



Course Title:		Positive Psychology and Happiness
Course type:	Degree	Semester and Year
Elective	BA	Fall semester, 2022
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Introduction to Positive Psychology

There's a misconception about positive psychology. Many believe that positive psychology is about being happy all the time, as if it's all sunshine and rainbows.

But those of us who have studied and adopted positive psychology know that you aren't going to be happy 100% of the time -- we're only human.

What positive psychology teaches us, is how to see the bright side of things and turn our problems into opportunities.

It's about focusing on the PROCESS -- simple practices that you can do to help you (and the people around you) not only to feel better, by also to become better.

If you can shift your mindset to take a problem and turn it into an opportunity for growth and experience, it will build up a resilience that allows you to go through adversity and challenges in the future and not just survive but thrive.

Positive psychology believes that being optimistic isn't about being happy all the time. Instead, positive psychology is about being able to weather the storm so that the good stuff outweighs the bad. By adopting a growth mindset when facing life's inevitable challenges, we build resilience and grit. And when we are adopting positive spirit and see life as an ongoing journey, we become much more grateful about our life and we can focus on the process and take responsibility of our life. Positive psychology principles also help us find information more easily, reach our goals faster, find more meaning and purpose in life, and to build better relationships. So positive psychology is not just wearing rose-colored glasses all the time and ignoring reality. It is learning how to shift your perspective by doing something—big or small—that not only makes life look a little sunnier, which helps people live a fuller and braver life.

Course Information

Prerequisite	Introduction to Psychology
Course Objectives	The course is dedicated to the study of main concepts in positive psychology like: happiness, wellbeing, flow, mindfulness, creativity, spirituality etc. and their role in psychological health. Understanding these concepts helps students finally shift away from disease model in psychology and focus on the role of positive concepts in overall psychological and physical health
Course Description	<p>Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the individual characteristics and environmental conditions that allow human beings to flourish. This course takes an empirical and experiential approach to helping individuals understand and use course content to enhance their lives. Topics covered include happiness and well-being, positive emotions and thinking, character strengths and virtues, motivation, and self-control.</p> <p>Course Learning Outcomes</p> <p>After successful completion of the course, the student will be able to: Identify the aim and scope of positive psychology Demonstrate the distinction between positive psychology principles and other theoretical principles of psychology Acquire insight into their own strengths and virtues and learn strategies to increase their happiness and overall quality of life Evaluate and understand the dimensions of subjective well-being and the application to their lives Experience a stable increase in happiness, as a result of practicing the happiness inducing techniques discussed in class and in the readings Demonstrate research skills that supports the principles, strategies, and skills of positive.</p>
Teaching Methods	The course will include frontal teaching, discussions, group activities, presentations, and guest lectures.
Attendance	Mandatory attendance policy.
Grading	Exercises – 60% (every assignment, 6 points. Final assignment 30 points) Final exam – 40%

Course Plan – Review of Topics by Week

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Subject 1	Positive psychology -An Introduction - course overview, syllabus Assignments	
Subject 2	Why was it Born? What are its origins??	Seligman, M. E. P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive Psychology. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55, 5-14. Assignment 1 – gift 1 or 2
Subject 4	Happiness and (Subjective) Well-being - PERMA model of PW	Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M. & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 9, 111-131 https://positivepsychology.com/happiness
Subject 5	Your Emotions and You	Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. <i>The Royal Society</i> , 1367-1377. Assignment 2 – gift 3 or 4
Subject 6	Stress – what it is and how to make it your friend	
Subject 7	Happiness and choice	Assignment 3 – gift 5
Subject 8	Emotional intelligence	Assignment 4 -gift 6 or 7
Subject 9	Positive Psychology goes to school	Seligman MEP, Ernst RM, Gillham J, Reivich K, Linkins M. Positive education: positive psychology and classroom interventions. <i>Oxford Rev Educ</i> . 2009; 35: 293–311.
Subject 10	Positive Psychology goes to work	Steger, M. F., & Dik, B. J. (2010). Work as meaning. In Linley, P. A., Harrington, S., & Page, N. (Eds.), <i>Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work</i> (pp.131-142). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Positive psychology at work. Assignment 5 – gift 8
Subject 11	Kindness, Compassion & Encouragement from Buddhist Perspective – helping others to be happy - Guest lecture	Kornfield, J. (2009). <i>The wise heart: A guide to the universal teachings of Buddhist psychology</i> . Bantam.
Weeks 12-13	TBD – class presentations	Final assignment

