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The Non-Clinical Benefits of Positive Psychology

"There is the potential for relief indefinitely;
we do not know of any ending point to the amount of
clarity, and adventure, and joy, and well-being, it is an
*unlimited thing."*

-Abraham-Hicks-

The roots of positive psychology are enriched with the potential to craft and nurture a life of satisfaction, resilience and well-being free from dependence on clinical and medicinal interventions. Such concepts and applications of non clinical positive psychology can be explored in detail below.

Should you wish to read further into the potential of positive emotion in a non clinical setting we would recommend you read Barbara Fredrickson's paper:

"The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions".

A nice review is given of the broaden-and-build theory itself alongside consideration of the role positive emotions play in strengthening an individual's personal resources.
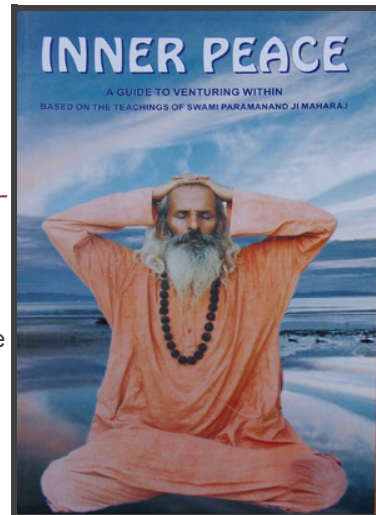
Page Breakdown

History

- *History within psychology*
- *A brief history of happiness and fulfillment*

Three key Readings

- *Education*
- *Human Flourishing*
- *Positive Psychology in Society*

Non-Clinical Applications

History

History within psychology.

The non clinical benefits of positive psychology finds its roots within humanistic psychology of the 20th century with the likes of Maslow, Rogers & Fromm (Froh 2004). Many psychologists where unhappy with the 'disease model' that drives a great deal of psychology, they believed that everyone has the tendency to strive for perceptual growth and development (Hall 2003). The focus had changed, it was no longer fully on mental illness but on increasing happiness, fulfillment, contentment with life and other positive phenomena such as love and courage. Humanistic psychologists took a holistic approach believing in human potential, spirituality and self-actualization. There was a turn away from the more traditional views and towards a more existentialism and phenomenological approach to understanding human behaviour, a man is more than just the sum of his parts and must be studied as a whole. This view stretches back further than the Humanists and can be found at the beginning of modern psychology with the likes of William James. He argued that to study human functioning one must also consider the subjective experience of the individual.

A brief history of happiness and fulfillment

The history of positive psychology goes back further than humanistic psychology of the 20th century.

It can find its roots in a variety of contexts, from religious principles and beliefs to the ancient Greek schools of thought and, cultural changes during the period of Renaissance in Europe (Carr 2004).

Judaism and Christianity promote happiness through the divine command theory whereby acting on the commands of the divine you are rewarded with happiness. The commands of the divine are found in semantics of ethical sentences, where propositions are expressed reflecting the views and commands of god. Buddhism teaches the Buddha's four noble truths, one of which is Noble Eightfold path. This path promotes the cessation of suffering through the achievement of self-awakening. There were various ways In which self-awakening could be achieved one of them being through Right Mindfulness; mindfulness is a practice that is used in positive psychology today with evidence of non-clinical benefits in stress reduction (Williams, Kolar, Reger, & Pearson, 2001)

Part of mindfulness is enjoying the simplest things, this is one of the teaching of the Epicureans for the path to happiness. Other teachings of the Greek Schools of thoughts propose different views on how

to achieve happiness, fulfilment and contentment. In a similar way to Buddhism and self-awakening Socrates advocated happiness through self-knowledge. The Stoics take a different view of the path to happiness; they believed that you can remain happy if you stay objective and reasonable.

A slightly different insight into the origins of positive psychology is to look at changes in culture in terms of art and creativity during the Renaissance. During this time there were many advances; the discovery of the 'New World' by Columbus, a 'Scientific Revolution' through the likes of Vesalius, Galileo and through the work of Leonardo Da Vinci during the early Renaissance where art and science where interwoven (Merrimen 2010). These advances lead to a change in thought where individualism and creativity was praised, work produced such as the Architecture of St Peters Basilica by the combined efforts of Bramante, Michelangelo , Raphael and others was no longer seen as work by mere craftsmen but that of artists. This shift gave way for a time of self-awakening and the expression of emotions, thoughts and feelings that could bring about a sense of fulfilment and joy that was accessible to more than the teachings of Buddhism.

