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WELCOME TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, . . . their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither wit nor courage; neither our wisdom nor our teaching; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.

—Robert F. Kennedy, 1968

The final lines in this 1968 address delivered by Robert F. Kennedy at the University of Kansas are still relevant today and point to the contents of this book: *the things in life that make it worthwhile.* In this regard, however, imagine that someone offered to help you understand human beings but in doing so would teach you only about their weaknesses and pathologies. As far-fetched as this sounds, a similar "What is wrong with people?" question guided the thinking of most applied psychologists (clinical, counseling, school, etc.) during the past 100 years. Given the many forms of human fallibility, this question produced an avalanche of insights into the human "dark side." As the 21st century unfolds, another question, "What is right about people?" seems to captivate the masses. This question is at the heart of **positive psychology**, which is the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning. (See the article "Building Human Strength," in which positive psychology pioneer Martin Seligman gives his views about the need for this new field.)

Although other subareas of psychology were not focused on human weaknesses, 20th-century applied psychology and psychiatry typically were. For example, consider the statement attributed to Sigmund Freud that the goal of psychology should be "to

replace neurotic misery with ordinary unhappiness" (cited in Simonton & Baumeister, 2005, p. 99). Thus, the applied psychology of yesteryear was mostly about **mental illness** and understanding and helping the people who were living such tragedies. Positive psychology, on the other hand, offers a balance to this previous weakness-oriented approach by suggesting that we also must explore people's strengths along with their weaknesses. In advocating this focus on strengths, however, in no way do we mean to lessen the importance and pain associated with human suffering.

Now we are poised to study the whole human picture by exploring psychological assets and deficits within varying cultural contexts. We present this book as a guide for this journey and to welcome those of you who are new to this approach.

In this chapter, we begin by orienting you to the potential benefits of focusing on the positive in daily life and in psychological research. In this first section, we show how a positive newspaper story can shine a light on what is right in the world and how this type of storytelling can produce very favorable reactions among readers. In the second section, we discuss the importance of a balanced perspective involving the strengths and weaknesses of people. We encourage readers not to become embroiled in the debate between the strengths and weakness camps about which one best reflects the "truth." Third, we explore the attention that psychology to date has given to human strengths. In the last section, we walk you through the eight major parts of the book and give brief previews of the chapter contents.

We would like to make three final points about our approach in writing this volume. First, we believe that the greatest good can come from a positive psychology that is based on the latest and most stringent research methods. In short, an enduring positive psychology must be built on scientific principles. Therefore, in each chapter, we present what we see as the best research bases for the various topics that we explore. In using this approach, however, we describe the theories and findings of the various researchers rather than going into depth or great detail about their methods. Our rationale for this "surface over depth" approach stems from the fact that this is an introductory-level book; however, the underlying methods used to derive the various positive psychology findings represent the finest, most sophisticated designs and statistics in the field of psychology.

Second, although we do not cover in a separate chapter the physiology and neurobiology (and, occasionally, the evolutionary) underpinnings of positive psychology, we do view these perspectives as very important. Accordingly, our approach is to discuss the physiology, neurobiology, and evolutionary factors in the context of the particular topics covered in each chapter. For example, in the chapter on self-efficacy, optimism, and hope, we discuss the underlying neurobiological forces. Likewise, in the chapter on gratitude, we explore the underlying heart and brain wave patterns. Moreover, in discussing forgiveness, we touch upon the evolutionary advantages of this response.

