Partner Veterinary
EMERGENCY & SPECIALTY CENTER

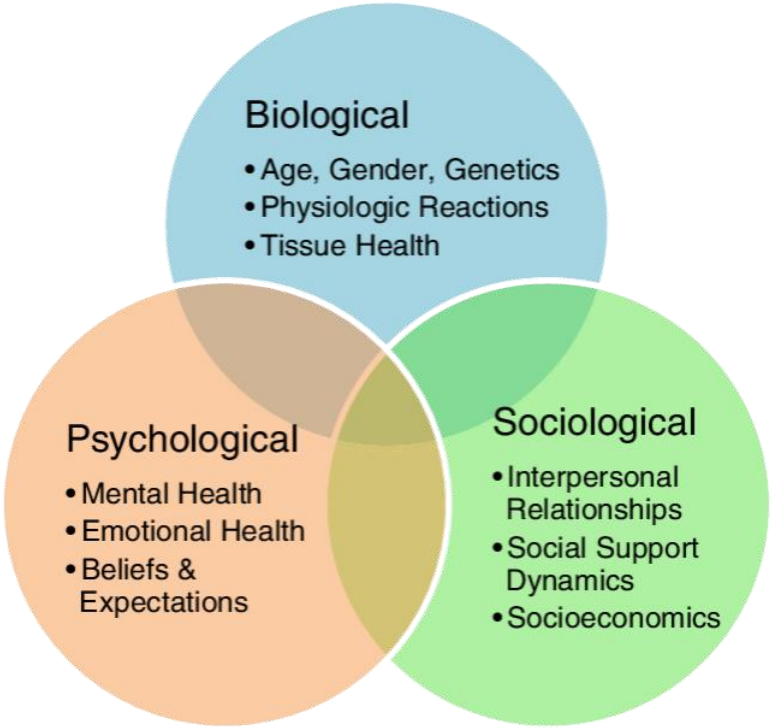
Positive Psychology:

Promoting Wellness in Onboarding, Training, Education & Development

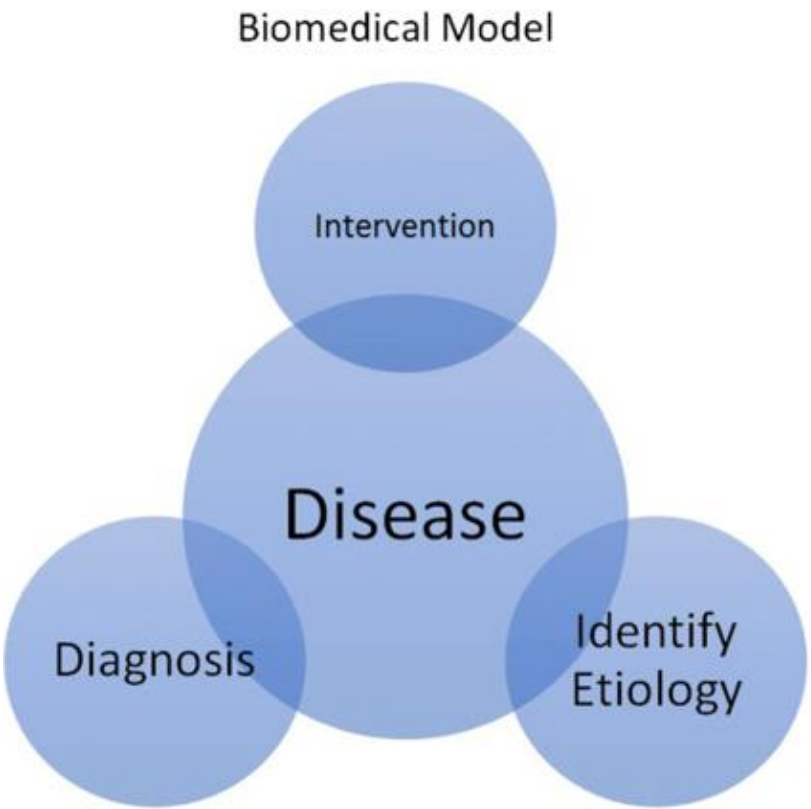


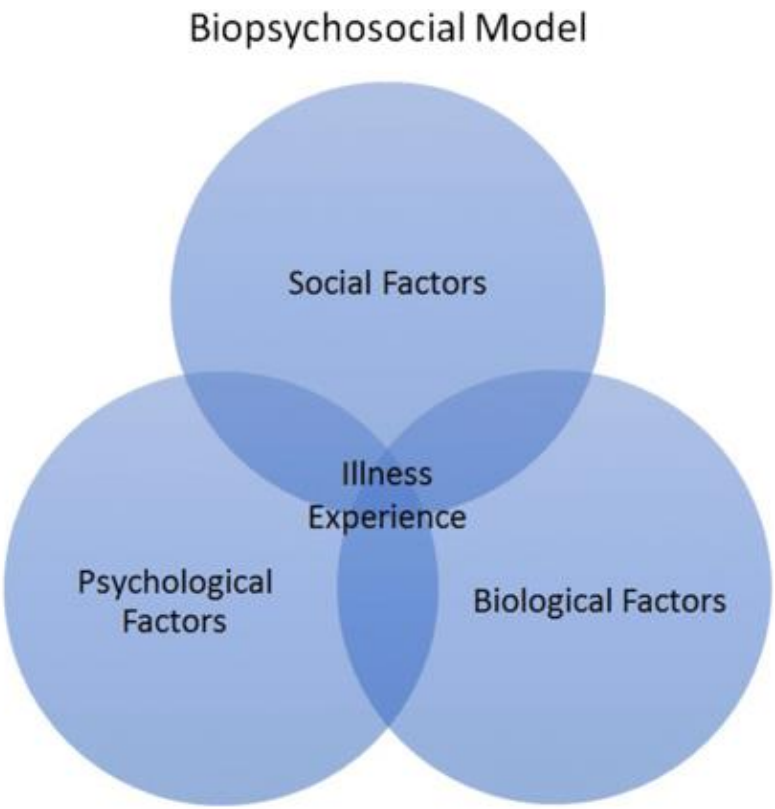
Context: Biobehavioral Health



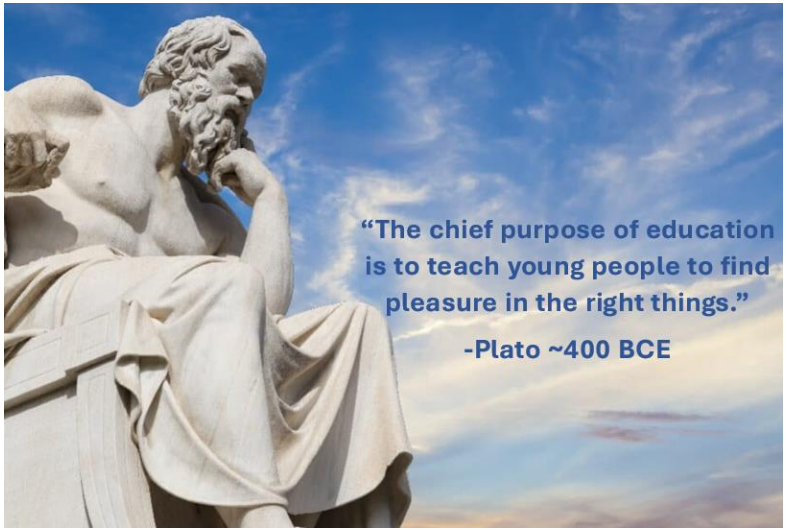


Context: Biobehavioral Health





Agenda



01. What is Positive Psychology

02. High-Level Overview of Topics

03. Topics of Interest in Training

04. Why Apply It?

05. Resources



“

What is Positive Psychology?