If you were only going to read 3 things, what would they be?

When considering the non-clinical benefits of positive psychology, it is appreciably difficult to narrow this down to 3 key articles, due to the far-reaching nature of the term 'non-clinical'. It has been decided herein that 'non-clinical' encompasses educational, health and societal domains; each of which is integrally important to an individual's wellbeing; as such, an article from each of these three domains will be selected as representing an overarching account of non-clinical applications of positive psychology.

Education

In my opinion, any prediction of the future beyond a 5-year horizon has to be extremely qualified – to be taken more as a stimulus to one's imagination than as a statement of actual expected outcomes. That being said, there can be little doubt that education will have to change very soon – or all of us are going to be in deep trouble

-Csikzszentmil 2009-

Education in 2025: How Positive Psychology can Revitalize Education. Knoop (2011) in S. I. Donaldson, M. Csikszentmihalyi, & J. Nakamura (Eds). *Applied Positive Psychology , pp97-115.* **New York/Hove: Routledge**

There are several hypotheses, based on years of psychological, social and political research, put forth by Knoop (2011) in an attempt to acknowledge the importance of positive psychology in education:

1. The more *physically* and *mentally* healthy learners are, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

2. The more *autonomy* and *control over their own situation* that learners experience while learning, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

3. The better *role models for learning and creativity* that teachers are (i.e., the most curious, innovative, socially caring, and technically skilled teachers are), the more learners will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

4. The more *intrinsically motivated* learners are (i.e., the more they enjoy learning), the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to the greater good.

5. The more *positivity* – specifically joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love – learners experience in their lives, the more they will lear n, they more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

6. The more of an *attractive future* learners see for themselves, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

7. The better the teaching matches the *intellectual strengths* (talents/intelligences) of learners, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

8. The better the teaching matches the *character strengths* of learners, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

9. The better the teaching matches the *preferred styles* of learners, the more they will learn the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

10. The more *aesthetically rich and sense stimulating* the learning environment is, the more the

learners will learn, the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

11. The more teaching and learning resemble a journey of discovery in which the individual learner plays the main character, the more learners will learn, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

12. The more *creative* learners are allowed to be, the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be contribute to the greater good.

13. The more *authentically, socially connected* learners are, they more they will learn, the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

14. The more learners experience a *combination of being socially differentiated, unique individuals (who are thus potentially interesting to others) and socially integrated/authentically connected members of a community (which thereby can function),* the more they will learn, the more inclined they will be for further learning, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.
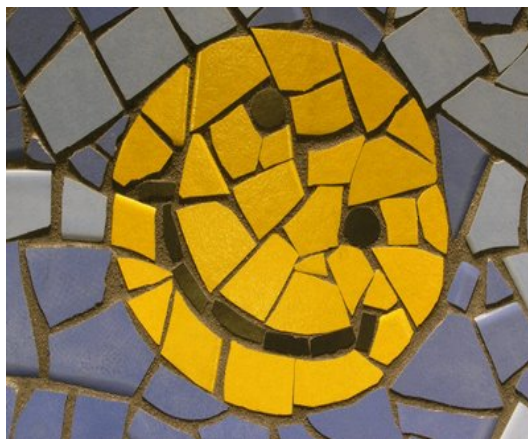
15. The more learners experience a combination of *positive support and positive challenge*, The more they will learn, the more inclined they will be to learn further, and the more inclined they will be to contribute to the greater good.

These 15 hypotheses highlight the importance of positive psychological principles to education.

Physically and mentally healthy…	*Creative learners…*	*Autonomy and control over their own situation…*
Character strengths…	*Authentically socially connected…*	*Combination of positive support and positive challenge…*
Attractive future…	*Role models for learning and creativity…*	*Journey of discovery…*
Combination of being socially differentiated, unique individuals and socially integrated/authentically connected members of a community…	*Positivity…*	*Intellectual strengths…*
Intrinsically motivated…	*Preferred styles…*	*Aesthetically rich and sense stimulating…*

Human Flourishing

Happiness Unpacked: Packed Emotions Increases Life Satisfaction by Building Resilience
Cohn,Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels & Conway (2009) *Emotion, 9,* 361-368.