Third, we recognize and want to assert to the reader that nothing exists within a vacuum. We are all products of our environment to some extent, and as such, looking at cultural context before making claims about various constructs is essential. You will notice throughout the chapters that we attempt to report on studies covering a number of different cultural groups. In our studies, we use a broad definition of the term *culture* and include race, ethnicity, generation, socioeconomic status, gender, nation of origin, and sexual orientation, among other social identity

BUILDING HUMAN STRENGTH: PSYCHOLOGY'S FORGOTTEN MISSION

MARTIN E. P. SELIGMAN

President, American Psychological Association

Before World War II, psychology had three missions: curing mental illness, making the lives of all people more fulfilling, and identifying and nurturing high talent. After the war, two events changed the face of psychology. In 1946, the Veterans Administration was created, and practicing psychologists found they could make a living treating mental illness. In 1947, the National Institute of Mental Health was created, and academic psychologists discovered they could get grants for research on mental illness.

As a result, we have made huge strides in the understanding of and therapy for mental illness. At least 10 disorders, previously intractable, have yielded up their secrets and can now be cured or considerably relieved. Even better, millions of people have had their troubles relieved by psychologists.

Our Neglected Missions

But the downside was that the other two fundamental missions of psychology—making the lives of all people better and nurturing "genius"—were all but forgotten.

We became a victimology. Human beings were seen as passive foci: Stimuli came on and elicited "responses," or external "reinforcements" weakened or strengthened "responses," or conflicts from childhood pushed the human being around. Viewing the human being as essentially passive, psychologists treated mental illness within a theoretical framework of repairing damaged habits, damaged drives, damaged childhoods, and damaged brains.

Fifty years later, I want to remind our field that it has been sidetracked. Psychology is not just the study of weakness and damage, it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken, it is nurturing what is best within ourselves.

Bringing this to the foreground is the work of the Presidential Task Force on Prevention, headed by Suzanne Bennett Johnson and Roger Weissberg. This task force will take on a number of jobs: It will attempt to identify the "Best practices in prevention," led by Karol Kumpfer, Lizette Peterson, and Peter Muehrer; it will explore "Creating a new profession: Training in prevention and health promotion" by setting up conferences on the training of the next generation of prevention psychologists, led by Irwin Sandler, Shana Millstein, Mark Greenberg, and Norman Anderson; it will work with Henry Tomes of APA's Public Interest Directorate in the ad campaign to prevent violence in children; it will sponsor a special issue on prevention in the 21st century for the *American Psychologist,* edited by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi; and, led by Camilla Benbow, it will ask what psychology can do to nurture highly talented children.

Building Strength, Resilience, and Health in Young People

But an underlying question remains: How can we prevent problems like depression, substance abuse, schizophrenia, AIDS, or injury in young people who are genetically vulnerable or who live in worlds that nurture these problems? What we have learned is that pathologizing does not move us closer to the prevention of serious disorders. The major strides in prevention have largely come from building a science focused on systematically promoting the competence of individuals.

We have discovered that there is a set of human strengths that are the most likely buffers against mental illness: courage, optimism, interpersonal skill, work ethic, hope, honesty, and perseverance. Much of the task of prevention will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to foster these virtues in young people.

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Fifty years of working in a medical model of personal weakness and on the damaged brain has left the mental health professions ill equipped to do effective prevention. We need massive research on human strength and virtue. We need practitioners to recognize that much of the best work they do is amplifying the strengths rather than repairing their patients' weaknesses. We need psychologists who work with families, schools, religious communities, and corporations to emphasize their primary role of fostering strength.

The major psychological theories have changed to undergird a new science of strength and resilience. Individuals—even children—are now seen as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful, efficacious, or, in malignant circumstances, helpless and hopeless. Such science and practice will prevent many of the major emotional disorders. It will also have two side effects. Given all we are learning about the effects of behavior and of mental well-being on the body, it will make our clients physically healthier. It will also re-orient psychology to its two neglected missions, making normal people stronger and more productive as well as making high human potential actual.

facets. As you will notice, findings are not static across these different groups, and sometimes what has been put forth as a "strength" in one cultural group does not hold this label in another. In addition, some groups have been unfairly pathologized over the years as a result of investigating constructs solely in power-holding groups and then interpreting these findings as universal. We ask the reader to be cautious in interpreting any construct as universal, as findings seem to belie the existence of this. Finally, we suggest that paying attention to worldviews other than one's own can help researchers to avoid these mistakes and harms against certain groups in the future.

