2013.

BASIC CONCEPTS IN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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2013.

I. Positive psychology as the science of psychological well-being and human strengths.

Goals and Goal-Setting Theory

Goals are objectives or purposes of action. Goal-setting theory is intended to describe the process of consciously setting performance goals and its influence on performance behaviors and outcomes.
Beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Edwin A. Locke, Gary P. Latham, and their colleagues conducted empirical investigations and theoretical work leading to the formulation of goal-setting theory. Locke and Latham reviewed theory development and empirical support in an article published in 2002. An important aspect of this work has revealed that the highest or most difficult goals lead to the highest levels of effort and performance, within the limits of ability. Additionally, specific goals improve performance over encouragement to „do one's best," particularly when those specific goals are high.
Goals support performance through four mechanisms. First, goals guide actions by directing attention and effort toward relevant information and activities, and averting attention and effort away from irrelevancies. This mechanism improves performance because time and effort are not wasted on extraneous activities. Second, goals serve an energizing function, with higher goals leading to increased effort. Thus, people tend to increase effort in order to meet the needs of goals. Third, goals improve persistence over time or, when time constraints are in place, goals increase intensity of effort. This aspect of goal-setting aids in overcoming obstacles during goal pursuit. Finally, goals support goal pursuit by facilitating the use of task knowledge and strategies at various levels.

Humanistic Psychology

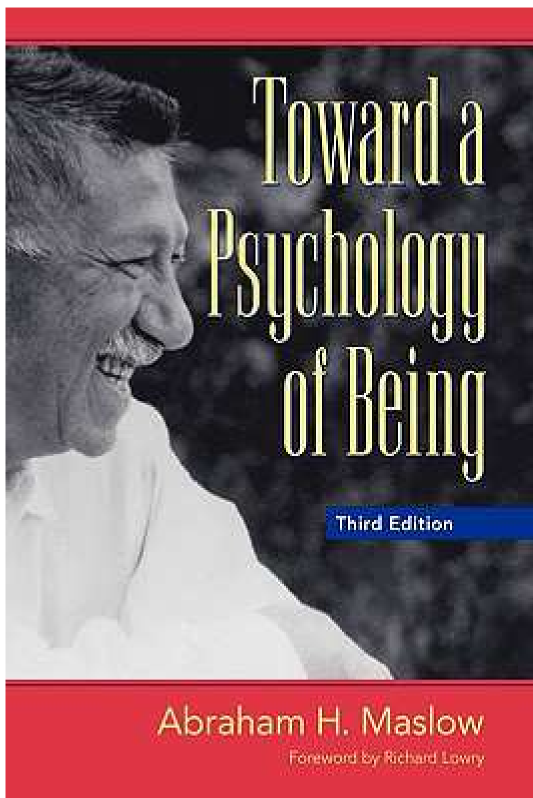
Humanistic theories have developed in the study of a broad range of subject matter by such psychologists as Gordon Allport, Henry Murray, Gardner Murphy, George Kelly, Brewster Smith, and Abraham Maslow. Maslow's motivational theory holistically integrates such limited theories as the operant conditioning theory of learning and the psychoanalytic theory of ego defense by postulating a complex process featuring the person's potential for growth through the gratification of basic needs for physiological equilibria, safety, belonging, and self-esteem. According to Maslow, the human being attempts to fulfill these prepotent deficiencies („D-values") in a larger effort towards „self-actualization," – the fulfillment of unique talents and potential. Maslow characterized such higher aspirations as „being" motivation („B-values") that are evident in „self-actualizers," the most psychologically healthy persons, and in „peak" and „plateau" experiences enjoyed in diverse contexts of human life. In his holistic theory, Maslow acknowledged not only inherited tendencies, biological needs, propensities for reinforcement, and defenses against psychological conflict, but such cognitive, social, and spiritual „metaneeds" as striving for truth, justice, and mystical connection with ultimate realities.

Author:

Abraham Maslow

Reference:

Maslow, A. Toward a Psychology of Being. New York: Wiley, 1998.



Intentional Self-Development

Intentional self-development (ISD) refers to a process of personal growth in which one purposefully takes actions that are designed to shape one's self-identity and personality. ISD can also be viewed as a form of self-regulation in which people act, observe outcomes, adjust, and so on, although with a greater focus on intentionality than typically examined in self-regulation research. Central to ISD are personal goals, actions, concepts of self, and the interpretative processes through which the individual comes to generate and evaluate goals, actions, and selves. ISD is typically studied by comparing goals (notably, goals aimed toward personal growth) with measures of goal progress, self-appraisals, and personality characteristics. Ultimately the study of ISD aims to demonstrate how individuals uniquely shape the development of their own life course.

ISD emphasizes the individual's intentional efforts toward development, whereas research on self-regulation more typically emphasizes appraisal processes that are largely reactive rather than visionary, consonant with the properties of a feedback system. Furthermore, self-regulation research typically studies internal concepts of self *as a factor* in the process of self-regulation, such as how appraisals of self-efficacy influence the course of self-regulation. While ISD research also examines self-knowledge and self-appraisals as factors in self-regulation, ISD research is especially concerned with subjective concepts of self *as a product* of self-regulatory processes. In other words, a primary phenomenon of interest is how goals and actions facilitate the development of self-understanding and broad personality characteristics.

Person-Environment Fit

The match between characteristics of the person and characteristics of the environment reflects the concept of person-environment fit. A number of person-environment fit theories have clear implications for positive psychology and well-being. These theories include Holland's theory of personality types and model environments; the theory of work adjustment by Dawis, England, and Lofquist; social cognitive theory by Lent, Brown, and Hackett; the situation selection theory by Diener, Larson, and Emmons; the self-concordance theory by Sheldon and Elliott; the demands control model by Karasek and Theorell; the attraction, selection, attrition model by Schneider, Smith, and Goldstein; the social-ecological model of well-being by Little; the transitional approach by Pervin; and the life domains approach by Moos. Taken together, these theories and their related research, in one way or another, suggest that persons in environments that are congruent with their personalities tend to be psychologically healthier, more satisfied, and more productive than persons in incongruent environments.

Self-Determination

Self-determination as a psychological construct refers to self- (vs. other-) caused action – to people acting volitionally, based on their own will. Volition is the capability of conscious choice, decision, and intention. Self-determined behavior is volitional, intentional, and self-caused or self-initiated action.

Self-determination theory (SDT) merged research on innate human tendencies, social contexts, and motivators for human action to posit congruence between one's basic needs and core values that spurs individual agency and, ultimately, results in overall well-being. SDT proposed three basic psychological needs – competence, autonomy, and relatedness – that are either supported or challenged by social contexts. The context also contributes to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that are self-regulated at either conscious or unconscious levels. This perspective views the process of self-regulation as an organizational function that coordinates systemic behaviors and serves as a foundation for autonomy and the sense of self.

In SDT, the inherent psychological need for competence refers to the motivation to be competent and effective within environments, which in turn stems from the theory of effectence motivation, which describes an innate drive for environmental mastery. This drive leads to behavioral responses that sustain and augment individual capabilities. The psychological need for relatedness is the sense of connectedness and belonging with others. This sense is distinct from the status of role-identification or group membership, as the focus is on personal perceptions of relatedness instead of goal outcomes. Variously, competence, relatedness, and autonomy may compliment each other, or may conflict.

Satisfying these needs enhances well-being. Within SDT, autonomous actions are based on one's core or „higher order values". Sometimes outside influences (e.g., social context) force values to conflict and a choice must be made that reflects the true self. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation plays a role here and these motivators are not simply polar opposites. Instead, the

rationale and outcome of negotiating and integrating the demands of intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation determines the autonomy of an action. Thus, an autonomous action is one in which the rationale behind an action-response (behavior) to an extrinsic pressure reflects one's core values.

Early SDT research focused on the role of social contexts in supporting or thwarting intrinsic motivation and found that conditions fostering autonomy and competence were positively associated with intrinsic motivation. When extrinsically motivated behaviors were acted on, individuals were more likely to integrate the behavior with core values when the social context supported autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Recent SDT research has examined the relationship between implicit/explicit motives (conscious or unconscious) and intrinsic/extrinsic motivation.

Authors:

Ryan, R. M;

Deci, E. L.

Reference:

Ryan, R. M; & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist, 55, 68-78.

Social Cognitive Theory

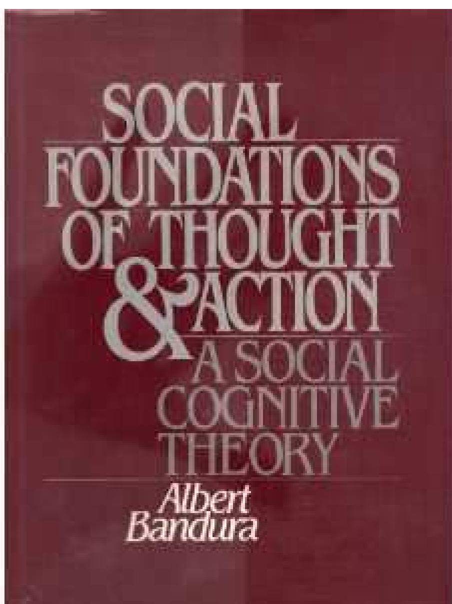
Social cognitive theory is an influential approach to understanding human thought processes, motivation, affect, and behavior. The theory focuses on the interaction among the person, his or her behavior, and the environment. A key feature of the theory is its emphasis on the ways in which people assert agency, or self-direction. Developed by Albert Bandura, it has been used to study many aspects of psychosocial functioning, both positive and problematic in nature. Originally termed social learning theory, Bandura's framework emerged in the 1960s, emphasizing the social context of human learning. It has been subjected to a great deal of subsequent research and conceptual development, culminating in his 1986 landmark work, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. In its current form, the theory encompasses a wide array of determinants of human behavior and behavior change, bringing them together within a coherent integrative system that highlights people's capacity for self-regulation. The theory has been applied to many topics of relevance to positive psychology, such as health-promoting behavior, academic motivation and performance, career development and work adjustment, and adaptive coping with diverse physical and psychological problems.

Author:

Bandura, A.

Reference:

Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Enlewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall



Actualizing tendency

Actualizing tendency refers to an innate growth drive or impulse that is said to exist within all human beings. Proponents of this concept make the optimistic assumption that people have an inherent tendency to become more elaborated, integrated, and internally coordinated over time – that is, to grow and develop as personalities.

This idea is most closely associated with the humanistic psychologies of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Maslow proposed that all humans have a need for self-actualization, but that this need does not come to the fore until lower level needs for safety, belongingness, and esteem are met. In contrast, Rogers viewed the actualizing tendency as standard equipment in all human beings, not considering prior lower level need satisfaction a necessary prerequisite. He proposed that all people have an organismic valuing process (OVP) which enables them to perceive and enact the most health- and growth-relevant choices for themselves by evaluating experiences based on their contribution to the actualizing tendency.

Within contemporary research psychology, the actualizing tendency is probably best represented within Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT). This complex and comprehensive theory of human motivation was built on the concept of intrinsic motivation, in which people are internally motivated to explore and engage the environment, elaborating their knowledge and skills in the process.

Author:

Rogers, Carl

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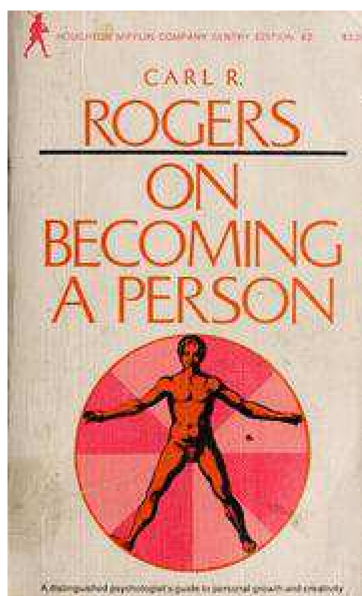


Agency

The concept of agency is fundamental to within-person developmental conceptions in positive psychology. Specifically, the idea that human behavior can be viewed as volitional due to either innate sources or experiential influences translates into a host of empirical questions about the sources, courses, and sequelae of agentic activity. Research hypotheses generated from various psychological theories regarding agentic characteristics and behaviors are testable and broadly supported in diverse contemporary psychological literatures. Agency-action ideas are found in numerous contemporary concepts that include action-control, perceived control, self-efficacy, self-determination, behavioral self-regulation, goal-directed behavior, and intrinsic motivation.
From an agency perspective, the key characteristics of actions include that:

- They arise from both biological and psychological needs;
- They are directed toward self-regulated goals that service the biological and psychological needs, both short-term and long-term;
- They are governed by one's personal knowledge about the links among agents, means, and ends and by behaviors that entail self-chosen forms and functions;
- They give rise to self-determined governance of behavior and development, which can be characterized as hope-related individual differences;
- They are triggered, executed, and evaluated in contexts that provide supports and opportunities, as well as hindrances and impediments to goal pursuit; and
- Their outcomes and consequences are interpreted in contexts that vary according to norms, social structure, and systemic features.

Altruism

The term „altruism" is used to describe two distinct phenomena. The first is „behavioral altruism", which refers to helping behavior that is either very costly to the helper or conveys no self-benefit for the helper. The second is „psychological altruism", which refers to a motivation to increase the welfare of another as an end in itself. Although the latter definition is commonly used among psychologists and philosophers, the former is popular among researchers who study non-human animals.
The disjoint between these uses of the term raises several important issues. First, psychological altruism may occur regardless of the – beneficial or costly - consequences for the helper. Second, psychological altruism may co-occur with other nonaltruistic motives (e.g. psychological egoism), and these motives can guide the behavior jointly. Third, behavioral altruism may occur even if one is not altruistically motivated. Both psychological altruism and psychological egoism, operating either alone or in combination, can result in behavioral altruism. Since only behavioral altruism is observable, there is much dispute regarding the existence of genuine psychological altruism.

Authenticity

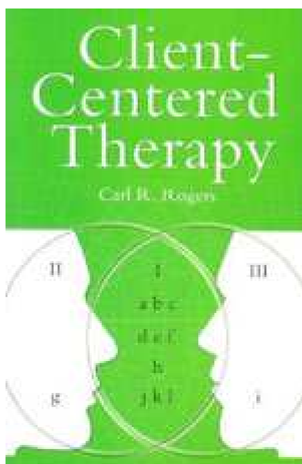
Psychological authenticity refers to emotional genuineness, self-attunement, and psychological depth. To be authentic is to live one's whole being in the moment, without guile or hidden agendas. Historically, the concept was given its most important expression by the humanistic and third force psychologists of the 1950s and 1960s. Rogers (1961) defined authenticity (or congruence) as occurring when „the feelings the person is experiencing are available to him, available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, and is able to communicate them if appropriate" (p. 61). Similar ideas have been developed within contemporary research psychology, under the aegis of self-determination theory (SDT). SDT is an organismic/dialectical theory built on the idea that people have inherent interests and passions that motivate behavior for its own sake (intrinsic motivation). Of course, not all important behavior can be enjoyable, and thus the theory expanded to incorporate identified motivation, in which nonenjoyable behavior is nevertheless undertaken willingly because it expresses important identities and beliefs. Both intrinsic and identified motivations are said to be autonomous, because both express the interests of a deeper, enduring self. In contrast, controlled motivations evoke behaviors that feel caused by the situation, or by unmastered introjects that overwhelm the person's sense of self. These ideas supply an interesting possible definition of authenticity – that it involves acting for reasons of interest and/or conviction, rather than with a sense of being compelled by uncontrollable forces. More recently, Kernis and colleagues have presented a four-component conceptualization of authenticity, involving (1) awareness of one's motives, feelings, and desires, (2) unbiased (i.e. nondefensive) processing of internal information, (3) behavior consistent with one's values, and (4) a relational orientation in which one values openness and truthfulness in interpersonal relationships, even if it means letting others see unflattering sides of oneself.

Author:

Rogers, Carl

Reference:

Rogers, C.R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



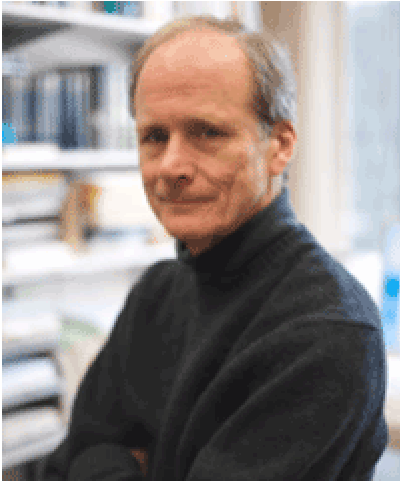
Autonomy

Autonomy is a term suggesting that the individual is self-governed. In contrast, heteronomy means to be governed by forces alien to the self. Deci, Ryan and their colleagues have engaged in a wide array of research programs, using both laboratory and field methods, to investigate many aspects of human autonomy. Self-determination theory (SDT), which has both emerged from this research and in turn, guided it, encompasses the most extensive empirical examination of human autonomy within psychology. SDT postulates three basic human needs with the need of autonomy concerning people's universal desire and urge to regulate their own behavior, act in accord with their interests and values, and behave in ways that they endorse at the highest level of their reflective capacity.

Authors:

Ryan, Richard. M.

Deci, Edward.L.



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Growth Goals

Contemporary research on goals can be traced to giants in psychology's history who emphasized internally motivated actions and internally motivating needs, such as William James, William McDougall, Kurt Lewin, and Henry Murray. The history of growth goals, however, is more limited and recent. In the 1950s and 1960s, Abraham Maslow built a theory of human motivation around the idea of growth, claiming that in everyday events people are motivated by either growth or safety by varying degrees. Growth motivation involves an orientation to progress, explore, seek challenges, learn, integrate, and more fully maximize one's potentials. Safety motivation, on the other hand, involves an orientation to preserve, conserve, protect, seek immediate comforts, maintain, and follow established action patterns. Toward the end of the twentieth century, Edward Deci's and Richard Ryan's self-determination theory translated a similar view of organismic growth into empirically testable terms, which has produced a large body of current research on growth-oriented goals. In another recent line of theory and research (notably grounded in George Kelly's constructive alternativism), John Nicholls and Carol Dweck contrasted learning (growth-oriented) goals with performance (outcome- and validation-oriented) goals, which Dweck relates to people's „implicit theories" about whether personal characteristics are fixed or malleable. Similarly, a variety of growth goal constructs that deal with cognitive growth have been operationally defined in terms of Jean Piaget's cognitive-developmental principles of assimilation and accommodation, though often cast in a more social-cognitive context than Piaget's original ideas. Other growth-goal research relies on Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of personality development, with goals oriented toward psychological maturity in terms of identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity. Finally, these approaches toward growth have been applied to a number of methodological forms for studying goals and related constructs that go by names such as personal projects, personal strivings, current concerns, life tasks, major life

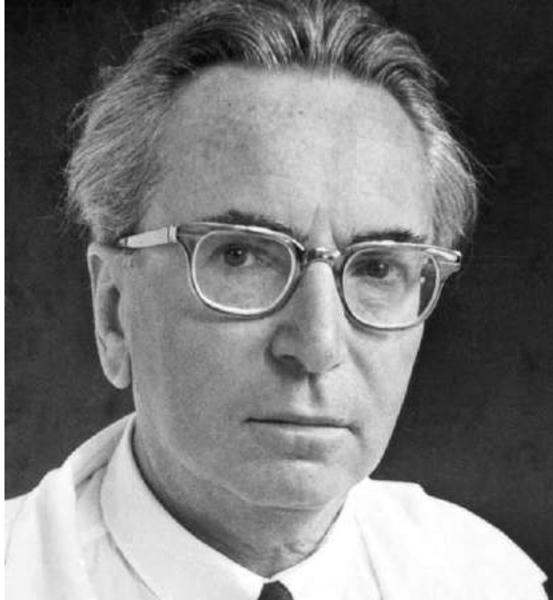
goals, and possible selves. Most empirically investigated forms of growth goals are consonant with one of these theoretical approaches, though these four in no way exhaust the possibilities for studying this concept.

Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility is concerned with people taking individual accountability for their decisions and actions, together with the outcomes they create and their impacts on others. It is about feeling that one is the author of one's own life, accountable for the life that is created and the impacts caused through one's decisions and actions, both on oneself and on others. Within philosophy, the concept has been referred to as moral responsibility, although with a narrower focus on causal accountability for actions either undertaken or not undertaken. Personal responsibility is differentiated from civic or social responsibility, which is concerned with our collective responsibilities to each other as human beings. The constructs are, however, related. Personal responsibility is understood at the level of the individual; civic or social responsibility is understood at the level of the collective. Responsibility is often also defined from the perspective of legal culpability, but the concept of personal responsibility differs from this constrained definition, being focused more widely on a prospective, future-focused sense of the need to take actions that will deliver appropriate outcomes over time, rather than a retrospective, past-focused accountability and culpability for previous actions.

Author:

Viktor Frankl



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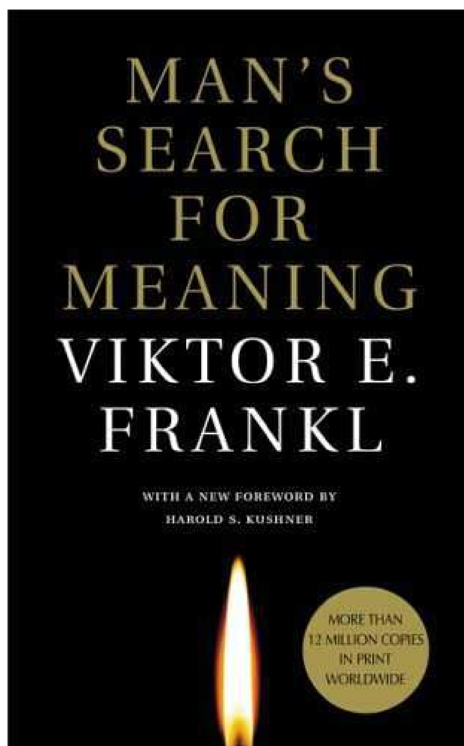


Strengths (Gallup)

Gallup defines strengths as those activities for which one can provide consistent, near-perfect performance. Strengths are composed of:

- Skills: the basic abilities to perform fundamental tasks, such as operating a particular piece of machinery. Skills are not naturally occurring – they must be acquired through formal and informal training and practice.
- Knowledge: an acquaintance with, and understanding of, facts and principles accumulated through education or experience.
- Talents: natural ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, such as an inner drive to compete, sensitivity to the needs of others, or the tendency to be outgoing at social gatherings. Talents must come into existence naturally and cannot be acquired like skills and knowledge.

A person's most powerful talents represent the best of his or her natural self. Accordingly, these talents are a person's best opportunities to perform at levels of excellence. Dominant talents naturally appear frequently and powerfully, in a variety of situations. They can take the form of yearnings, or areas of rapid learning. They can be areas of great personal satisfaction, or in which one experiences a sense of timelessness:

- A yearning can be described as an internal force that leads one to a particular activity or environment time and again.
- Rapid learning reveals talent through the speed at which one anticipates the steps of a new activity, acquires a new skill, or gains new knowledge.
- Satisfaction is a positive emotional response to successfully meeting challenges that engage one's greatest talents. These energizing experiences are often evidence of a dominant talent at work.

