

Thriving

Mental Health Mastermind

Notes

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is the study of what traits and behaviors help us flourish and what makes life worth living. From a positive psychology perspective, the goal is to build upon what is good rather than get rid of what isn't working.

The Happiness Equation

Positive psychology research shows us that happiness can be statistically predicted using this formula:

$$10\% \text{ life circumstances} + 50\% \text{ genetics} + 40\% \text{ what you practice} = \text{happiness}$$

This formula is actually REALLY good news. It shows us that we have a lot of room to make improvements in our happiness, even if we're not in the best circumstances.

PERMA-V, the Building Blocks of Flourishing

There are many experiences and behaviors that can help us thrive in life, but all of them can be sorted into this model for flourishing: 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.

University of Arizona Counseling and Psych Services, Mental Health Mastermind

If you're feeling off-balance, do a quick self-test. Is one area of PERMA lacking in your life? How can you bring it back into alignment?

4 Practices for Flourishing

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.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of being awake to the present moment. It is often done through meditation, but any activity in which you focus on your body, your mental state, and your surroundings can be a mindfulness practice. In fact, researchers have found many positive benefits of mindful dishwashing and sweeping! At the heart of mindfulness is the attitude of nonjudgment, openness, and curiosity. This means that whatever arises inside and out during your mindfulness practice is allowed. Treat it with curiosity and be open to learning more about it. Notice any urges to judge it as good or bad.

Mindfulness can be practiced in as little as a minute by simply breathing and focusing on your breath. You can also take mindful walks, mindful meals, and mindful anything's just by allowing yourself to be present with whatever arises.

Mindfulness videos:

[Equanimity Meditation \(Find Calm\)](#)

[Compassion Meditation \(Strengthen Happiness\)](#)

[Forgiving Yourself Meditation \(Heal and Let Go\)](#)

[Gratitude Meditation \(Strengthen Happiness\)](#)

[Safe House Chill Pill for Calm](#)

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.

University of Arizona Counseling and Psych Services, Mental Health Mastermind

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.

Work

Name Your PERMA-V

Explore where in your life you experience the building blocks of flourishing. When you're done, notice where you are strongest and where you could offer yourself more care.

Positive Emotions:
Engagement:
Relationships:
Meaning:
Accomplishment:
Vitality:

Takeaways from this exercise:

Building on Positive Emotions

How do you want your life to feel? List as many good-feeling emotion words as you can.
When do you already feel that way/what gives you that feeling?
How can you create that feeling when you're down?
How often do you act on this?
What stops you from acting on this?

3 Beautiful Things

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:

Looking Forward to List

Use this exercise anytime you need a boost in optimism.

Name 3-5 things you're looking forward to tomorrow.
Name 3-5 things you're looking forward to in the next week:
Name 3-5 things you're looking forward to in the next month:
Name 3-5 things you're looking forward to in the next year:
What is it about you that helps make these experiences possible?