

Beyond the Pursuit of Happiness: Applying Positive Psychology

Introduction:

Positive psychology seeks to address the issue of basic well-being. It goes beyond fixing the broken, diagnosing the mentally ill, or arriving at a basic state of "happiness." Through a variety of methods, this new field examines the qualities of everyday life and determines a way to improve the way humans think about their past, the way they live in the present, and the way they make decisions that form their futures.

Some methods of positive psychology that currently exist include focusing on optimism, meditation, journaling, expressing gratitude, and recalling positive memories. These ways of implementing the science behind positive psychology are imperative to the success of the field. It is important to understand the various ways these findings can be integrated into the lives of people in an effective way. In the realm of positive psychology, the goal is not only to survive, but also to thrive. With this newfound lens, the once acceptable is now challenged.

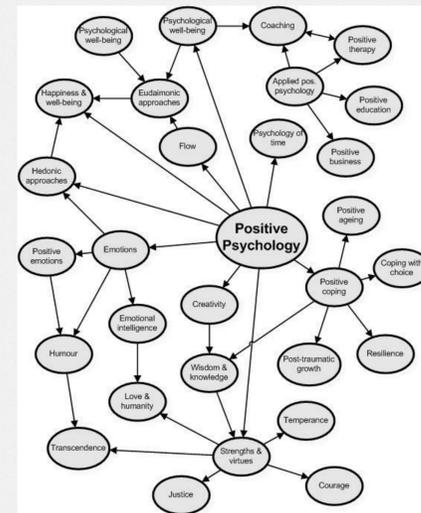
Background & Literature Review:

The foundation of this research is driven by the concept of prevention. This idea of prevention was the presidential theme of the 1998 American Psychological Association convention (Seligman, 2000, p. 7). Researchers have found that building certain traits such as courage, optimism, honesty, hope, and perseverance in people acts as a shield against mental illness.

Ernst and Seligman (2009) divide happiness into three realms including the "Pleasant Life," the "Engaged Life," and the "Meaningful Life" (p. 296). The pleasant life includes positive emotion. The engaged life includes a state of flow in which one does not operate in the apparatus of time, but rather is completely absorbed in their activity or present state. The meaningful life includes the application of strengths to something greater than oneself.

Research Questions:

- What are the ways in which positive psychologists are seeking to integrate their findings into the lives of people in various walks of life?
- How could specific methods of positive psychology be implemented in a widespread way to improve the lives of many?
- What methods of positive psychology are most effective?
- Which institutions can be reached in order to improve individuals' lives, for example, schools, workplaces, families?
- Is there a way to utilize the science of positive psychology without the negative effects of the stigma that goes along with psychology as a treatment of mental illnesses?



Significance:

This research will improve the lives of individuals, boost the cohesiveness of family structures, as well as increase effectiveness of companies. In order for society to prosper as a cohesive whole, we must be concerned with the well-being of each individual and always strive towards excellence instead of halting at a metaphorical "homeostasis." Progress does not come by settling with adequate, and because of this, it is important to address the mediocrity of some individual's lives and work towards meeting a higher standard.

Methods:

I plan to collect information through multiple sources. I will continue to review the data that already exists in order to expand upon it. I will interview both experts in the field as well as potential subjects. I will conduct a survey that will include questions regarding lifestyle satisfaction in order to get firsthand, current data. I will also test out particular theories regarding implementation of methods and observe the results.

For example, a possible future study may include choosing two practical applications, such as gratitude journaling and building upon known strengths, and implementing these in workplace and school settings to observe the which application is more effective and in which setting.

Expected Conclusions:

The information gained from this research will improve previous studies because it will expand upon straightforward implementation of already known methods of positive psychology. I hope to discover alternative methods as well as ways to integrate extant methods in a way that is new and innovative on both an individual and community level.

I expect that all of the methods will increase productivity, success, well-roundedness, and pleasure. In addition, I expect that they will reduce conflict, stress, and anxiety. The workplace and educational settings are promising places where the applications of positive psychology will flourish.

References:

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