GOING FROM THE NEGATIVE TO THE POSITIVE

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter and your assignment is to describe the thoughts and actions of people who are stranded one Friday evening at a large airport because of bad weather. The typical content of the newspaper story about such a situation probably would be very negative and filled with actions that portray people in a very unfavorable light. Such stories emphasize the bad side of human behavior that was the focus of many 20th-century psychologists. But, as we shall see, not all stories about people are negative.

A Positive Newspaper Story

Juxtapose such negative newspaper stories with the following tale reported by one of the authors of this book (Snyder, 2004c, p. D4) in a local newspaper. The scene

is the Philadelphia International Airport on a Friday evening as flights arrive late or are canceled.

. . . people who were trying to make the best of difficult situations. For example, when a young Army soldier just back from Iraq noticed that he had lost his girlfriend's ring, the people working at the airport and all of us in the waiting area immediately began to search for it. In a short period of time, the ring was located, and a cheer went out in the crowd.

Around 7:40 p.m., the announcer told us that there would be yet longer delays on several of the flights. To my amazement and delight, I found that my fellow travelers (and I) just coped. Some broke out supplies of food that they had stashed away in bags, and they offered their treasures to others. Decks of playing cards came out, and various games were started. The airlines people handed out snacks. There were scattered outbreaks of laughter.

As if we were soldiers waiting in the trenches during a lull between battles, someone in the distance began to play a harmonica. Small boys made a baseball diamond, and as their game progressed, no one seemed to mind when one of their home runs would sail by. Although there weren't enough seats for everyone, people creatively made chairs and couches out of their luggage. The people who had computers took them out and played video games with each other. One guy even turned his computer screen into a drive-in-movie-like setup on which several people watched *The Matrix*. I used my computer to write this column.

I once heard it said that grace is doing the average thing when everyone should be going crazy. When hollering and screaming, becoming angry and upset, and generally "losing it" seem to loom just over the horizon, it is wonderful instead to see the warming grace of people—similar to the rays of the sun on a cold day.

Reactions to This Positive Story

After this story appeared, Dr. C. R. Snyder (CRS) reported that he was not prepared for readers' reactions and had these words to say:

Never have I written anything that ignited such an outpouring of heartfelt praise and gratitude. In the first week alone after this editorial appeared, I was swamped with favorable e-mails. Some recounted how it reminded them of times they had witnessed people behaving at their very best. Others wrote about how this story made them feel better for the rest of that day and even for several days afterward. Several people said they wished there were more such news stories in the paper. Not a single person among the responses I received had anything negative to say about this column.

Why would people react so uniformly and warmly to this short story about a Friday night at the Philadelphia airport? In part, people probably want to see and hear more about the good in others. Whether it is through newspaper stories such as this one or through the scientific studies and applications we present in this book, there is a hunger to know more about the good in people. It is as if the collective sentiment were, "Enough of all this negativity about people!"

In writing this book on positive psychology, we have experienced the uplifting effects of reviewing the many research and clinical applications that are appearing on the study of strengths and positive emotions in varying groups. As you read about the assets of your fellow humans from multiple cultural perspectives and hear about the many resources that promote the best in people, see whether you, too, feel good. There are many things for which we can praise people, and we will share many examples.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY SEEKS A BALANCED, MORE COMPLETE VIEW OF HUMAN FUNCTIONING

Seeing only the good in one's own actions and the bad in those of others is a common human foible. Validating only the positive or negative aspects of experience is not productive. It is very tempting to focus on just the good (or the bad) in the world, *but it is not good science,* and we must not make this mistake in advancing positive psychology. Although we do not agree with the tenets of the previous pathology models, it would be inaccurate to describe their proponents as being poor scholars, poor scientists, poor practitioners, or bad people. Instead, this previous paradigm was advanced by well-meaning, bright people who were responding to the particular circumstances of their times. Likewise, it is not as if these people were wrong in their depictions of people. They developed diagnoses and measurement approaches for schizophrenia, depression, and alcoholism and validated many effective treatments for specific problems such as panic disorder and blood and injury phobia (see Seligman, 1994).