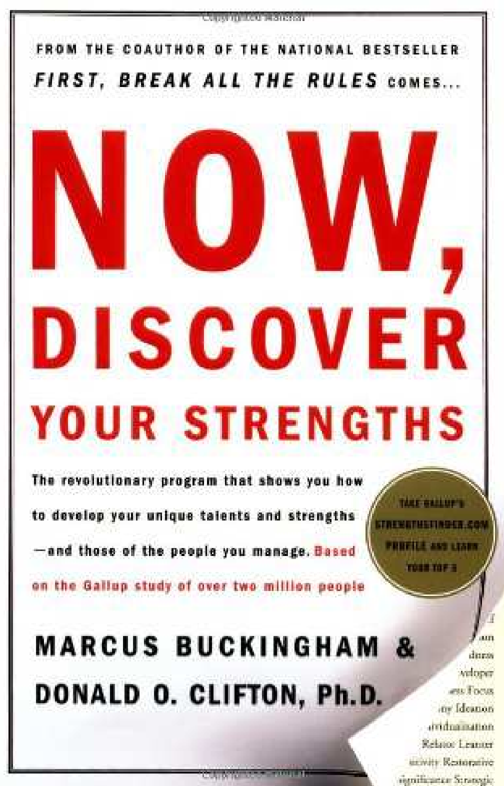
- Timelessness also can serve as a clue to talent. Being engaged in an activity at a deep, natural level can result in a lack of the sense of time passing, and indicates a level of engrossment in that activity that is consistent with a deep natural talent.

Author:

Cilfton, Donald, O.

Reference:

Buckingham M; Clifton, D. O. (2005) Now, discover your strengths.Pocket Books.



Strengths (personality)

Extensive work has been undertaken to understand strengths more comprehensively through reviewing existing literature and empirical evidence, naturalistic observation and field interviews with strengths exemplars, and reference to theoretical perspectives that would provide a deeper understanding of the evolution of, reason for, and prevalence of strengths within human life. On the basis of this multimethod approach, a strength was defined as „a preexisting capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic or energizing to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance" (Linley, in press).

The two most popular strengths tools assess 58 nonoverlapping strengths. The Clifton StrengthsFinder from Gallup assesses 34 themes of talent developed through occupational interviews, whereas the VIA Inventory of Strengths, developed by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, assesses 24 character strengths, believed to be universally valued across cultures and time. However, it is unlikely that even these 58 concepts taken together could be considered fully representative of the universe of strengths, and other researchers, including Shane Lopez and colleagues in a special positive psychology issue of *The Counseling Psychologist*, have suggested a myriad of other strengths that merit consideration.

Strengths Perspective (Positive Psychology)

The strengths perspective is fundamentally concerned with what is right, what is working, and what is strong. It is interested in prevention, strength, and appreciation. It stands in contrast to the deficit model, and its interest in treatment, weakness, and alleviation. The strength perspective could be described as being interested in taking people from +3 to +8, that is, building on what is right, whereas traditional deficit models are more focused on taking people from -8 to -3, that is, ameliorating what is wrong. The strengths perspective represents the fundamental assumption of positive psychology at the meta-theoretical level. At the pragmatic level, positive psychology can be defined in relation to the topic areas within its remits. At the meta-theoretical level, it can be defined in relation to the approach that is taken to the study of those topic areas, with reference to the nature of the research questions that are asked, and the approaches that are taken, in dealing with the topic areas of pragmatic concern. As such, the strengths perspective represents a philosophical position that defines the approach of positive psychology.

Character Strengths (VIA)

Virtues are the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers. These may be universal, perhaps grounded in biology through an evolutionary process that selected for these predispositions toward moral excellence as means of solving the important tasks necessary for the survival of the species. Character is the entire set of positive traits that have emerged across cultures and throughout history as important for the good life. Character strengths are the psychological ingredients – processes or mechanisms – that define the virtues. They are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues. Character strengths are the subset of personality traits on which we place moral value. Good character is:

- a family of individual differences: in principle distinct strengths that people possess to varying degrees;
- shown in thoughts, feelings, and actions;
- malleable;
- measurable; and
- subject to numerous influences, proximal and distal.

The VIA Classification identifies 24 character strengths organized under six broad virtues. The most general use of the term VIA is to describe a vocabulary for psychologically-informed discourse on the personal qualities of a person that make him or her worthy of moral praise.

These six core virtues identified by the VIA Classification are:

- wisdom and knowledge – cognitive strengths entailing the acquisition and use of knowledge;

- courage – emotional strengths involving the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal;
- humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve „tending and befriending" other;
- justice – civic strengths underlying healthy community life;
- temperance – strengths protecting against excess; and
- transcendence – strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning.

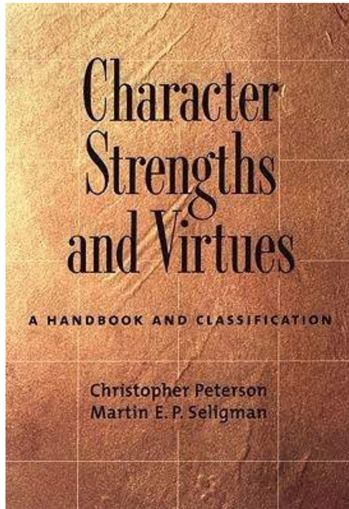
Authors:

Peterson, Christopher

Seligman, Martin

Reference:

Peterson, C.& Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strength and virtues: A handbook and classification. WashingtonDC: American Psychological Association.



Charisma

Charisma is a constellation of personal characteristics and qualities that allow an individual to have impact on others by affecting their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Although charisma is an elusive construct, it has been studied by the fields of psychology, leadership, political science, sociology and communication. The original definition of charisma is a „divine gift of grace or power", and there are religious connotations associated with it. However, psychological perspectives on charisma view it as a personal ability or quality (personal charisma), whereas sociologists have focused on the charismatic relationship, such as that between a charismatic leader and follower. Charisma is tied to positive psychology because charismatic individuals are inspiring, upbeat, optimistic, charming, and socially-skilled.

Values

For many years, research in psychology devoted relatively little attention to the study of values. Milton Rokeach contributed more than any other researcher to creating a new momentum in value research. Rokeach suggested that personal values serve as reference points which people use to formulate attitudes and behaviors, and developed a self-report measure of personal values, distinguishing between instrumental and terminal values. Building on Rokeach, Shalom Schwartz proposed a theory of the content and structure of personal values. Schwartz suggested that values differ in the type of motivational goal they express. Based on universal requirements of human existence, Schwartz identified ten motivationally distinct types of values: power; achievement; hedonism; stimulation; self-direction; universalism; benevolence; tradition; conformity; and security. Actions taken in the pursuit of a certain value type carry social, psychological, and practical consequences that might conflict or may be compatible with the pursuit of other value types. The total pattern of conflict and compatibility among value priorities yields a circular structure of value systems, in which competing value types emanate in opposing directions from the center, and complementary types are adjacent going around the circle. The circular structure of values can be summarized into two basic conflicts. The first basic conflict is self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. Self-enhancement values emphasize the pursuit of self-interest by focusing on gaining control over people and resources (power) or by demonstrating ambition and competence according to social standards and attaining success (achievement). These values conflict with self-transcendence values that emphasize serving the interests of others: expressing concern and care for those with whom one has frequent contact (benevolence) or expressing acceptance, tolerance, and concern for all people regardless of group membership (universalism).

The second conflict is openness to change vs. conservation. Openness to change emphasizes

openness to new experiences: autonomy of thought and action (self-direction); and novelty and excitement (stimulation). These values conflict with conservation values that emphasize preserving the status quo: commitment to past beliefs and customs (tradition); adhering to social norms and expectations (conformity); and preference for stability and security for self and close others (security). Hedonism values share elements of both openness and self-enhancement and are in conflict with self-transcendence and conservation values. The links between values and well-being are of special interest because they relate to the basic issue of what makes people happy. Values are related to well-being through multiple pathways. Self-determination theory engendered a view that directly links values and well-being: values and strivings that are intrinsic by nature (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) lead to positive well-being because they reflect self-actualization needs that are inherent to human beings. A second path toward happiness is suggested by the goal-attainment perspective: according to this view, well-being results from the attainment of goals that are pursued for intrinsic reasons, irrespective of the value content of those goals. The third path suggests that it is the fit between individuals and their environments that affects subjective well-being. According to that path, even extrinsic values may lead to a positive sense of well-being if a person holding such values operates in an environment that encourages these values.

Virtues

It is important to distinguish between virtue and the virtues. Ths singular term „virtue" refers to the general concept whereas the plural „virtues" refers to specific personal strengths such as courage or honesty. It is vital to have a clear, systematic general conception of virtue within which specific virtues can be defined. Virtue can be defined as the overall constellation of virtues that make it possible to live the best kind of life. The term „character" is generally used synonymously with virtue and the term „character strength" is interchangeable with a specific virtue.

In the earliest Western list of virtues, Socrates identified four virtues in Plato's Republic: courage; justice; temperance; and wisdom. Aristotle expanded this list and the concept of virtue dramatically in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the first full text devoted to ethics in the Western world. Aristotle added virtues such as liberality, proper pride, honesty, ready wit, and friendship. In addition, he emphasized the necessity of „phronesis" or practical wisdom in enacting virtue: „it is impossible to be good in the full sense of the word without practical wisdom or to be a man of practical wisdom without moral excellence or virtue" (Aristotle, ca 330 BCE/ 1999, p. 172). Thomas Aquinas incorporated Socrates' four virtues and called them the four cardinal virtues. He added three theological virtues: faith; hope; and charity. For Aquinas, „God Himself is the very object of these [theological] virtues" (ca 1265 CE/ 1966). Confucian virtues include reverence (li), live within the family (hsiao), righteousness (yi), honesty (xin), benevolence (jen), and loyalty to the state (chung).

These and other catalogs of the virtues often have a good deal in common, but it is obvious that they differ substantially as well. Peterson and Seligman (2004) set out to „reclaim the study of character and virtue as legitimate psychological topics" (p. 3) by examining „dozens of inventories of virtues and strengths" (p. 15) from a wide variety of sources. These authors hoped to create a comprehensive classification system for virtue. Their system contains six

virtues (courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom) with 24 character strengths distributed within these virtues.

Authors:

Peterson, Christopher

Seligman, Martin

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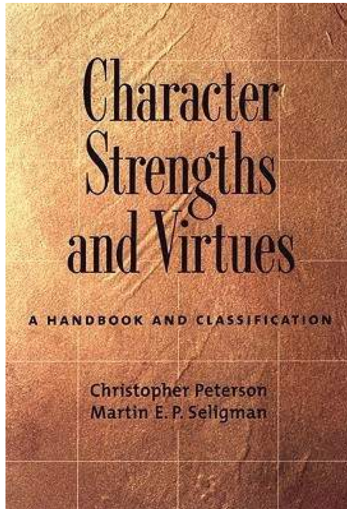

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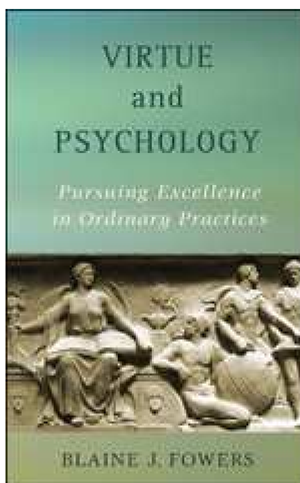


Courage

Courage is the intentional pursuit of a worthy goal despite the perception of personal threat and uncertain outcome.
There have been many attempts to identify and understand this concept better, yet an inclusive and comprehensive definition remains elusive. Rachman's research focused on the component of fear and fearlessness, while other scholars focused on other facets of courage, such as the need for awareness and active coping. In his reflections on the patient-physician relationship, Shelp identified the following components of courage: voluntary action, dangerous circumstances, reasonable appraisal of risk, pursuit of perceived good, uncertainty, and perhaps, fear. Wrestling with this last element, Shelp (1984) states that „courage masters fear but the courageous person is not necessarily fearless or fearful" (p. 355).
Woodard (2004) defined courage as „the ability to act for a meaningful (noble, good, or practical) cause, despite experiencing the fear associated with perceived threat exceeding the available resources" (p. 174), highlighting the role of fear in the creation of inherent threat and uncertainty. Rate, Clarke, Lindsay, and Sternberg suggested specific dimensions of courage, and identified its essential components: intentionality, deliberation, personal risk to the actor, noble/good act, and perhaps fear. Currently, there appears to be consesus that courage requires the element of intentionality. The actor must have an awareness and understanding of the presented occasion for courageous action, and voluntarily decide to act. It also requires a worthy goal, deemed so by merit of that goal's moral, noble, or otherwise good value, typically from the perspective of the actor. Finally, the actor must perceive the occasion for courage as potentially personally threatening, and the outcome must not be certain. There is no courage where personal safety is assured, but it is here that a secondary or parallel role of fear becomes relevant. Personal risk and uncertainty may or may not induce the emotional response of fear, depending on factors such as training, familiarity, and

confidence. While this added emotion would be expected to emerge from personal threat and uncertain outcome, some authors believe that acting under these conditions constitutes courage with or without the presence of fear.

Curiosity

Feelings of curiosity can be defined as the recognition, pursuit, and intense desire to explore novel and challenging information. When people feel curious, they devote more attention to the activity, process information more deeply, remember information better, and are more likely to persist on tasks until goals are met. The immediate function of curiosity is to learn, explore, and immerse oneself in the activity that initially stimulated the person's interest. Across the lifespan, curiosity serves a broader function of building knowledge, skills, relationships, and expertise. After all, a person spending time with novel stimuli is exposed to some degree of information and experience that was not previously available. Some consideration has been given to facets of curiosity. Epistemic curiosity reflects how people are stimulated by incomplete, incoherent, or uncertain knowledge (e.g., discovering how things work, conceptual puzzles, mystery novels). Perceptual curiosity refers to visual, auditory, or tactile stimulation leading to novel or challenging sensory experiences (e.g., aesthetic appreciation of music, art, food, strange sounds or smells). Social curiosity reflects how people overtly (e.g., seeking people out for conversations) or covertly (e.g., gossip, spying) seek to learn more about other people. People also differ in their willingness to take risks to obtain moments of novelty and uncertainty or to avoid the pain of boredom. This mode of curiosity, termed sensation-seeking, includes socially desirable actions such as enjoying unusual art forms, meeting new people, and trying new entrées at restaurants, as well as less socially desirable actions such as drug use, gambling, risky sexual activities, and aggression.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is – from a psychological perspective – a multidimensional process involving cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social features. Forgiveness is often an unfolding process that over time partially or totally eclipses unforgiving motivation such as revenge or avoidance, and unforgiving emotions such as bitterness and fear. This transformation is often achieved by fostering positive thoughts (e.g., focusing on the offender's humanity rather than defining him or her in terms of the offense; she is a person who lied in this situation rather than merely a liar) and positive emotions such as compassion and mercy toward the offender. Forgiveness can be an expression of altruism, or other-focused care. Ironically, this form of love can only emerge when the giver has first suffered harm from a blameworthy offender. Granting forgiveness begins with blaming someone for a moral violation that caused suffering or other psychological, physical, or material losses (e.g., loss of self-esteem, relationships, opportunities, health, or damaged property). While taking seriously the importance of justice to adequately take care of the victim, community, and offender – and only after ensuring the victim's emotional, physical and spiritual safety – forgiveness is a moral response from a victim that seeks to overcome injustice with goodness. Forgiveness involves cultivating positive, prosocial responses (e.g., empathy, compassion, and the desire for genuine and ultimate good) for the offender so that they eventually edge out the hurt and bitter emotional responses of unforgiveness. In short, forgiveness responds to harm with rooted hope.

Future Mindedness

Future mindedness refers to a general orientation toward the pursuit and achievement of future goals. While psychology has historically focused on negative orientations toward the future such as hopelessness and pessimism, psychologists have more recently examined the potential benefits of positive expectations in the form of self-efficacy, optimism and hope (see below for further details). These conceptualizations of positive future orientations have been dubbed „Velcro constructs" for their tendency to be associated with positive life outcomes in a wide range of life domains and have been found to be one of the strongest, if not the strongest, predictors of life satisfaction in adults.

The first of these positive future expectations is self-efficacy that is defined as people's perceptions of their capability to execute the actions necessary to achieve a desired goal. Self-efficacy is not a perception of whether one will perform these actions or whether one will necessarily achieve the desired outcomes, but an evaluation of whether one *can* perform the necessary actions.

Optimism – as defined by Carver and Scheier – is a general expectation of favorable outcomes in the future along with an expectation of an absence of undesired outcomes. They have found optimism to be a stable trait that is consistently associated with improved psychological and physical well-being.

A third conceptualization of future mindedness is the cognitive model of hope developed by Rick Snyder and colleagues at the University of Kansas. Hope theory suggests that human behavior is primarily driven by the pursuit of goals and that hope reflects the synthesis of two components that are vital for the successful attainment of goals: pathways and agency thinking. Pathways thinking is the organizational component of hope theory and reflects one's perceived ability to identify the necessary routes to achieve the desired goals (i.e., how to get

from point A to point B). Agency thinking is the motivational force in hope theory and reflects one's perceived ability and likelihood to use the identified pathways.

Humor

Humor is essentially a form of play, a type of activity in which people take an unserious attitude toward the things they say and do, engaging in these actions for their own sake, rather than having a more important goal in mind. It is also typically a social activity: people engage in humor and laughter much more frequently when they are with others than when they are alone. Thus, humor may be viewed as a form of social play. Not all play, however, is humorous or „funny”. Humor is distinguished from other forms of play by the presence of elements that are perceived to be incongruous, odd, unusual, surprising, or out of the ordinary. Thus, as many theorists have noted, for humor to occur there needs to be a particular type of cognitive appraisal involving the perception of nonserious incongruity. Koestler coined the term „bisociation” to refer to this cognitive process, in which a situation or idea is simultaneously perceived from the perspective of two self-consistent but normally unrelated and even contradictory schemas or frames of reference. The perception of humorous incongruity in a playful context typically also elicits a specific positive emotion that, although closely related to joy, is uniquely associated with humor. Martin proposed the term „mirth” as a technical name for this emotion. The emotional nature of humor is demonstrated by recent brain imaging studies showing that exposure to humorous cartoons activates the well-known dopaminergic reward network in the limbic system of the brain. Depending on how amusing a stimulus is perceived to be, the emotion of mirth can range from mild feelings of amusement to very high levels of hilarity.

Humility

Positive psychologists have identified humility as one of the core human strengths or virtues. In brief, its key elements are thought to include:

- an accurate assessment of one's abilities and achievements (not low self-esteem, self-deprecation);
- an ability to acknowledge one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations (often vis-a-vis a „higher power");
- openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice;
- keeping one's abilities and accomplishments – one's place in the world – in perspective (e.g., seeing oneself as just one person in the larger scheme of things);
- a relatively low self-focus, a „forgetting of the self", while recognizing that one is but the part of the larger universe; and
- an appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways in which people and things can contribute to our world.

Honesty

Honesty is a human characteristic that reflects a quest for truthfulness rather than deceit in thought and action. The psychological study of honesty has a long and rich history that can be best captured as forming two traditions. In one tradition, honesty is defined as a duty to nondeceptiveness that can be equated with emotional, cognitive, and behavioral authenticity. These studies of honesty-as-authenticity involve the exploration of individuals' intrapsychic responsibilities to be true to themselves when confronting societal norms. The other tradition focuses on the conditions under which individuals in society make and accept responsibility for consistently being truthful in their interactions with others. These studies of honesty-as-truthfulness are concerned with candor in interpersonal interactions.
Within each tradition, honesty has been represented in one of three ways. Honesty can be a character trait that influences whether individuals respond authentically or behave sincerely in particular situations. Honesty can also be a state that is elicited by the demands of various situations; individuals will respond authentically or sincerely when they have learned to define truthfulness as beneficial. Honesty is also seen as instinctive intrapsychic reactions or truthful forms of prosocial behavior that cannot be taught. Comparing findings from the two research traditions and three theoretical frames within each tradition reveals a host of interesting conclusions about honesty.

Gratitude

Gratitude is a commonly experienced emotion. It can also represent a broader attitude toward life – the tendency to see all of life as a gift. Gratitude, thus, has various meanings, and can be conceptualized at several levels of analysis ranging from momentary affect to long-term dispositions. It has been conceptualized as an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, and a coping response. The word itself is derived from the Latin „gratia", meaning grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. All derivatives from this root „have to do with kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing" (Pruyser, 1976, p. 69). Existing research suggests that gratitude is a typically pleasant experience that is linked to contentment, happiness, and hope. From the perspectives of moral philosophy and theology, gratitude is seen as a human strength that enhances one's personal and relational well-being and is beneficial for society as a whole. McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson theorized that gratitude is a moral affect – that is, one with moral precursors and consequences. They hypothesized that by experiencing gratitude, a person is motivated to carry out prosocial behavior, energized to sustain moral behaviors, and is inhibited from commiting destructive interpersonal behaviors. Specifically, they posited that gratitude serves as a moral barometer, providing individuals with an affective readout that accompanies the perception that another person has treated them prosocially. Second, they posited that it serves as a moral motive, stimulating people to behave prosocially after they have been the beneficiaries of other people's prosocial behavior. Finally, they posited that gratitude serves as a moral reinforcer, encouraging prosocial behavior by reinforcing people for their previous good deeds. McCullough and colleagues adduced evidence from a wide variety of studies in personality, social, developmental, and evolutionary psychology to support this conceptualization.

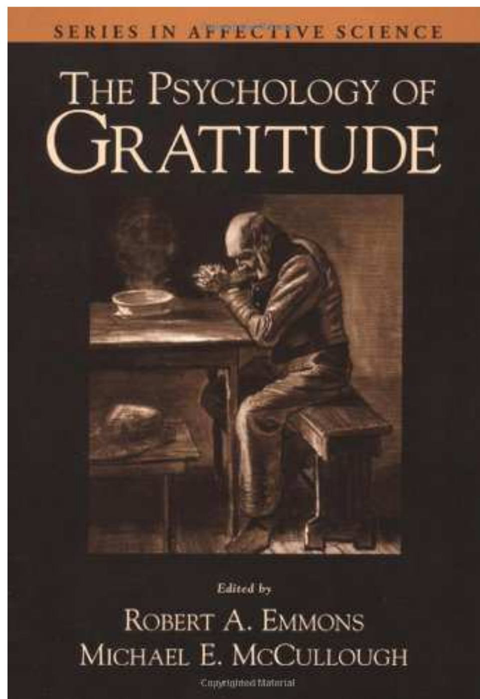
Authors:

Emmons, R. A.

McCullough, M. E

Reference:

R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), The psychology of gratitude. New York: OxfordUniversity Press.



Intimacy

Intimacy is the quality of feeling special, cared for, validated, and understood in a close relationship, and its meaning is broader than physical closeness or sexual behavior. A close relationship involves an interdependence of lives, such that people frequently and intensely interact with, show feelings care for one another, and think about one another. They show this pattern of mutual behavior over time and define themselves as close. Sexuality, which also is defined as a broad set of behaviors, is one component of intimacy. A couple may feel intimate with one another while showing only minimal sexual involvement.
It is essential that people in close relationships reciprocate the behavioral patterns characterizing intimacy. If one person directs considerable intimate behavior toward another person, but the latter does not reciprocate, the relationship is not intimate. In fact, nonreciprocated intimate behavior may constitute the basis of an unrequited love. Unrequited relationships sometimes emerge when one partner falls „out of love” with the other. They also may evolve when one person has a „crush” on another, but the other person does not return the overtures of desire.

Author:

Prager, K. J.

Reference:

Prager, K. J. (1995). The psychology of intimacy. New York: Guilford.