Cohn et al.'s study highlights the non-clinical impact of positive psychology in an investigation into the impact of positive emotions on resilience building. The broaden and build theory suggests that positive emotions help people build lasting resources through broadening one's awareness and encouraging novel, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. To test this hypothesis, Cohen et al. measured emotions daily for one month in a sample of 86 university students and assessed life satisfaction and trait resilience at the beginning and end of the month. It was found that positive emotions predicted increases in both resilience and life satisfaction. Negative emotions had weak or null effects and did not interfere with the benefits of positive emotions. Positive emotions were also found to mediate the relation between baseline and final resilience, but life satisfaction did not suggesting that it is in-the-moment positive emotions, and not more general positive evaluations of one's life that form the link between happiness and desirable life outcomes. It was found that change in resilience mediated the relation between positive emotions and increased life satisfaction, suggesting that happy people become more satisfied not simply because they feel better but because they develop resources for living well.

Positive Psychology in Society

**Subjective Well-Being and Peace. Diener &
Tov (2007)** *Journal of Social Issues, 63,*
421-440.

Will a happy citizenry create more peace?
Although it is often assumed that peace
establishes the conditions for happiness,
Diener and Tov (2007) investigated the
possibility that increasing happiness fosters
or sustains the conditions for peace. In this
study the relationship between person-level
subjective well-being (SWB) and peace-
relevant attitudes as determined across
nations by the World Values Survey (WVS)
was measured. Data was obtained from the
1995 and 1999/2000 waves of the WVS, and
had a final data set of 51, 929 adults from
51 nations. It was found that personal level
SWB was associated with more confidence in
the government and armed forces, greater
emphasis on post-materialist values such as
autonomy and self-expression, and stronger
support for democracy. Further SWB was
associated with less intolerance of immigrants and racial groups suggesting a role of positive
emotions in trust and cooperation. The authors suggest that SWB is not only a by-product of peace,
but a crucial element in sustaining peace over time. SWB is posited as a critical base for a culture of
peace. This relates to Phil Hanlon's lecture on wellbeing and provides evidence on a global scale for
the importance of wellbeing beyond material wealth.

Non-Clinical Application of Positive Psychology

Education

> *"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his
> attitudes of mind."*

> *-William
> James-*

A parent's primary hope for their children is wellbeing; in disharmony with this is a decrease in the age
of onset of depression into adolescence and reports of 20% of individuals experiencing an episode of

clinical depression by the time of completing their high school education. (Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham & Seligman, 1994).

Positive psychology purports to maintain the emphasis of traditional education on accomplishment, success and discipline but also use the widespread outreach capabilities of education to improve the life satisfaction and wellbeing of pupils alongside enhancing learning and creative thought. (Fredrickson, 2001).

School based wellbeing programmes claim to have the capacity to:

- Promote skills and strengths valued by most parents
- Produce measurable improvements in wellbeing and behaviour
- Facilitate engagement in learning and achievement.

Penn Resiliency Programme (PRP)

Aimed at primary and high school students, PRP is based on the Ellis' Adversity-Consequence-Belief Model (beliefs regarding events mediate their impact on our emotions and behaviour).

PRP is often delivered via 12 90-minute lessons, using a variety of methods including role play, short story and skits to introduce core concepts such as assertiveness, negotiation, social problem solving and relaxation followed by discussion of how such skills could be applied to everyday life. Lessons are then consolidated with set homework to use the learnt skills in the up and coming week.

PRP aims to instil the propensity to detect inaccurate thoughts, evaluate the accuracy of such thoughts and challenge negative beliefs via alternative interpretations which can be applied to both family/peer relationships and academic work.

> *Research*
>
> PRP has been evaluated in several controlled studies with more than 2000 children and adolescents aged between 8 and 15. Such studies have shown to offer increased prevention of depression and anxiety, with some studies showing endurance of prevention for up to two years. Gillman however found significant prevention of depression, anxiety and adjustment disorder diagnoses across a two year follow up with individuals with only high but not low baseline symptoms. A study focussing on the long term effects on externalized behavioural problems also found significant preventative effects on disruptive behaviours up to 36 months post intervention. (Brunwass & Gillham, 2008)

Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum (SHPPC)

The Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum is considered a more comprehensive system of positive education combining the resilience education of PRP with character strength development including work on relationships, positive emotion and applying positive meaning to actions.