Thus, those operating within the pathology model were quite accurate in their descriptions of some people at some particular times in their lives. Moreover, they were able to help certain people with select problems. Nevertheless, advocates of the pathology approach were incomplete in their portrayals of humankind. Undeniably, the negative is part of humankind, but only a part, and what is viewed as negative in one group may be positive in another. In addition, a bias toward Western culture is found, thus doubly pathologizing nondominant groups. Positive psychology offers a look at the other side—that which is good and strong within a cultural context, along with normative ways to nurture and sustain these assets and resources.

Although we explore the positive, we emphasize that this half is no more the entire story than is the negative side. Future psychologists must develop an inclusive approach that examines both the weaknesses *and* the strengths of people in varying cultural groups, as well as the stressors *and* the resources in the environment. That approach would be the most comprehensive and valid. We have not reached that point, however, because we have yet to develop and explore fully the science and practice of positive psychology. Only when we have done such detective work on the strengths of people within their cultural contexts and the many resources of positive environments will we truly be able to understand all human

beings in a more balanced fashion. Our task in these pages, therefore, is to share with you what we do know about positive psychology at this relatively early point in its development.

We look forward to that future time in the field of psychology when the positive is as likely as the negative to be used in assessing people and helping them to lead more satisfying and culturally comfortable existences. That time will probably come during the lifetimes of the readers of this book; some of you may pursue careers in psychology in which you routinely will consider people's strengths along with their weaknesses. Indeed, we feel strongly that your generation will be the one to implement a culturally competent psychology that truly balances the tenets of a positive approach with those of the previous pathology orientation. We also hope that today's parents will use positive psychology techniques to shore up families and bring out the best in their children. Likewise, we envision a time when school-age children and youth are valued as much for their major strengths as for their scores on state tests or college entrance examinations.

You, the readers, are the stewards of the eventual culturally competent and balanced positive-negative psychology. We warn you about the debate that is already in progress as to the superiority of one approach over the other. In the next section, we attempt to inoculate you against such "us versus them" thinking.

Views of Reality That Include Both the Positive and the Negative

Reality resides in people's perceptions of events and happenings in their world (Gergen, 1985), and scientific perspectives thereby depend on who defines them. Accordingly, the positive psychology and pathology "camps" may clash over how to build meaningful systems for understanding our world. On this process of **reality negotiation** (i.e., moving toward agreed-upon worldviews), Maddux, Snyder, and Lopez (2004) have written that

> the meanings of these and other concepts are not *revealed* by the methods of science but are *negotiated* among the people and institutions of society who have an interest in their definitions. What people often call "facts" are not truths but reflect reality negotiations by those people who have an interest in using "the facts." (p. 326)

So, whether one is of a mind to believe the positive psychology or the pathology perspective, we must be clear that this debate involves **social constructions** about those facts. Ultimately, the prevailing views are linked to the social values of society's most powerful individuals, groups, and institutions (Becker, 1963). Likewise, because the prevailing views are social constructions that contribute to ongoing sociocultural goals and values, both the positive psychology and the pathology perspectives provide guidelines about how people should live their lives and what makes such lives worth living.

We believe that both the positive psychology view and the more traditional pathology view are useful. Accordingly, it would be a huge mistake to continue the "us versus them" debate between these two groups. Professionals in both camps want to understand and help people. To accomplish these ends, the best

scientific and practical solution is to embrace both perspectives while keeping cultural context in the forefront of our minds. Therefore, although we introduce positive psychology tenets, research, and applications in this textbook, we do so in order to add the strengths approach as a complement to insights derived from the previous weakness model. Accordingly, we encourage the readers of this book—those who eventually will become the leaders in the field—to avoid being drawn into the debate aimed at proving either the positive psychology or pathology model.