Play

Pretend play is a resource for children that relates to adaptive functioning in the developing child. Because processes in play have been associated with optimal functioning, play can be considered within the positive psychology framework. Pretend play has long been recognized as important in child development pretend play involves the use of fantasy, make-believe, and symbolism. In 1987, Fein defined pretend play as symbolic behavior in which „one thing is playfully treated as if it were something else" (p. 282). Both cognitive and affective processes are utilized in play. Jerome and Dorothy Singer in 1990 identified many cognitive processes in play. For example, play involves practice with divergent thinking – the ability to generate ideas. Play also involves the ability to store and recombine images; transformation abilities; and organization of narratives. They also emphasized the importance of affective processes in play. Sandra Russ in 2004 identified possible affective processes such as the expression of emotions and affect themes and enjoyment of the play process. Play is also an arena where children learn to process and regulate emotions. In the research literature, play has been found to relate to or facilitate areas of adaptive functioning including creativity, perspective-taking and emotional understanding, and general well-being and adjustment.Play should also enable children to be hopeful. One aspect of hope, according to Snyder, is agency, or a child's sense that he can reach his goals. Part of what makes play so pleasurable for children is that within play, unlike the rest of their day, children can be powerful. In play, children can arrange toys any way they like; they can choose which character to be and how to respond. In this way, the child feels a sense of agency.

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Fein, G. (1987). Pretend play: Creativity and consciousness. In P. Gorlitzs & J. Wohlwill (Eds.), Curiosity, imagination, and play (pp. 281-304). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Association

Religiousness

How to define religiousness remains the topic of ongoing debate among scholars and researchers within psychology. In general, however, there is consensus that religiousness involves the sacred, is both multidimensional and multilevel, can be associated with both mental health and distress, and is best understood within context. To separate it from the broad context of spirituality, many characterize religiousness as specifically associated with a traditional context or organized faith tradition.
In Peterson and Seligman's positive psychology work entitled Character Strengths and Virtues, religiousness is considered to be one aspect of spirituality and both are distinguished from other related concepts such as hope, gratitude, meaning, and secular transcendence by their focus on the sacred. The sacred in this sense refers to that which is considered holy, worthy of reverence, or associated with the divine. Aspects of human life such as healthy lifestyles, relationships, changes, goals in life, cultural traditions, and formal rituals can acquire sacred qualities through the process of sanctification, or lose them through desanctification. It appears that individuals pursue, maintain, or react differently to sacred phenomena than to secular objects and processes. These processes have recently been investigated empirically by psychologists such as Ken Pargament and Robert Emmons.
In the past, popular usage and scientific inquiry have often focused on specific aspects of religiousness such as religious attitudes, frequency of prayer, or religious experiences. However, religiousness is not one-dimensional. Rather, it touches on a wide range of psychological phenomena such as beliefs, behavior, emotions, identity, meaning, personality, and morality. Further, religious correlates and phenomena extend beyond individual intrapsychic functioning to many levels of analysis. In other words, as described by theorist Ken Wilber, concepts such as religiousness can be examined from the micro to the macro in terms of neuroanatomy, intrapsychic phenomenon, states of consciousness, family dynamics,

group processes and norms, cultural patterns, social systems, and global concerns. For example, the process of religious conversion may be understood through an examination of neurotransmitter levels, changes in brain activation, emotional experiences, cognitive shifts, alterations in personal and social behavior, role and identity transformations, family impacts, group membership changes, cultural influences, and global events. Similarly, a full understanding of the relationship between religiousness and positive psychology requires attention to these multiple dimensions and levels. Examples relevant to both domains include faith-inspired resilience, happiness, civic virtues, altruism, social support, family influences, and culture. Likewise, several processes or outcomes may be similarly relevant: the development of character, methods of increasing adherence to healthy proscriptions such as abstinence from alcohol or risky behavior, the process of forgiveness, conversion experiences that solidify identity and resolve suffering, religious aspects of effective coping, and clerical methods of interpersonal influence for health and virtue promotion.

Author:

William James

References:

James, W. (1979). The will to believe and other essays in popular philosophy. Cambridge, MA: HarvardUniversity Press. (Original work published in 1897)

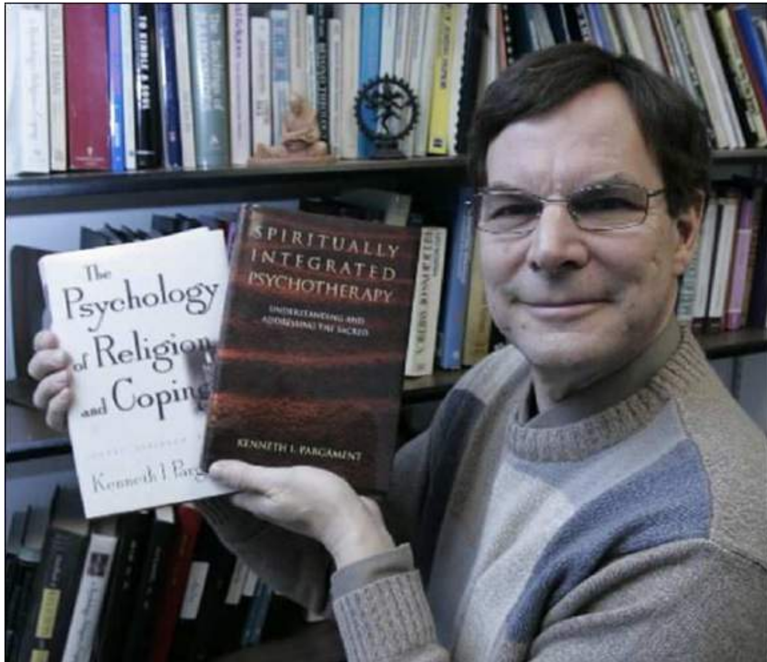
James, W. (1985). The varieties of religious experience. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univerity Press. (original work published in 1902)

Spirituality

The term „spirituality" comes from the word „spirit" (to breathe) and there is general agreement that spirituality is a living, dynamic process that is oriented around whatever the individual may hold sacred. The „sacred" refers to concepts of God and transcendent reality as well as other aspects of life that take on divine character and significance by virtue of their association with the holy. Thus, the sacred can encompass material objects (e.g., crucifix, American flag), special times (e.g., the Sabbath, birth and death), special places (e.g., cathedral, the outdoors), relationships (e.g., marriage, parenting), and psychological attributes (e.g., soul, virtues). Spirituality can be defined as a search for the sacred, that is, an attempt to discover and hold onto the sacred and, when necessary, transform the sacred. The experience of sacredness is accompanied by a sense of transcendence (i.e., being connected to something that goes beyond oneself), boundlessness (i.e., infinite time and space), and ultimacy (i.e., being in touch with what is „really real"). Theologian Rudolf Otto noted that the idea of the divine is often accompanied by a mysterium, a complex of feelings of attraction (e.g., love, adoration, gratitude) and repulsion (e.g., repulsion, fear, dread). More recently, researchers have linked perceptions of the sacred to a variety of emotion-based responses, including peak experiences, mystical experiences, and feelings of responsibility, duty, humility, awe, elevation, and uplift.

Author:

Kenneth I. Pargament



Wisdom

There are three major approaches to understanding the nature of wisdom: philosophical, implicit-theoretical, and explicit-theoretical. They largely have in common three attributes. First, they regard wisdom as a melding of cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects of the individual's functioning. Second, they emphasize the use of skills for some kind of positive common good. Third, they view wisdom as occurring in thought and deed, not only in thought. Wisdom is at least as much about what one does as it is about what one thinks or feels. Wisdom is a critical construct in positive psychology because it is, in the end, the use of one's repertoire of skills and dispositions for a positive common good.
Implicit-theoretical approaches to wisdom have in common the search for an understanding of people's folk conceptions of what wisdom is. Thus, the goal is not to provide a „psychologically true" account of wisdom, but rather an account that is true with respect to people's beliefs, whether these beliefs are right or wrong. Implicit theories have been comprehensively reviewed by Bluck and Glück.
Explicit theories are constructions of (supposedly) expert theorists and researchers rather than of laypeople. In the study of wisdom, most explicit-theoretical approaches are based on constructs from the psychology of human development. The most extensive program of research has been that conducted by the late Paul Baltes and his colleagues. According to them, wisdom is reflected in these five components: rich factual knowledge (general and specific knowledge about the conditions of life and its variations); rich procedural knowledge (general and specific knowledge about strategies of judgment and advice concerning matters of life); lifespan contextualism (knowledge about the contexts of life and their temporal [developmental] relationships); relativism (knowledge about differences in values, goals, and priorities); and uncertainty (knowledge about the relative indeterminacy and unpredictability of life and ways to manage).

Sternberg also proposed an explicit theory, suggesting that the development of wisdom can be traced to six antecedent components: 1) knowledge, including an understanding of its presuppositions and meaning as well as its limitations; 2) processes, including an understanding of what problems should be solved automatically and what problems should not be so solved; 3) a judicial thinking style, characterized by the desire to judge and evaluate things in an in-depth way; 4) personality, including tolerance of ambiguity and of the role of obstacles in life; 5) motivation, especially the motivation to understand what is known and what it means; and 6) environmental context, involving an appreciation of the contextual factors in the environment that lead to various kinds of thoughts and actions. Whereas that theory specified a set of antecedents of wisdom, the balance theory proposed by Sternberg specified the processes (balancing of interests and of responses to environmental contexts) in relation to the goal of wisdom (achievement of a common good). According to the balance theory, wisdom is the application of intelligence, creativity, and knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests, over the short and long terms, in order to achieve a balance among adaptation to existing environments, shaping of existing environments, and selection of new environments.
Although most developmental approaches to wisdom are ontogenetic, Csíkszentmihályi and Rathunde have taken a philogenetic or evolutionary approach, arguing that constructs such as wisdom must have been selected for over time, at least in a cultural sense. In other words, wise ideas should survive better over time than unwise ideas in a culture. The theorists define wisdom as having three basic dimensions of meaning: that of a cognitive process, or a particular way of obtaining and processing information; that of a virtue, or socially valued pattern of behavior; and that of a good, or a personally desirable state or condition.

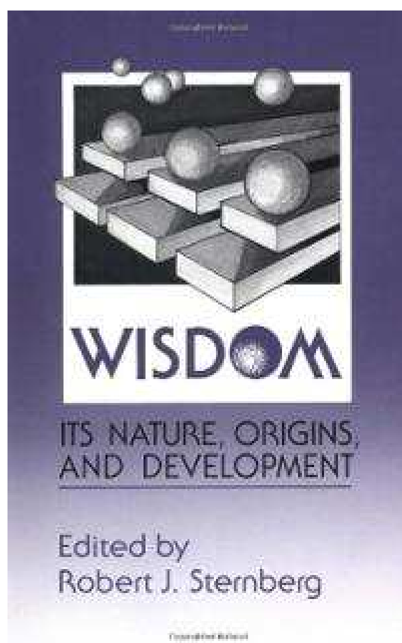
Authors:

R. J. Sternberg

Paul Baltes

Reference:

Sternberg, R. J. (Ed,.) Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development. New York: CambridgeUniversity Press.



II. The biopsychosocial conditions of the establishment and maintenance of positive states.

Authentic happiness

As proposed by Martin Seligman, authentic happiness is a blend of hedonic and eudaimonic elements. He parses the concept into three scientifically manageable components: the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life.

The pleasant life successfully pursues positive emotion about the present, the past and the future. The positive emotions regarding the past are satisfaction, contentment, and serenity. Optimism, hope, trust, faith, and confidence are future-oriented positive emotions. Positive emotions about the present are divided into two categories: pleasures and gratifications. Pleasures are momentary positive emotions that satisfy the senses, such as delicious tastes and smells, sexual feelings, moving the body well, etc. There are higher pleasures that are usually set off by more complicated and more learned mechanisms, these are, for instance, ecstasy, rapture, thrills, bliss, gladness, mirth, glee, fun, ebullience, comfort, amusement, and relaxation. Pleasures are inherently subjective and are easy to get habituated to. Gratifications are higher-order pleasures. These involve more intentional activities, such as cooking, reading, writing or dancing.

The second component, engaged life, means pursuing involvement and absorption in work, love, and leisure. To foster this, Seligman recommends creating „flow", a psychological state that accompanies highly engaging activities (see Flow).

Meaningful life is the third component. It consists of attachment to, and service of, something larger than oneself. People want to live a life that matters to the world and creates a difference for the better. There are a number of ways to achieve this: close interpersonal relationships, generativity, social activism or service, and careers pursued as callings or missions.

All in all, authentic happiness, as seen by Seligman, comes from a full life consisting of

experiencing positive emotions, savoring positive feelings coming from pleasures, deriving abundant gratifications by using one's signature strengths, and creating flow and engagement through them as well as pursuing a meaning in life that serves something larger than one's own self.

Author:

Seligman, Martin

Reference:

Seligman, M. E.P. (2002) Authentic happiness.NewYork: Free Press.

Eudaimonia

The word eudaimonia, literally „good spirit" from the ancient Greek words eu and daimon, is often translated as „happiness" and sometimes as „flourishing". However, eudaimonia differs from some now mainstream understandings of happiness or well-being in three important ways. First, eudaimonia represents an all-encompassing goal of life as opposed to one goal among many that a human life might have. Positive psychologists who study psychological well-being (PWB), subjective well-being (SWB), or happiness, often say that their target is but one component of a good human life. Second, eudaimonia is much less subjective and less psychological than current notions of happiness and well-being. Third, the ancient Greeks tended to agree that eudaimonia is attributed to a person's life as a whole, not to some distinct part of it.

The three major views concerning eudaimonia in the ancient period are Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Aristotelianism. According to the Stoics, we live well by not becoming emotionally attached to that over which we have no control. Since the only thing we can control is our character, according to the Stoics, virtue is both necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia. Epicurus thought that the life of pleasure is the best life for us, but his view of pleasure made his philosophy unlike contemporary hedonism. Epicurean pleasure – ataraxia (sometimes translated as „tranquility") – is the state we achieve when we have satisfied our natural desires and are not suffering from physical pain or the mental perturbations of unnatural or „empty" desires. Aristotle's view of eudaimonia is complex and there are scholarly debates about what to do with certain elements that seem to be in tension. The standard interpretation is that the good life for a human being is one in which we exercise the virtues and have sufficient good fortune to enjoy money and friends throughout our lives.

Author:

Ryff, Caroll

*Reference***:**

Ryff, C. D., Singer, B. H., Dienberg Love, G. (2004). Positive health: connecting well-being with biology. Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London: Biological sciences, 359 (1449), 1383-1394.

Good life

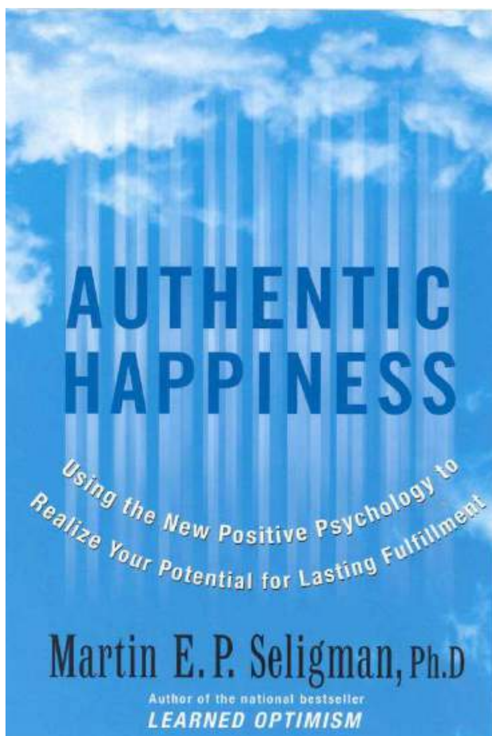
While there is no universal definition, the good life is generally considered a life of optimal functioning and/or flourishing. Across time, culture, and religion views of the good life vary. The current conception of the good life is built upon the ideologies of Carl Rogers (client-centered therapy) and Abraham Maslow (self-actualization) and self-determination theory, as well as research on the identification of character strengths, engagement, flow, and well-being. A central aim of Rogers' client-centered therapy is to help individuals improve their functioning by discovering and expressing their authentic selves. Maslow also believed in this process of self-actualization (which is the result of having access to the full range of one's talents and abilities). Self-determination theory posits that self-realization is key to well-being and a good life. Fulfillment of our needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness lead to psychological growth, integrity, well-being, vitality, and self-congruence. Seligman defined the good life as „identifying one's signature strengths and virtues and using them in work, love, play, and parenting to produce abundant and authentic gratification" (Seligman, 2004, p. 85).

Author:

Seligman, Martin

Reference:

Seligman, M. E.P. (2002) Authentic happiness.NewYork: Free Press.



Happiness

In 2002, Martin E. P. Seligman proposed a theory of happiness that is similar to Aristotle's eudaimonia. According to Seligman, authentic happiness is achieved upon identifying and cultivating one's signature strengths (e.g., curiosity, vitality, gratitude) daily in work, love, and play. Three distinct paths exist. The pleasant path involves experiencing positive emotions about the past (e.g., forgiveness, contentment), present (e.g., joy, ebullience), and future (e.g., optimism, hope). Those following the path of meaning typically report a robust attachment to something larger than themselves and have a strong sense of purpose in life. Finally, individuals traveling along the engaged path often report „being in the zone" or experiencing flow. The „full life" is realized when one is fully engaged on all three paths. Another conceptualization of happiness comes from the work of Ed Diener. Happiness, which he calls subjective well-being, is comprised of three components: a) frequent positive affect; b) infrequent negative affect; and c) high life satisfaction (i.e., the cognitive component). Though related, these three components appear independent.

Author:

Ed, Diener

Reference:

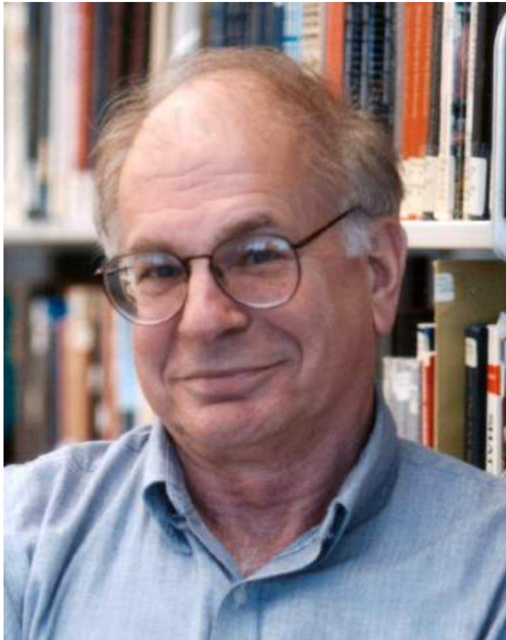
Myers, D. G. & Diener, E. (1995). Who is happy? Psychological Science, 30, 483-498.

Hedonics

Hedonics refers to a branch of psychology that deals with pleasurable and unpleasurable states of consciousness. From ancient Greek „hedone”, meaning pleasure, hedonics constitutes one of the three pillars of positive psychology (the other two are positive traits and positive institutions). The related term hedonism is the doctrine that pleasure is the sole good. Philosophical hedonism claims that pleasure is the moral good, suggesting that the definitive social norm is to provide the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people. Psychological hedonism holds that everyone aims only at pleasure as the ultimate end, and that at any given moment there is an ordering of events along a continuum of hedonic tone ranging from very aversive through neutral, to very desirable. Hedonic tone is often used synonymously with broader constructs, such as like versus dislike, aversive versus desirable, joy versus sorrow, or good versus bad.

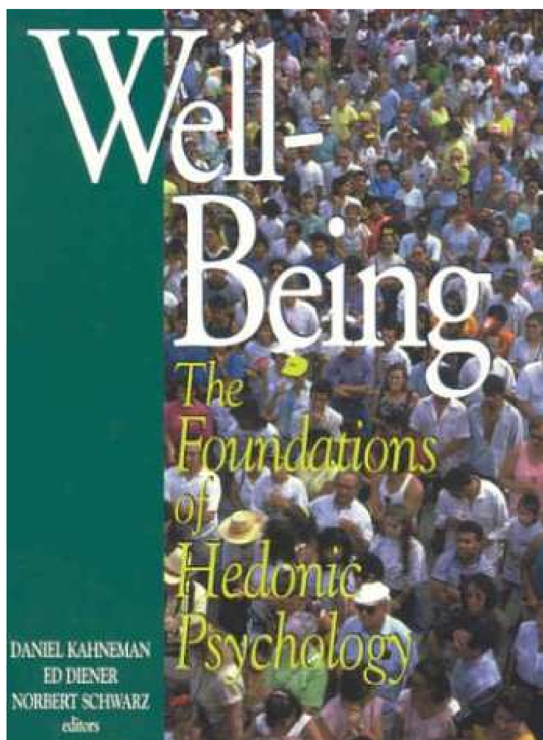
Author:

Kahneman, Daniel.



Reference:

Kahneman, D; Diener, E; & Schwarz, N. (Eds.) (1999). Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology. New York: Russel Sage.



Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction (i.e., cognitive evaluation of one's life based on self-selected standards) is one of the key components of happiness. The concept of happiness has shaped the thinking of some of the most influential writers. Philosophical, religious, and political treatises such as Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Augustine's *The Happy Life*, and even the United States' *Declaration of Independence* contend that the pursuit of happiness is the ultimate goal of human existence, with the attainment of any other goal merely a means to this end. However, inspite of its prominence in the lay literature, scientific study of the nature and determinants of happiness has only recently begun. Collectively, research indicates that happiness is not a unidimensional entity, but rather consists of frequent positive affect (emotions), infrequent negative affect, and life satisfaction. Given that the affective and cognitive elements are related, albeit separable, researchers prefer the term subjective well-being rather than the more colloquially derived term „happiness" to reflect its multidimensional nature. It is also recommended that the components of subjective well-being be investigated separately because they have different correlates. Life satisfaction assessments have been used as part of the evaluation process across a variety of psychosocial, educational, and medical settings. Two of the most frequently administered measures in this regard are the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS), which contains five items and is appropriate for adults, and the *Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (SLSS), which contains seven items and is appropriate for school-age children and adolescents. Both of these global measures yield strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency and solid evidence of construct validity. However, global reports only partially explain variance within specific life domains. Thus, recent studies have incorporated domain-specific measures, which assume a „bottom-up" approach in which analyses of specific domains provide a differentiated analysis of factors that contribute to an individual's overall or general sense of

satisfaction. Domains have been chosen based upon the age of the respondents, weightings of their importance, and the nature of the research question. Examples of multidimensional life satisfaction measures for adults and youth can be found in works by Robert Cummins, Michael Frisch, and Gilman, Heubner, & Buckman. As with global measures, multidimensional life satisfaction measures have demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity across a variety of ages and populations.

Author:

Diener, Ed

Reference:

Diener, E; Emmons, R. A; Larsen, R. J &Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with Life Scale. Journal of Personality Assessment, 49, 71-75.

Well-Being

Hedonistic and eudaimonic traditions in well-being research have evolved from different philosophical and theoretical roots, yet modern day hedonistic (subjective/emotional) and eudaimonic (psychological and social) aspects of well-being appear to be closely related components of psychological functioning. Although these models have previously been presented as competing alternatives, recent theoretical and empirical work has focused on how these three theories and components of well-being complement one another and can be integrated into comprehensive models of flourishing mental health.