The SHPPC curriculum consists of at least 20 80-minute classes to discuss character strengths and other positive psychology skills. Like PRP inclass activities (including the Three Good Things Exercise and Use Signature Strengths in a New Way) and applied homework are used to instill the key skills of each class alongside the introduction of a personal journal for reflection throughout the course of the class.

The key goals of the programme are to assist students to identify their signature character strengths and apply these in daily life and in turn promote resilience, positive emotion, meaning and purpose and maintenance of positive social relationships.

> *Research*
>
> A large scale randomized controlled evaluation of the SHPPC was conducted at Strath Haven High School including 347 students aged 14 to 15 years. Blind rating teachers identified improvement in the strengths of curiosity, love of learning and creativity in students who received the SHPCC. Student enjoyment and engagement in school was also seen to increase including grade inflation with almost all students receiving A grades by their honor years, this crucially indicates that increasing wellbeing does not have to undermine the traditional goals of education but can in fact enhance them.
>
> Social skills were also seen to improve according to both mother and blind teacher reports particularly with regard to empathy, cooperation, assertiveness, self-control and reduced bad conduct. (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009)

Case Study of a positive infused school: Geelong Grammar School

In 2008 the University of Pennsylvania attempted to imbed an entire school with positive psychology, one hundred members of the school staff were comprehensively trained in PRP both for personal use and academic application to the curriculum. Several key figures in positive psychology from the university remained in residence at the school for a year accompanied by frequent visiting scholars in order to maintain the education and application of PRP.

In Geelong Grammar positive psychology is not only taught as a standalone class but is embedded into all aspects of the curriculum from physical to religious education. English teachers are encouraged to discuss novels in relation to character signature strengths, resilience to build optimism on a performance that did not go well is advocated in music lessons and the chapel daily discuss scriptural passages of courage, forgiveness and persistence.

The work at Geelong Grammar School is not a controlled experiment so Seligman has offered nothing more than a before and after case of perceived high morale and optimism transcending through the staff and pupils. Geelong Grammar does however stand as evidence of the potential for positive psychology to be an integral part of education and youth development. (Seligman, 2011)

<u>The future of positive education</u>

Concerns have been raised that positive education will distract from academic achievement and is based on a weak bank of research with little regard to the realities of funding in widespread education. The first of these concerns has been largely addressed by the existing research investigating current positive education schemes. The feasibility of nationwide application however appears to have been given minimal consideration.

Seligman states as economic prosperity reduces it is time to take notice of the potential of a new prosperity advocating wellbeing and personal development. Following his thoughts the next generation will best psychologically prosper if the required skills are instilled systematically from an early point such as the formative years of education. (University of Pennsylvania web resource, 2012)

Resources

- ***An Interview with Martin Seligman discussing positive education***
- ***Geelong Grammar School website (section on positive curriculum)***

Military

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

-Winston Churchill-

Military forces in both the UK and the USA face increasingly complex challenges. Soldiers are engaged in operations of indefinite duration in extreme climates exposing them to sleep deprivation, cultural dissonance, prolonged separation from family and the strong threat of serious bodily injury or death. More than 70% of US soldiers have been exposed to a severely traumatic event whilst in operation in Iraq or Afghanistan reflected in ever increasing rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide rates reaching a 28 year high (Hoge, Castro, & Koffman, 2004)

The traditional approach of the military to psychological welfare was a reactive one of screening/detection and treatment. In a time of such persistent conflict the US Army has recognised the need to move from such a treatment centric approach towards prevention and the enhancement of psychological strengths and resiliency bringing positive psychology into the army to develop a strengths based resiliency programme (Casey, 2011).

<u>The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Programme (CSF)</u>

The vision of the CSF programme is to become the primary means of developing psychologically resilient soldiers, family members and Army civilians. CSF hopes to change army culture of stigmatising behavioural health (54% believe receiving psychological assistance would harm their career) to soldiers holding psychological health in the same high esteem physical health is held.

CSF is a long term integrative training programme intended to the span the career of each soldier with four key stages.

1. **Assessment**

   The assessment process of CSF aims to measure emotional, social, family and spiritual fitness using the Global Assessment Tool (GAT).

   The GAT is an online tool that has been proposed to be used for reassessment at least every two years of an individual soldier's career to personally document growth, maturity and learning.

   The GAT is capable of providing feedback and in turn suggesting future paths for further self-development.

2. **Universal Resilience Training**

   From initial entry into the army CSF soldiers receive instruction on skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to enhance emotional, social and spiritual resilience in both their personal

and professional lives.