What is Positive Psychology?



Positive Psychology: What it isn't

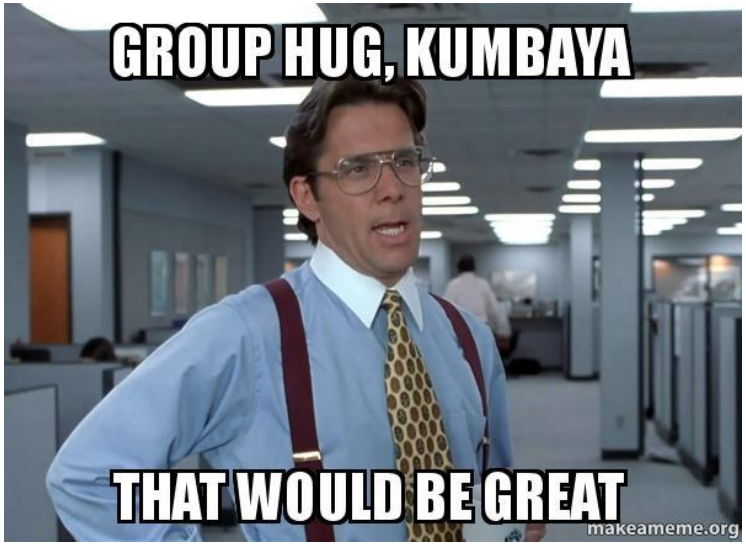




Positive Psychology: What it isn't

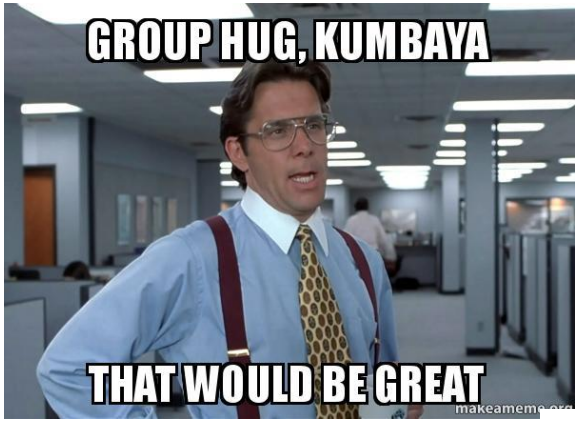






Positive Psychology: What it isn't



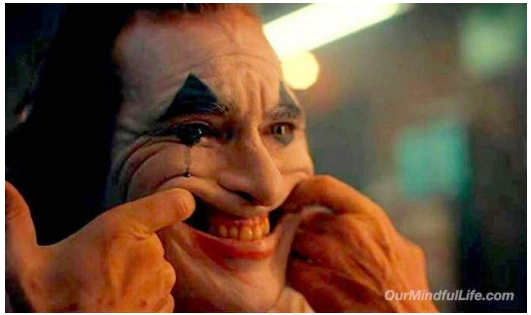








Positive Psychology: What it isn't









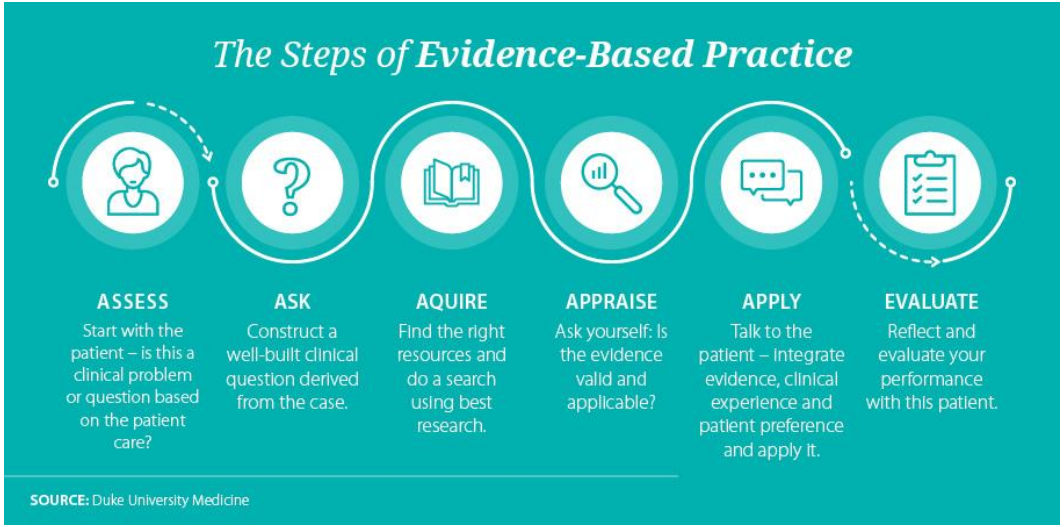


Positive Psychology: What it *IS*

Science & Evidence Based

The field of psychological study with the emphasis on positive emotion and the "good life" while using evidence-based research and the tools for psychological science, so that ideas put forward can be evaluated and compared with facts, rather than "hype."

Deals with the ***science*** of positive emotion and its enhancement, as well as the management of negative emotion.



A Word of Warning:

Research has a history of being WEIRD…..
& Male

“

Collectivist & Individualistic Cultures are not the same.