Bibliography – not mandatory

Brickman, P., and others (1978). Lottery Winners and Accidents victims: Is Happiness Relative? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36, 917-927.

Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I. & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 1-44.

Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and Its Role in Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (4), 822-848

Callaghan, P. (2004). Exercise: a neglected intervention in mental health care? *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 11, 476-483

Diener, E. & Seligman, M.E.P., (2002) Very Happy People, *Psychological Science*, 13, 80-83.

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 88, 377-389.

Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A. & Asher, E. R. (2004). What Do You Do When Things Go Right? The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Benefits of Sharing Positive Events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 228-245.

Fredrickson, B. L., Branigan, C. (2005) Positive Emotions broaden the Scope of Attention and Thought-action Repertoires. *Cognition and Emotion*, 19, 313-332.

Gable, S. L. & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and Why) Is Positive Psychology? *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 103-110.

Gilbert, D. T., Pinel, E. C., Wilson, T. D., Blumberg, S. J., & Wheatley, T. P. (1998). Immune Neglect: A Source of Durability Bias in Affective Forecasting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 617-638.

Kahneman, D., Krueger, A. B., Schkade, D., Schwartz, N. & Stone, A. A. (2006). Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion. *Science*, 312, 1908-1910.

Park, N., Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. E. P., (2004) Strengths of Character and well-being. *Journal of social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 603-619.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. Chapter 3, 12-28. Guilford Publications.

Peterson, C., Park, N., Seligman, M. E. (2005) Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The full Life Vs. The Empty Life, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6, 25-41

Vaillant, G. E. (2000) Adaptive mental mechanisms: Their Role in Positive Psychology. *American Psychologist*, 55, 89-98

Course Assignments

General instruction:

The course contains 5 assignments and a final assignment. Each assignment is independent of the others. There us some choice in choosing assignments. In each assignment the active experience is as important as writing your thoughts down. The process of the experience is not less important than the result. Feel free to stick with an assignment if it's significant and effective in your experience (and continue doing the same one, for as long as you can learn from it and it opens you up to other good experiences). In other words, you may do the same assignments a few times, for you personal purposes. In the case where an assignment has a negative or paradoxical effect, you can of course, stop it at any time and jump to the next assignment.

You must hand in the assignment every 2 weeks.

The assignments will be sent by turned in through MAMA, with a heading of the number and name of the assignment.

There are no restrictions regarding the length, but we recommend writing at least, one page. Writing style can be free and not necessarily academic.

You may choose to write the assignments in a structured academic manner. If you choose so, please indicate it and keep the regular rules of references, citations etc.

The assignments (gifts):



1. Three daily blessings: Before going to bed, write about three good things that happened to you that day. Reflect on those good things by answering the following questions:

1. Why did this good thing happen and what does it mean to you?
2. What lessons have you learned from reflecting on this good thing?
3. How did you or others contribute to this good thing happening? Try doing this every day for a week and notice how you feel?



2. The gift of joy: Pay attention to something that causes spontaneous joy (especially a sensory one). Try not to judge it as meaningful, healthy or lasting. Do try to give an extra attention to it, to point it out, to take a picture of it (mental or real), share it, keep it or put it on your favorites list and by doing so making the joy more pleasurable or even expand a bit the duration and satisfaction of your joy.



