



Bridging the Gap between Our Minds and Bodies with Positive Psychology

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Longevity and Healthy Aging Symposium

What is Positive Psychology?

In 1998, Dr. Martin Seligman proposed a new approach to psychology.

Two models instead of only one:

1. *a disease model*

what's broken – what needs to get fixed

2. *a strengths-based approach for optimal functioning and human flourishing*

what's going right – when we're at our best

“The exclusive focus on pathology that has dominated so much of our discipline results in a model of the human being lacking the positive features that make life worth living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

“What is good in life is not the mere absence of what is bad” (Peterson, 2000).

Dr. Seligman's Model for Flourishing: PERMA

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment

A Sampling of PERMA Tools

- **Positive Emotions**
 - Expressing gratitude
 - Savoring
- **Engagement**
 - Identifying and fostering our character strengths, our passions, our sparks
- **Relationships**
 - Establishing high quality connections (HQCs)
 - Using active constructive responding (ACR)
- **Meaning**
 - Engaging in positive service
- **Accomplishment**
 - Creating best life scenarios

**Despite the divisive layout between positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, there is actually significant overlap amongst them.

Focusing on “R”

“Other people matter.”

Time spent cultivating positive relationships throughout the lifespan - both in and out of the home – is time well spent, for relationships are *one of the most important sources of meaning, life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being.*

But here's the problem...

Loneliness has become an epidemic.

Loneliness is:

- as deadly as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- more lethal than consuming 6 alcoholic drinks per day
- more dangerous than obesity and inactivity
- linked to stroke, heart disease, dementia, inflammation, suicide

“Loneliness breaks the heart, literally and figuratively” (Kristof, 2023).

High Quality Connections are Central to our Well-Being

They reduce the risk of death, helping us live longer by:

- strengthening immune systems
- lowering blood pressure
- reducing stress levels
- building protective factors that make us less susceptible to depression and self-destructive behaviors (Dutton, 2003).

They play a key role in bridging the gap between our minds and bodies.

Combating Loneliness

Ways to connect with others:

- put away technology and have face to face conversations
- plan meals together
- have gatherings – attend gatherings
- get out in nature/exercise
- volunteer
- join a class and/or a club
- create rituals with family and friends
- attend a place of worship
- give the gift of time
- personalize our world

Resources

The Lethality of Loneliness - TEDx - John Cacioppo

Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones - Netflix - Dan Buettner

Happy Together: Using the Science of Positive Psychology to Build Love that Lasts - Suzann & James Pawelski

Happy - This is a documentary that takes us from the slums of Kolkata to the subways of Tokyo and continents in between. It introduces us to the field of positive psychology and its most prominent researchers. Weaving research into the story line, Happy inspires us to pursue important components of our well-being, including strong relationships, intrinsically motivated goals, and a quest for meaning.



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