

What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing

“Happiness” is commonly defined as a state of well-being or pleasurable experience, but this notion of happiness is only a small part of positive psychology.

According to Seligman (2002), positive psychology covers 3 main areas: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. These can be summarised as;

Positive Emotion - contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future. A large part of experiencing these emotions is choosing to do so. Begin making a choice to be open-minded and letting in moments of inspiration, joy, and interest, while working to cultivate hope for the future and gratitude for the present. The top 10 Positive Emotions are;

- **Joy** - comes from delightful and cherished experiences, and raises our well-being where we feel light and vibrant.
- **Gratitude** - can revolve around anything you feel great appreciation for.
- **Serenity** - comes from those moments of stillness and calm where you can just “be” in the present moment.
- **Interest** - It’s a state of intrigue and wonder, where you want to know more.
- **Hope** - It’s knowing our current problems aren’t permanent and that the future is still promising despite tough circumstances.
- **Pride** – Emanates from a sense of purpose and meaning in our accomplishments, and offers an increase in confidence to expand the belief in our potential to do greater things.
- **Amusement** - Amusement helps us build connections with others.
- **Inspiration** - Amazing feats of intellect, strength, and agility can lead to inspiration. A moment of inspiration draws us in and really stands out as an instant of excellence.

- **Awe** - feeling wonder and reverence toward something extremely powerful and admired.

- **Love** - a feeling of strong affection and personal attachment, where we have a very positive feeling of connection toward another person.

Positive Individual Traits - strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom.

Positive Institutions - meaning and purpose as well as the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY TOOLS TO ENHANCE WELLBEING

- 3 good things - Before going to bed write about 3 good things that happened that day;
- Best possible self - visualise and write down what it would be like in the future, once all your dreams and goals were fulfilled;
- Counting acts of kindness - note how many times you have observed others being kind either to you or others.
- Identifying and using strengths - Identify your strengths and try to use at least one of your strengths in a new way, every day for a week.

Recommended Readings:

Flourish, Martin E.P Seligman, 2011

Being Happy, Tal Ben-Shahar, 2010

Positivity, Barbara Fredrikson, 2010

Peace is Every Step, Thich Nhat Hanh, 1992