To date, the hedonic model of well-being has been the most extensively studied. Hedonic well-being is also commonly referred to as subjective or emotional well-being or happiness. This research tradition was pioneered by Ed Diener, whose seminal review paper in 1984 on subjective well-being proposed a model of well-being focusing on an individual's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. More specifically, Diener and his colleagues have defined hedonic (or subjective) well-being as the frequent experience of pleasant emotions and moods, the infrequent experience of negative emotions and moods, and high levels of self-reported life satisfaction. This model is an extension of the philosophy of hedonism, which identified the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain as the primary goals in life, and is predicated on the belief that individuals are the best judges of their happiness or well-being.

The eudaimonic tradition of well-being focuses on the aspects of human functioning that promote and reflect the pursuit of meaningful life goals. Exemplifying this tradition, Carol Ryff and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin have developed a model of eudaimonic well-being that is intended to provide a holistic and theoretically grounded model of positive functioning. Specifically, Ryff and colleagues have identified six related but distinct factors that are proposed to encompass the eudaimonic idea: autonomy; environmental mastery; personal growth; positive relations with others; purpose in life; and self-acceptance. This

model is an extension of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, which identified the pursuit of one's „daemon", or true self, as the ultimate purpose in life.
Whereas Ryff's model of psychological well-being focuses on primarily private phenomena that reflect the challenges encountered by adults in their private lives, Corey Keyes' model of social well-being focuses on primarily public phenomena that reflect whether individuals are flourishing in their social lives. Specifically, social well-being consists of five factors that represent the extent to which individuals are overcoming social challenges and are functioning well in their social world. The five factors include social acceptance, social actualization, social coherence, social contribution, and social integration. Social well-being can be considered an extension of the eudaimonic tradition of well-being from the intrapersonal focus of Ryff's model to the interpersonal realm.
In addition to exploring the various dimensions of well-being, researchers have recently begun to examine the utility of categorical models of well-being that distinguish between different levels of positive mental health. Two categorical models of well-being have been developed in recent years and found to have preliminary empirical support. The first was developed by Barbara Fredrickson and colleagues and focuses on the ratio of positive to negative emotions that individuals experience. Fredrickson's research indicates that a ratio of more than three positive emotions for each negative emotions is indicative of flourishing mental health, and therefore that these affect ratios can be used to diagnose levels of well-being. The second categorical model of well-being was developed by Keyes. This model distinguishes between flourishing, moderate, and languishing levels of mental health based upon levels of the fourteen factors of well-being that comprise the hedonic, eudaimonic, and social theories of well-being.
One question that is often raised about well-being is to what extent do higher levels of well-being simply reflect life circumstances such as age or income. Surprisingly, these factors

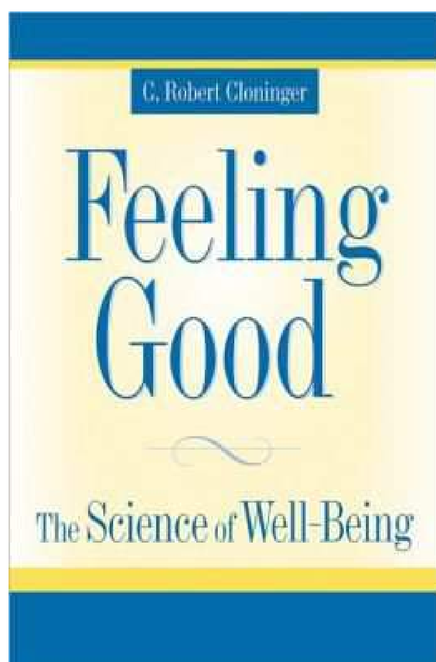
appear to determine only a modest amount of individuals' levels of well-being. A recent review paper by Lyubomirsky and colleagues indicated that demographic variables and life circumstances determine roughly 10 percent of the variance in individual levels of hedonic well-being. This review paper also reviewed research from twin studies, and concluded that roughly half of the variance in hedonic well-being can be explained by genetic factors. Fortunately, the remaining forty percent of the variance in individuals' levels of well-being appears to be dependent on intentional activities, and is therefore subject to change. Psychological factors that appear to be particularly important in promoting adaptive intentional activities include hope, curiosity, optimism, and gratitude.

Author:

Cloninger, C. R

Reference:

Cloninger, C. R. (2004). Feeling Good. The Science of Well-Being. New York: OxfordUniversity Press.



Amusement

Amusement is the positive emotion experienced during play - either physical, rough-and-tumble play, or mental play in the form of games, puzzles and humor. Although they are typically researched separately, a growing body of evidence suggests common features in the emotional aspects of physical and mental play. One central feature is cognitive flexibility – redefining a situation from an alternative perspective. In physical play, this might involve role-taking or inferring another person's perspective in a game. In mental play, this might involve generating alternate possible courses of action, or „getting" the change of perspective suggested by the punchline of a joke. Thus amusement in either context may facilitate creativity, effective problem solving, and skill development.

Awe

A classical definition of awe is Rudolf Otto's formulation of mysterium tremendum in response to an overwhelming Other – the „holy". A scientific model, proposed by Keltner and Haidt, defines awe in terms of perceived vastness and need for accomodation. The former refers to anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self, while the latter is defined as an inability to assimilate an experience into current mental structures. This model, known as the appraisal model, also specifies eliciting situations consisting of social elicitors (such as powerful leaders), physical elicitors (such as a beautiful view), and cognitive elicitors (such as a grand theory). In addition, the variety of awe-related experiences is hypothesized to be determined by five peripheral or „flavoring" features of the eliciting stimuli: threat, beauty, ability, virtue, and the supernatural.

The so-called expanded model of awe adds a further dimension to the appraisal model of Keltner and Haidt. This model claims that in addition to perceived vastness and need for accomodation, the phenomenology of awe entails a self-reflexive, higher-order contemplative consciousness.

Author:

Haidt, Jonathan

Reference:

Keltner, D; & Haidt, J. (2003). Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion. Cognition&Emotion, 17, 297-314

Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions describes the short-term effects of positive emotions on attention, cognition, motivation, and physiological responses, and details how these transient effects produce long-term changes in individuals' personal resources. The theory has three empirically-based premises:

1. Positive emotions broaden the range of thoughts and actions to which people are inclined.
2. This broadened repertoire of thoughts and actions helps build enduring resources.
3. Positive emotions evolved to help build resources rather than focusing exclusively on immediate concerns.

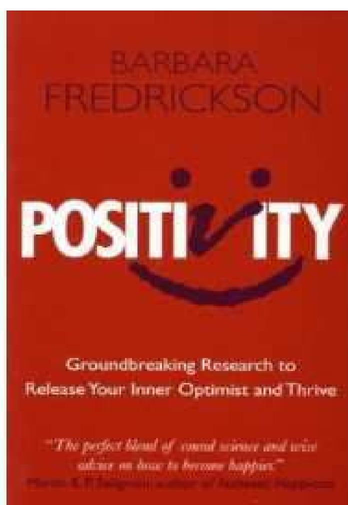
The first and second premises describe a causal link: positive emotions precede and give rise to growth in resources. The third premise offers a framework to help explain why positive emotions lead to broadening and why broadening helps people build resources. This theory was developed by Barbara Fredrickson and her research team at the University of Michigan, combining Fredrickson's own research with existing findings in fields such as perception, resilience, problem-solving, and emotional appraisal. Fredrickson's early work on the broaden-and-build theory was awarded the Templeton Positive Psychology Prize in 2000. The most recent review of the theory, including a broad range of empirical support, is the chapter by Cohn and Fredrickson in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2nd ed.).

Author:

Fredrickson, Barbara

Reference:

Fredrickson, B. (2009). Positivity. New York: Hudson Street Press.



Compassion

In recent literature, compassion has been defined as being moved by the suffering of others such that one desires to relieve or make bearable that suffering. Compassion, at its core, is a social and relational emotion, based on a sense of connectedness and concern with the prevention, alleviation or elimination of suffering in others.Compassion not only involves being able to notice, feel and respond to another’s suffering but is necessarily undergirded by a feeling of connectedness with others. An operationalized definition of compassion is therefore proposed: compassion is a relational and interpersonal process arising from a sense of interconnectedness which promotes an awareness of, and an emotional reaction to, another’s suffering, leading to an intentional response to assuage or make bearable that suffering. Preliminary findings on compassion indicate that it may be related to positive psychological and physical outcomes as well as prosocial behavior and positive socialization. As a powerful motivation for individual transformation and societal action, compassion is therefore a crucial emotion that merits further study.
Put more succinctly, compassion stems from a feeling of connectedness with others which makes it possible for one to notice, feel and respond to the suffering of others with care and concern.

Contentment

Contentment is a form of pleasant affect involving tranquility and serenity. It is an emotional response that tends to arise under conditions that include high certainty and low effort, and thus, is akin to the relief or mild joy one might experience in response to feeling safe and cared for. Contentment has traditionally been conceptualized as an aspect of the broader constructs of subjective well-being and happiness. Within this conceptualization, contentment is viewed as the positive affective basis, along with joy, for more global well-being; one's experience of positive emotions (including contentment) contributes to one's subjective appraisal of happiness.

Contentment is unique in that it is associated with only mild activation, thus, it provides the opportunity not only to regulate the experience of negative emotions, but also to savor the present moment and to integrate one's current circumstances in a way that broadens one's conception of self, thereby leading to the potential for an improved mindset with regard to self and the world. In fact, Fredrickson suggests that contentment may provide the basis for interventions based on relaxation techniques to reduce stress. She argues that relaxation and meditation practices are based on the experience of contentment, which promotes mindfulness, savoring, appreciation and awareness, which work to decrease negative emotions and increase well-being.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is thought of as engagement in a challenging experience that either includes or results in a positive affective state. Enjoyment is often considered synonymous with pleasure in much existing research and literature, but Csíkszentmihályi provides an important distinction between the two. He purports that pleasure is the feeling of contentment achieved when biological or social needs have been met, whereas enjoyment is characterized by forward movement that accomplishes something novel or challenging, resulting in a growth experience. Borrowing from Deci and Ryan's work on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, this optimal growth experience becomes an enjoyable activity that is done regardless of future benefits, because doing it is in itself a reward.

Hope

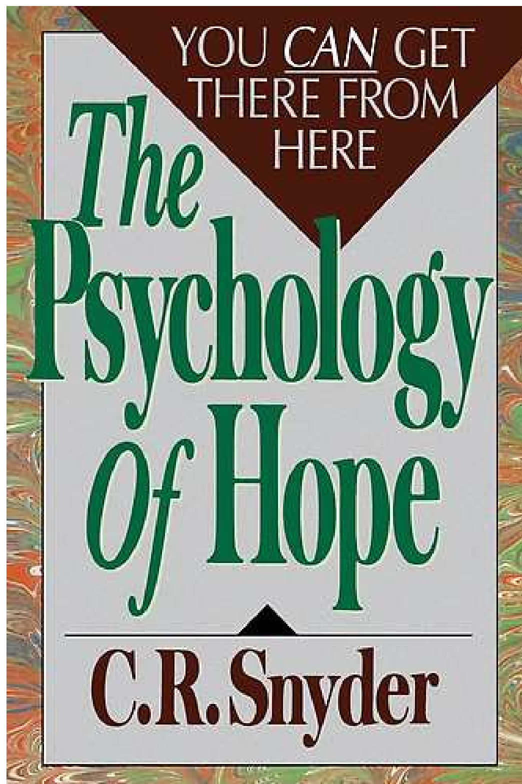
Since the 1900s social scientists have attempted to describe, measure, and study hope in various ways, and this construct has been conceptualized as expectations or feelings about goals or the future. Some conceptions of hope see the construct as an emotion that allows individuals to sustain belief during challenging times. While popular literature has generally portrayed this affective view of hope, most research has been conducted about models of hope that are more cognitive in nature. For example, Averill and colleagues described hope as an emotion that was guided by cognitions and influenced by environmental conditions. Stotland and Gottschalk each described hope as expectancies about reaching goals, with Stotland emphasizing the importance and probability of achieving goals, and Gottschalk describing a positive force that propels individuals to work through difficult circumstances. Similarly, Staats viewed hope as an expectancy which interacts with wishes to weigh the possibility and affect connected to the achievement of goals.

The theory of hope developed by C.R. Snyder and his colleagues over the past 20 years has received much attention both within and outside the field of psychology. In his seminal book, The Psychology of Hope, published in 1994, Snyder outlined his theory and early research efforts to understand hope more fully. Similar to previous theories, this conceptualization of hope is primarily cognitive in nature, though the theory evolved to include emotions as well. Snyder and colleagues described hope as a motivational state based on goals, pathways, and agency goal-directed thinking.

Author:

Snyder, C. R.

Reference:



Joy

Joy is a pleasant and often quite intense emotion which usually occurs within a safe and secure environment and is experienced bodily as a warm glow which emerges from the center of the body and moves upward and outward. The expansive feeling of joy is accompanied by a corresponding broadening of perception, a powerful sense of connection to others, a profound feeling of being rooted in the present moment, a sense of existential freedom, and/or the belief that the world is nurturing, life-affirming, and benevolent. Dimensional approaches to emotion identify joy as having the characteristics of positive valence and high arousal. Joy and subjective well-being (SWB) share the characteristic of positive valence, however the construct of SWB does not imply any particular level of arousal, neither in the short term, nor over an extended period of time. By way of comparison, a relaxed state is also characterized by positive valence, but possesses a low state of arousal. On the dimension of valence, joy and relaxation can be further distinguished from negatively valenced emotions such as depression and fear, which can be discriminated from each other by their respective low and high states of arousal. Theoreticians who consider emotions to be discrete rather than dimensional have identified joy to be one of the basic emotions. Basic emotions are those emotional states that are considered to be primary because they tend to be universal within the species, likely evolved to serve particular survival functions, and have been found to appear very early in development. In addition, the basic emotions usually elicit a set of species-typical behavioral patterns (e.g., facial expressions) that can be universally identified and are not easily modified by learning, history, and social context.

Pleasure

Pleasure is a term used to describe a range of positive affective, emotional, and physical sensations. Pleasure is a major component of the field of positive psychology, as it encompasses the essence of what is associated with positive functioning. The aspect of pleasure as it relates to positive functioning, describes a niche of how we interpret and understand positive functioning.

The historical context from which pleasure is most notably recognized is from the writing of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. In his writings and discussions of human behavior, he wrote about the „pleasure principle". Freud explained the pleasure principle as the motivating force in human behavior, the need for immediate gratification of pleasure and avoidance of pain. Today, the term „hedonism" indicating that pleasure is the sole purpose in life, would be analogous to Freud's pleasure principle. The definition of pleasure, however, has broadened since its usage by Freud to include things other than a behavioral reaction and has taken on a general descriptor of something that is positive or good.

As the research and understanding into human strengths and positive emotions expands so does the subjective understanding of pleasure. Pleasure, at its widest definition, can be described as an umbrella term to describe positive emotions and sensations. Although pleasure encapsulates a number of descriptors, it can be viewed as being on a continuum of positive emotions in which pleasure is close to an extreme form of happiness.

In short, pelasure can be described as an emotional reaction to an event, thus current research is focused on pleasure being segmented into two categories, one being the biological basis and reactions of pleasure, and the other category being pleasure as it relates to other variables. The research into the biological basis of pleasure looks at the concept at a neurochemical level, attempting to understand how we respond neurologically to pleasure. This type of research seems to be working towards making the mind-body connection a more concrete idea,

allowing a greater understanding of the physical response of pleasure on a microlevel. The other category of current research on pleasure aims to understand the circumstance in which pleasure is evoked and how that can impact other areas of functioning. Pleasure in and of itself is not an isolated concept and is more of a response to stimuli. The other arm of research looks at pleasure from its relationship to other variables. Pleasure and such items as food intake, health behaviors (i.e. exercise, smoking, and sex for example) motivation, risk taking, and learning are some of the current focuses of research.

Positive Emotions

Positive emotions are brief experiences that feel good in the present and increase the chances that one will feel good in the future. They seem to be essential ingredients in the recipe of living a good life. Understanding positive emotions is a core objective of positive psychology. Thanks largely to Isen and Fredrickson, empirical evidence supporting the role of positive emotions in promoting personal growth and development is accumulating. By increasing our thought-action repertoires (i.e., by broadening our cognitive and behavioral flexibility and options) and subsequently engendering physical, intellectual, and social resources, positive emotions improve coping and thus build resilience. Resiliency, in turn, predicts future occurrences of positive emotions. With positive emotions demonstrating such robust relationships to goal-achievement, physical and mental health, and other positive outcomes, it makes sense for psychology to further the understanding of positive emotions.

In her seminal article, What Good Are Positive Emotions?, Fredrickson suggested that positive emotions receive less attention than negative emotions for several possible reasons. First, compared to negative emotions, positive emotions are limited in quantity. The English language reflects this disparity. More words exist describing negative emotions relative to positive ones. Positive emotions, compared with negative ones, also don't have distinctive facial expression or autonomic responses.

Second, some argue that psychology wears problem-focused lenses: it focuses on the negative. Although aiming to reduce negative emotions is an integral part of treatment, it may be insufficient for facilitating positive emotions, especially since some suggest that negative and positive emotions operate independently.

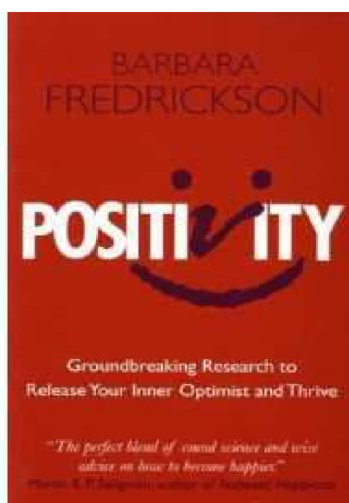
Finally, emotion theorists have aimed to appreciate emotions in general. Emotion specific models largely reflecting prototypic emotions (e.g., anger, fear) have thus developed. But understanding anger doesn't necessarily lead to a greater understanding of joy, hope, or

gratitude. A single general-purpose model of emotions inadequately describes positive emotions. This realization sparked Fredrickson to develop her broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Negative emotions narrow our focus and restrict our behavioral range. Fredrickson argued that positive emotions yield nonspecific action tendencies beyond physical action. She proposed that positive emotions generate broad thought-action repertoires that ultimately build enduring physical, intellectual, and social resources.

Author: Fredrickson, Barbara

Reference:

Fredrickson, B. (2009). Positivity. New York: Hudson Street Press.



Vigor

Vigor has been studied primarily as a mood state. In past research, vigor has been conceptualized as reflecting one form of energy – physical strength. This is in contrast to the current focus on vigor as an affective experience at work reflecting three interrelated forms of energetic resources. Thus, vigor is seen as a composite variable, comprised of three components, namely one's feelings concerning one's: 1) physical strength; 2) emotional energy; and 3) cognitive liveliness. Theoretically, this view of vigor is derived from Hobfoll's conservation of resources (COR) theory, according to which people are motivated to obtain, retain, and protect their resources, which can be material, social, or energetic. The concept of vigor relates to physical, emotional, and cognitive energetic resources for several reasons. The first follows from the COR theory argument that personal resources are closely interrelated and that the expansion of one is associated with the others being augmented. The second reason is that these components represent the three most salient domains of energy that humans possess: physical, emotional (relating specifically to one's interpersonal interactions with others and one's feeling capable of expressing empathy and sympathy to others), and cognitive (relating to one's feelings concerning one's capability of generating ideas, his/her vital thought processes, etc).

A construct that overlaps to a certain extent with vigor is that of vitality, conceptualized by Ryan and Fredrick as referring to the subjective experience of being full of energy, alert, and alive or vital. It overlaps in that both vigor and vitality refer to one's feeling energetic as reflecting one's internal resources and as unrelated to specific stimuli in one's environment. Vitality includes also the components of feeling alive and vital and of feeling awake and alert. Future research on the vitality measure has yet to test the possibility that the vitality measure actually represented two different dimension, vigor and vitality, respectively.

Vitality

Vitality refers to a state of organismic well-being in which individuals feel energetic, alert, and fully alive. Various researchers have provided measures of this concept. Richard Ryan and his colleagues have assessed subjective vitality in terms of dynamic energy that emanates from the self and is relatively free from tenseness, jitteriness, or anger. For them, vitality represents a feeling of aliveness that is affected by both physical (e.g., health, fatigue) and psychological conditions. Robert Thayer described a similar construct, termed „calm energy", which requires the experience of liveliness that is free of tension and pressure. As such, vitality is associated with a number of positive emotions, including feelings of joy, interest, and enthusiasm as well as physical health and improved physical functioning. Although vitality relates to positive affect, the state is differentiated from happiness or subjective well-being in that it consists of higher levels of experienced activation or energy, as well as positive affect.

Ryan, Ken Sheldon, Tim Kasser, and Robert Emmons have found that integrated, self-congruent individuals experience higher vitality. State levels of vitality may also be experienced when one acts autonomously or in a self-congruent fashion, or experiences a sense of competence. Furthermore, individuals experience greater vitality when engaging in intrinsic pursuits. Experimental data presented by Glen Nix and his colleagues show that succeeding at an activity for which one feels pressured leads to increased happiness but not vitality, but that succeeding at an activity autonomously undertaken leads to increases in both. Thayer's lab also shows that ego involvement has similar effects to those of pressure, ultimately leading to greater losses in vitality. Research by Harry Reis and colleagues provides further support for the importance of psychological well-being in freeing up vitalizing energy, showing that on days in which individuals experience greater autonomy, relatedness to others, and competence, they also experienced greater vitality. Along similar

lines, Roy Baumeister and his colleagues have viewed energy as a limited resource, and emphasized the role of self-control in depleting this resource. Baumeister and his colleagues have shown that extending self-control in an effort to attain difficult goals depletes energy resources, effectively reducing levels of vitality.

Experience Sampling Method

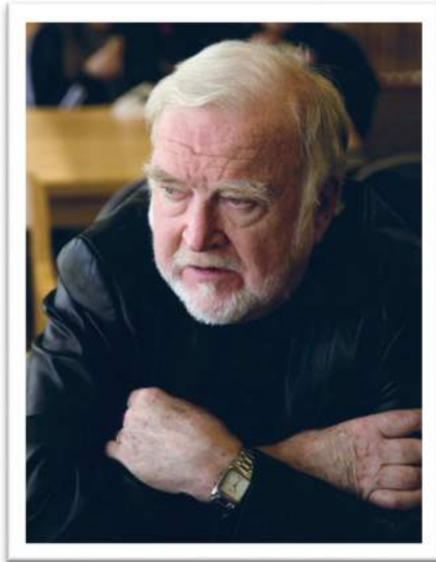
Experience Sampling Method (ESM) is a quasi-naturalistic method that involves signaling research participants at repeated times throughout the day and asking them to report on the nature and quality of their experience. The method has been applied to study an array of psychological phenomena that include research into behaviors, emotional experience, interpersonal processes, personality, physical symptoms, and physiological responses. Experience-sampling procedures stand in contrast to standard self-report procedures, such as traditional questionnaire and diary methods. Although a form of self-report, ESMs do not rely on the need for respondent retrospection or memory, people report what is presently occurring. This is often called a „momentary experience" (e.g., „How do you feel right now?"). Well-designed ESM studies can answer questions regarding aggregates of experiences over time, temporal patterns of experiences, and the factors affecting changes in these experiences. For each type of question, ESM studies can provide information about the average person, between person variability, and predictors and determinants of this variability.