WHERE WE ARE NOW AND WHAT WE WILL ASK

A notable accomplishment of the positive psychology initiative in its almost two decades has been its success in increasing the amount of attention given to its theories and research findings.

University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman should be singled out for having ignited the recent explosion of interest in positive psychology, as well as for having provided the label *positive psychology*. (Abraham Maslow actually coined the term *positive psychology* when he used it as a chapter title in his 1954 book, *Motivation and Personality*.) Having grown tired of the fact that psychology was not yielding enough "knowledge of what makes life worth living" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5; note the similarity in this sentiment to Robert F. Kennedy's lament about the gross national product in this chapter's opening quotation), Seligman searched for a provocative theme when he became president of the American Psychological Association in 1998. It was during his presidency that Seligman used his bully pulpit to bring attention to the topic of positive psychology. Since that time, Seligman has worked tirelessly to initiate conferences and grant programs for research and applications of positive psychological research. Throughout his leadership of the developing positive psychology movement, Seligman has reminded psychologists that the backbone of the initiative should be good science.

At times, we will make mistakes in our search for human strengths. On balance, however, we firmly believe that our hunt for strengths will result in some marvelous insights about people from all backgrounds. We are also aware that *humans* are incredibly diverse as a group, and so we must always look to context as well. In judging the success of positive psychology, we hold that it must be subjected to the very highest standards of logic and science. Likewise, positive psychology must undergo the analyses of skeptical yet open minds. We leave this latter important role to you.

Courtesy of Martin Seligman.

Martin Seligman

PERSONAL MINI-EXPERIMENTS
WHAT YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, we provide numerous examples of how a focus on the positive can bring more good feelings and people into your daily life. Reorienting the focus of our thinking can help to determine whether we spend our days in pursuit of meaningful experiences or remain fearful of the bad that might happen. Too often, people act as if their thoughts were out of their control when, in fact, we are the authors of daily scripts that largely determine our daily actions. With the goal of focusing your thoughts on the positive, please go through each of these steps and follow the instructions. It is important to take your time.

- Identify three good things you would like to happen tomorrow.

- Think of one thing that you do not want to happen in the upcoming days.

- Imagine what you want not to happen as a circle that is getting smaller and smaller.

- Of the three good things you want to happen tomorrow, imagine the least important one getting smaller and smaller.

- Imagine the small circle of what you want not to happen getting so small it is hard to see.

- Let go of what you want not to happen. Say goodbye to it.

- Of the two good things you want to happen tomorrow, imagine the least important one getting smaller and smaller.

- Focus your mind on the one good thing that remains as the most important for tomorrow.

- See this good thing happening in your mind's eye.

- Think of others in your social group who might support you in this endeavor.

- Practice having this good thing happen in your mind.

- When you awaken tomorrow, focus on the good thing happening.

- Repeat to yourself during the day, "I make this positive possible."

- Repeat the phrase "I choose how to focus my thoughts."

The point of this exercise is to teach people that they have more control of their mental agendas than they often realize. Furthermore, by attending to what they want to happen, people are more likely to own their daily activities rather than to be reactive. In doing this exercise, feel free to tinker with the exact words that you may say to yourself, but try to retain the empowering message in the words we have selected. In our experiences in working with people, spending mental energies on avoiding certain unwanted outcomes tends to make people reactive to other people and events. On the other hand, thinking of what we want to happen helps to keep the negative away.