The resilience training is applied progressively and maintained at all levels of professional development in order to ensure full integration into army ethos.

3. **Individual Training**

Individual training is based on GAT identified psychological strengths with appropriate self-development opportunities offered.

All training tools are constantly monitored and adjusted to ensure relevance. Both live and virtual training tools are in the process of being developed to add to the individual strengths training programme.

4. **Master Resiliency Training**

Non Commissioned Officers have been given advanced training in building the emotional and physical skills of enhanced resilience in order to ensure resilience is developed and maintained in every individual unit including civilian positions and family members.

Master Resiliency Training aims to ensure CSF in integrated into every aspect of military training and developed throughout the working lifespan (Casey, 2011)

Post Traumatic Growth and Positive Psychology

Post traumatic growth is a much less understood counterpart to Post traumatic stress disorder that has been documented in relation to an array of human and natural traumatic events including war. Post Traumatic Growth can be understood in terms of suffering and distress yielding future positive change. In a sample of U.S soldiers a striking 78% had never previously heard of PTG. As focus is often placed on the potential negative outcomes of conflict, soldiers need to receive a more complete education of the psychological consequences of combat (T edeschi, & McNally, 2011) .

CSF offers a means to understand and predict the correlates of PTG and develop a psychological fit and resilient armed force.

Resources

- ***U.S Army site dedicated to Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Programme***
- ***Special Issue of the American Psychologist dedicated to CSF***

A short film created by the U.S Army introducing the CSF programme

Organisational Change

"Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change".

The climate of the corporate world is becoming ever more severe and convoluted. For organisations to maintain success and continue to competitively prosper they must become adaptive and receptive to change. Positive psychology challenges the common view of individuals as resistant to change and advocates the resourceful and adaptive capacity of human nature seen in everyday growth as a product of increased positive affect.

Increased positive affect has been found to have several benefits to employees including:

- Expanded and broader scopes of attention

- Increased openness to new experience and exploration

- Flexible and creative thought

- Promotion of knowledge accumulation and capacity to deal with intellectual complexity.

- Increased optimism resulting in greater self-confidence and tenacity (Fredrickson, 1998).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry is a practical and direct method of facilitating organisational change based on practical intervention. AI focuses on the social and human aspects of organisational change in contrast to the logical-rational approach of previous actions for change research.

AI and positive psychology share an understanding and belief in the power of positive emotion to facilitate and maintain change.

"Put most simply it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose..."

-Cooperrider, (founder of AI)-

Once organisations have clearly defined the specific areas requiring inquiry four key stages are applied.

1. Discovery

A large scale inquiry is made into individuals' experiences of the organisation focussing on positive experience in order to identify a positive workplace core. These positive aspects are discussed and then used to discuss further positive change that could be made to sister areas that are not so successful.

2. Dream

A vision of the future is built with all members of the organisation. The vision of the future is based on consumer expectation, what the positive core of organisation suggests could be achieved and what the most exciting possibilities for the future are.

3. Design

The positive core is used to design practices and policies likely to build towards the organisations vision of the future, aiming to craft an organisation based on its core positive skills.

4. Destiny

The final phase is the application of the designed initiatives and plans for change. This stage encourages individuals at all levels of the organisation to take steps towards continued development in the areas of the future plan they are most passionate about in order to maintain progress.

The Appreciative Cycle
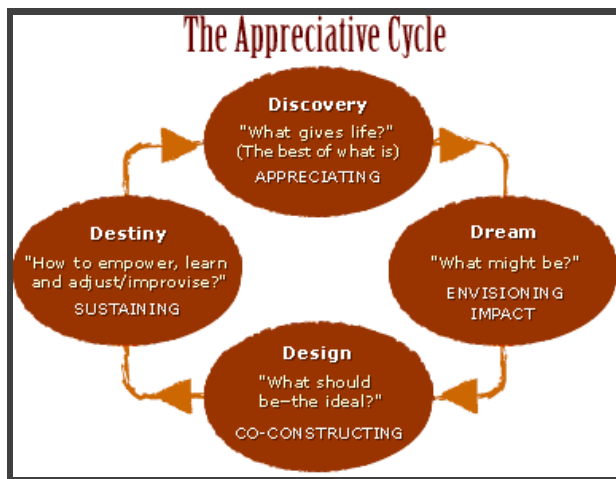
Appreciative Inquiry draws on many of the insights of positive psychology to stimulate members of an organisation to embrace change by focusing on their own personal strengths and the core strengths of the organisation. To date AI has been applied to a range of corporate organisations including British Airways and Nokia (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore 2007).

