology?

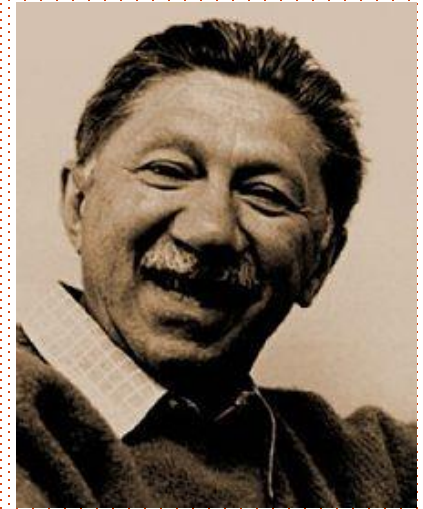
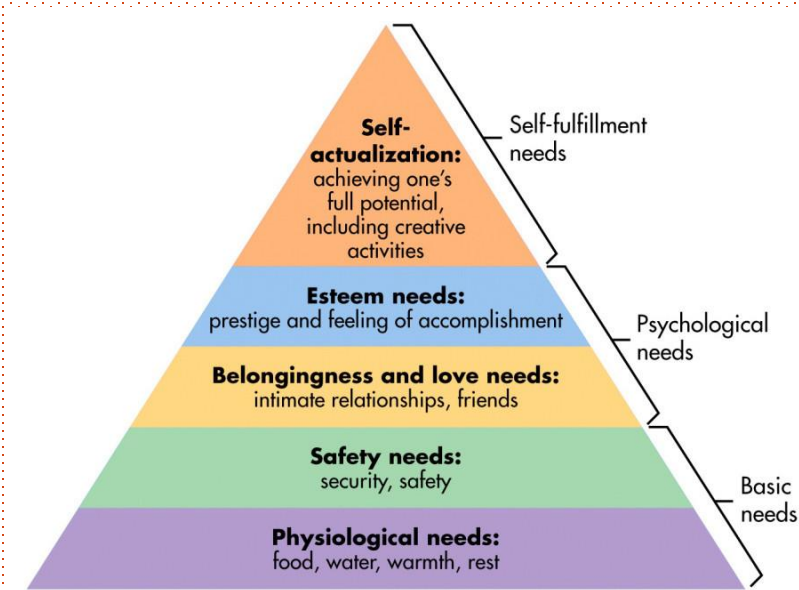
Positive psychology is the study of happiness, flourishing, well being and what makes life worth living.



It is the scientific study of the **strengths** that enable individuals and communities to **thrive**.

Where did it Positive Psychology Originate ?

Abraham Maslow
coined the term
“positive psychology”
in 1950.



Martin Seligman is more commonly known as the founder of **Positive Psychology**.

He is a leading authority in the fields of **Positive Psychology**, resilience, **learned helplessness**, depression, optimism and pessimism.

He is also a recognized authority on interventions that prevent depression, and build strengths and well-being.



Beyond Psychology

- What can we learn from **mentally healthy** individuals?
- One can decrease stress, but also increase happiness and well being.
- Study of “resilience”- investigating people who are able to cope well and “bounce back” from adversity.
- What are the key building blocks of happiness, and well being- ie. How do we get there?

3 Kinds of Life

According to Seligman, we can experience three kinds of happiness:

- I. pleasure and gratification,
- II. embodiment of strengths and virtues and
- III. meaning and purpose.

1. **The “Pleasant Life”**- focused on positive emotion
2. **The “Engaged Life”**- focused on using your highest strengths in whatever you do (work, love, play)
3. **The “Meaningful Life”**- using your strengths in the service of something larger, and more meaningful than yourself/your life

Shift From Happiness to Well Being

- Happiness is related to how we feel at the moment, as opposed to overall life satisfaction
- Happiness and Life satisfaction are partial measures of a broader concept: that of “Well Being”.
- Well Being, or “flourishing”- individuals who use strengths such as engagement, meaning, self-esteem, vitality and optimism to create a life worth living.