A GUIDE TO THIS BOOK

This book was written with you in mind. Throughout our collaboration, we asked each other, "Will this chapter bring positive psychology to life for students?" These discussions helped us realize that the book needed to be an excellent summary of positive psychological science and practice *and* that it had to hook you into applying positive psychology principles in your daily lives. With that goal in mind, we have attempted to distill the most rigorous positive psychology studies and the most effective practice strategies, *and* we have constructed dozens of personal mini-experiments (try the first one, "What You Want to Experience," right now) and life enhancement strategies that promote your engagement with the positives in people from all backgrounds and the world. Our goal is that, by the time you have finished reading this book, you will be more knowledgeable about psychology *and* will have become more skilled at capitalizing on your own strengths and generating positive emotions.

We have divided this book into eight parts. In Part I, "Looking at Psychology From a Positive Perspective," there are three chapters. Chapter 1, which you are about to complete, is introductory. Our purpose has been to give you a sense of the excitement we feel about positive psychology and to share some of the core issues driving the development of this new field. Chapter 2 is titled "Eastern and Western Perspectives on Positive Psychology: How 'ME + WE = US' Might Bridge the Gap." In the chapter, you will see that, although there are obvious positive psychology ties to Western cultures, there also are important themes from Eastern cultures, and that use of a ME-mindset (individualist) or a WE-mindset (collectivist) can both be beneficial. In addition, we encourage you here, regardless of your own mindset, to be able to view things from the different perspectives. Chapter 3, "Classifications and Measures of Strengths and Positive Outcomes," will give you a sense of how psychologists apply labels to the various types of human assets. For readers who are familiar with the more traditional pathology model, this will provide a counterpoint classification that is built on human strengths.

In Part II, "Positive Psychology in Context," we have dedicated two chapters to the factors associated with living well. In Chapter 4, "The Role of Culture in Developing Strengths and Living Well," we examine how the surrounding societal and environmental forces may contribute to a sense of well-being and how culture might affect understanding, function, and utility of a variety of constructs. Moreover, in Chapter 5, "Living Well at Every Stage of Life," we show how childhood activities can help shape a person to become adaptive in their later years.

Part III, "Positive Emotional States and Processes," consists of two chapters that cover topics pertaining to emotion-related processes. In Chapter 6, "The Principles of Pleasure: Understanding Positive Affect, Positive Emotions, Happiness, and Well-Being," we address the frequently asked question, "What makes a person happy?" In Chapter 7, "Making the Most of Emotional Experiences: Emotion-Focused Coping, Emotional Intelligence, Socioemotional Selectivity, and Emotional Storytelling," we introduce new findings regarding emotions as extremely important assets in meeting our goals.

In Part IV, "Positive Cognitive States and Processes," we include three chapters. Chapter 8, "Seeing Our Futures Through Self-Efficacy, Optimism, and Hope," covers the three most-researched motives for facing the future: self-efficacy, optimism, and hope. In Chapter 9, "Wisdom and Courage: Characteristics of the Wise and the Brave," we examine positive psychology topics involving the assets people bring to circumstances that stretch their skills and capacities. Likewise, in Chapter 10, "Mindfulness,

Flow, and Spirituality: In Search of Optimal Experiences," we discuss how people become aware of the ongoing process of thinking and feeling, along with humans' need to believe in forces that are bigger and more powerful than they.

In Part V, "Prosocial Behavior," we describe the general positive linkages that human beings have with other people. In Chapter 11, "Empathy and Egotism: Portals to Altruism and Gratitude," we show how kindness-related processes operate to the benefit of people. And in Chapter 12, "Attachment, Love, Flourishing Relationships, and Forgiveness," we review the importance of close human bonds for a variety of positive outcomes.

Part VI, "Understanding and Changing Human Behavior," describes how to prevent negative things from happening, as well as how to make positive things happen. Chapter 13, "Balanced Conceptualizations of Mental Health and Behavior," and Chapter 14, "Preventing the Bad and Promoting the Good," will help you to see how people can improve their life circumstances.

Part VII, "Positive Environments," looks at specific environments. In Chapter 15, "Positive Schooling and Good Work: The Psychology of Gainful Employment and the Education That Gets Us There," we describe recent findings related to positive learning outcomes for students, as well as the components of jobs that are both productive and satisfying.