Resource

- ***An online portal dedicated to Appreciative Inquiry Resources***

Practical Exercises for Non-Clinical Benefits

There is an infinite list of non-clinical activities that can be practised to derive positive benefits, including laughter yoga and gratitude exercises.

Laughter Yoga

'A laugh a day keeps the doctor away'- Chew 2001

It is widely acknowledged that laughter can relieve negative symptoms, stress and depression, whilst enhancing wellbeing and quality of life (Mahony et al 2002; Chew 2001; Cousins 1989; Berk et al 1989). Hence, it is no surprise that laughter yoga is becoming an increasingly popular activity. Established in 1955 by Madan Kataria, there is now more than 6000 laughter clubs worldwide, with even schools, prisons, and businesses applying this positive technique (laughteryoga.org; Beckman et al 2007). Hence, it is easily accessible and can be practised by anyone, regardless of age or mental state (Robbins 2006; Folkman & Nathan 2004; schooloflaughteryoga.com). Laughter yoga is based on the idea that real and pretend laughter cannot be distinguished by the human body yet they have equal benefits (Mora-Ripoll 2011). Initially, self-generated laughter may be somewhat forced, particularly without presence of humour or comedy. However, on the principle of contagious emotion, it can quickly spread between group members, escalating into genuine, heart-felt laughter (Goleman et al 2002).

The American School of Laughter Yoga (2011) suggests various methods to generate such laughter, including five classic techniques: pretend you are on the phone and laugh into receiver; raise arms, lift head and laugh right from deep in your heart; feign a smile, gently laugh, and slowly increase both volume and speed; greet people by using laughter instead of words; or imagine an awkward social situation and laugh.

Traditional yoga breathing and stretching combined with the laughter techniques, creates physiological change including increased blood and oxygen flow, better circulation, more relaxed muscles, and a reduction in stress hormones (Breyer et al 2011; Colom et al 2011; Folkman & Nathan 2004). Recent research has started to confirm the suspected benefits from these changes- including less stress-related disease; increased social connectedness (Colom et al 2011; Delaney 2007); more positive emotion including higher increases in laughter group life satisfaction compared to control group (Shahidi & Mojtahed 2011); increases in personal efficacy beliefs, morale and resilience in workplace laughter (Beckman et al 2007); and reductions in perceived levels of stress (Chaya et al 2008). However, majority

of information on laughter yoga is website and organisation based; there is very limited empirical, un-biased evidence, stimulating a need for greater research.

Organisations such as Joyworks run laughter yoga workshops in Glasgow, Stirling and Edinburgh- a positive first step, for anyone interested in practising this activity. Further details can be found at: **http://www.joyworks.co.uk/public-events/**.

Gratitude

'He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has'- Epictetus

Individuals who feel nervous or apprehensive about laughter yoga may want to try a more private activity. For example, the practise of gratitude- acknowledging things of value in life, particularly received from others (Emmons & Mishra 2011). Despite many positive outcomes, it is often not an immediate response for humans, beaten by feelings of resentment or entitlement (Emmons & Mishra 2011). To overcome this pattern, there is a large number of simple gratitude exercises that can be conducted, including:

- Spend 15 minutes a week remembering past occasions where somebody did something that you felt grateful for, and then writing but not sending a letter to that individual (Seligman 2005)

- Make a list every evening of things you are currently grateful for, perhaps 3-5 things, such as family, friends, or a good cup of tea. This will gradually build up over time and if noted in a diary, allows you to read over them and reinforce them (Wood et al 2010).

- Write thank you notes or practise saying thank you to people in a meaningful way (Sansone & Sansone 2010).

Activities such as these may make changes to the brain, altering neuronal firing patterns in a positive way (Greenberg et al 2011). Research suggests that gratitude is related to lower depression and anxiety, due to mechanism of positive emotion (Lambert et al 2011; Rosmarin et al 2010) and can increase happiness and wellbeing if there is commitment to the activity (Lyubomirsky et al 2011; Wood et al 2011).