Goal of Well Being

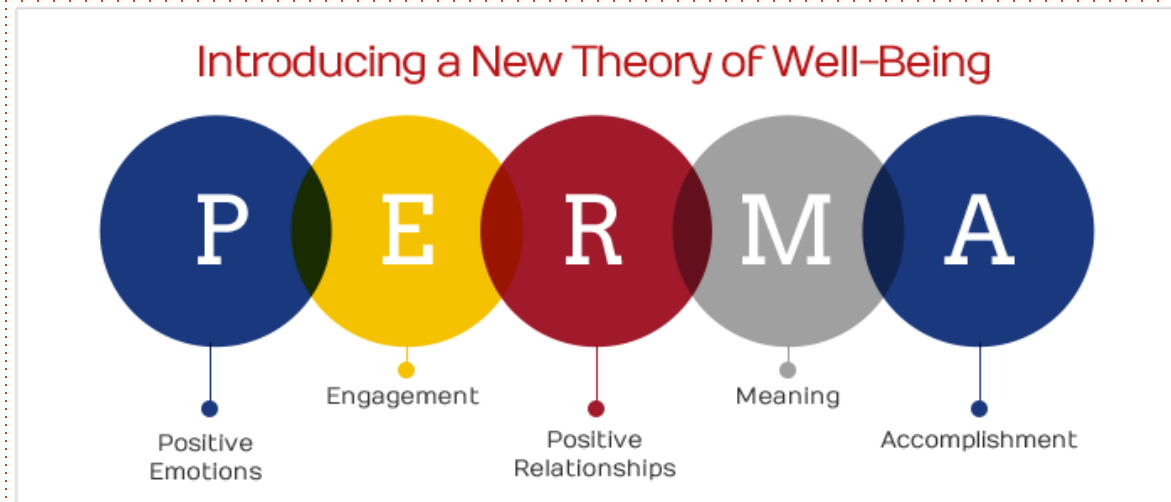
- To increase happiness, life satisfaction, meaning, purpose.....in order to FLOURISH.
- Great, but HOW?????



The Five Building Blocks of Well Being

Martin Seligman points to five factors that lead to a sense of “well-being” and “flourishing”

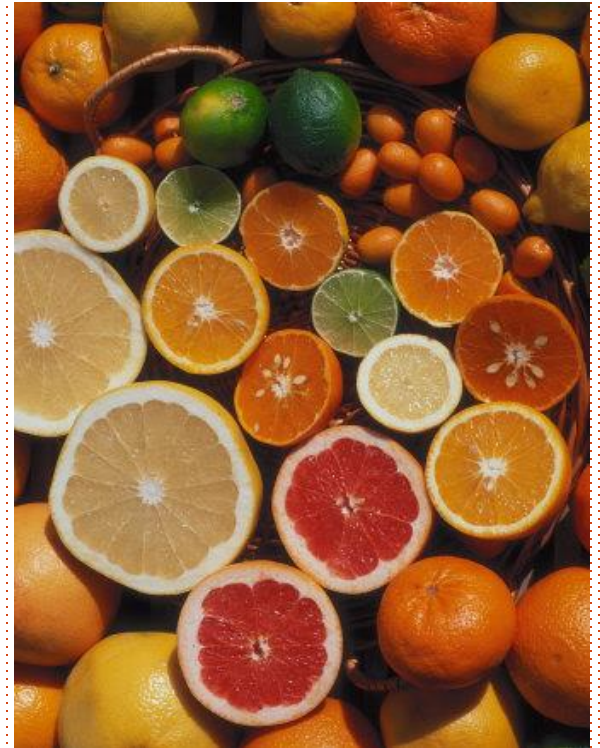
- Positive Emotion
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning and Purpose
- Accomplishment



The way to remember them is “P.E.R.M.A.”

Positive Emotion

- Learn ways to cultivate, or generate, positive emotion.
- How to **amplify**, or **increase** feelings of happiness, joy, enjoyment, in life.
- There are many things/activities we can derive enjoyment from. They don't have to be complicated, expensive, or time consuming
- One key: Staying/Being “Mindful in the moment”

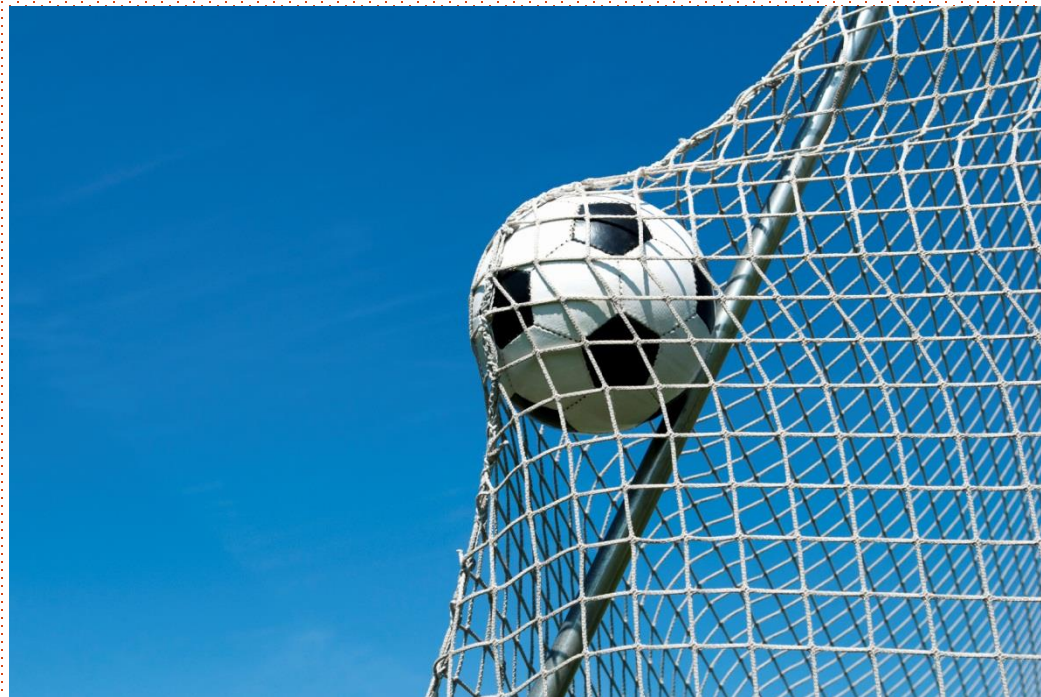


Build Positive Experiences- Short Term

- **Increase pleasant events** in your life. They help to increase positive emotions.
- **List of positive, pleasant events**, things that you enjoy doing- they can be small, medium, or large
- **Focus attention on positive events** when they happen- to keep the good feeling going