The book closes with Part VIII, "Finding Strengths in Others: Embodying Strengths in Everyday Life." This section comprises Chapter 16, "Remembering Shane: Real Strengths in a Real Person" and shares memories and thoughts about this major contributor to the field of Positive Psychology. Though he is gone, his life was one well-lived and provides many good examples of the way in which one can embody and share a variety of strengths, making better all the lives around him.

Personal Mini-Experiments

In most of the chapters (including this one), we encourage you to put the ideas of leading positive psychologists to the test. In Personal Mini-Experiments, we ask you to bring positive psychology into your life by conducting the kind of experiments that positive psychology researchers might conduct in a lab or the field and that positive psychology practitioners might assign to their clients for homework. Some of these experiments take less than 30 minutes to complete, whereas some will take more than a week.

Life Enhancement Strategies

Finding the positive in daily life does not necessarily require a full-fledged experiment. In fact, we believe that a mindful approach to everyday living will reveal the power of positive emotions and strengths. Therefore, for the chapters that focus specifically on positive emotions, strengths, and healthy processes, we devised Life Enhancement Strategies, which can be implemented in a matter of minutes. We decided to develop these strategies to help you attain life's three most important outcomes: connecting with others, pursuing meaning, and experiencing some degree of pleasure or satisfaction. Specifically, love, work, and play have been referred to as the three great realms of life (Seligman, 1998e). Freud defined *normalcy* as the capacity to love, work, and play, and psychological researchers have referred to this capacity as "mental health" (Cederblad, Dahlin, Hagnell, & Hansson, 1995). Developmental researchers have described love, work, and play as normal tasks associated with human growth (Icard, 1996) and as keys to successful aging (Vaillant, 1994). Professionals interested

in psychotherapy consider the ability to love, work, and play to be an aspect of the change process (Prigatano, 1992), whereas others view it as one of the primary goals of counseling (Christensen & Rosenberg, 1991). Although full engagement in pursuits of love, work, and play will not guarantee a good life, we believe it is necessary for good living. With this belief in mind, we encourage you to participate in numerous Life Enhancement Strategies that will enhance your ability to love, work, and play. We have also tried to include varying cultural perspectives in these strategies. We also think you could incorporate positive psychology into your leisure time. See the Appendix for a list of movies that bring the best in people to life.

This concludes our brief rundown of where we plan to go in the ensuing chapters and of our many hopes for you. If you become fully engaged with the material and the exercises in this book, you will gain knowledge and skills that may help you lead a better life.

THE BIG PICTURE

Despite the horror and uncertainty of terrorism and natural disasters, we must not forget to also focus on such issues as virtues, creativity, and hope. Three earlier cultures faced similar eras. In the fifth century BC, Athens used its resources to explore human virtues—good character and actions. Democracy was formed during this period. In 15th-century Florence, riches and talents were spent to advance beauty. And Victorian England used its assets to pursue the human virtues of duty, honor, and discipline. As Martin Luther King Jr. is quoted as saying, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Now is the time to focus on strengths and how they might be used to challenge us as a nation to do better and to live well.

Like the gifts emanating from these three previous eras, perhaps the contribution of the United States in the 21st century lies in adopting and exploring the tenets of positive psychology—the study and application of that which is good in people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Certainly, never in our careers have we witnessed such a potentially important new development in the field of psychology. But we are getting ahead of ourselves because the real test will come when new students are drawn to this area. For now, we welcome you to positive psychology.