Aside from laughter yoga or gratitude, there are many other activities which can help to increase happiness and meaning in life. Two websites that are a good place to start are: 1.) **http://diyhappiness.co.uk** - including daily tips, ranging from smiling at strangers or starting some meaningful volunteering, to physical and mental exercises and exploring new places; and 2.) **http://www.actionforhappiness.org** – with suggestions such as noticing the world around you and continuously learning new things. With such a huge array of suggestions, there is bound to be a suitable, non-clinical activity to increase your happiness!

Critique of Non-Clinical Positive Psychology

This section will cover some criticisms of non-clinical psychology. It must be noted that non-clinical psychology essentially covers all of positive psychology, as even those therapies invented for clinical

cases could be applied to the non-clinical population and may gain results. As it such a broad area it will not be discussed in whole, but a few areas will be critiqued, namely Seligman's theories of Happiness and Wellbeing, and breifly Optimism.

Authentic Happiness/Wellbeing Theory

One of Seligman's focal theoretical contributions to Positive Psychology was 'Authentic Happiness' which he deemed to arise from Positive Emotion (comfort, ecstasy etc), Engagement (flow) and Meaning (e.g. duties). This was focused on the non-clinical population and was essentially an attempt at defining what leads to happiness. He believed that people lived their lives focussed on one of these constructs, so someone who aimed for positive emotion was living 'the pleasant life', someone who aimed for flow enjoyed 'the engaged life' and someone who aimed for meaning was living 'the meaningful life'. However Seligman was later challenged by one of his students who discussed with him that people often do things just for the sake of it, such as competing just to win.
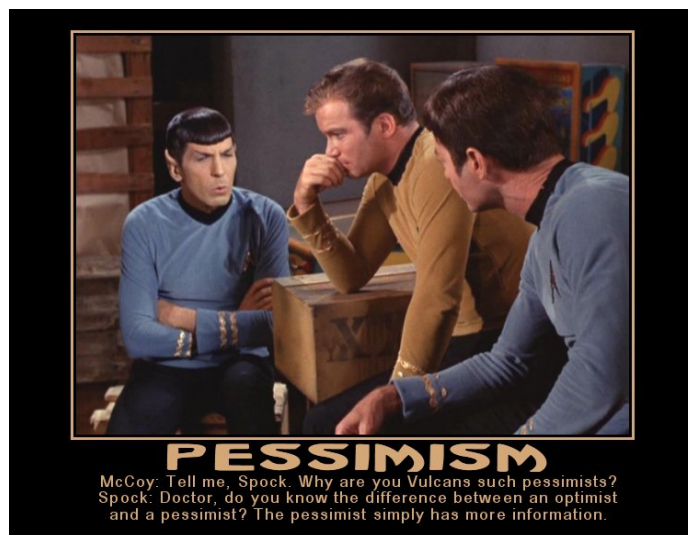
He subsequently changed this theory to Wellbeing Theory and added two more constructs, so there was now: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning & Accomplishment (P.E.R.M.A). Each element was defined as contributing to wellbeing, being pursued for its own sake, and defined and measured independently to the others. There were also 24 strengths underpinning each construct, whereas in the authentic happiness theory they had only underpinned engagement. Seligman defined these constructs in order to bring about some direction, so people would know what should be aimed for to bring about happiness.

Richard Layard is a general supporter of Seligman however he criticises Seligman's individualistic view and says "We will never achieve a better life for all of us unless we each take more trouble about the wellbeing of others." Empathy is thus cited as an example where Seligman thinks individualistically; he views empathy as good for the person who feels it rather than the person they feel it for. This is a good criticism, as if we only pursue our own wellbeing or happiness and have no consideration for others that could easily lead to more problems in society rather than reducing them. For example, a psychopath does not need encouragement to put themselves first, disregarding the happiness or importance of others . Seligman certainly does not promote psychopathic behaviour, but neither does he distinctly discuss the importance of group happiness, which is a flaw.

Optimism

Positive psychology is probably most often misconceived as being about forcing optimism, so it may seem as though this would be an obvious area to critique. However, although it is encouraged and studies have associated happiness with subsequent success (Lyubomirsky et al 2005), positive psychology does acknowledge that there is a place for negative emotions. From an evolutionary perspective, this is obvious; ignoring fear would result in death from predation.