Build Positive Experiences- Long Term

- Make **changes in your life** so that positive events will happen
- Work toward your **goals**
- Attend to your **relationships**



Engagement

- Completely involved in the activity
- Sense of being outside everyday reality
- Inner clarity- knowing what needs to be done
- Timelessness- thoroughly focused on the present moment, thought and feeling are usually absent (later you might think “that was fun”)
- Whatever you are doing, you are doing it for its own sake- action is its own reward

Mindful in the Moment



- Do one positive thing with all your attention.
- Stay in the **present moment**: e.g., When you are eating, eat; when you are walking, walk.
- Let go of distractions- do not think about when the positive experience will end, or whether you deserve the experience.

Engagement- Qualities



- Engagement or “flow” often occurs when you have a **high challenge** combined with a **high skill or strength** (usually one is doing something they really like to do).
- You need to deploy your highest **strengths** to get to **“FLOW”** (“in the zone”)

"Use your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are."

~ Martin Seligman (2002, p. 263)

Positive Relationships

- Humans are social creatures- cooperation is important to our survival.
- *Make the time-* to keep in touch with friends and family.
- Evolutionary value to social skills.



Positive Relationships

- Relationships take time and effort:
 - Work on current relationships
 - Repair old relationships
 - Reach out, create new relationships
 - The goal: build and maintain a social support network



Positive Relationships

- Very little that is positive is solitary. Were you alone the last time you:
 - laughed?
 - felt a sense of accomplishment?
 - felt joy?
 - Sensed significant meaning and purpose?



Positive Relationships



- Are you looking to increase your sense of well being?
- Do something nice for someone else!
- George Valliant: Researcher who found that if you have one person in your life you would feel comfortable calling at 4 in the morning to tell your troubles to you are likely to live longer than someone who does not

Positive Relationships (cont'd)

- John Gottman, Ph.D. 5 positives for every one negative in a marriage- predictive of success or failure in a marriage (the “ Losada ratio”)
- Friendship- often underrated
- Social support-
 - Formal – clubs, churches, the arts, social or political causes, hobby groups, sports
 - Informal- “ hanging out”



Meaning and Purpose

- Belonging to and serving something that is bigger than yourself such as work or career.
- Other organizations that give individuals meaning: Religious organizations (and services and projects within them), political and social movements, the Arts, Boy/Girl Scouts or 4H, Big Bro Big Sis, Rotary Clubs, volunteering, family reunions.



Meaning and Purpose (cont'd)

- Altruism-do something kind, helpful for another person
- Helping another person creates a positive emotion that lasts and lasts
- Concept of “ reinforcement”- thanking others, expressing appreciation, increases the likelihood that you will get what you want, now and later.

Accomplishment

- Concept of “ Self-Mastery”- do one thing a day that makes you feel competent and in control.
- Setting short term goals can help you reach your long term goal.
- Acknowledge the accomplishment- ie. give yourself credit to motivate yourself to continue to move forward.



Accomplishment

- Create goals and develop skill in a particular area.
- Human beings often choose to do something, to accomplish something, for its own sake.



Apply PERMA - Positive Interventions

- Design a Beautiful Day- using “positive emotions” and “engagement”
 - Customize your day- what would make up a beautiful day for you?
 - Like taking a brief vacation



Apply PERMA - Positive Interventions

- Do something nice for someone else, help another person
- Thank someone that you hadn't properly thanked before for something they did for you, or some way they have helped you in the past.
- AA- exercise an "Attitude of Gratitude"



“What-Went-Well” or “The Three Blessings”

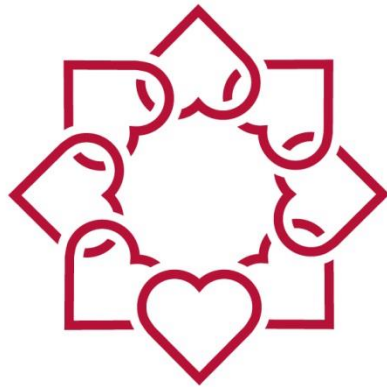
Think of three happy or pleasant moments that you have had over the last 24 hours. Write them down. After each one, answer the question:
Why did this happen?

In Summary.....

You can have a life worth living, with improved mood, lower stress, happiness and well being, but you have to work on developing the PERMA building blocks to get you there.



Thank You!



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