Flow

Flow is a subjective state people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself. It is what one feels when reading a good novel, or playing a good game of tennis, or when having a stimulating conversation. The defining feature of flow is intense experiential involvement in moment-to-moment activity, which can be either physical or mental. Attention is fully invested in the task at hand, and the person functions at his or her fullest capacity. It is a state often reported by athletes and artists, but also by people involved in everyday activities. This concept emerged in the late 1960s as a result of a series of studies of what were initially called autotelic activities; that is, things people did for the sheer sake of doing, without expectation of any subsequent reward or outcome.
The initial question was: why do people perform time-consuming, difficult, and often dangerous activities for which they receive no discernible extrinsic rewards? This was the question that originally prompted a program of research that involved extensive interviews with hundreds of rock climbers, chess players, athletes, and artists. The basic conclusion was that in all the various groups studied, the respondents reported a very similar subjective experience that was so enjoyable that they were willing to go to great lengths to experience it again. This was eventually called the flow experience, because in describing how it felt when the activitiy was going well, several respondents used the metaphor of a stream or a current that carried them along effortlessly. The intense experiential involvement of flow results in three additional characteristics commonly reported: the merging of action and awareness; a sense of control; and an altered sense of time.

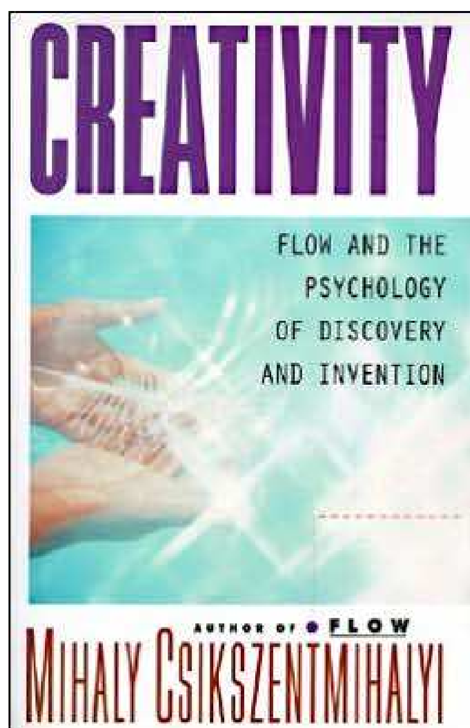
Author:

Csíkszentmihályi Mihály



Reference:

Csíkszentmihályi, M. (1996). Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. New York: Harper Collins.

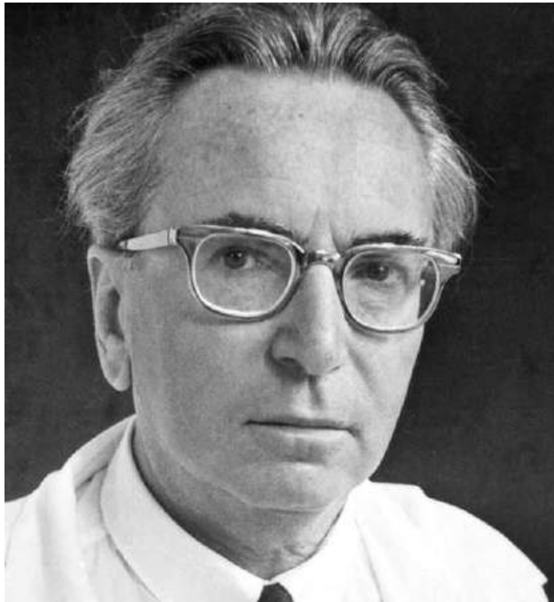


Meaning

Meaning in life research has focused overwhelmingly on asking people whether their lives are meaningful or meaningless. This dimension of meaning in life is referred to as the *presence of meaning in life*, which has been defined as „the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or over-arching aim in life" (Steger, in press). The search for meaning in life refers to people's desire and efforts to establish and/or augment their understanding of the meaning, significance, and purpose of their lives. The presence of and the search for meaning are empirically and theoretically distinct constructs.

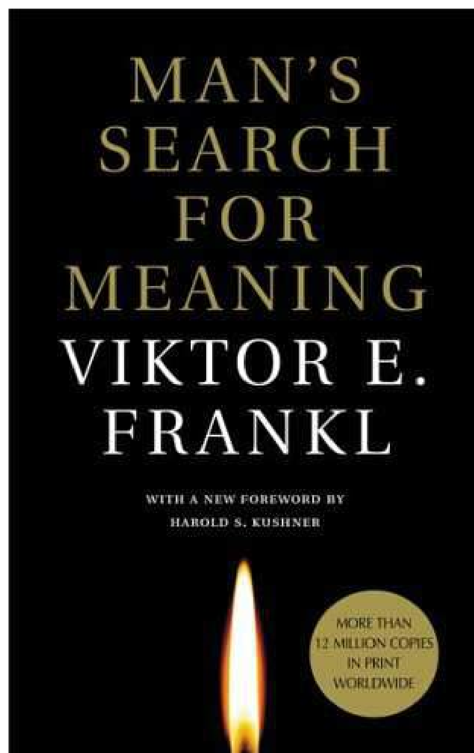
Author:

Viktor, Frankl



Reference:

Viktor E. Frankl: Man's search for meaning.



Positive experiences

Positive experiences are most clearly identified as positive events which occur to people in the course of their daily lives. Several distinctive areas of theory and research concerning this concept have become joined in the positive psychology framework. One important tradition within positive psychology is the research by Csíkszentmihályi and colleagues. Based on their work on positive and optimal experiences they have developed what is called the Flow theory. Flow is a concept that refers to a state of optimal experience with total absorption in the task at hand. Flow enhances positive feelings when the person's experience becomes so concentrated that other concerns are eliminated, and attention is focused on the event and the positive feelings that result from such complete focus.
A second development by Diener and colleagues has focused on the measurement of well-being. They have investigated what is called subjective well-being (SWB) measurement, defined broadly as people's cognitive and affective evaluation of their lives. Their assessments of SWB have even extended to cross-national comparisons of levels of SWB in various countries. Their research has shown that events involved in, for example, positive social relationships and economic status are central to SWB. In overview, it is a hallmark of these research areas to emphasize the dynamics between the person and their environment. Environmental events and the person's cognitive and emotional reactions to them are central components of an integrative model of health and well-being.

Purpose in Life

Many theories of purpose in life have been developed. Viktor Frankl was one of the first to develop a psychological theory of meaning. At the core of his theory, called Logotherapy, is the „will to meaning” – the universal drive toward life meaning – which, when frustrated, can lead to mental illness. Based partially on his experience as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, however, Frankl observed that life can have meaning in any situation. People find meaning through acting on three types of values: 1) creative values (by creating or producing something); 2) experiential values (by experiencing something, especially love); and 3) attitudinal values (through the attitude one takes to situations).

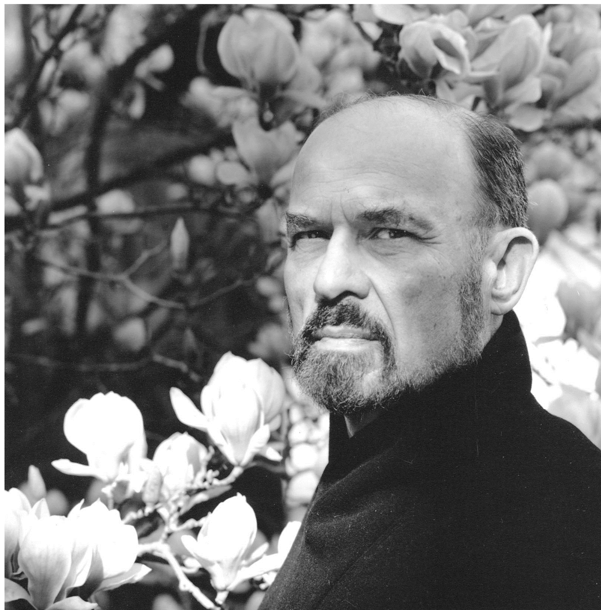
A second approach to purpose, the sense of coherence, was developed by Anton Antonovsky. Believed to serve as a stress buffer preserving psychological and physical well-being, the sense of coherence consists of three components. First, people must comprehend how their environments function. Second, people must believe that they can manage those environments so as to achieve their desires. Last, as people cope with the demands of their environments, they must believe that they do so for meaningful or worthy ends.

A third approach to purpose is terror management theory. Developed by Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldon Solomon based on the work of Ernest Becker, this theory conceptualizes meaning as linked with culture and self-esteem. The theory begins with the premise that, as human beings, we must ultimately die – a prospect that could engender great anxiety. To avoid this, people cling to their cultural worldviews, most of which promise potential immortality. Through Christian culture, for instance, people who live up to cultural standards are promised immortality in heaven. Likewise, secular culture promises symbolic immortality in such forms as monuments, works of art, and children. When people meet cultural standards, they feel increased self-esteem and thereby are buffered against death anxiety. Terror management theory represents an important development, as it acknowledges

the centrality of culture in meaning.
Roy Baumeister has developed a fourth theory that integrates concepts cutting across various other theories of meaning. He posits four needs for meaning. Notably, the first need is for purpose. That is, people have a need to see their current activities „in relation to future or positive states” or goals (Baumeister, 1991, p. 32). The second need, for value, consists of people’s desire to see their actions as right, good, or justifiable. Third, people have a need for efficacy, for a sense that they have control over events. Last, people have a need for self-worth; that is, they desire to see themselves as having positive value. Baumeister believes that when these needs are satisfied, a sense of meaning ensues.

Authors:

Yalom, I.



Baumeister, R. F.

References:

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). Meaning of life. New York: Guilford.

Yalom, I. (1980). Esistential Psychotherapy. New York: Basic Books

Spiritual Well-being

It has become common in psychology and related fields to differentiate between spirituality and religion as related but distinct concepts. Spirituality often refers to feelings, beliefs, values, experiences, and behaviors that concern the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfilling relationships in the context of a person's understanding of that which is ultimate, sacred, or of fundamental life significance. Religion involves the expression of spirituality through participation in organized communities and traditions that share these ultimate concerns. For example, the positive psychologists Snyder and Lopez (2007, p. 262) define spirituality as, „the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that fuel and arise from the search for the sacred". In such formulations, spirituality may be expressed in religious and/or nonreligious ways.

Similar distinctions impact operationalization of spiritual well-being in tools for measurement research and clinical diagnosis and assessment. For example, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, developed by Craig Ellison and Raymond Paloutzian, includes 10 items each for existential well-being (i.e., related to a person's level of life perspective, meaning, and purpose) and religious well-being (i.e., view of God and sense of positive relationship with God). The concept „religious" is distinguished here by belief in God or a higher power. The more extensive Spiritual Well-being Questionnaire, developed by David Moberg, addresses beliefs and attitudes, social activities, feelings about life, religious activities and identity. Various items relate to the theme of meaning and purpose while others relate to specifically religious issues. Some items use Christian terms. The more recent Spirituality Index of Well-Being (developed by Timothy Daaleman and Bruce Fey) focuses on self-assessments of insight, ability to solve problems, and sense of purpose and meaning in life. There are numerous other instruments dealing with religious and spiritual beliefs, behaviors, values, and coping practices that are relevant to spiritual well-being. Two helpful compendia with critical reviews

are: *Measures of Religiosity* edited by Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood, and *Handbook of Religion and Health* by Harold Koenig, Michael McCullough, and David B. Larson. The variability of terms, definitions, and measures can create confusion. But care can be taken to make these clear in each study, in comparative or meta-analytical studies, and in clinical tools. Perhaps the most commonly used features of the concept of spiritual well-being are: positive sense of meaning and purpose in life. Some instruments focus exclusively on this, while some include relatedness with the sacred, transcendence, and a general sense of positive connectedness. Some scholars prefer a broad conceptualization, without reference to religion or sacredness, in order to be widely applicable. Other scholars believe that a conceptualization is vacuous without reference to particular religious contexts or at least the dimension of sacredness.

Reference:

Hill, P. C; Pargament, K. I; Hood, R. W; Mccullough, M. E; Swyers, J. P; Larson, D. B; & Zinnbauer, B. J. (2000). Conceptualizing religion and spirituality: Points of commonality, points of departure. Journal for the theory for social behavior, 30, 51-77.

III. Positive psychology in clinical health psychology.

Benefit Finding

Benefit finding refers to an individual's perception that major positive changes have occurred as a result of challenging life events such as major illness or trauma. After such negative experiences some people report a new appreciation of their strength and resilience. Other people may feel that their relationships are stronger and that they feel emotionally closer to others, especially family and friends. Yet others report that they have become more compassionate or altruistic. Life philosophies may also change. Some people cite an enhanced appreciation of „the little things in life" and redirected priorities. Finally, some individuals note a new openness to spiritual experience or religious activities. Succinctly, benefit finding is akin to the adage: when life hands you lemons, make lemonade. Benefit finding following adverse life events has been described by many authors, with little consensus in terminology. Posttraumatic growth, stress-related growth, found meaning, experienced meaning, meaning as outcome, cognitive adaptation, perceived benefits, self-transcendence, positive sequelae, and thriving are among the many terms applied to this concept.

Author:

Nolen-Hoeksema, Susan

Reference:

Nolen-Hoeksema, S;& Davis, C. G. (2002). Positive responses to loss: Perceiving benefits and growth. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), Handbook of positive psychology (pp. 598-607). New York: OxfordUniversity Press.

Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic growth refers to the constellation of positive changes that people may experience following a trauma or other stressful event. The term was introduced by Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in 1995, in the context of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, a self-report assessment of the construct that was first presented in their book *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*. Conceptually, posttraumatic growth is described as consisting of three broad dimensions. First, people often report that their relationships are enhanced in some way, for example that they now value their friends and family more, and feel an increased compassion and altruism toward others. Second, survivors change their views of themselves in some way, for example that they have a greater sense of personal resiliency and strength, perhaps couple with a greater acceptance of their vulnerabilities and limitations. Third, there are often reports of changes in life philosophy, for example survivors report finding a fresh appreciation for each new day, and renegotiating what really matters to them in the full realization that their life is finite. Unlike resilience, which connotes a stability of functioning in the face of adversity, posttraumatic growth refers to a nonnormative positive shift in functioning, and has been likened to using the traumatic experience as a springboard or trampoline to achieve a higher level of posttrauma functioning than existed at the pretrauma baseline.

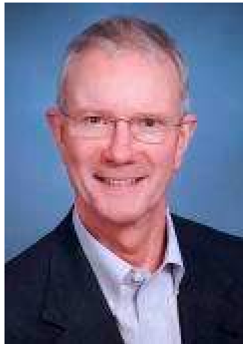
While the term posttraumatic growth is the most widely used label for this phenomenon, a number of other terms have been developed and are often used interchangeably. These include: stress-related growth, adversarial growth, positive adaptation, positive changes, positive by-products, benefit finding, perceived benefits, thriving, flourishing, and growth following adversity. Importantly, posttraumatic growth does not require the presence of a DSM-IV Criterion A traumatic stressor for the use of the term to be considered appropriate. Posttraumatic growth is considered a much more normative and dimensional phenomenon

than posttraumatic stress disorder, which, coming from a medical model perspective, requires the presence of a specifically defined traumatic stressor before a diagnosis can be made. In contrast, posttraumatic growth is considered a more normative developmental experience, and as such may be reported following apparently minor difficulties and stresses, and not just major traumatic events.

Building on positive psychological perspectives and the person centered approach, Stephen Joseph and Alex Linley developed the organismic valuing theory of growth following adversity. The organismic valuing process (OVP) refers to people's innate ability to know what is important to them and what is essential for a fulfilling life, based on the view that human beings can be relied on through their psychological processes to know what they need from the environment and what is right for them to grow and develop. As with the functional-descriptive model, the confrontation with an adverse event has a shattering effect on the person's assumptive world, and following the completion tendency there is a need to integrate the new trauma-related information. The completion principle is the foundation of a number of cognitive-emotional processing models in the posttraumatic stress literature, and within the organismic valuing theory, the completion principle is viewed as an aspect of the OVP. Organismic valuing theory posits that when the social environment is able to provide for the basic human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, then growth will be promoted. The theory holds that it is human nature to modify existing models of the world to positively accommodate new trauma-related information when the social environment provides the basic nutrients for growth; however, the social environment does not always provide these, and as such people may assimilate or negatively accommodate the trauma-related information.

Authors:

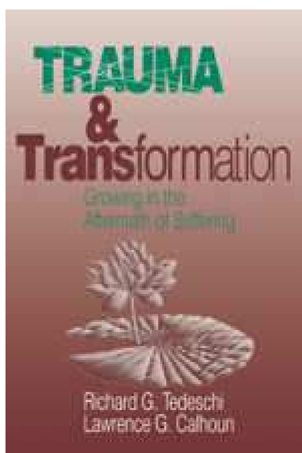
Calhoun, L. G



Tedeschi, R. G.

Reference:

Tedeschi, R. G; Calhoun, L G. (1995) Trauma and transformation. Growing in the aftermath of suffering. Sage, Thousands Oaks.



Positive Affectivity

Positive affectivity is a trait that refers to stable individual differences in the experience of positive emotions and active engagement with one's surroundings. Along with negative affectivity (the parallel tendency to experience negative emotions), positive affectivity is one of the two basic dimensions that define long-term affective experiences. Individuals who are high in positive affectivity tend to be cheerful, enthusiastic, energetic, confident, and alert. In contrast, those who are low in positive affectivity tend to experience lower levels of happiness, excitement, vigor, and confidence. Positive affectivity is a moderately stable trait over time and individuals tend to report consistent levels across different situations, such as being alone, interacting with others, or working.

Positive and negative affectivity are relatively independent of one another, which means that they can occur in a widely varying range of combinations (e.g., an individual can be high in both traits or low in both traits). They may be seen as the subjective components of larger biobehavioral systems that have evolved to promote the survival of animals. Positive affectivity is related to the behavioral facilitation system, an approach system that directs organisms towards rewarding and pleasurable situations, such as food, shelter, and sex. This system is linked primarily to dopamine activity and the level of resting activity in the left prefrontal cortex. In contrast, negative affectivity is related to the behavioral inhibition system, which protects organisms by encouraging the cessation of actions that may result in injury or death. The behavioral inhibition system is associated with activity in the right frontal cortex.

Author:

Watson, D

Reference:

Watson, D. (2002). Positive affectivity. The disposition to experience pleasurable emotional states. In: Snyder, C. R; Lopez, S. J. (Eds.). Handbookof Positive Psychology. New York, Oxford University Press, 106-119.o

Optimism

Optimists are people who expect good things to happen to them, pessimists are people who expect bad things to happen to them. Optimists and pessimists differ in ways that have a big impact on their lives. They differ in how they approach problems, and they differ in the manner – an success – with which they cope with adversity. These differences have important implications for their psychological and physical well-being. Research on the effects of optimism has flourished over the past 20 years. This research has taken several different routes to assessing optimism, leading to somewhat distinct literatures. One approach measures expectancies directly. Some researchers who take this approach ask respondents about their expectancies in specific situations, trying to sample from as many domains of life as possible. Another approach to assessing generalized optimism derives from work on attributional style. The idea behind this approach is that people's expectations for the future stem from their interpretations of the past. Explaining bad outcomes in terms of causes that persist into the future and influence a broad range of events implies pessimism. This explanation carries the implication that negative outcomes will continue to occur in the future. The opposite attributional style, explaining negative events in terms of causes that are more time limited and narrower in their effects, implies a more optimistic orientation. Historically, researchers have viewed optimism and pessimism as comprising of a single, bipolar dimension. From this perspective, pessimism is simply the opposite of optimism. Most people working in the field still construe optimism and pessimism in this fashion, and analyze their studies accordingly. However, a growing number of researchers are exploring the possibility that optimism and pessimism are somewhat distinct constructs. This view is consistent with the fact that scales of generalized optimism are often shown to be comprised by two separate components – one measuring the person's expectancies for positive

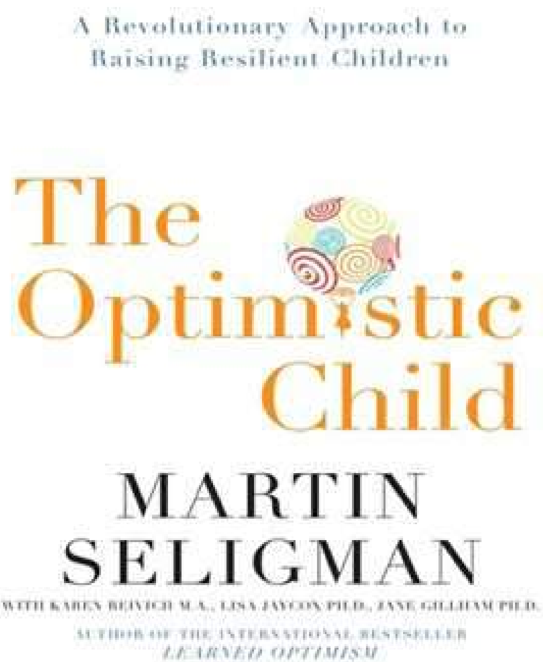
outcomes, and one measuring the person's expectancies for negative outcomes. It remains unclear how questions involving the structure of optimism and pessimism will be resolved.

Author:

Seligman, Martin

Reference:

Seligman, M. (1996) The optimistic child. New York: Houghton Mifflin

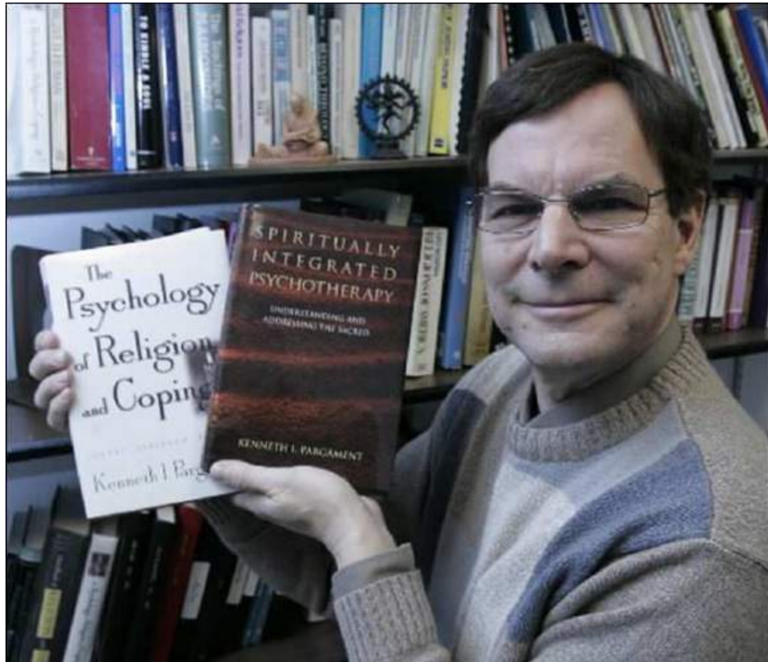


Spirituality

The term „spirituality" comes from the word „spirit" (to breathe) and there is general agreement that spirituality is a living, dynamic process that is oriented around whatever the individual may hold sacred. The „sacred" refers to concepts of God and transcendent reality as well as other aspects of life that take on divine character and significance by virtue of their association with the holy. Thus, the sacred can encompass material objects (e.g., crucifix, American flag), special times (e.g., the Sabbath, birth and death), special places (e.g., cathedral, the outdoors), relationships (e.g., marriage, parenting), and psychological attributes (e.g., soul, virtues). Spirituality can be defined as a search for the sacred, that is, an attempt to discover and hold onto the sacred and, when necessary, transform the sacred.
The experience of sacredness is accompanied by a sense of transcendence (i.e., being connected to something that goes beyond oneself), boundlessness (i.e., infinite time and space), and ultimacy (i.e., being in touch with what is „really real"). Theologian Rudolf Otto noted that the idea of the divine is often accompanied by a mysterium, a complex of feelings of attraction (e.g., love, adoration, gratitude) and repulsion (e.g., repulsion, fear, dread). More recently, researchers have linked perceptions of the sacred to a variety of emotion-based responses, including peak experiences, mystical experiences, and feelings of responsibility, duty, humility, awe, elevation, and uplift.