3. Flow/Involvement: Find one experience or few of them that you are totally immersed in. So immersed that time, judgment and ego, move aside and you are totally in the moment without losing energy, even though it might entails a great effort on your part (i.e. jogging) It can be an activity (sculpting, painting, water skiing) or passive (standing under your shower head during a shower, reading a book, watching a movie), It can be a special experience (making love) or a very common one (breathing, walking), It can be an activity that you know well and that demands skill (programming, building) or an automatic activity that only after have done it you realize an hour has gone by (for instance – driving). Describe the experience and that made it possible for you.



4. The gift of growth: Each one of us has experiences of pain, sad events and suffering in our lives. Make time in your week to write about that time or event in an open manner, freely and as associatively as possible, without keeping in mind wording, grammar, restraints or wisdom. Describe what happened – how you felt

about it then and how you feel about it today. How it affected you? What lesson you took from it? In what aspects did you grow from it? What more can you learn from it today? Since you hand in a very brief paper you want to focus on the growth elements.



5. Gift of gratitude/ appreciation:

It's probably one of the most well-known positive psychology interventions. The world's leading expert on gratitude, Robert Emmons (<https://youtu.be/8964envYh58>), defines gratitude as:

" A felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life."

Gratitude is a great buffer against negative emotions such as envy, hostility, worry, and irritation. It involves a focus on the present moment and appreciating what is instead of focusing on what could be. People who are frequently grateful are:

- Happier;
- More energetic;
- More hopeful;
- Experience more frequent positive emotions.

Choose a man/woman who had a significant impact in your life, someone who went out of their way to help or support you, or someone you feel very blessed to have in your life, write a gratitude letter to that person. Express your appreciation as detailed as possible but make sure to stay genuine. State in detail what he or she did and express your appreciation in concrete terms.

Then, if possible, arrange so that you can read the letter out loud to that person, either on a special day or just a random one. As part of my Executive Masters in Positive Psychology, we did all the positive psychology interventions and found that this was one of the most powerful.

After, reflect on:

- The impact the exercise had;
- How you felt while you were doing it;
- How you felt after the exercise and how long it lasted;
- How you are going to continue your gratitude practice.



6. The gift of praise: Choose a friend in one of the groups that you are a part of (school, work, family, volunteer, neighborhood, sports). Preferably, one that doesn't stand out, excel or receives praise regularly. Find time and praise him about his positive contribution personally or to the group (family, manager, etc.). Try to pick praise that is true and authentic.



7. The gift of kindness: Be kind, friendly and pleasant in the most unexpected place. For example: the next time you have to take care of a bureaucratic issue, after you have been delayed and angered, or cut in line, try to be nice and understanding, by for example – try asking how the service giver is doing, express empathy for the overload in his work, thanks to him for showing interest and taking the time to do his job

properly. Don't forget the time restraints and the purpose of your visit. Describe what happened after your words of kindness.



8. The gift of designing a beautiful day: Who doesn't want to design a beautiful day for themselves? This exercise is not only fun for most clients, but it also carries a double impact: the planning of the near-perfect day, and the actual experience of the near-perfect day.

Think about what a beautiful day means to you.

What do they love to do? What do they enjoy that they haven't had a chance to do recently? What have you always wanted to do but have never tried?

These questions can help you discover what constitutes a beautiful day to you. Here are some tips:

1. Some alone time is fine, but try to involve others for at least part of the day.
2. Include the small details that you are looking forward to in your plan, but don't plan out your entire day. Leave some room for spontaneity!
3. Break your usual routine and do something different, whether it's big or small.
4. Be aware that your beautiful day will almost certainly not go exactly as planned, but it can still be beautiful!
5. Use mindfulness on your beautiful day to soak in the simple pleasures you will experience throughout the day.

Testing Format: Multiple choice questions

Test Duration: 90 minutes

Testing material Aids Allowed: None

