

The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

Positive Mindset



Positive Mindset



“What concerns us is not the way things actually are, but rather the way we think things are.”

~ Epictetus ~

The two pillars of Positive Psychology

- Strengths
- Positive Emotions

Gratitude, Mindfulness, and Hope



Three Pillars of Positive Mindset:

- Gratitude about the past
- Savoring the present (related to mindfulness)
- Hope and optimism about the future

Why Gratitude?



- Gratitude linked to:
 - Greater life satisfaction
 - Greater overall well-being
 - Greater relationship satisfaction
 - Greater closeness in relationships

Growing Gratitude



Seligman's two experiments:

- **Three things:** List three things that went well each day, at the end of the day.
- **Letter of gratitude:** Write a letter of thanks to someone who has made a difference in your life

Savoring the present (related to mindfulness)



The Tiger Story: What does it mean?

- Stuck between the two tigers, the farmer forgets about his double trouble and savors the wild strawberry (the present moment)
- We tend to lose focus due to negative emotions

Savoring / Mindfulness

The ability to focus on, enjoy, or appreciate, what is going on right now, in spite of challenges, is a major key to happiness.

Why Mindfulness?



Mindfulness is a powerful way to reduce anxiety, cope with stress, and improve psychological wellbeing

Why Optimism?



- Martin Seligman defines optimism as reacting to problems with a sense of confidence and high personal ability.
- Optimism enables people to cope more effectively with stress and anxiety.

Positive Mindset: Key Points



- The cultivation of positive emotions is a key to wellbeing
- Positive Psychology focuses on three kinds of positive emotions:
 - Gratitude about the past
 - Savoring the present (related to mindfulness)
 - Hope and optimism about the future
- Gratitude
 - Two effective exercises
 - Daily reflection on three things
 - Messages of gratitude
- Savoring / mindfulness
 - Enjoy / appreciate the present moment (the tigers and the strawberry)
- Optimism
 - Set Meaningful Goals

Key Scientific Studies on Positive Mindset

- **Gratitude**

- Alkozei, A., Smith, R., & Killgore, W. D.S. (2018). Implicit self-esteem is associated with higher levels of trait gratitude in women but not men. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1497691>
- Benoit, V., & Gabola, P. (2021). Effects of positive psychology interventions on the well-being of young children: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(22), 12065. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182212065>
- Boggiss, A. L., Consedine, N. S., Brenton-Peters, J. M., Hofman, P. L., & Serlachius, A. S. (2020). A systematic review of gratitude interventions: Effects on physical health and health behaviors. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 135, 110165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2020.110165>
- Davis, D. E., Choe, E., Meyers, J., Wade, N., Varjas, K., Gifford, A., Quinn, A., Hook, J. N., Van Tongeren, D. R., Griffin, B. J., & Worthington, E. L. (2016). Thankful for the little things: A meta-analysis of gratitude interventions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(1), 20–31. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000107>
- 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 and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377–389. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>
- Karns, C. M., Moore III, W. E., & Mayr, U. (2017). The cultivation of pure altruism via gratitude: A functional MRI study of change with gratitude practice. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 11, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2017.00599>
- Komase, Y., Watanabe, K., Hori, D., Nozawa, K., Hidaka, Y., Iida, M., Imamura, K., & Kawakami, N. (2021). Effects of gratitude intervention on mental health and well-being among workers: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 63(1), e12290. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1348-9585.12290>
- Ma, L. K., Tunney, R. J., & Ferguson, E. (2017). Does gratitude enhance prosociality?: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(6), 601–635. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000103>

Positive Mindset

- **Mindfulness**

- Chittaro L., and Vianello, A. (2014). Computer-supported mindfulness: Evaluation of a mobile thought distancing application on naive meditators. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 72(3), 337–348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2013.11.001>
- Diener, E., Pressman, S. D., Hunter, J., Delgado-Chase, D. (2017). If, why, and when subjective well-being influences health, and future needed research. *Applied Psychological Health and Well Being*, 9(2), 133-167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12090>
- Lee, S. H., Hwang, S. M., Kang, D. H., Yang, H. J. (2019). Brain education-based meditation for patients with hypertension and/or type 2 diabetes: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *Medicine (Baltimore)*. 98(19), e15574. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000015574>
- Melnyk, B. M., Kelly, S. A., Stephens, J., Dhakal, K., McGovern, C., Tucker, S., Hoying, J., McRae, K., Ault, S., Spurlock, E., & Bird, S. B. (2020). Interventions to improve mental health, well-being, physical health, and lifestyle behaviors in physicians and nurses: A systematic review. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 34(8), 929–941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117120920451>
- Noone, C., Hogan, M. J. (2018). A randomised active-controlled trial to examine the effects of an online mindfulness intervention on executive control, critical thinking, and key thinking dispositions in a university student sample. *BMC Psychology*, 6(1), 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-018-0226-3>
- Pressman, S. D., Jenkins, B. N., Moskowitz, J. T. (2018). Positive affect and health: What do we know and where next should we go? *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 627-650. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102955>
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T.F., Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 52-66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>



Positive Mindset

- **Optimism**

- Brosowsky, N. P., Barr, N., Mugon, J., Scholer, A. A., Seli, P., & Danckert, J. (2022). Creativity, boredom proneness and well-being in the pandemic. *Behavioral Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, 12(3), 68. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12030068>
- Dennis, A., & Ogden, J. (2022). Nostalgia, Gratitude, or Optimism: The Impact of a Two-Week Intervention on Well-Being During COVID-19. *Journal of happiness studies*, 1–22. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00513-6>
- Erthal, F., Bastos, A., Vilete, L., Oliveira, L., Pereira, M., Mendlowicz, M., Volchan, E., & Figueira, I. (2021). Unveiling the neural underpinnings of optimism: A systematic review. *Cognitive, Affective & Behavioral Neuroscience*, 21(5), 895–916. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-021-00931-8>
- Huang, I. C., Lee, J. L., Ketheeswaran, P., Jones, C. M., Revicki, D. A., & Wu, A. W. (2017). Does personality affect health-related quality of life? A systematic review. *PloS One*, 12(3), e0173806. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0173806>
- Isch, C., Ten Thij, M., Todd, P. M., & Bollen, J. (2022). Quantifying changes in societal optimism from online sentiment. *Behavior Research Methods*, 1–9. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-021-01785-1>
- Kotikalapudi, R., Dricu, M., Moser, D. A., & Aue, T. (2022). Brain structure and optimism bias: A voxel-based morphometry approach. *Brain sciences*, 12(3), 315. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci12030315>
- Schiavon, C. C., Marchetti, E., Gurgel, L. G., Busnello, F. M., & Reppold, C. T. (2017). Optimism and Hope in Chronic Disease: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02022>
- Uribe, F., de Oliveira, S. B., Junior, A. G., & da Silva Pedroso, J. (2021). Association between the dispositional optimism and depression in young people: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psicologia, Reflexao e Critica: Revista Semestral do Departamento de Psicologia da UFRGS*, 34(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-021-00202-y>

