

Thriving

Mental Health Mastermind

A Broaden & Build Approach to Mental Health

What makes you happy? What helps you thrive? Researchers in positive psychology study exactly these questions. Positive psychology is the study of behaviors that help us flourish and live a personally meaningful life. From a positive psychology perspective, the goal is to build upon what is good rather than remove what isn't working. In other words, to take a broaden and build approach to mental health and life.

Before we talk about behaviors that researchers have uncovered, let's reflect on what you already know from personal experience.

What do you know about the behaviors, habits, or practices that help you thrive?

What do you know about what gives you life meaning?

PERMA-V, the Building Blocks of Flourishing

There are many experiences and behaviors that can help us thrive in life. From a positive psychology perspective, those experiences and behaviors can be summarized PERMA-V.

P: Positive Emotions. This is experiencing positive emotions, knowing what in your life brings you positive emotion, making feeling good a priority, and being able to draw upon memories of good feelings and strategically do things to feel good during hard times.

E: Engagement. This is being an active participant in your life. This means feeling awake and purposeful, being willing to initiate, create, and savor experiences, and getting into a state of flow. In our relationships, engagement means choosing to connect with others.

R: Relationships. This is being able to identify, engage in, and nurture true positive relationships. In positive relationships, those involved want to give to the relationship and the relationship itself offers positive qualities such as quality time, repairing rifts, and validation.

M: Meaning. This is the feeling of connection to something bigger than yourself. Meaning gives us a sense of worth and purpose. Taking action with intention can build meaning. Meaning can contribute to well-being when you can find it in good and bad times.

A: Accomplishment. This is the feeling you get when an attempt to do something feels positive, purposeful, and effective. Feelings of confidence, capability, and fulfillment can come with a sense of accomplishment. To feel accomplishment, build rewarding activities into your life and give yourself the time and space to enjoy the moment of accomplishment.

V: Vitality. Vitality is the feeling of being alive, strong, and healthy in body and mind. Exercise, meditation, sleep, healthy diet, and moments of discovery can bring more vitality to our lives.

PERMA-V Inventory

Which PERMA-V categories do you already nurture in your life through time, money, energy, or any other means?

Which PERMA-V categories have you considered nurturing more or differently?

What do you know about any or all of the PERMA-V categories contribute to your wellbeing?

4 Practices for Flourishing

1. Gratitude

Gratitude is both a feeling and action. Feelings-wise, it entails appreciation and enjoyment of our life circumstances. Action-wise, gratitude entails taking the time to notice and savor that which you appreciate. Researchers find that savoring is one way to continue reaping the benefits of a positive change in your external circumstances.

Gratitude practices include journaling 3 good things every week or more, practicing mental subtraction (what would your life look like without something you value?), saying thank you, writing thank you letters, creating a web of gratitude (looking at all the people and resources that came together to bring you something you value), and affirmations.

Describe a time you recently felt or expressed gratitude:

3 Beautiful Things Exercise

Use this exercise anytime you want to boost your sense of gratitude and awe.

Name 1 beautiful thing you saw in nature today:

Name 1 beautiful man-made thing you saw today:

Name 1 beautiful human act or idea you saw today:

2. Optimism

Optimism is the experience of seeing the future in the best possible light and viewing oneself as having some control in achieving these good things. It is an aspect of personality, so some people are more naturally inclined to be optimistic than others, but everyone can boost their optimism with practice.

Optimism can be practiced by taking time every day to name 3 things you're looking forward to, scheduling things to look forward to, and envisioning your best possible self. Optimism can also be enhanced by looking at positive events as stable and global (i.e., representative of your larger environment) and personal to you (i.e., you had a hand in bringing this good thing about). Studies also show us that reminiscence and sentimental music can boost our sense of optimism.

Looking Forward to List

Name at least one thing you're looking forward to tomorrow.
Name at least one thing you're looking forward to in the next week:
Name at least one thing you're looking forward to in the next month to year:
What do you know about your role in making these experiences possible?

3. Awe

Awe is the feeling that you're in the presence of something vast that challenges your understanding of the world. Nature, art, mind-blowing ideas, impressive feats of strength, and acts of great skill or virtue are all examples of awe-inspiring experiences.

Practice awe by going on an awe walk to notice nature and other beautiful things, visit places, watch videos, read books, and look at images that inspire awe. When you experience awe, slow down and savor it.

All of these experiences can be practiced, and the practice of all is linked to better physical and emotional wellness.

What do you know about where you've felt awe?

4. Values

Your personal values can act as a compass through life. When you're deciding on a path, prioritizing your goals, revamping your self-care, or need to regroup for any reason, knowing your values can help point you in the direction that feels most authentic. Your values may shift over time as you evolve, but you'll likely notice that many of your values have been with you a long time.

Everyone's values are different, and there's no right or wrong. Scan this sample list of values on the next page and choose at least 3 that resonate with you. Alternatively, you can use this list to spark your own values brainstorming session.



Achievement	Depth	Improvement	Presence
Adventure	Determination	Individuality	Progress
Agency	Discernment	Influence	Recognition
Authenticity	Ease	Inspiration	Religion
Authority	Elegance	Integrity	Reputation
Autonomy	Energy	Investigation	Respect
Artistry	Enrichment	Joy	Responsibility
Balance	Emotion	Justice	Security
Beauty	Excitement	Kindness	Self-Love
Boldness	Fairness	Kinship	Self-Knowledge
Bravery	Faith	Knowledge	Self-Respect
Challenge	Fame	Leadership	Service
Character	Freedom	Learning	Spirituality
Citizenship	Friendship	Love	Stability
Compassion	Fun	Loyalty	Success
Communication	Generosity	Mastery	Status
Community	Goodness	Meaning	Teamwork
Competency	Grace	Openness	Togetherness
Contribution	Growth	Optimism	Trustworthiness
Cooperation	Happiness	Peace	Truth
Courage	Honesty	Pleasure	Upliftment
Creativity	Humor	Poise	Wealth
Curiosity	Imagination	Popularity	Wisdom



Any other values come to mind?