Having meaning vs. Finding meaning

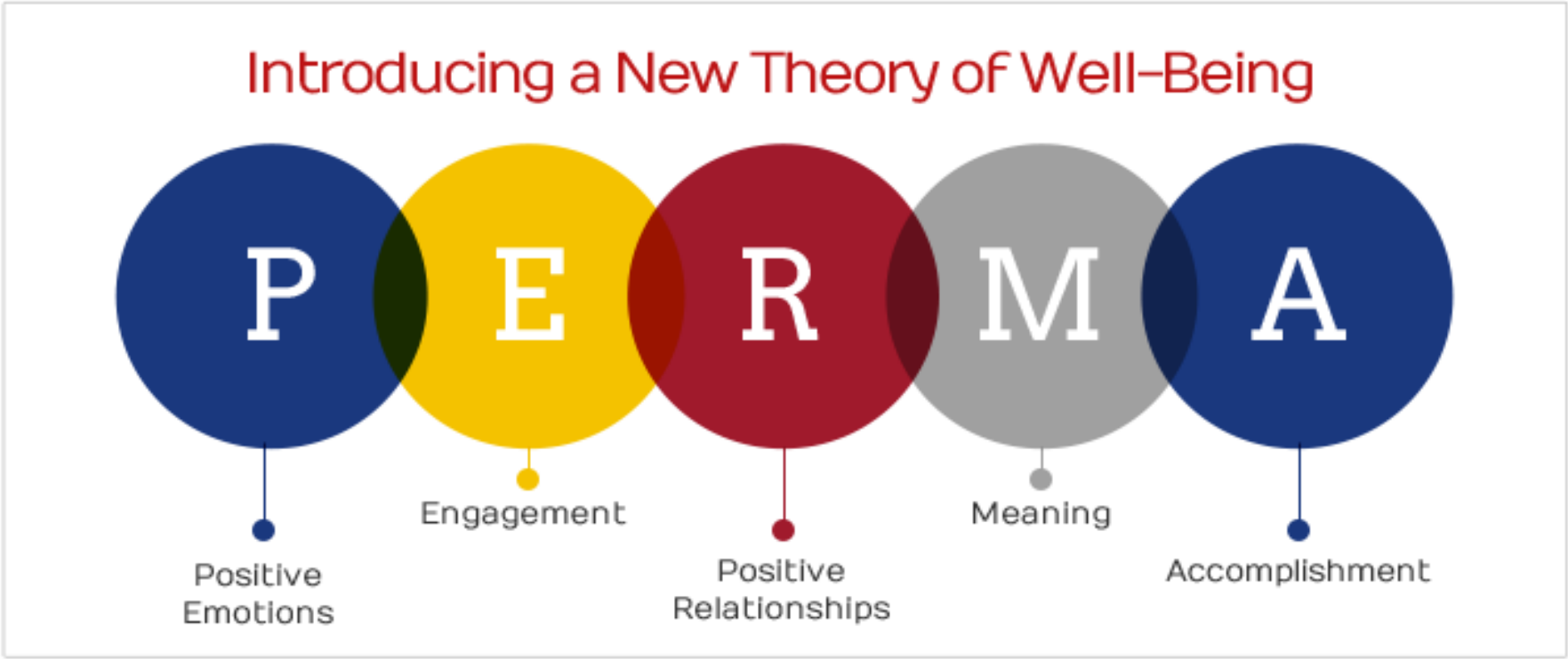
Strengths, Values Characteristics

What is happiness?



Positive Psychology: What it *IS*

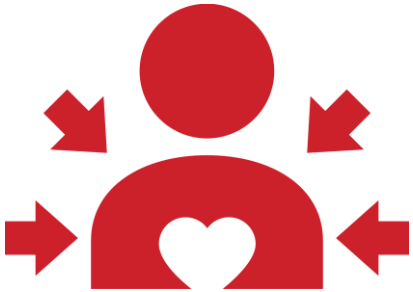
Science & Evidence Based





Aspects of Positive Psychology

A General and Incomplete Overview



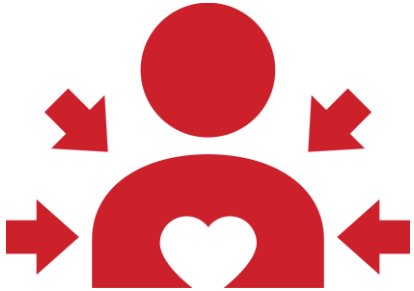
Human Condition



Manage / Enhance
Positive Emotion



Manage / Minimize
Negative Emotion



Human Condition

- Personal Characteristics
- Experiences
- Values
- Interests, Abilities
- Relationships
- Altruism
- Overall Wellness
- “Personality Types”



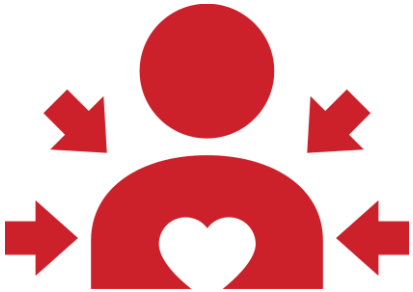
Manage / Enhance Positive Emotion

- Theories & benefits of happiness
- Self-efficacy
- Growth mindsets
- Meaning
- Mindfulness/Relaxation
- Positive thinking & emotions



Manage / Minimize Negative Emotion

- Battling psychological inflexibilities
- ID negative emotions and their components
- ANTs
- Problem solving
- Managing anxiety, stress & grief



Human Condition



Manage / Enhance
Positive Emotion



Manage / Minimize
Negative Emotion

PERMA


P
Positive Emotions
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
Achievement

PERMA H


P
Positive Emotions
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
Achievement
H
Health

PERMA +4


P
Positive Emotions
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
Achievement
+4
Physical Health, Mindset, Environment, Economic Security

PERMA


P
Positive Emotions
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
Achievement


P
Positive Emotions
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
Achievement


P
Stress tolerance, Resilience, Optimism, Self-efficacy, Positive Affect
E
Engagement
R
Relationships
M
Meaning
A
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P
Stress tolerance, Resilience, Optimism, Self-efficacy, Positive Affect
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Finding/Leveraging Strengths, Distributing Leadership, Job Design
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Vision Statements, Mindfulness, Contribution, Identity, Values
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Finding/Leveraging Strengths, Distributing Leadership, Job Design
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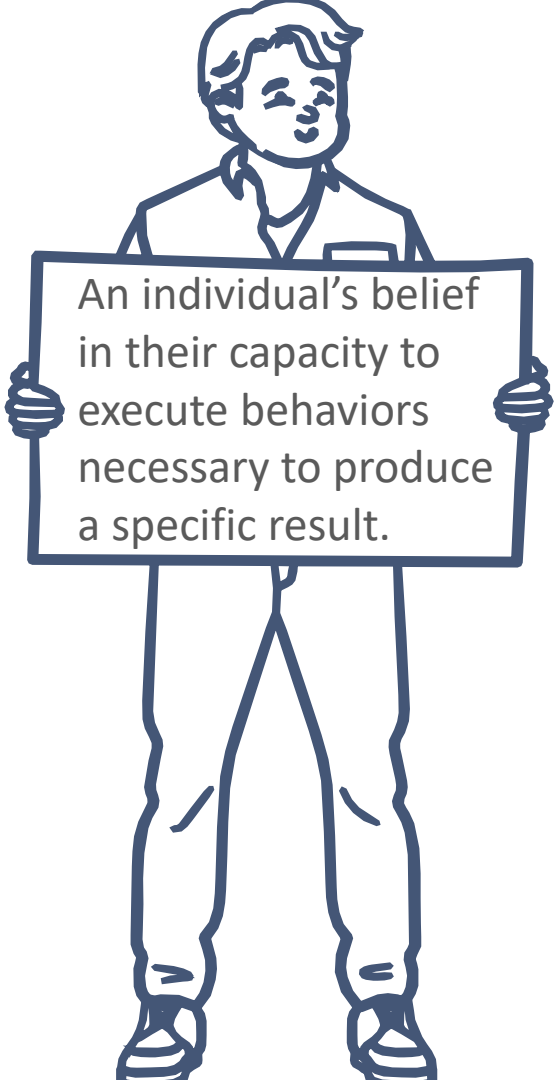
Team Building, Coaching, Mentoring, Collaboration, Conflict Resolution
M
Vision Statements, Mindfulness, Contribution, Identity, Values
A
Goal Setting, Celebrating Successes, Feedback, Opportunities

