

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Learning Objectives - Positive Psychology

1. Describe the dimensions and scope of positive psychology
2. Explain Seligman's PERMA model
3. Explain the role of positive emotions in psychological wellbeing and health
4. Identify and explain your character strengths

PREPARATION

- Values In Action Inventory (character strength survey)

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

INTRODUCE CONCEPT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

I understand that everything said in group is confidential. No group member is ever required to answer any question, to participate in any activity, or to tell anything. If I am asked questions or asked to participate in an activity which makes me feel uncomfortable, I understand that I have the right to pass, that is, the right to refuse. I agree that will never pressure other group members to participate in any discussion or activity after the member has passed or refused. I understand that the group leader is obliged to protect this right. I also understand that I will benefit more from group the more I am able to take risks in sharing and participating.

WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY (you need to download the PowerPoint for this embedded video to play)

You tube video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qJvS8v0TTI>

WHY POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY - Describe the dimensions and scope of positive psychology

- PP is the scientific study of what people do right – what makes life worth living, making individuals and groups flourish and thrive
- PP is a science, not a self-help technique, but is the cultivation of talents and strengths at both individual and group level
- General psychology aims from getting people from negative to zero; PP aims to get people from 0 to positive.
- Does not cover mental illness instead focuses on healthy growth and development rather than the treatment of pathology.
- PP does not deny the negative aspects of life, it does not deny that sadness, sickness and loneliness occur but aims to decrease these states
- There has been a lot of talk recently about the poor state of doctor's mental health so practicing PP can be a part of a self care program. It has the potential to increase happiness, improve your resiliency (which is how you bounce back after adversity) and decrease burnout – so why not?

PERMA - Explain Seligman's PERMA model

Martin Seligman is an American psychologist who is touted as the grandfather of PP. He has described the PERMA model which contains FIVE core elements of psychological wellbeing and happiness = Scientific Theory of Happiness. The five elements of a flourishing life; what we call a flourishing life will depend on which of the 5 elements you value and in what proportion.

- POSITIVE EMOTIONS – ability to be optimistic and view the past, present and future in a positive perspective, can inspire you to be creative, Broaden and Build theory (see below)
- ENGAGEMENT – use your character strengths to induce “flow” (being in the zone, the mental state of operation in which a person performing the activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus, full involvement and enjoyment in the process of the activity)
- RELATIONSHIPS – authentic connections, spread love and joy, practicing kindness; sharing and developing trust, constantly showing gratitude for self and other, can provide support in difficult times, improve recovery from mental illness, prevent cognitive decline in older age, more successful work groups if employees are friends with colleagues
- MEANING – attachment to and the service of something larger than oneself; Ikigai diagram; greater longevity and life satisfaction, fewer health problems, improve employee engagement
- ACCOMPLISHMENT – having goals and ambition in life can help us achieve things that can give us a sense of pride and fulfilment

Keep referring back to the 5 elements to help you apply it to each aspect of your life – find things that make you happy and can make you fully engaged, you could even put goals to achieving more and challenging yourself in the activities you enjoy; focus on relationships with family and friends by finding ways to connect and enjoy each other's company; find the meaning to your life and what gives you a sense of purpose – it's different for everyone.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND HEALTH – this module will focus on positive emotions & engagement

10 most important positive emotions

1. Joy – that perfect moment, captured in an instant, joy leads to approaching behaviour
2. Gratitude - can often engender a pay it forward mentality
3. Serenity – peacefulness of a cloudless day with nothing to do, when you “let go” on holiday
4. Interest – calls your attention to something new that inspires fascination and curiosity, stimulates exploration which is the base for knowledge and personal growth
5. Hope – a belief that things can change or turn out better, possibilities exist
6. Pride – something that took time and effort → reach goal
7. Amusement – delightful surprises that make you laugh
8. Inspiration – a perfect sunset, academic or athletic excellence or you observe unexpected triumphs over adversity
9. Awe – goodness on a grand scale, overwhelmed by greatness
10. Love – a combination of all of the above

Research regarding Positive emotions

- PE can build physical, intellectual, social and psychological resources
- PE can undo Negative emotions and increase resilience
- PE can prevent and speed up recovery from illness
- PE can predict a longer life span
- PE can broaden cognition and increase creativity
- PE has a significant impact on employee wellbeing and performance related outcomes

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY – how could you increase positive emotions at work to improve staff engagement?

BROADEN AND BUILD THEORY

- Barbara Fredrickson proposed that exposure to positive emotions can broaden one's awareness, open the mind, increase creativity, exploratory thoughts and actions
- When people are in positive emotional states, they are likely to view an issue and its solutions more broadly – to be more creative and flexible in their responses and as a result, build up a greater bank of social, emotional and intellectual resources from which they can benefit, even in adversity (PP for Dummies, p13)
- Resilience – resources gained through experience of positive emotions outlive the emotions from which they were acquired – increased resilience leads to more positive emotions and vice versa – upward spiral of continually improving wellbeing
- In the workplace – creating a safe environment in which employees are encouraged to experiment without fear of repercussion for failure → promote interest and skills building
- QUESTION – how could this relate to medicine? The ED?

POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND HEALTH

- Positive immune effects <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1201429/> Fredrickson) laughter generates increases in positive emotion – research has shown increased levels of IgA in those better able to cope using humour
- Reduced CV disease - elderly patients with cardiovascular disease who reported greater happiness for 90 days after hospital release had lower readmission rates to the hospital. Reports of positive emotions predicted readmission over and above other factors like health status at initial release, length of initial stay in the hospital, and personal adjustment ([Middleton & Byrd, 1996](#)).
- To illustrate, in one study, participants were assigned to one of three groups: (1) count your blessings, (2) list daily hassles or (3) control. People who “counted their blessings” weekly for 10 weeks by listing things for which they were grateful or thankful evidenced better subjective health outcomes, including fewer physical complaints, more time exercising, more hours of sleep, and better sleep quality. Notably, the subjective experience of gratitude (over and above general positive affect) mediated the effects of the “count your blessings” intervention on health outcomes ([Emmons & McCullough, 2003](#)).
- Longevity For example, the positive emotional content in the autobiographies of nuns in early adulthood predicted the likelihood of being alive 6 decades later ([Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001](#)).
- Psychological health - For instance, coping strategies related to the occurrence and maintenance of positive emotions (e.g., positive reappraisal, problem-focused coping, infusing ordinary events with positive meaning) help buffer against stress ([Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000](#)) and depressed mood ([Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998](#)).

THE EVIDENCE

Isen

Experiment (Alice Isen) An Influence of Positive Affect on Decision Making in Complex Situations: Theoretical Issues with Practical Implications. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 11(2) 2001. pp75-85.

- 3 groups of dr induced with positive, neutral or negative emotion
- Those in positive group quicker and more skilful at assimilating information
- Positive affect enhances problem solving and decision making leading to cognitive processing that is not only flexible, innovative but also thorough and efficient

- Positive affect leads to helping, generosity, interpersonal understanding
- Improved medical consumer satisfaction

Cohen

Experiment (Cohen et al) Positive Emotional Style predicts resistance to illness after experimental exposure to rhinovirus or influenza a virus. Psychosom Med. 2006. Nov-Dec 68 (6):809-815.

- Rhinovirus inoculation after quarantine period
- Split participants according to level of positive affect
- Kept in quarantine during experiment
- Those with highest positive affect at the time of the experiment less likely to contract a cold, shorter duration of symptoms

VIRTUES - 6 overarching virtues

- Wisdom : cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
- Courage : emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in face of opposition
- Humanity : interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others
- Justice : civic strengths that underlie health community life
- Temperance : strengths that protect against excess
- Transcendence : strengths that forge connections to a larger universe and provide meaning

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

<https://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths-Survey>

Research regarding Flow

- If you use your strengths – increase happiness, decreased depression, increase physical and mental wellbeing
- Employees who have the opportunity to do what they do best every day is the single best predictor of employee engagement

WISDOM - Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning, Perspective

COURAGE - Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, Zest

HUMANITY - Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence

JUSTICE - Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership

TEMPERANCE - Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, Self-Regulation

TRANSCENDENCE - Hope, Humour, Spirituality

Interesting observations of character strengths

- Youth most frequently show - hope, teamwork, zest
- Adults most frequently show - beauty, authenticity, leadership and open mindedness
- Heart strengths (zest, gratitude, hope and love) foreshadow subsequent life satisfaction
- Each individual possesses all 24 character strengths in different degrees
- 24 character strengths - consistent around the world
- Most common - kindness (humanity), fairness (justice), authenticity (courage), gratitude (transcendence), open mindedness (wisdom)

Character Strengths can help you by

- Buffer against, manage and overcome problems
- Improve relationships
- Enhance health and overall well being

The Five Key Strengths (PP for Dummies) - Job satisfaction comes from finding engagement through using your strengths on a daily basis rather than shoring up your weaknesses; some strengths especially contribute to wellbeing and are worth cultivating, these 5 key strengths are

1. Gratitude
2. Optimism
3. Enthusiasm
4. Curiosity
5. Loving and being loved

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

- What are your top 5 character strengths (VIA Survey)
- Discuss how character strengths could be used in the ED?
- Can you recognise character strengths in others and how can this help the team?
- How do your character strengths contribute to your life?
- Give an example of an episode of “flow”; what circumstances led you to be in that state; what strengths or characteristics do you show in “flow”

APPLICATION

Seligman – Validation of Interventions - 5 Happiness Exercises

1. Gratitude visit – write and deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had been especially kind to them but never officially thanked
2. Three good things in life – write down 3 things that went well each day and their causes each night for one week
3. You at your best – write about a time when they were at their best and reflect on the personal strengths displayed in the story, review story daily for a week and reflect on the identified strengths
4. Using signature strengths in a new way
5. Identifying signature strengths – take survey, note 5 highest strengths then use them more often through the next week

6 month benefits (increased happiness and decreased depression)

- Three good things
- Using signature strengths in a new way

3 month benefits

- Gratitude visit

Positive but transient benefits

- Placebo
- Identifying signature strengths
- You at your best

CHALLENGE – use one of the activities to increase your happiness and enrich your life

- Use your signature strength, Gratitude visit, Three blessings, What went well

References:

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