Author:

Kenneth I. Pargament



Forgiveness

Forgiveness is – from a psychological perspective – a multidimensional process involving cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social features. Forgiveness is often an unfolding process that over time partially or totally eclipses unforgiving motivation such as revenge or avoidance, and unforgiving emotions such as bitterness and fear. This transformation is often achieved by fostering positive thoughts (e.g., focusing on the offender's humanity rather than defining him or her in terms of the offense; she is a person who lied in this situation rather than merely a liar) and positive emotions such as compassion and mercy toward the offender. Forgiveness can be an expression of altruism, or other-focused care. Ironically, this form of love can only emerge when the giver has first suffered harm from a blameworthy offender. Granting forgiveness begins with blaming someone for a moral violation that caused suffering or other psychological, physical, or material losses (e.g., loss of self-esteem, relationships, opportunities, health, or damaged property). While taking seriously the importance of justice to adequately take care of the victim, community, and offender – and only after ensuring the victim's emotional, physical and spiritual safety – forgiveness is a moral response from a victim that seeks to overcome injustice with goodness. Forgiveness involves cultivating positive, prosocial responses (e.g., empathy, compassion, and the desire for genuine and ultimate good) for the offender so that they eventually edge out the hurt and bitter emotional responses of unforgiveness. In short, forgiveness responds to harm with rooted hope.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the feeling of involvement and engagement. It is an active state of mind that is achieved by simply noticing new things. It doesn't matter how smart or silly the distinctions are, just that they are novel. By actively drawing novel distinctions we become situated in the present, sensitive to context and perspective.
Much of the time we are mindless yet thirty years of research reveals that mindfully noticing new things results in nursing home residents living longer; students learning better; and results in more intelligent and creative products, and positive affect, to name a few of the findings. Moreover, in our most recent research we have found that dolphins, children and adults are more attracted to people when they are mindful. Thus it may be the essence of charisma. Research also has shown that the more distinctions we draw, the more we like the target of our mindfulness and the more we remember about it. It can even be recognized in the products we produce.

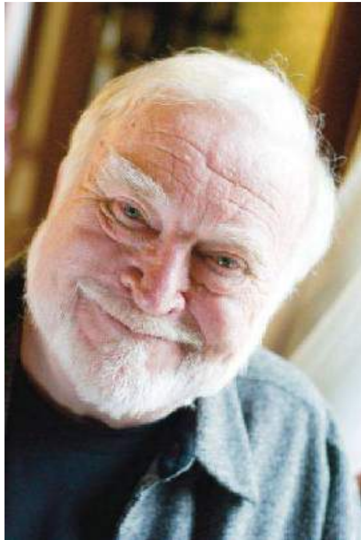
IV. Theories and measuring alternatives of emotional intelligence, creativity, wisdom and mindfulness.

Creativity

Although most scholars agree upon such aspects of creativity as originality, appropriateness, and the production of works of value to society, there is little agreement about the specifics, making it very difficult to research this concept. Two major forms of creativity are recognized, labeled by researchers as „little-c" creativity, which is creative everyday decisions and behaviors, and „big-c" Creativity, which is the kind that changes an entire domain. As many as sixty definitions can be found in the literature of psychology. Most current theories of creativity attempt to describe the persons, processes, products, and social systems that bring creative products to light. Robert Sternberg, a psychologist who writes about creativity and intelligence, believes that the former should not be considered outside its social context. For example, he likens successful creativity to the economic process of „buy low and sell high;" that is, creative people may invest in an idea that initially holds little interest for others, develop it, then disseminate that idea for great reward and reknown. He describes a dialectic that exists among intelligence, wisdom, and creativity, where intelligence advances existing societal agendas, creativity questions them and proposes new ones, and wisdom balances the old with the new. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi proposed a systems model of creativity that included the creative domain, which is the symbolic knowledge that is shared by a particular culture or humanity as a whole; the field, which includes the teachers, mentors, critics, and leaders as gatekeepers, and the individual, who uses the symbols of the given domain to create a new idea, submits it to the gatekeepers, and may receive recognition for the appropriateness or novelty of the idea.

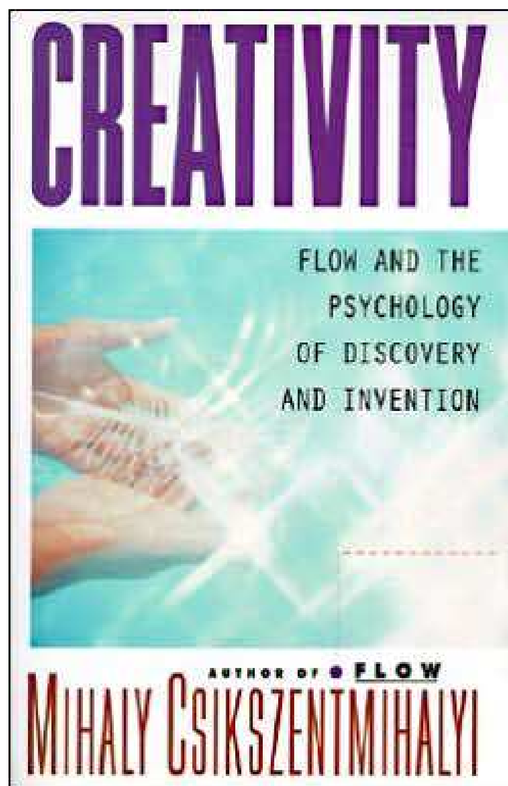
Author:

Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály



Reference:

Csíkszentmihályi, M. (1996). Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. New York: Harper Collins.



Emotional creativity

Emotional creativity is the ability of people to develop new and more adaptive kinds of emotions. The criteria for judging a response as creative are threefold: novelty, effectiveness, and authenticity. Applying these criteria to emotions, creativity reveals itself. A response may be novel in comparison to typical behavior in a group or to an individual's own past behavior. Most discussions of creativity focus on group comparisons. That is where genius is recognized. However, creativity is not unique to a few exceptional individuals. All learning and development involves the acquisition of novel behavior from the individual's perspective; hence, creativity is part of life and growth. However, not all novel responses are creative; some are simply bizarre or eccentric. A creative response should be effective; that is, of potential benefit to the individual or group, and it should be authentic, that is, a reflection of an individual's own values and beliefs, and not a mere affectation.

The above criteria are, to an extent, compensatory: an emotion that is exceptionally effective may be judged creative even though it is not remarkably novel or authentic; similarly, emotions that are exceptionally novel or authentic may be judged creative even if they are unexceptional in other respects.

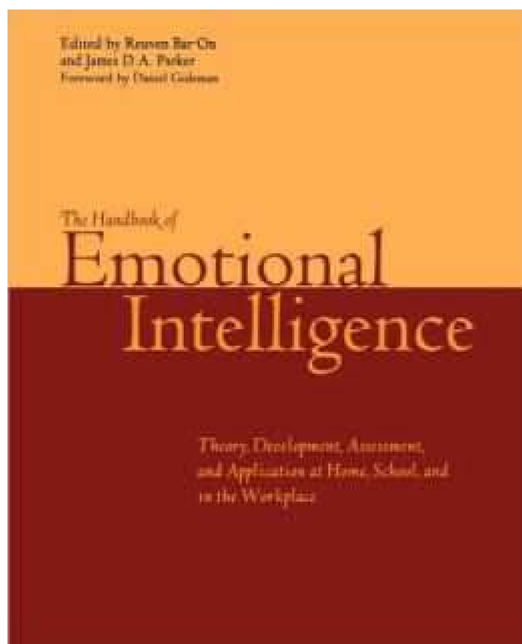
As with art, emotional creativity admits of kinds. At the simplest level, it involves the particularly effective application of a preexisting emotion, one that is found within the culture; at a more complex level, it involves the modification („sculpting") of a standard emotion to better meet the needs of the individual or group; and at the highest level it involves the development of new emotional syndromes. The latter (transformational) type of emotional creativity is the most difficult to describe in ordinary language. It does, however, provide the grist for fine poetry.

Author:

James R. Averill

Reference:

Averill, J. R. (2000). Intelligence, Emotion, and Creativity. From trichotomy to trinity. In R. Bar-On; J. D. A. Parker (Eds.), The handbook of emotional intelligence (pp. 277–298). New York: Jossey-Bass.



Emotional intelligence

Currently, there are two distinct models of emotional intelligence (EI): ability models and mixed models. The ability model espoused by Mayer and Salovey conceptualizes EI as a set of mental skills pertaining to the perception, use, understanding, and management of emotion. Mixed models, on the other hand, are based primarily on popular depictions of EI and include two classes of constructs: perceived emotional (and other) competencies and personality traits. While the traits and competencies covered in mixed models are important and predictive of significant life outcome, these models diverge considerably from a primary focus on emotion and intelligence. According to Brackett, Crum, & Salovey (2009), keeping EI restricted to an ability model allows one to test empirically the degree to which emotional abilities contribute to positive social functioning.

Authors:

Salovey, Peter

Mayer, John D.

Reference:

Stough, C; Saklofske, D. H; Parker, J. D. A. (eds.) (2009) Assessing emotional intelligence. Theory, Research, and Applications. London: Springer.

Folk wisdom

Folk wisdom reflects time honored assumptions about the management of life that are more frequently validated by common sense than empirical science. Folk wisdom should be distinguished from „folk cures" and „wives' tales" which generally refer to healing practices. Folk wisdom is present in the proverbs, poetry, songs, stories, rhymes, and religions of all cultures.

The study of folk wisdom as a research topic falls under the more general area of wisdom research. While a precise definition of wisdom is elusive, it is „generally considered the pinnacle of insight into the human condition and about the means and ends of a good life" (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 122). Scholarly efforts at understanding wisdom have produced two strands of research guided by either implicit or explicit theories. Research grounded in implicit theories of wisdom generally explores the beliefs or thoughts that people have about wisdom or the characteristics of a wise person. Research grounded in explicit theories of wisdom focuses on the behavioral expressions of wisdom that may be empirically tested. The study of folk wisdom lends itself to either research approach. Researchers may explore the ways in which proverbs, songs, stories, and other forms of folk wisdom use the term wisdom or characterize wise persons, or research may explore the validity of the assumptions expressed in various forms of folk wisdom.

Author:

Baltes. P. B.

Reference:

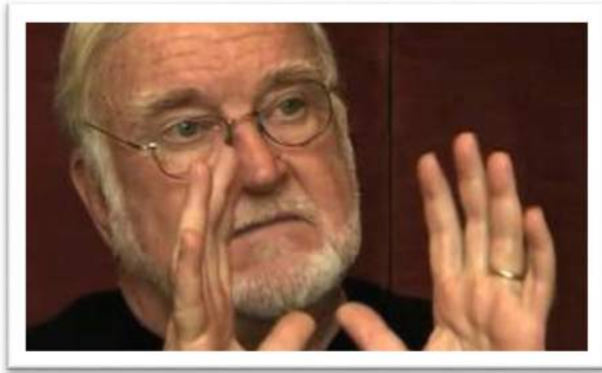
Baltes, P. B; & Staudinger, U. M. (2000). Wisdom: A metaheuristic (pragmatic) to orchestrate mind and virtue toward excellence. American Psychologist, 55, 122-136.

Giftedness

In recent years, researchers and scholars have proposed broader definitions of giftedness, suggesting that high IQ alone – something giftedness has previously often been equated with – does not necessarily define this concept. For example, the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, originally passed by Congress in 1988 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, defines gifted and talented students as students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. Therefore, while intelligence tests and IQ scores still play a large role in the identification of gifted individuals, more emphasis has also been placed on giftedness in areas outside of those typically assessed on standardized intelligence tests (e.g., creativity, artistic capabilities, and leadership skills). Increasingly, it is recognized that no single measure can identify giftedness, and that multiple measures, which may include portfolios of classroom work, classroom observations, achievement tests, and intelligence tests, are necessary to develop an understanding of the pattern of strengths and abilities demonstrated by gifted students.

Author:

Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály



Reference:

Csíkszentmihályi, M. &Robinson, R. E. (1986). Culture, time, and the decelopment of talent. In: R. J. Sternberg& J. E. Davidson (Eds.), Conceptions of giftedness (pp. 264-284). New York: CambridgeUniversity Press.

Successful Aging

Aging successfully, remaining vital and actively engaged with life, is quite possible, and gerontological science focuses on finding ways to help our aging population live well in the years ahead.

Old age does not necessarily contribute to activity restriction and depressed affect following a stressful life event. Financial resources, however, are a potentially important contributor to coping with stress. Inadequate income interferes with normal activities. Moreover, if financial resources are merely *perceived* as being less than adequate, activities are more restricted. Thus, when life becomes stressful, a first line of defense may be to cut back on normal activities that involve spending money, e.g., shopping, recreation, and hobbies. Personality also contributes to activity restriction. Some people cope in maladaptive ways across all situations throughout their lives. In contrast, there are those who routinely face the situation, rationally evaluate possible solutions, seek help and information as appropriate and, if all else fails, accept that the problem has occurred, deal with their emotional reactions, and make every effort to resume life as usual.

Another important factor is social support. People with stronger social support resources cope better with all types of stressful life events, and routine activities are facilitated by social support. Comparable benefits are seen in people who merely perceive that social support is available if it is needed, and the benefits of perceiving that one has supportive others remain after controlling for demographics (e.g., age, financial resources), illness severity, and personality variables. Social support, however, appears to be a function of personality variables that, in turn, influence activity restriction. Those with more socially desirable characteristics also have more supportive social ties and, therefore, may be less subject to activity restriction.

In their acclaimed book, Successful Aging, Rowe and Kahn proposed that there are three

components of successful aging: 1) avoiding disease; 2) engagement with life; and 3) maintaining high cognitive and physical function. Other factors (e.g., personality, financial resources) also influence how well one ages.

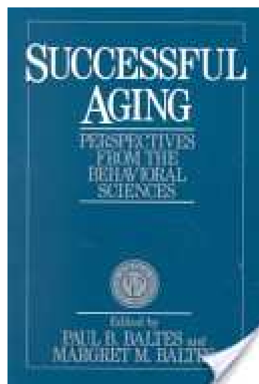
Avoiding disease is largely a function of routine activities. Temperance in detrimental behavior (e.g., smoking) is related to better physical health, less disability, and greater longevity. People need to engage in personally meaningful activities (whether intellectual, physical, or social). Maintaining high cognitive and physical functioning is a key to aging successfully. When confronted with seemingly overwhelming life events, the telling factor may well be the extent to which at least a semblance of normal activities can continue.

Author:

Paul, Baltes

Reference:

Baltes, P; Baltes, M. M. (1993) Succesful aging: Perspectives from the Behavioral Sciences, Cambridge University Press.



Wisdom

There are three major approaches to understanding the nature of wisdom: philosophical, implicit-theoretical, and explicit-theoretical. They largely have in common three attributes. First, they regard wisdom as a melding of cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects of the individual's functioning. Second, they emphasize the use of skills for some kind of positive common good. Third, they view wisdom as occurring in thought and deed, not only in thought. Wisdom is at least as much about what one does as it is about what one thinks or feels. Wisdom is a critical construct in positive psychology because it is, in the end, the use of one's repertoire of skills and dispositions for a positive common good.

Implicit-theoretical approaches to wisdom have in common the search for an understanding of people's folk conceptions of what wisdom is. Thus, the goal is not to provide a „psychologically true" account of wisdom, but rather an account that is true with respect to people's beliefs, whether these beliefs are right or wrong. Implicit theories have been comprehensively reviewed by Bluck and Glück.

Explicit theories are constructions of (supposedly) expert theorists and researchers rather than of laypeople. In the study of wisdom, most explicit-theoretical approaches are based on constructs from the psychology of human development. The most extensive program of research has been that conducted by the late Paul Baltes and his colleagues. According to them, wisdom is reflected in these five components: rich factual knowledge (general and specific knowledge about the conditions of life and its variations); rich procedural knowledge (general and specific knowledge about strategies of judgment and advice concerning matters of life); lifespan contextualism (knowledge about the contexts of life and their temporal [developmental] relationships); relativism (knowledge about differences in values, goals, and priorities); and uncertainty (knowledge about the relative indeterminacy and unpredictability of life and ways to manage).

Sternberg also proposed an explicit theory, suggesting that the development of wisdom can be traced to six antecedent components: 1) knowledge, including an understanding of its presuppositions and meaning as well as its limitations; 2) processes, including an understanding of what problems should be solved automatically and what problems should not be so solved; 3) a judicial thinking style, characterized by the desire to judge and evaluate things in an in-depth way; 4) personality, including tolerance of ambiguity and of the role of obstacles in life; 5) motivation, especially the motivation to understand what is known and what it means; and 6) environmental context, involving an appreciation of the contextual factors in the environment that lead to various kinds of thoughts and actions. Whereas that theory specified a set of antecedents of wisdom, the balance theory proposed by Sternberg specified the processes (balancing of interests and of responses to environmental contexts) in relation to the goal of wisdom (achievement of a common good). According to the balance theory, wisdom is the application of intelligence, creativity, and knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests, over the short and long terms, in order to achieve a balance among adaptation to existing environments, shaping of existing environments, and selection of new environments.
Although most developmental approaches to wisdom are ontogenetic, Csíkszentmihályi and Rathunde have taken a philogenetic or evolutionary approach, arguing that constructs such as wisdom must have been selected for over time, at least in a cultural sense. In other words, wise ideas should survive better over time than unwise ideas in a culture. The theorists define wisdom as having three basic dimensions of meaning: that of a cognitive process, or a particular way of obtaining and processing information; that of a virtue, or socially valued pattern of behavior; and that of a good, or a personally desirable state or condition.

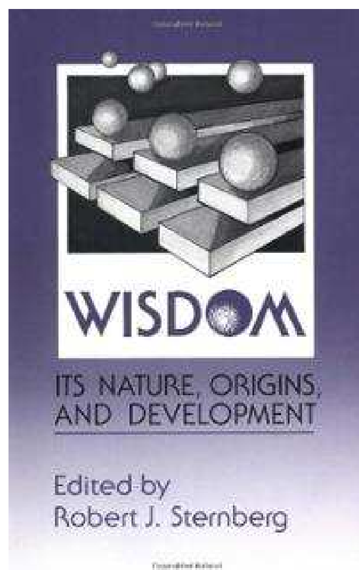
Authors:

R. J. Sternberg

Paul, Baltes

Reference:

Sternberg, R. J. (Ed,.) Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development. New York: CambridgeUniversity Press.



Balance

Balance is achieved when a person develops harmony within the self, and between the self and others. The pursuit of a balanced life is an important aspect of several character strengths and virtues. For other strengths, a focus on achieving personal excellence is more important than balance. Focus-oriented strengths help people become better in areas where they already excel. The ultimate goal of practicing both kinds of strengths is the same: a satisfying and meaningful life. The path to a meaningful life will be different, however, for people pursuing balance versus focus.
Creativity, leadership, curiosity, judgment, perseverance, social intelligence, love of learning, appreciation of beauty are all considered focus strengths because their development involves focusing interest and energy on becoming more competent but does not involve the balancing of any intrapersonal or interpersonal interests. The balance strengths, in contrast, necessarily involve balancing competing interests of these kinds and their development leads to increased competence in these activities.

V. Personality antecedents of psychological immunity. The positive psychological model of coping.

Confidence

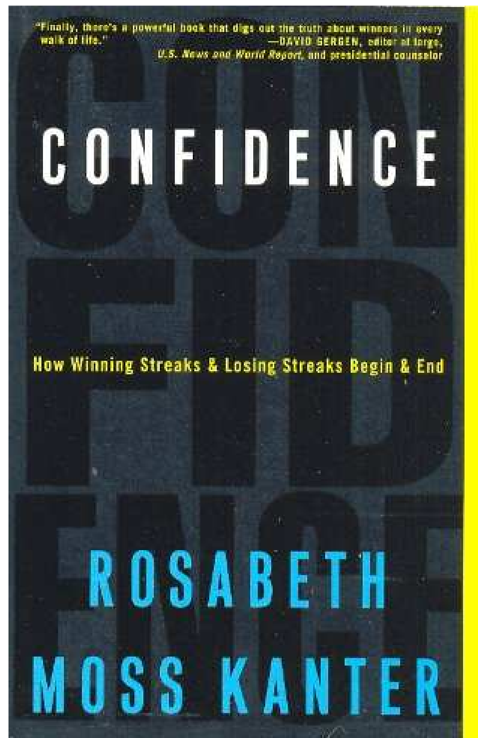
Confidence consists of positive expectations for favorable outcomes in specific situations. Although often used interchangeably with optimism in popular discourse, confidence is not a character trait nor a global cognitive predisposition. Rather than an attribute of individuals, it is a response to situations; degrees of confidence vary with accumulated experience and are related to the immediate context. While individuals vary in character, mood, and cognitive tendencies, confidence is not a mental construct, solely dependent on what people generally believe. People interpret specific events based on observations of the behavior of others around them and use these to predict the future likelihood of success. Judgments that underlie confidence can be made at many system levels. People can have confidence in themselves (self-confidence), in other people (thus influencing the other's confidence), or in larger system units, such as organizations, institutions, or nations. The foundation for confidence stems from the quantity of information about strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to take corrective actions (accountability); the quality of support people provide for one another (collaboration); and the perception of opportunities to take positive action, however small (initiative).

Author:

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Reference:

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2004). Confidence: How winning streaks ..losing streaks begin.. end. New York: Crown



Hardiness

Based on existential theory, hardiness represents a set of attitudes or beliefs conceptualized as courage and motivation to face stressful circumstances. According to Kobasa, hardiness characterizes individual differences in reactions to stressful life events. In positive psychology, it has been identified as a strong correlate of subjective well-being and a pathway to resilience in the face of loss and trauma.

As a personality trait predictive of health, performance, and conduct outcomes, hardiness consists of three dimensions termed the three Cs of commitment (vs. alienation), control (vs. powerlessness), and challenge (vs. threat). First, hardy individuals who are high in commitment tend to have a strong sense of purpose or meaning rather than experience alienation and isolation from people and events. Second, hardy individuals who are high in control try to influence their surroundings and outcomes of events with a sense of power rather than passivity and helplessness. Third, hardy individuals who are high in challenge perceive change rather than stability to be normal in life and anticipate changes as learning opportunities and incentives to growth rather than threats to security.