P: Self-Efficacy

Positively correlated with employee engagement and commitment



Negatively correlated with workplace anxiety and stress

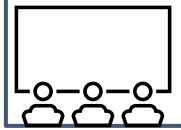
Cooper, C. L., Patnaik, S., & Rodriguez, R. V. (2025). *Positive organizational behavior: Current issues in work and organizational psychology.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032619385

P: Self-Efficacy

Mastery



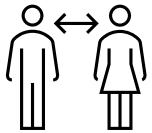
Vicarious





An individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce a specific result.





Verbal / Social



Physiological

E: Strengths

“You wrote to me once, listing the four chief virtues. Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. As I read the list I knew I had none of them. But I have other virtues, father. Ambition, that can be a virtue when it drives us to excel. Resourcefulness. Courage. Perhaps not on the battlefield but there are many forms of courage. Devotion, to my family, to you. But none of my virtues were on your list….”

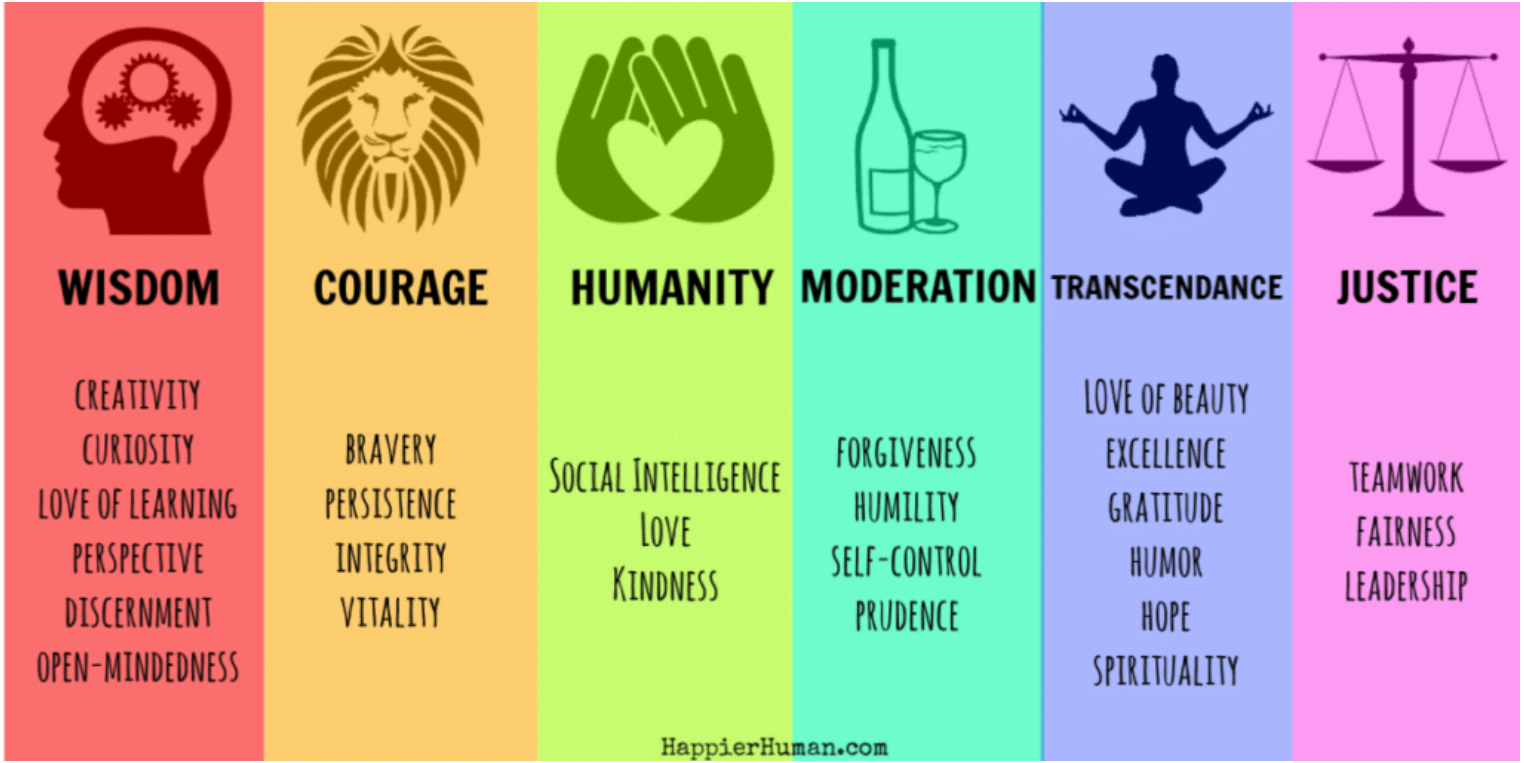
-Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix)

Gladiator (2000)



E: Strengths

Signature Strengths: A strength a person owns, celebrates and frequently uses



The VIA Classification of 24 Character Strengths

VIA INSTITUTE ON CHARACTER

ViaCharacter.org

WISDOM	**CREATIVITY** • Originality • Adaptive • Ingenuity	**CURIOSITY** • Interest • Novelty-Seeking • Exploration • Openness	**JUDGMENT** • Critical Thinking • Thinking Things Through • Open-mindedness	**LOVE OF LEARNING** • Mastering New Skills & Topics • Systematically Adding to Knowledge	**PERSPECTIVE** • Wisdom • Providing Wise Counsel • Taking the Big Picture View
COURAGE	**BRAVERY** • Valor • Not Shrinking from Fear • Speaking Up for What's Right	**PERSEVERANCE** • Persistence • Industry • Finishing What One Starts	**HONESTY** • Authenticity • Integrity	**ZEST** • Vitality • Enthusiasm • Vigor • Energy • Feeling Alive	
HUMANITY	**LOVE** • Both Loving and Being Loved • Valuing Close Relations with Others	**KINDNESS** • Generosity • Nurturance • Care & Compassion • Altruism • "Niceness"			**SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE** • Aware of the Motives/ Feelings of Self/Others • Knowing what Makes Other People Tick
JUSTICE	**TEAMWORK** • Citizenship • Social Responsibility • Loyalty			**FAIRNESS** • Just • Not Letting Feelings Bias Decisions About Others	**LEADERSHIP** • Organizing Group Activities • Encouraging a Group to Get Things Done
TEMPERANCE		**FORGIVENESS** • Mercy • Accepting Others' Shortcomings • Giving People a Second Chance	**HUMILITY** • Modesty • Letting One's Accomplishments Speak for Themselves	**PRUDENCE** • Careful • Cautious • Not Taking Undue Risks	**SELF-REGULATION** • Self-Control • Disciplined • Managing Impulses & Emotions
TRANSCENDENCE	**APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE** • Awe • Wonder • Elevation	**GRATITUDE** • Thankful for the Good • Expressing Thanks • Feeling Blessed	**HOPE** • Optimism • Future-Mindedness • Future Orientation	**HUMOR** • Playfulness • Bringing Smiles to Others • Lighthearted	**SPIRITUALITY** • Religiousness • Faith • Purpose • Meaning