Second, positive thinking urges positivity on us for all times and places, but positive psychology does not. Positive psychology recognizes that in spite of the advantages of positive thinking, there are times when negative or realistic thinking is appropriate. Studies find that optimism is associated with better health, performance, longevity, and social success (Seligman, 1991; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005), but there is evidence that in some situations negative thinking leads to more accuracy and being accurate can have important consequences (Alloy, Abramson, & Chiara, 2000)

PESSIMISM
McCoy: Tell me, Spock. Why are you Vulcans such pessimists?
Spock: Doctor, do you know the difference between an optimist and a pessimist? The pessimist simply has more information.

In General

Positive Psychology is not as evidentially based as other areas of psychology such as neuropsychology, and that is because emotions are subjective and almost impossible to measure. The best method researchers have for measuring emotions are self-reports. These are notoriously unreliable, and it can be speculated that some people may not admit to their true emotions, for example if they feel extremely depressed but believe their distress is unjustified they may manipulate the test and fill it in the way they think they should to appear normal.

Conclusion

Positive psychology is a useful addition to psychology, which has primarily focused on preventing and improving clinical mental illness in the past, rather than focusing on further improving the mental health

of clinically healthy populations. It may at first seem quite an abstract concept and based on common sense but there are many examples of the usefulness of positive psychology and what it leads to. To name just a few:

1. Wealth is only weakly related to happiness both within and across nations, particularly when income is above the poverty level (Diener & Diener, 1996).
2. Activities that make people happy in small doses – such as shopping, good food and making money – do not lead to fulfillment in the long term, indicating that these have quickly diminishing returns (Myers, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
3. Engaging in an experience that produces 'flow' is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, rather than for what they will get out of it. The activity is its own reward. Flow is experienced when one's skills are sufficient for a challenging activity, in the pursuit of a clear goal, with immediate feedback on progress toward the goal. In such an activity, concentration is fully engaged in the moment, self-awareness disappears, and sense of time is distorted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
4. People who express gratitude on a regular basis have better physical health, optimism, progress toward goals, well-being, and help others more (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000).
5. Trying to maximize happiness can lead to unhappiness (Schwartz et al., 2002).
6. People who witness others perform good deeds experience an emotion called 'elevation' and this motivates them to perform their own good deeds (Haidt, 2000).
7. Optimism can protect people from mental and physical illness (Taylor et al., 2000).
8. People who are optimistic or happy have better performance in work, school and sports, are less depressed, have fewer physical health problems, and have better relationships with other people. Further, optimism can be measured and it can be learned (Seligman, 1991; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).
9. People who report more positive emotions in young adulthood live longer and healthier lives (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001).
10. Physicians experiencing positive emotion tend to make more accurate diagnoses (Isen, 1993).
11. Healthy human development can take place under conditions of even great adversity due to a process of resilience that is common and completely ordinary (Masten, 2001).
12. There are benefits associated with disclosive writing. Individuals who write about traumatic events are physically healthier than control groups that do not. Individuals who write about the perceived benefits of traumatic events achieve the same physical health benefits as those who write only about the trauma (King & Miner, 2000). Individuals who write about their life goals and their best imagined future achieve similar physical health benefits to those who write only about traumatic events. Further, writing about life goals is significantly less distressing than writing about trauma, and is associated with enhanced well-being (King, 2001).
13. People are unable to predict how long they will be happy or sad following an important event (Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg & Wheatley, 1998; Wilson, Meyers, & Gilbert, 2001). These researchers found that people typically overestimate how long they will be sad following a bad event, such as a romantic breakup, yet fail to learn from repeated experiences that their predictions are wrong. (Positive Psychology Center (2007)

Evidence such as the above shows that positive psychology's claims are neither wild nor uncritical as critics may suggest.

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Cohn et al.'s study highlights the non-clinical impact of positive psychology in an investigation into the impact of positive emotions on resilience building. The broaden and build theory suggests that positive emotions help people build lasting resources through broadening one's awareness and encouraging novel, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. To test this hypothesis, Cohen et al. measured emotions daily for one month in a sample of 86 university students and assessed life satisfaction and trait resilience at the beginning and end of the month. It was found that positive emotions predicted increases in both resilience and life satisfaction. Negative emotions had weak or null effects and did not interfere with the benefits of positive emotions. Positive emotions were also found to mediate the relation between baseline and final resilience, but life satisfaction did not suggesting that it is in-the-moment positive emotions, and not more general positive evaluations of one's life that form the link between happiness and desirable life outcomes. It was found that change in resilience mediated the relation between positive emotions and increased life satisfaction, suggesting that happy people become more satisfied not simply because they feel better but because they develop resources for living well.

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