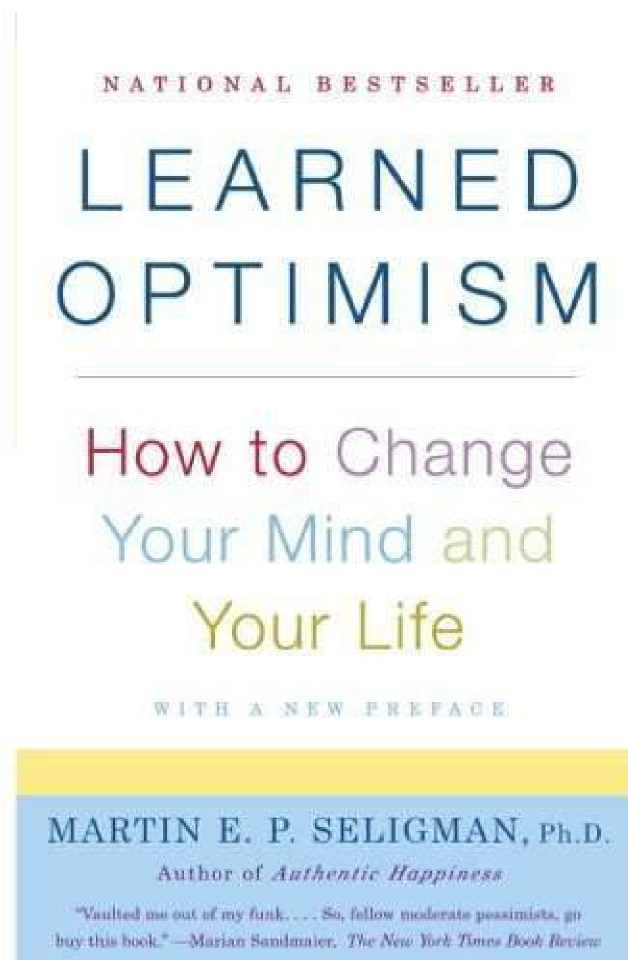
Learned Optimism

Learned optimism is a phrase coined by Martin Seligman, to describe the process of adapting one's explanatory style toward a more optimistic orientation. Such an explanatory style is the opposite of a pessimistic explanatory style which has been shown to predict depression in children and adults. Seligman, in his 1992 book entitled *Learned Optimism*, suggests that an optimistic explanatory style can be learned if one currently uses a pessimistic one. Strategies that promote an optimistic orientation can thus be a treatment for depression. The explanatory style patterns of people in studies of learned helplessness fall along three dimensions – global/specific (projection of cause across different situations), stable/temporary (projection of cause across time), and internal/external (projection of cause to internal traits versus external factors). Researchers eventually categorized optimists and pessimists as having diametrically opposed explanatory styles of good and bad events. For example, if an optimistic student received a bad grade, then that grade is viewed as not reflective of her ability in other classes (specific), independent of future test opportunities (temporary), and likely to be caused by inefficient study habits (external). Conversely, a pessimist would explain the situation as stemming from a global, stable, and internal cause (e.g., he is a failure).

Author:

Reference:

Seligman, M. (1998). Learned optimism. New York: NY: Pocket Books.



Mature Defense Mechanisms

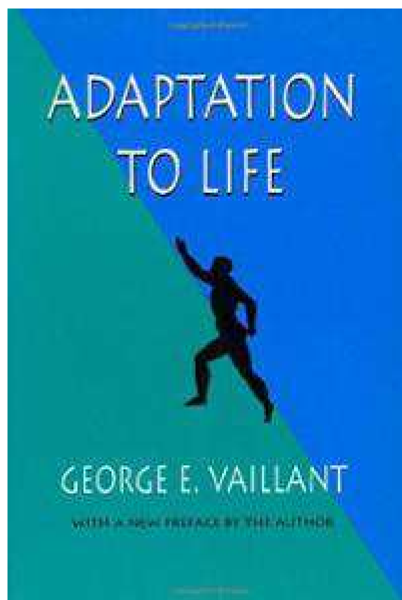
Included within the „high adaptive level" of DSM-IV are the defenses: anticipation, altruism, humor, sublimation, and suppression. These five adaptive mental mechanisms „maximize gratification and allow conscious awareness of feelings, ideas and their consequences" (APA, 2000, p. 752). They epitomize what is meant by positive transformations. Adaptive involuntary coping mechanisms are essential to positive mental health. Defenses reduce conflict and cognitive dissonance during sudden changes in internal and external reality. If not modified, such sudden changes result in anxiety and/or depression. First, such mechanisms can restore psychological homeostasis by ignoring or deflecting sudden increases in affect. Second, such mechanisms can provide a mental time-out to mitigate changes in reality and self-image, which cannot be immediately integrated – for example, after major surgery or promotion. Third, such mechanisms help cope with irresolvable conflict with important people, living or dead. Finally, these mechanisms soften conflicts of conscience – for example, after putting a parent in a nursing home. In short, defenses shield us from sudden changes in affect, reality, relationships, or conscience.

Author:

Vaillant, George

Reference:

Vaillant, G. E. (1977) Adaptation to life. Boston, MA, Little, Brown.



Protective Factor

Protective factors are predictors of positive outcomes among people at risk for developing problems as a result of adverse life events or experiences. Interest in protective factors emerged in the context of research on resilience in the 1970s, as scientists began to search for explanations of unexpectedly good adjustment among individuals exposed to negative experiences. Initially, research was focused on identifying the qualities of the individuals, their relationships, or other qualities in their environment that were associated with positive adaptation to risk or adversity. Eventually, research turned to deeper questions about how protective factors work and how to facilitate resilience by mobilizing protective processes. Pioneering scientists recognized that protective factors represented important clues to resilience processes, with the potential to inform intervention. Early researchers, such as Norman Garmezy, Michael Rutter, and Emmy Werner, observed striking consistencies in the protective factors found across diverse studies of individuals who overcame significant challenges in their lives. Subsequently, this „short list" of protective factors would be corroborated many times across diverse studies of resilience.
This short list includes attributes of the individual, family, and neighborhood that are associated with positive adaptation in the context of risk or adversity. At the top of the list in an involved and competent parent figure or mentor. Effective parenting in the context of a close relationship with a caring and capable adult appears to be the key protective factor in the lives of young children undergoing adversity. As children grow older, close relationships with additional supportive people such as friends, romantic partners, and mentors also become more important. By adulthood, the protective factors based in relationships are often described in terms of social capital or social support.
Individual attributes strongly associated with resilience in childhood and adulthood include an array of cognitive skills related to problem solving and intelligent behavior; motivation and

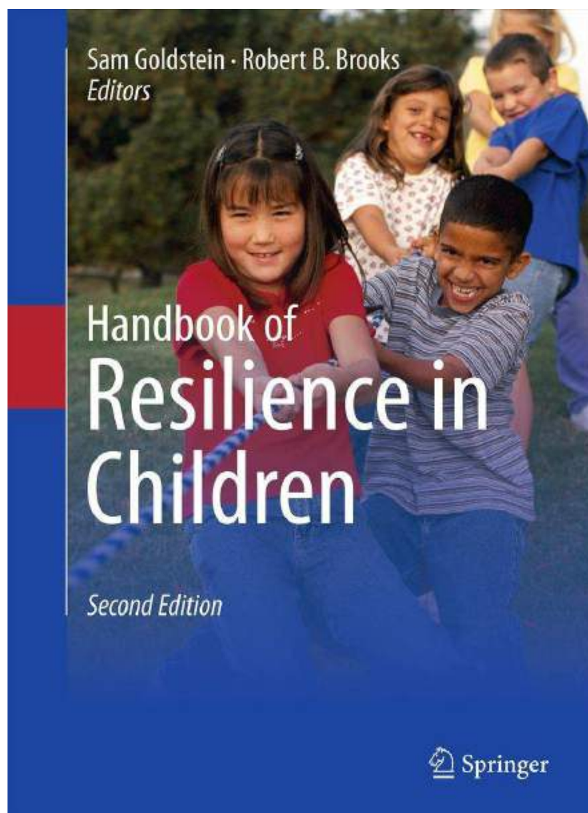
self-efficacy related to achievement; and hope for the future, faith, and beliefs that life has meaning. Self-regulation skills appear to be crucial protective factors for children and adults as they overcome difficult times, including capabilities for controlling and directing one's own attention, arousal, emotion, and behavior in order to achieve goals. Community-based protective factors include effective schools, resources such as health care, recreational centers, religious institutions, and emergency services.

Author:

Werner, Emmy

Reference:

Goldstein, S; Werner, R.E. E. (Eds.), Handbook of resilience in children. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers



Resilience

The science of resilience began only a few decades ago. Resilience research grew out of research on people at risk of developing problems, including children at risk because of their family background (such as having a parent with a severe mental disorder), life experiences (such as premature birth or divorce), or hazardous rearing conditions (such as poverty or neighborhood violence). Investigators seeking to understand the etiology of mental illness began to notice that some individuals „at risk” were doing quite well, even flourishing. Pioneering investigators in the 1970s and 1980s, including Norman Garmezy, Lois Murphy, Michael Rutter, and Emmy Werner, recognized the importance of unexpectedly positive development, and began to search for explanations of resilience. From the outset, these pioneers had the goal of gaining knowledge for promoting better outcomes among individuals at risk for problems.

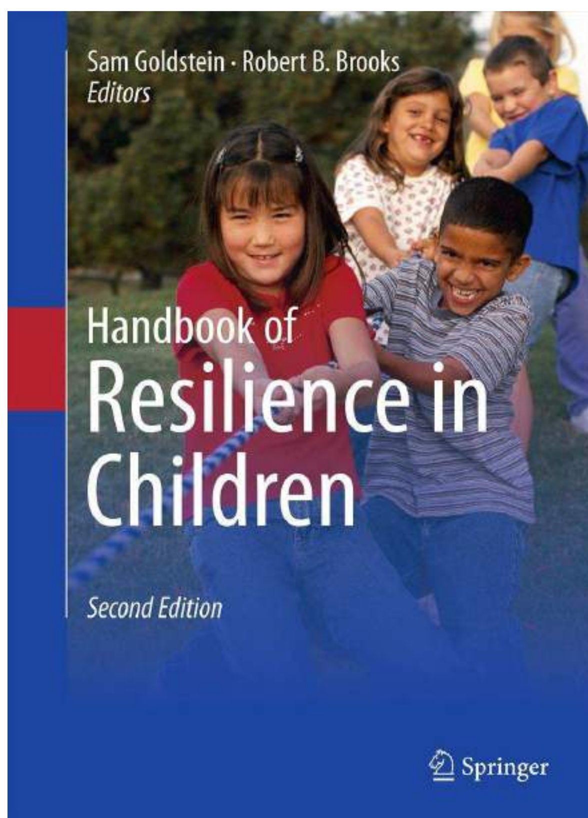
Resilience researchers have studied many potential factors that might account for better outcomes in the context of risk or adversity. These have come to be called promotive and protective factors. Promotive factors are associated with good outcomes in general, regardless of risk exposure. Healthy brain development and good parenting predict many good outcomes in life, regardless of risk exposure. In contrast, protective factors moderate risk, showing a special effect when adversity is high. Some protective factors are analogous to airbags in automobiles or the antibodies of the human immune system. They have no function until they are activated by threat and then they serve a protective role. Emergency social services, like child protection, are intended to work in this way.

Author:

Werner, Emmy

Reference:

Goldstein, S; Werner, R.E. E. (Eds.), Handbook of resilience in children. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers



Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy beliefs are people's beliefs about their ability to produce desired outcomes through their own actions. These beliefs are among the most important determinants of the behavior people choose to engage in and how much they persevere in their efforts in the face of obstacles and challenges. Therefore, they also are among the most important determinants of psychological well-being and adjustment. Although the term self-efficacy is of recent origin, interest in beliefs about personal control has a long history in psychology. Albert Bandura's 1977 *Psychological Review* article „Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavior Change" formalized the notion of perceived competence as self-efficacy, defined it clearly, and embedded it in a theory of how it develops and influences human behavior. Self-efficacy beliefs can be distinguished from a number of related concepts. Self-efficacy beliefs are not beliefs about skills; they are beliefs about one's ability to exercise one's skills under certain conditions – especially under changing and challenging conditions. Self-efficacy beliefs are not predictions or intentions about behavior; they are concerned not with what one believes one will do but with what one believes one can do. Self-efficacy is not self-esteem, although self-efficacy beliefs in a given domain will contribute to self-esteem in direct proportion to the importance one places on that domain. Self-efficacy is not a motive, drive, or need for control. One can have a strong need for control in a particular domain, and still hold weak beliefs about one's ability to perform effectively in that domain. Self-efficacy is not a personality trait. Although measures of general self-efficacy have been developed and are used frequently in research, they have not been as useful as specific self-efficacy measures in predicting how people will behave under specific conditions. Thus, it is preferable for self-efficacy measures to be specific to the domain of interest (e.g., social skills, exercise, dieting, safe sex, arithmetic skills). Within a given domain, self-efficacy beliefs can be measured at varying degrees of behavioral and situational specificity, depending on what one is trying to

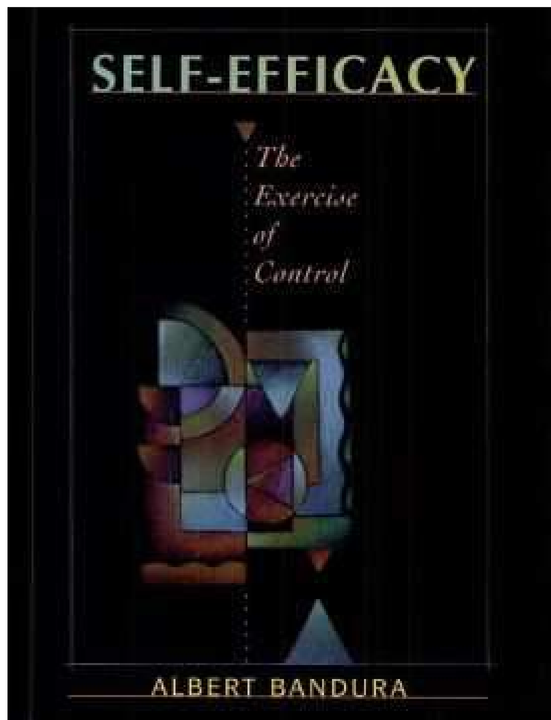
predict. Thus, the measurement of self-efficacy should be designed to capture the multifaceted nature of behavior and the context in which it occurs.
Self-efficacy beliefs are important in all aspects of human psychological functioning. Four domains are especially important: psychological adjustment; physical health; self-regulation; and psychotherapy.

Author:

Albert, Bandura

Reference:

Bandura, A. B. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: W. H. Freeman and Co.



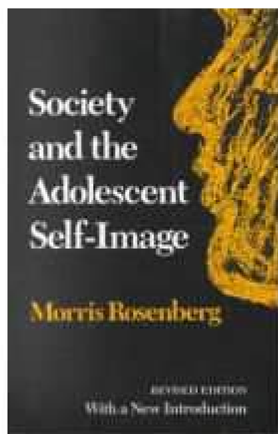
Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the evaluative dimension of self-regard, combining a cognitive and an affective aspect. People acquire knowledge of themselves, organized into schemas derived from direct experience as well as the real or imagined judgments of others. And they respond emotionally to this knowledge. They feel about themselves essentially the same range of affect that they are capable of directing toward any object. Fear, anger, hatred, love, pride, satisfaction, anxiety, loathing, shame, guilt, embarrassment, and other named emotions which might figure in the experience of self. Self-esteem may exist as a global sense of worth or value; it may be felt in relation to particular accomplishments or spheres of competence; and it may be experienced in relation to the person's real or desired membership in racial, ethnic, or other collectivities, with a sense of worth derived from identification with them.
The value of self-esteem is less than previously thought. High self-esteem is associated with the pleasant feelings we call happiness and with the fostering of initiative. But there is no convincing reason to believe that raising self-esteem by itself is a useful means of improving the quality of the individual's life or solving social problems. With the important qualification that some manifestations of high self-esteem are the result of defensive tactics, conceit, and narcissism, high self-esteem is best conceived as an indicator of the individual's mental health, well-being, and social capabilities rather than as a desired goal or end state in itself. Conditions that promote optimal human functioning also promote self-esteem, and these fundamental conditions are the ones worth pursuing: acceptance within a social fold, a sense of security, cultural competence, and the capacity to reconcile personal goals and social expectations.

References:

Baumeister, R. F; Campbell, J; Krueger, J; & Vohs, K. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happines, or healthier lifestyles? Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 4, 1-44.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton: PrincetonUniversity Press.



Self-Regulation

The term self-regulation is often viewed as synonymous with self-control, implying that people can exercise some degree of voluntary control over their behavior, feelings, and thoughts. The term self-regulation, however, is usually used to refer to self-control that is directed toward a valued goal, especially a goal that extends beyond the immediate situation. Of course, to assume that humans can exercise control over their own behavior is not to assume that human behavior is always or even usually under intentional control but only that people are capable of controlling their own behavior in the pursuit of valued goals. People are usually more satisfied with their lives when they believe that they are making good progress in moving toward valued goals. For this reason, effective self-regulation is crucial to psychological adjustment and well-being.

Numerous models of self-regulation have been proposed over the past several decades. Taken together, these models identify ten components of self-regulation: a) goals – what a person is either trying to accomplish or trying to avoid; b) plans – the person's strategy for accomplishing the goals; c) self-efficacy beliefs – the person's confidence in his/her ability to implement specific aspects of the plane; d) standards of evaluation – the person's „yardstick" for measuring progress along the way; e) goal-directed action – actual attempts to implement specific aspects of the plan; f) self-monitoring – observing one's behavior and the impact of one's behavior on progress towarda goal; g) feedback – information about progress toward a goal (as compared to standards of performance) that people either gather themselves or that is provided by other people or automatically by the situations (e.g., a computer video game); h) self-evaluation – judgments about one's progress toward a goal; i) emotional reactions to these evaluations; and j) corrective action – attempts to change one's behavior to move oneself toward one's goal more efficiently based on feedback, self-evaluation, and emotional reactions. Self-regulation does not, of course, consist of an invariable sequence of ten steps,

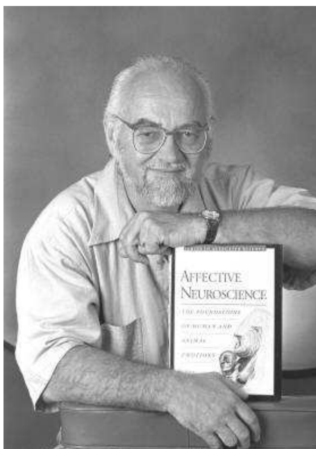
beginning with a goal and ending with correction action. Instead, self-regulation consists of a number of components that interact continually in complex ways.

Anticipatory enthusiasm

Anticipatory enthusiasm is the positive emotion experienced while one is expecting to acquire or consume some kind of reward. Panksepp (1998, p. 147) described environmental stimuli eliciting this emotion as „unconditional, distal, incentive cues of reward”, meaning that the environment presents a cue of a definite reward to come in the near future, provided that the organism expends some energy to pursue it. Evidence of this emotion and the neurological pathways involved in it has been demonstrated across a wide range of mammals from rodents to humans. In the case of laboratory mammals, the reward is usually food, with the occasional usage of mates or offspring. As for humans, anticipatory enthusiasm can be elicited in the laboratory through various types of gambling tasks, or by showing the subjects photographs of desired objects such as food, money, or material goods. On a neurobiological level, the role of the neurotransmitter dopamine has been implicated.

Author:

Panksepp, J.



Reference:

Panksepp, J. (1998). Affective neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions. New York: OxfordUniversity Press.

Coping

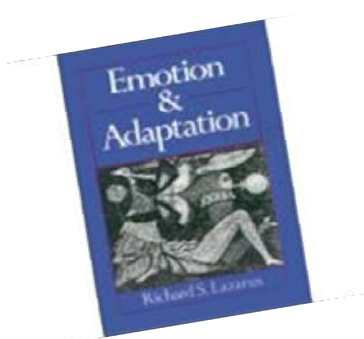
The conceptualization of coping processes has evolved over the past several decades resulting in numerous contemporary models of coping. One of the widely accepted models is known as the transactional model of stress appraisal and coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman. According to this conceptualization, coping consists of „constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised to be taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). From this perspective, psychological stress is viewed as the dynamic interplay between the person and the environment. Thus, coping is determined by the degree to which a person perceives a threat in a situation (primary appraisal) and by the person's perception of personal and social resources that they can utilize to confront the situation (secondary appraisal). The integration of positive psychology and coping constructs represents a promising new area of theory and research. Coping is one area of positive psychology that is common to all individuals. Although all attempts to coping do not necessarily result in growth and flourishing, all people cope with the demands of internal and external environments that tax resources available to the individual. Thus, all organisms cope in some way and understanding this potentially adaptive process and how to increase the effectiveness of such efforts is of fundamental importance to all people.

Author:

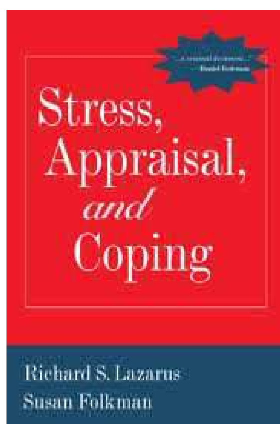
Lazarus, Richard

Reference:

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Emotion and adaptation. New York: OxfordUniversity Press.



Lazarus, R. S; Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer.



Flourishing

Flourishing is a state of positive mental health. Not only are flourishing individuals free of mental illness, they are also filled with emotional vitality and function positively in both private and social realms of their lives.
To flourish means to thrive, to prosper, and to fare well in endeavors, qualities that the subjective well-being measure attempts to capture. To be diagnosed as „flourishing" in life, individuals must exhibit high levels on one of three scales of emotional well-being and high levels on six of eleven scales of positive functioning. Flourishing is not only distinct from psychopathology, but also from languishing: a state in which an individual is devoid of positive emotion toward life, is functioning poorly psychologically and socially, and has not experienced depression in the past twelve months. In short, languishers are neither mentally ill nor mentally healthy. To be diagnosed as „languishing" in life, individuals must exhibit low levels on six of the eleven scales of positive functioning. The complete mental health model suggests that classifications of individual's psychological well-being are (from low to high levels of mental health): mental illness and languishing, pure mental illness, pure languishing, moderately mentally healthy, (i.e., neither flourishing nor languishing), and completely mentally healthy (i.e., flourishing).

Author:

Corey L. M. Keyes

Reference:

Keyes, C. L. (2007). Promoting and Protecting Mental Health as Flourishing: A Complementary Strategy for Improving National Mental Health. American Psychologist , 62 (2), 95-108.

Mental Health

In 1999, the Surgeon General's report focused for the first time on mental rather than physical health. In that report, mental health was defined as „a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity" (U.S. Public Health Service, 1999, p. 4). In 2004, the World Health Organization's historic first report on mental health promotion defined mental health as: *a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.* (World Health Organization, 2004, p. 12)

Keyes' research on mental health as a complete state suggests that the paradigm of mental health research and services in the US must include two, complementary, ongoing strategies: the promotion and maintenance of mental health as „flourishing", as well as the treatment and prevention of mental illness. Research on the national sample of US adults has shown that measures of mental illness and measures of mental health form two distinct continua. In other words, the absence of mental illness does not translate into the presence of mental health as flourishing. In turn, measures of work productivity, disability, chronic physical illness, cardiovascular disease, psychosocial functioning, and healthcare utilization reveal that anything less than mental health as flourishing is associated with increased impairment and burden to self and society. In other words, the absence of mental health is as problematic as the presence of mental illness, and only mental health as flourishing is associated with the desired quality of execution of social roles and responsibilities as well as health and work productivity outcomes.

Author:

Ryff, Caroll

*Reference***:**

Ryff, C. D., Singer, B. H., Dienberg Love, G. (2004). Positive health: connecting well-being with biology. Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London: Biological sciences, 359 (1449), 1383-1394.