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DON CLIFTON

Father of Strengths Psychology and Inventor of CliftonStrengths

1. Connectedness
2. Learner
3. Context
4. Individualization
5. Analytical

R: Coaching & Mentoring

20% of how adults learn is social



R: Coaching & Mentoring



- Enhances trainee/student success[1]
- Fosters positive relationships[1]
- Emotional support[1]
- Educational support[1]
- Develop collaboration skills[1]
- Leadership skills for the mentor[1]
- Promotes retention[2]

[1]Andersen, T. & Watkins, K. (2018). The value of peer mentorship as an educational strategy in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education,* 57(4), 217–224.

[2]Shroyer, C., Zellers, R. & Abraham, S. (2016). Increasing registered nurse retention using mentors in critical care services, *The Healthcare Manager,* 35(3), 251-265.

M: Vision Statements



A: Goal Setting and Opportunities

- Great for reviews
- Leverage strengths & Values
- Ensure they are attainable
- Use coaching and mentoring to facilitate
- Provides engagement
- Promotes optimism



A: Feedback

- Delayed feedback unhelpful
- Requires good and continual communication at all levels
- Continual recognition
- Should focus on prospective success, and guidance to reach career goals and objectives



A: Celebrate Successes

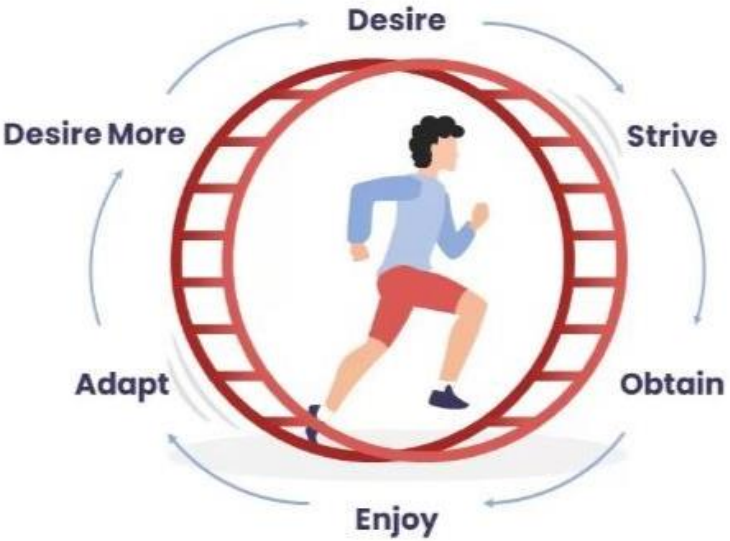


Can Positive go TOO Far?

Pollyanna Principle



Hedonic Treadmill









“What about negative emotions?

WE ARE NOT CLINICAL PYSCHOLOGISTS
WE ARE NOT PSYCHIATRISTS
WE ARE NOT THERAPISTS

Negative Emotions Happen

"It May Not Be Your Fault, but it is Your Responsibility"



