

Positive Psychology: What Is It?

Positive Psychology

What is it?

- The scientific study of optimal human functioning

Character Strength (24) and Virtues (6)

- Wisdom or knowledge (5)
- Courage (4)
- Humanity (3)
- Justice (3)
- Temperance (4)
- Transcendence (5)

Character Strengths

- Character strengths ubiquitous across cultures
- Commitment to study how character strengths contribute to fulfillment or life satisfaction



Early Research on Interventions

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- Outcome of “happiness” (SHI)
- Positive emotion ✓ SWB
- Engagement } PWB
- Meaning } PWB
- “Happiness” is not an epiphenomenon – it is causal

Internet Intervention

- Sample of hundreds of adults (577)
- Method
 - Baseline scores on SHI and CES-D and posttest scores
 - Participants randomly assigned to one of five exercises to do for one week
 - Follow-up at one week, one month, three months, six months

Five “Happiness” Exercises

1. Three good things
2. Gratitude visit
3. You at your best
4. Using signature strengths in a new way
5. Identify signature strengths

Results

- Two exercises increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms for six months
- One exercise increased happiness for only one month
- Good effect of other interventions were transient

Major Mediation Effect

- Positive effect if research participants continued the exercise for six months

Research on a Contemporary Group Counseling Intervention for Individuals Experiencing Chronic Pain

A Contemporary Group Counseling Intervention for Individuals Experiencing Chronic Pain

- The issue of chronic pain
- The conceptualization of hope

Research Aim

Research aim: to see whether a hope-focused counseling group is effective with patients experiencing chronic pain

- Method
 - Measures of
 - Positive mental health
 - Pain acceptance
 - Pain catastrophizing
 - Hope
- Pilot with 10 participants
- Study with 24 participants

The Intervention

- Theory of group counseling
- Narrative psychotherapy theory
 - From narrative dominated by pain to a counternarrative where hope was evident
- Psychoeducation
 - How to be hopeful in the face of the hopelessness of chronic pain

Results of Second Study


- Higher hope
- Higher well-being
- Lower pain catastrophizing

Another Contemporary Example: Positive Family Therapy

Another Contemporary Example: Positive Family Therapy

- Combined family theory/therapy and positive psychology in a model that is culturally sensitive to populations for whom mental health issues are stigmatized

The Intervention

- Broaden and build model of positive psychology 
 - Positive emotions are not just outcomes—they are a process
- Example of capitalization
 - To disclose good news to someone who actively celebrates the good news with the bearer of the good news

Current Status and Critique

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From “happiness” to perma

- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Meaning
- Relationships
- Accomplishments

Current Status and Critique (cont.)

- Happiness” or perma needs to be contextualized

- Four longitudinal studies of marriages
- Study of four positive processes, forgiveness, optimistic expectations, positive thoughts, and kindness
- Results

$F \rightarrow +MS$

$F(H-H) \rightarrow -MS$
 $F(LH) \rightarrow +MS$

- Character traits are not inherently positive or negative