APPENDIX: MOVIES FOR REVIEW

1. Courage—Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

    Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain

      Schindler's List (1993)

      Life as a House (2001)

      The Kite Runner (2007)

      Gravity (2013)

      Moana (2016)

Wonder Woman (2017)

Integrity (Authenticity, Honesty): Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way

A Few Good Men (1992)

Erin Brockovich (2000)

Lincoln (2013)

Moonlight (2016)

Persistence (Perseverance): Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action despite obstacles

The Piano (1993)

The Legend of Bagger Vance (2000)

The Blind Side (2009)

The King's Speech (2010)

Twelve Years a Slave (2013)

Lion (2016)

2. Humanity—Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

Kindness (Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion, Altruistic Love): Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them

Promise (1986)

As Good as It Gets (1997)

Children of Heaven (1997)

Cider House Rules (1999)

The Secret Life of Bees (2008)

Wonder (2017)

Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people

My Fair Lady (1964)

Sophie's Choice (1982)

The Bridges of Madison County (1995)

The English Patient (1996)

Iris (2001)

Brokeback Mountain (2005)

Frozen (2013)

Coco (2017)

Social Intelligence (Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence): Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick

Children of a Lesser God (1986)

Driving Miss Daisy (1989)

K-Pax (2001)

The Five Senses (2001, Canadian)

I Am Sam (2002)

3. Justice—Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

Citizenship (Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork): Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share

Awakenings (1990)

L.A. Confidential (1997)

Finding Forrester (2001)

A Mighty Heart (2007)

Fairness: Treating all people equally according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance

Philadelphia (1993)

The Emperor's Club (2002)

Hidden Figures (2016)

Battle of the Sexes (2017)

Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)

Dances With Wolves (1990)

Black Panther (2018)

4. Temperance—Strengths that protect against excess

Forgiveness and Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful

Ordinary People (1980)

Terms of Endearment (1983)

Dead Man Walking (1995)

Pay It Forward (2000)

Lady Bird (2017)

Humility/Modesty: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is

Gandhi (1982)

Little Buddha (1994)

Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted

    Sense and Sensibility (1995)

Self-Regulation (Self-Control): Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions

    Star Wars: Return of the Jedi (1983)

    Forrest Gump (1994)

5. Transcendence—Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

    Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (Awe, Wonder, Elevation): Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science to everyday experience

    Out of Africa (1985)

    Colors of Paradise (2000, Iranian)

    An Inconvenient Truth (2006)

Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

    Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)

    Sunshine (2000)

Hope (Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientation): Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about

    Gone With the Wind (1939)

    Good Will Hunting (1997)

    Life Is Beautiful (1998, Italian)

    Cinderella Man (2005)

    Finding Dory (2016)

    Trolls (2016)

Humor (Playfulness): Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes

    Patch Adams (1999)

    School of Rock (2003)

Spirituality (Religiousness, Faith, Purpose): Knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

    Priest (1994)

    Apostle (1997)

Contact (1997)

What the Bleep Do We Know!? (2004)

Vitality (Zest, Enthusiasm, Energy): Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

Cinema Paradiso (1988, Italian)

My Left Foot (1993)

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (2013)

6. Wisdom and Knowledge—Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.

Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things

Amadeus (1984)

Shine (1996)

The Pianist (2002)

LaLa Land (2016)

The Greatest Showman (2017)

Curiosity: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience

October Sky (1999)

Amélie (2001, French)

In America (2003)

Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge

Stand and Deliver (1988)

Billy Elliott (2000)

A Beautiful Mind (2001)

Freedom Writers (2007)

Open-Mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides

No Man's Land (2001, Bosnian)

Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (2013)

Perspective (Wisdom): Being able to provide wise counsel to others

The Devil's Advocate (1997)

American Beauty (1999)

Appendix Note: Adapted and Reprinted with permission of Tayyab Rashid.

Key Terms

Mental illness: Within the pathology psychological approach, refers to a variety of problems that people may have. A catch-all term for someone having severe psychological problems, as in "he is suffering from mental illness."

Positive psychology: The science and applications related to the study of psychological strengths and positive emotions.

Reality negotiation: The ongoing processes by which people arrive at agreed-upon worldviews or definitions.

Social constructions: Perspectives or definitions that are agreed upon by many people to constitute reality (rather than some objectively defined "truth" that resides in objects, situations, and people).