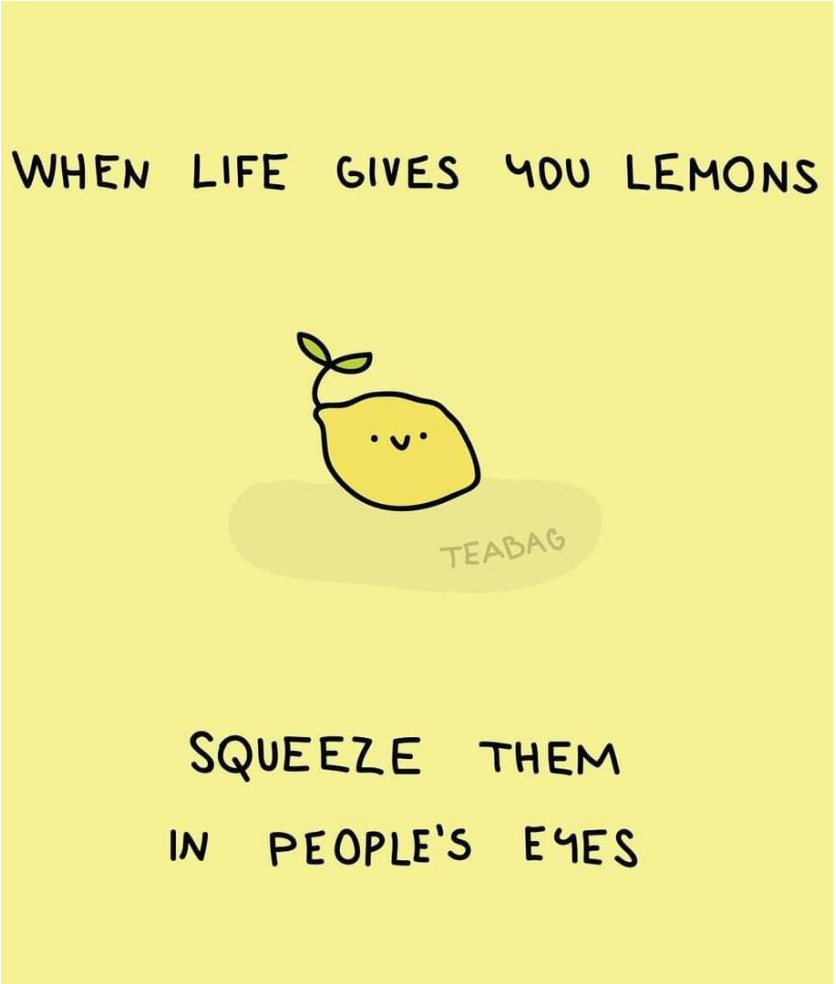

TRY
FAIL
SUCCESS


FAIL
FIRST
ATTEMPT
IN
LEARNING

Managing Negative Emotions

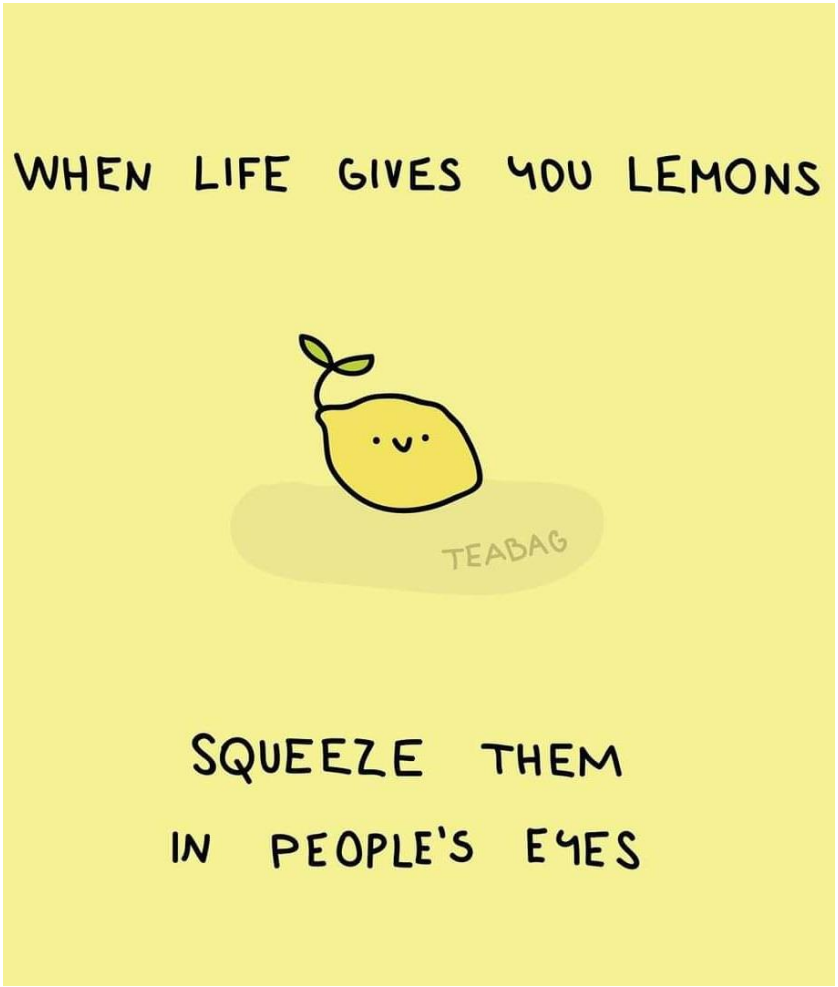
“

- Identifying Automatic Negative Thoughts
- Cognitive Restructuring of an Event



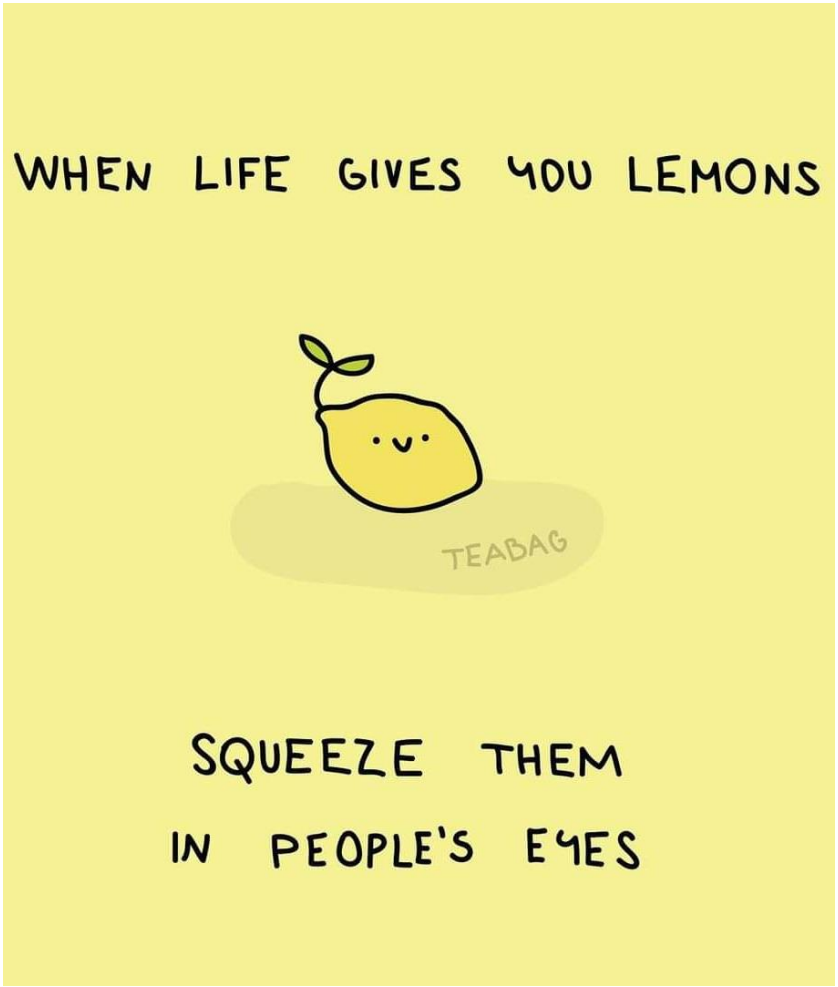
Identifying Automatic Negative Thoughts

- “All or Nothing”
- Arbitrary Inference
- Minimization / Magnification
- Personalization
- Discounting Positive
- Overgeneralization
- Global Judgements
- Moral Imperatives
- Emotional Reasoning
- Selective Abstraction