Proactive Coping

Proactive coping entails striving for more resources, desiring to maximize gains, and building up resistance factors either to ward off future crises or to grow and cultivate their capabilities for their own sake. Proactive coping's forward time perspective opens new research questions and helps to overcome traditional coping models that overemphasize the reactive nature of coping. There is a general trend to broaden stress and coping research by including positive strivings that were formerly domains of motivation and action theories. The notions of mastery, such as Baltes and Baltes' optimization, Lazarus' challenge and benefit, and Hobfoll's resource gain, are in line with proactive coping theories as proposed by authors such as Aspinwall, Greenglass, or Schwarzer.
The recent broadening of coping theory might be a reaction to earlier conceptualizations of coping that neglected goals, purpose, and meaning. As these become more salient and explicit in the current thinking, it is appropriate to redesign coping theory in order to extend it into volition and action theory. In line with these ideas presented by Beehr and McGrath in the late 1990s, the present approach makes a systematic distinction between proactive coping and three other kinds of coping (reactive, anticipatory, and preventive) that might shed more light on some previously neglected aspects. Reactive coping refers to harm or loss experienced in the past, whereas anticipatory coping pertains to inevitable threats in the near future. Preventive coping refers to uncertain threats in the distant future, whereas proactive coping involves future challenges that are seen as self-promoting.
Proactive coping can be defined as an effort to build up general resources that facilitate promotion toward challenging goals and personal growth. In proactive coping, people have a vision. They see risks, demands, and opportunities in the far future, but they do not appraise these as threats, harm, or loss. Rather, they perceive difficult situations as challenges. Coping becomes goal management instead of risk management. Individuals are not reactive, but

proactive in the sense that they initiate a constructive path of action and create opportunities for growth. The proactive individual strives for improvement of life or work and builds up resources that ensure progress and quality of functioning. Stress is interpreted as „eustress”, that is, productive arousal and vital energy.

Savoring

Savoring is the capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences in one's life. Savoring involves cognitive and behavioral processes that regulate positive feelings; that is, thoughts, and behaviors that influence the frequency, intensity, and duration of positive experience, including joy, pride, gratitude, awe, and pleasure. The term „savoring" was first used in this context by Bryant in 1989.
Although savoring requires a focus of attention on positive feelings in the present, savoring may also involve a temporal focus on either the past (termed reminiscence) or the future (termed anticipation). When people savor through reminiscence, they attend to positive feelings that they rekindle from the past, or attend to other positive feelings they experience when looking back on the past. When people savor through anticipation, they attend to positive feelings they imagine they will have in the future, or attend to other positive feelings they experience when looking forward. People may also enhance the quality of an unfolding positive experience by remembering how much they looked forward to it earlier (i.e., recalled anticipation), or by looking forward to reminiscing about it later (i.e., anticipated recall). Regardless of the source, the positive feelings that one experiences when savoring are in the here-and-now.

In explicating the nature of savoring, it is important to distinguish four interrelated conceptual components: savoring experiences, savoring processes, savoring responses (or strategies), and savoring beliefs. At the broadest level, a savoring experience consists of one's sensations, perceptions, thoughts, behaviors, and feelings when mindfully attending to and appreciating a positive stimulus (e.g., listening to a virtuoso musical performance).
At the intermediate level, a savoring process is a sequence of mental or physical operations that unfolds over time and transforms a positive stimulus into positive feelings to which a person attends and savors. Different savoring processes regulate different positive emotional

states. For example, marveling regulates awe, thanksgiving regulates gratitude, basking regulates pride, and luxuriating regulates physical pleasure.

At the smallest level, a savoring response or strategy is the operational component of the savoring process – that is, a specific, concrete thought or behavior that amplifies or dampens the intensity, or prolongs or shortens the duration, of positive feelings (e.g., mentally congratulating oneself while basking in response to a personal achievement).

Bryant and Veroff have identified ten savoring strategies that people use in relation to positive experience: sharing with others, memory building, self-congratulation, sensory-perceptual sharpening, comparing, absorption, behavioral expression, temporal awareness, counting blessings, and kill-joy thinking.

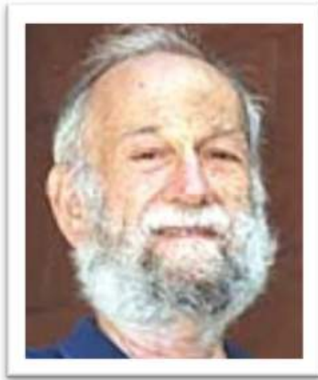
Savoring experiences can be differentiated in terms of whether one's dominant focus of attention is on the external world or the internal self. In world-focused savoring, the source of positive feelings is primarily identified with something or someone outside oneself (e.g., a spectacular sunset). In such experiences, savoring is largely experienced as an involuntary, uncontrollable positive emotional response to an external stimulus. In self-focused savoring, on the other hand, positive feelings are primarily perceived as originating within the self.

Savoring experiences can be further distinguished in terms of whether they primarily involve cognitive reflection (in which one introspects about one's subjective experience) pr experiential absorption (in which one minimizes introspection in favor of perceptual engrossment).

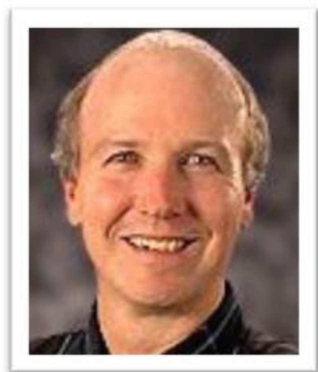
Combining these two distinctions produces a 2X2 classification model of four primary savoring processes (and their associated positive feelings): a) thanksgiving (gratitude) is a form of world-focused cognitive reflection; b) marveling (awe) is a form of world-focused experiential absorption; c) basking (pride) is a form of self-focused cognitive reflection; and d) luxuriating (physical pleasure) is a form of self-focused experiential absorption.

Savoring beliefs reflect people's perceptions of their ability to enjoy positive experiences, as distinct from their ability to obtain positive outcomes in the first place.

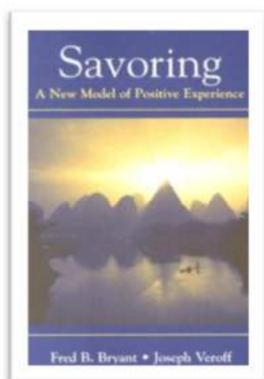
Authors: Joseph Veroff



Fred, B. Bryant



Reference: Bryant, F. B; Veroff, J. (2007) Savoring: A new model of positive experience. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates



Smiles

There are two basic types of smiles. Genuine or Duchenne smiles involve not only an upward turn of lip corners caused by contraction of the zygomaticus major muscles associated with a prototypical smile, but also the tightening of the orbicularis oculi muscle around the eye, typically causing crow's feet. They are named Duchenne smiles after the French neurologist, Guillaume Benjamin Amand Duchenne de Boulogne, who first noted in 1862 in Mecanisme de la Physionomie Humaine that orbicularis oculi muscle contraction occurs during spontaneous, not posed, smiles of enjoyment. This observation remained unexplored and unreplicated until Paul Ekman and colleagues provided further evidence that Duchenne smiles consistently cooccur with positive emotion such as happiness and amusement. However, people often smile in nonpositive affective states as well. These polite, non-Duchenne smiles typically consist of the upward turn of lip corners caused by contraction of the zygomaticus major muscles, without crow's feet caused by the contraction of orbicularis oculi around the eye. Non-Duchenne smiles are not typically associated with positive emotion.

Duchenne expressions have been shown to elicit positive emotional reactions in others, positive personal attributions, affiliative responses, and even increased forgiveness. In terms of well-being and adjustment, Duchenne expressions have also been associated with greater marital satisfaction in middle-aged and older couples, and less likelihood for divorce. Strong Duchenne smiles in college yearbook pictures have been associated with less daily distress and greater overall emotional and physical well-being up to 30 years later. Beyond merely signaling current emotional states that reflect current adjustment, Duchenne smiles may promote positive adjustment by eliciting positive responses in other people, encouraging social affiliation, and increasing availability of social resources for coping with adversity.

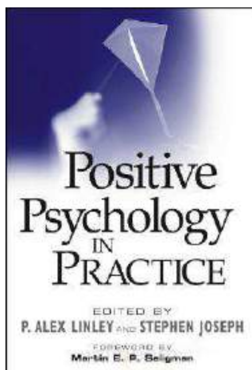
VI. Positive psychology in practice

Clifton StrengthsFinder

Gallup's Clifton StrengthsFinder (and its recent revision, Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0) is an online measure of personal talent that identifies areas where an individual's greatest potential for building strengths exists. The 180 item pairs (177 item pairs for the revised version) were based on the theory and research foundation associated with semi-structured personal interviews that had been used by Selection Research Incorporated and Gallup for over 30 years. The measure, developed through rational and empirical processes, has been repeatedly subjected to psychometric examination; evidence of reliability and validity is apparent.

Author: Clifton, Donald, O.

Reference: Hodges, T. D; &Clifton, D. O. (2004). Strength-based development in practice. In P. A. Linley& S. Joseph (Eds.), Positive psychology in practice (pp. 256-268). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc



Positive Ethics

Positive psychology attempts to move the discipline of psychology away from an emphasis on pathology or illness to a discussion of the uplifting and emotionally fulfilling aspects of life. Similarly, positive ethics attempts to move the discussion of professional and scientific ethics away from „an almost exclusive focus on wrong-doing and disciplinary responses to a more balanced and integrative approach that includes encouraging psychologists to aspire to their highest ethical potential" (Handelsman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002, p. 731). The ethics of psychologists need not be restricted to a set of specific rules as promulgated by the current code of conduct and/or the laws of a particular jurisdiction. Ethics can also include affirmations of what is good, ideal, and valuable, and embrace the best of the world's rich professional, philosophical, and religious traditions. Rather than being a static set of directives or a fixed entity of prohibitions, ethics can be a dynamic enterprise that allows psychologists to respond better to changing conditions and situations. „Most psychologists want to do more than just avoid being punished; they want to have a positive impact on others and excel in their profession" (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2006, p. 4). Traditional approaches to ethics often focus only on the minimum standards of the profession (the „ethical floor") or the sanctions that would be applied to the few who violate them. Positive ethics informs psychologists who strive for the ethical ceiling.

References:

Handelsman, M. M; Knapp, S; & Gottlieb, M. (2002). Positive ethics. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), Handbook of positive psychology (pp. 731-744). New York: OxfordUniversity Press.

Knapp, S; & VandeCreek, L: (2006). Practical ethics for psychologists: A positive approach. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Positive Psychotherapy

Positive psychotherapy (PPT) is a therapeutic movement within positive psychology to broaden the scope of traditional psychotherapy. It rests on the central hypothesis that building positive emotions, strengths, and meaning, in addition to undoing symptoms, is efficacious in the treatment of psychopathology. Positive emotions, strengths, and meaning serves us best not when life is easy but when life is difficult. For a depressed client, having and using strengths such as optimism, hope, zest, and social intelligence can be more important to counter depression that they are in good times.

PPT assumes that a client has good and bad states and traits, which influence each other and are also influenced by the larger culture and environments in which clients live. All clients have an inherent capacity for growth, fulfillment, flourishing, and happiness, when this tendency is blocked, psychopathology results. It is also important to see that positive emotions and strengths are as authentic and real as symptoms and disorders.

PPT assumes that therapy is not a place where only resentment, frustration, jealousy, anxiety, and competition are discussed and treated, but also a venue where active doses of hope, optimism, gratitude, compassion, contentment, modesty, and emotional and social intelligence can be delivered. PPT also assumes that it is not an absolute sine qua non that only discussion of troubles builds strong therapeutic relationships and is essential for cure. Rather using the same therapeutic basics such as warmth, unconditional positive regard, and empathic listening, the therapist can draw clients' attention to positive emotions and strengths in their lives in a gentle and careful manner. Doing so takes added importance because human beings in general, and clients coming to therapy in particular, are biased towards remembering the negative, attending to the negative, and expecting the worst. Riding on this negative bias, if the therapist is an authority in eliciting and interpreting negatives only, then clients' strength will likely receive less attention and assume less importance. A therapist in traditional therapy

might ask: What personal weakness has lead to your troubles?, whereas in PPT a therapist might ask: What strengths do you bring to deal with your troubles?. Furthermore, negatives are never dismissed nor artificially replaced. Instead, when clients bring negatives, they are empathically attended and offered time-proven traditional interventions to undo negatives. However, slowly and gradually attention is drawn to positive emotions, strengths, and meaning to widen the perspective about negatives. All in all, PPT does not compete with, but rather complements traditional therapeutic approaches.

Author:

Seligman, Martin

References:

Duckworth, A. L; Steen, T. A. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Positive psychology in clinical practice. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 1, 629-651.

Seligman, M. E. P; Rashid, T; & Parks, A. C. (2006). Positive psychotherapy. American Psychologist, 61, 774-788.

Positive Youth Development

In the late 1990s, youth development practitioners, the policy community, and prevention scientists reached similar conclusions about promoting better outcomes for youth. They all called for expanding programs beyond a single problem behavior focus and considering program effects on a range of positive and problem behaviors. Prevention and developmental research provide substantial evidence that many youth outcomes, both positive and negative, are affected by the same predictors, including risk factors that increase the likelihood of problems and protective factors that appear to promote positive behavior or buffer the effects of risk exposure. The evidence that risk and protective factors are found across family, peer, school, and community environments led to recommendations that positive youth development interventions address multiple socialization forces – across family, school, community, peer, and individual development. This convergence in thinking has been recognized in forums on youth development including practitioners, policy makers, and prevention scientists who have advocated that models of healthy development hold the key to both health promotion and prevention of problem behaviors.

In reviewing the literature and conducting a consensus meeting of leading scientists, an operational definition of positive youth development constructs was created in 1997. This definition was further developed by a meeting of scientists organized by the Annenberg Sunnylands Trust. Space limitations preclude a full description of these constructs that are described in Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins (2002). The constructs included under the umbrella of positive youth development have emerged through consensus meetings involving scientists, practitioners, and policy makers synthesizing findings across the developmental, evaluation, and behavioral sciences. These efforts have married diverse science and practice across a range of disciplines and achieved an encompassing scope in the characterization of positive youth development. Constructs addressed by youth development

programs include: promoting bonding; fostering resilience; promoting social, emotional, cognitive behavioral, and moral competence; fostering self-determination; fostering spirituality; fostering self-efficacy; fostering clear and positive identity; fostering belief in the future; providing recognition for positive behavior; providing opportunities for prosocial involvement; fostering prosocial norms; promoting life satisfaction; and promoting strength of character.

Reference:

Catalano, R. F; Brglund, M. L; Ryan, J. A. M; Lonczak, H. S; & Hawkins, J. D. (2002). Positive youth development in the United Sates: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. Prevention and Treatment, 5(15).

Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics refers to the contemporary study of virtue, which has appropriated Aristotle's account of virtue and the good life in the *Nicomachean Ethics* for present-day concerns. The core idea of virtue ethics is the concept of eudaimonia, sometimes translated as happiness, but better rendered as flourishing. Flourishing is not an experience or steady state. Rather, it is a pattern of activity through which a person enacts excellence not only in extraordinary actions, but in the daily activities of life. This ethical account focuses on what it is to live a rich and meaningful life by exercising human capacities such as reason, sociality, and creativity in the service of characteristically human goods such as knowledge, democracy, and justice. One intriguing feature of virtue ethics is the nearly complete absence of rules for moral behavior. There is, of course, a general injunction to act virtuously, but virtue is not a matter of following rules. Rather, it requires cultivating excellence in character, from which fine and noble action will naturally ensue. Because the circumstances individuals encounter are endlessly variable, no set of rules or guidelines could provide enough direction to know how to act, and actors have to rely on their ability to choose wisely. In practical situations, the virtues require good judgment to know which traits are appropriate for a given situation and to know how to enact them, given the circumstances. The capacity to recognize the essentials of what we encounter and to respond well and fittingly to those circumstances is known as „phronesis", often translated as practical wisdom, or judgment.

Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer

Gallup developed numerous semi-structured interviews to identify the talent of youth and adults that could be enhanced and used to pursue positive outcomes in work and school. Under the leadership of educational psychologist Donald Clifton, Gallup made strengths measurement more accessible with the development of the Clifton StrengthsFinder, a brief, objective, online measure of personal talent. Gallup's success with web-based assessment coupled with 30 years of experience with the Youth Perceiver (a structured interview consisting of 81 open-ended questions), led to the development of the Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer. The new measure and the supporting educational materials are appropriate for 10- to 14-year-olds.

Author:

Clifton, Donald, O.

Reference:

Hodges, T. D; &Clifton, D. O. (2004). Strength-based development in practice. In P. A. Linley& S. Joseph (Eds.), Positive psychology in practice (pp. 256-268). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc

Positive Psychology Network

The intellectual birth of positive psychology came in 1998 when Dr Martin Seligman was President of the American Psychological Association and made positive psychology one of his presidential initiatives. The organizational and financial birth of positive psychology arrived in 1999, when Seligman raised millions of dollars of funding to carry out numerous initiatives, some of which are described below. The term Positive Psychology Network was the name of the network of leading scholars he assembled to chart the course of this new field and carry out this initiatives.
The following are some of theses initiatives that have been spearheaded by Dr Seligman:

- Key personnel: He created the Positive Psychology Steering Committee, a group of leading scholars, to help him plan the goals and initiatives. This committee was initially comprised of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, Ed Diener, Ray Fowler, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Robert Nozick, Christopher Peterson, and George Vaillant.
- Classification of strengths and virtues: The first great intellectual task, and the foundation of much that followed, was the creation of the classification and measurement of strengths and virtues.
- Akumal Conferences: In the first four years of the PPN, annual conferences were held in Akumal, Mexico.
- Research funding: The PPN supported the research of about 30 groups of researchers (the pods) from over 50 universities.
- Young Scholar Research Grants: The PPN awarded more than 20 Young Scholar Grants to promising young researchers in positive psychology.

- Templeton Positive Psychology Prize: The first place prize ($100,000) was the largest prize ever awarded in the field of psychology and was given each year for three years in recognition of excellence in positive psychology research.
- Gallup International Positive Psychology Summit: Starting in 1999, Gallup has sponsored the annual Positive Psychology Summit at their Washington, DC headquarters.
- Positive Psychology Summer Institute: The PPN convened five summer institutes from 2001 to 2005.
- Websites: The PPN created two websites. They created www.positivepsychology.org to provide practical resources for people interested in positive psychology, including researchers, students, teachers and the general public. The other website, www.authentichappiness.org was created to disseminate information about positive psychology to the general public in three languages: English, Chinese, and Spanish.

Positive Therapy

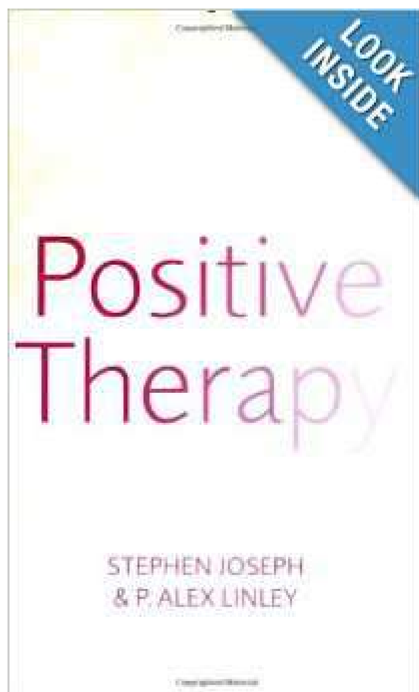
The term positive therapy has been used to describe counseling and psychotherapeutic approaches that are consistent with the ambition of positive psychology to facilitate well-being and not simply to alleviate distress and dysfunction. The exemplar is client-centered therapy (CCT) originally developed by Carl Rogers. CCT is based on the meta-theoretical principle that people are intrinsically motivated toward fully functioning, but that intrinsic motivation can be distorted by unfavorable social environmental conditions resulting in distress and dysfunction. Thus, the therapist aims to provide a social environment that is facilitative of the client's intrinsic motivation. The term positive therapy has been used specifically by Joseph and Linley (2006) to describe positive psychological approaches that are based on this meta-theoretical principle: *positive therapy is based on the fundamental assumption that the client is their own best expert and that the role of the therapist is to facilitate the client in listening more attentively to their own inner voice, and to learn how to evaluate their experiences from an internal locus rather than an external locus… The essence of client-centered therapy is the belief in the self-determination of the client.* (p. 140)

Author:

Linley, P. A.

Reference:

Joseph, S; Linley, P. A. (2006). Positive therapy: A meta-theory for positive psychological practice. London, Routledge



Templeton Foundation, John M.

The John M. Templeton Foundation was established in 1987 by the internationally renowned financial investor Sir John Marks Templeton. The Foundation funds research projects that scientifically explore the link between religion and spirituality and the virtues and human strengths that reflect humanity's highest aspirations and noble qualities including, but not limited to: creativity; purpose; perseverance; gratitude; prayer; awe and wonder; personal responsibility; unlimited love; altruism; courage; honesty; joy; humility; talent and genius; and thrift and generosity. Cutting-edge work on these core themes is supported and encouraged by the foundation. New and generative methodological approaches that advance the science of spirituality are emphasized. The over objective of the foundation's grant initiatives is to take research on the human spirit to new levels of scientific sophistication and significance. Beyond research on these core themes, the foundation's mission is to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discovery in areas engaging in life's biggest questions. These questions include explorations into the laws of nature and the universe such as: Do we have a soul? Is mathematics discovered or invented? Do we have free will? What is the nature of ultimate reality? What is freedom? What is the nature of divinity?

Author:

Templeton, J. M.

References:

Harper, C. L. Jr. (Ed.), (2005). Spiritual information: 100 perspectives on science and religion. Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Templeton, J. M. (2000) Possibilities for over one hundredfold more spiritual information. radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Well-Being Therapy

Well-being therapy (WBT) is a new psychotherapeutic strategy with the aim of enhancing psychological well-being. It was originally applied and validated in the residual phase of mood and anxiety disorders but its efficacy has also been extended to the prevention of relapse in recurrent depression; to the loss of anti-depressant efficacy during maintenance pharmacotherapy in recurrent depression; and recently to the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder and of generalized anxiety disorder. Well-being therapy is based on Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being, encompassing six dimensions: autonomy; personal growth; environmental mastery; purpose in life; positive relations; and self-acceptance. This model was selected on the basis of its easy applicability to clinical populations; in fact it can be used to describe specific impairments of patients with affective disorders and calls for behavioral and psychological modifications in order to reach optimal human functioning. The goal of WBT is to improve the patients' levels of psychological well-being according to these six dimensions.

WBT includes:

- Cognitive restructuring: change from negative to positive any thoughts which interrupt periods of feeling well;
- Scheduling of pleasant activities: negotiate with patients enjoyable activities they will carry out each day, e.g., go for a walk, listen to music;
- Graded tasks: e.g., to improve positive relations, encourage a patient to phone a friend, invite that friend out for dinner, spend further time with that friend, etc.;
- Assertiveness training;

- Problem solving to improve patients' autonomy and environmental mastery, e.g., help patient deal with everyday activities; ask for a promotion at work etc.; and
- Increasing optimism and positive thinking.

WBT shares techniques and therapeutic ingredients similar to those of standard cognitive-behavioral therapy. It thus may be conceptualized as a specific strategy within the broad spectrum of self-therapies. However, the main point of distinction of WBT is the focus: It is not the abatement of distress (as in cognitive-behavioral therapy), but the enhancement of psychological well-being and the promotion of optimal human functioning.