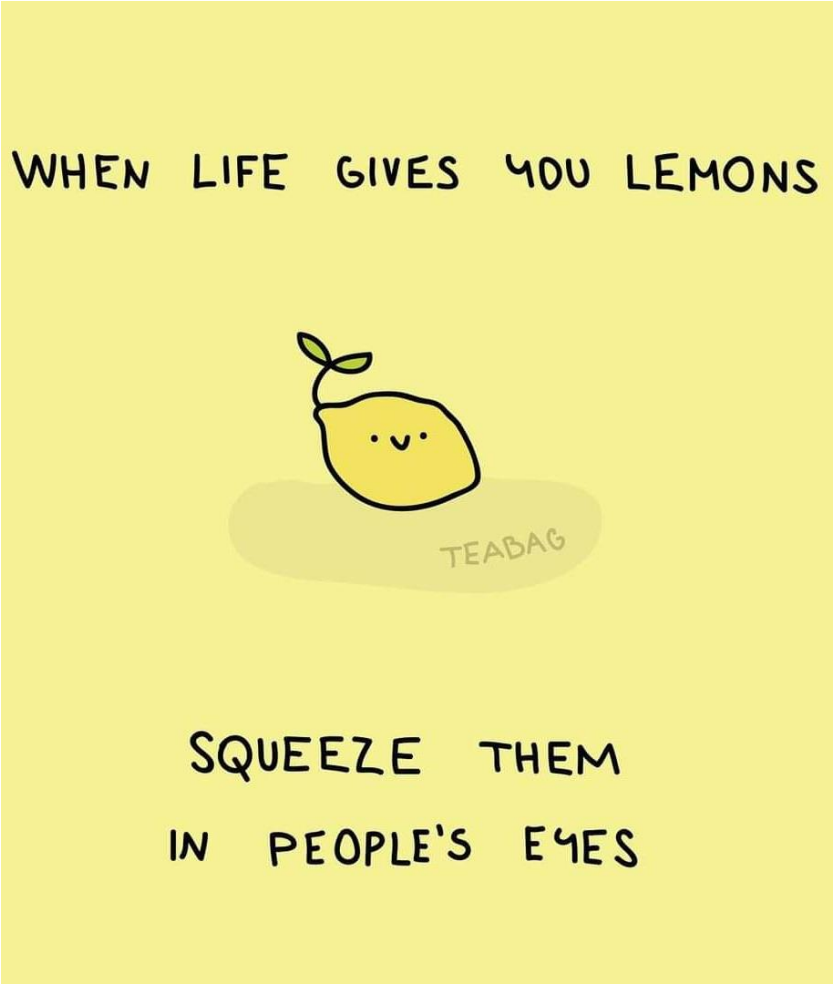
Identifying Automatic Negative Thoughts

- “Do I know for certain that…”
- What is the worst that could happen? How bad is that? How can I cope?
- “Is there another explanation?”
- “Does ____ *have to* lead to or equal _____?”
- “Is there another point of view?”



Cognitive Restructuring

- What was the event?
- What are (my) thoughts about the event?
- How can I cognitively restructure those thoughts?



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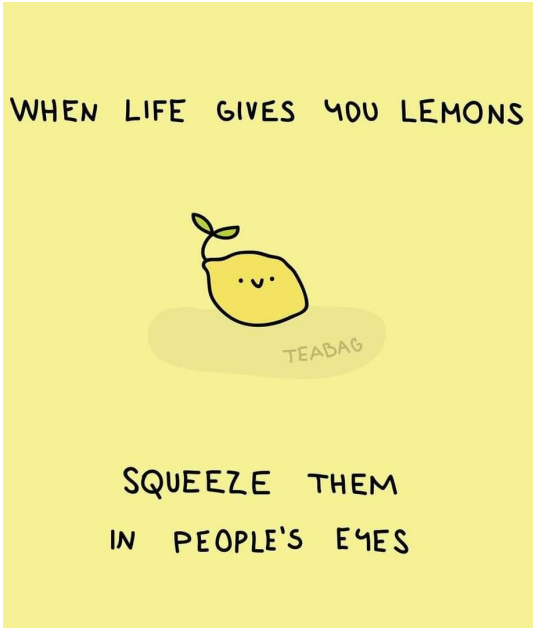
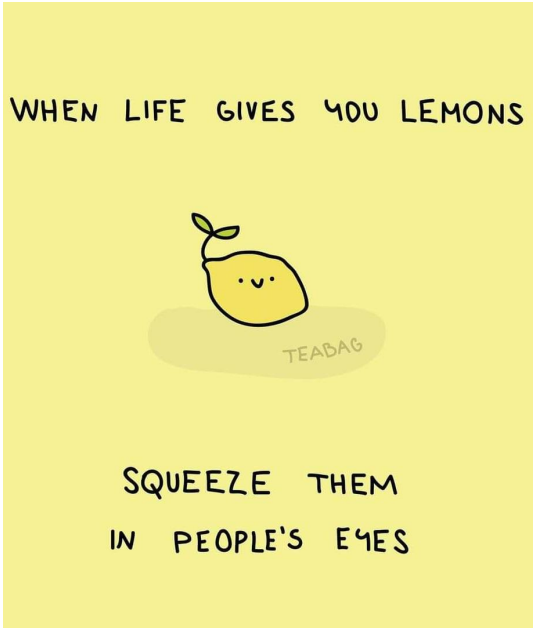


Example: *I failed my exam*	*I'm useless at exams, I'll never get the grades I need for University.*	*I was well prepared for my exam. I answered all the questions and used my time well.* *If I don't get the grades, I will either retry next year or apply for a different course.*

Cognitive Restructuring

FAILURE

FAIL = First Attempt In Learning



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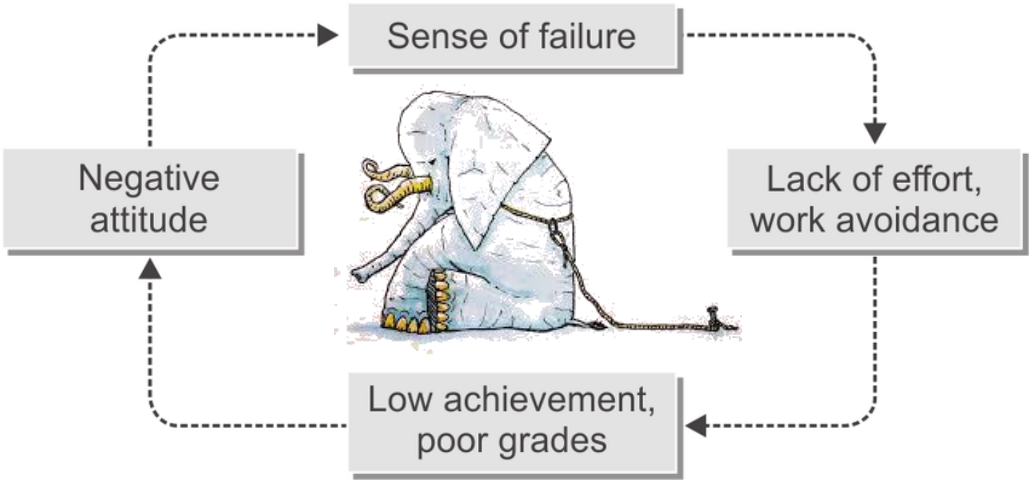
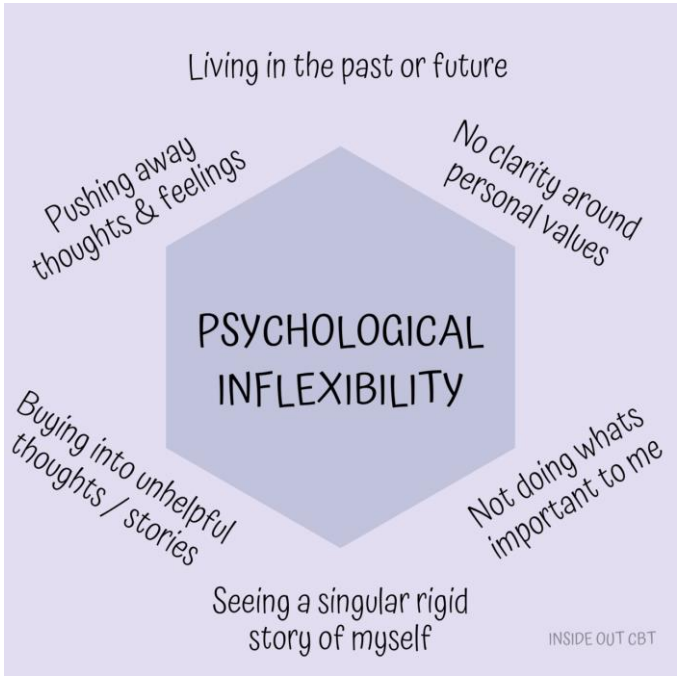
We are not clinical psychologists or psychiatrists!!





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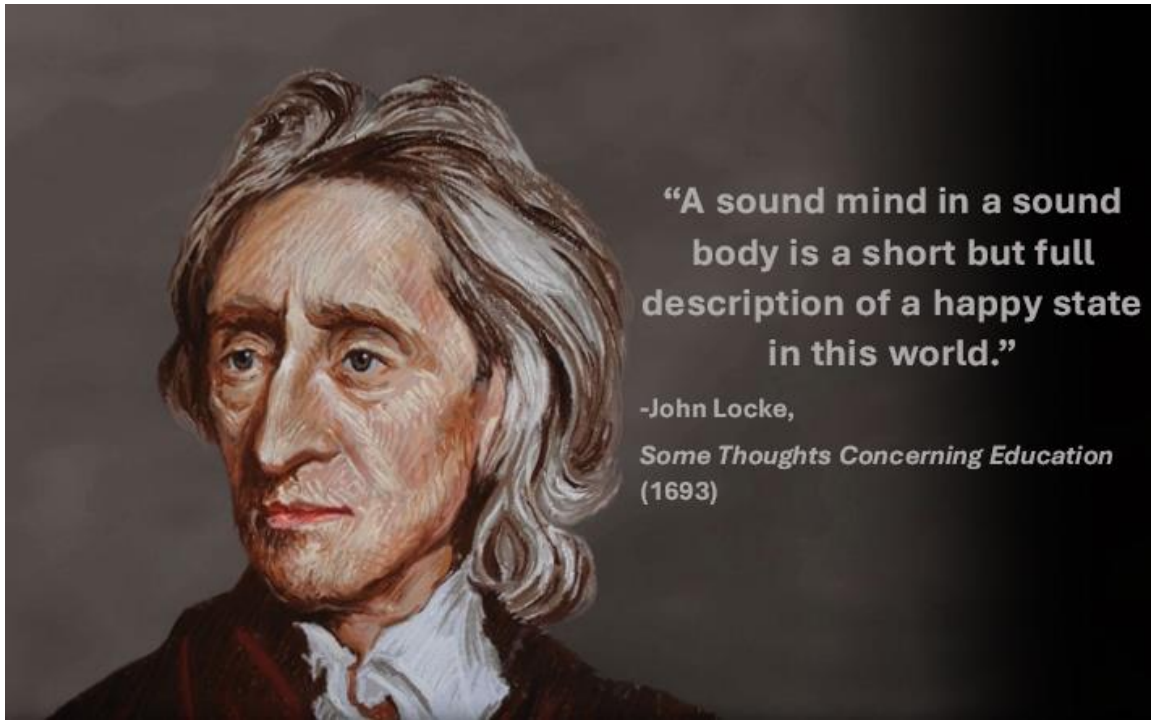


WHY?

Definition of Wellness

- **“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”**

– World Health Organization



Stress

- Adapting to a new culture (R)
- Impaired self-efficacy (P)
- New/weak relationships (R)
- Lack of clear vision (M)
- Achievements may be lacking (A)



- Job Strain:
- Strike & Steptoe (2004): High rates of job strain are a *chronic* stressor.

Mind-Body Connection

Psychoneuroimmunology: interactions among behaviors, neuroendocrine and immunological processes in the body.

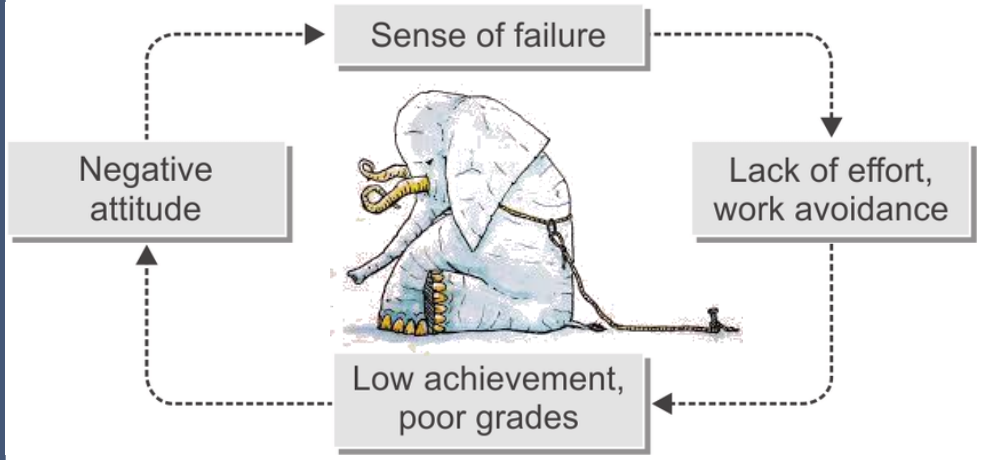
- Immune system is connected with the CNS bidirectionally:

- Stress increases negative emotions, depression and anxiety.
- Sympathetic NS connects directly (physically) with thymus and bone marrow
- An unwell mind can make a physical body sick



Consequences of Poor Health at Work

Psychologically



Learned Helplessness

Physically

- More illnesses
- More call outs
- Higher turnover

Staff-Wide Chronic Stress

Consequences of a Healthy Staff at Work
Promoting training/onboarding wellness

- Decreased stress and associated behaviors and illness
- Increased engagement
- Higher productivity
- Decreased turnover
- Reduced brain drain



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In Summary



Positive Psychology

- Positive Psychology is the scientific study and application of “the good life.”
- It’s principles and tactics can be used in training, education and development of our teams.
- Implementation as *part* of culture may help with engagement, retention and productivity.
- Failure to recognize it may lead to deleterious psychological and physical effects.
- Lack of illness does not equate to wellness
- Resources available for anyone to use to promote wellness, but always consider professional help when needed.

Positive Psychology

- PositivePsychology.com
- Positive Psychology Center at Upenn: https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/
- A Primer in Positive Psychology (Christopher Peterson) (2006)
- Advancing Positive Organizational Behavior (Cooper, Patnik, & Rodriguez)(2025)
- Health Psychology 11th Ed. (Shelley E. Taylor & Annette L. Stanton) (2021)
    - Identifying and mitigating ANTs
    - Cognitive Restructuring
    - Ikigai: At Work, Job Crafting, Strengthening
    - Assertiveness
    - Meditation / Mindfulness



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Thank You!

