

Positive Psychology

Some of the key principles within traditional Psychology have gotten it wrong! Much of Psychology as we know it today focuses on deconstructing personality and categorizing human behavior. Since Sigmund Freud wrote his ground breaking book, "The Psychology of Everyday Life," in 1904 psychology has largely focused on disorders. This often includes looking for problematic thoughts, feeling, and behaviors within a person's life.

However, in 1991 Martin Seligman flipped this concept upside down with his book, "Learned Optimism, How to Change your Mind and your Life." He began to research what is right with people and how people can create happiness. The pursuit of happiness is something that humans have been working toward since the beginning of time. Martin Seligman found that focusing on a person's strengths, often brings people closer to creating healthy, happy, and sustainable lifestyles. Seligman identified five key principles that help people create more meaning and joy... **PERMA**.

- P – Positive Emotion.** This is not just happiness, it also includes emotions like hope, interest, joy, love, compassion, pride, amusement, and gratitude. When people integrate these emotions into their daily lives, it improves critical thinking, rational behavior, emotional wellbeing, and relationships.
- E – Engagement.** Engagement is living in the present moment and focusing entirely on the task at hand. Engagement involves the perfect balance between challenge and skill, where people use their unique personal strengths to achieve a mission.
- R – Positive Relationships.** Positive Relationships is feeling supported, loved, and valued by others. Humans are inherently social creatures and time spent engaging in social interactions can prevent cognitive decline and contribute to better overall physical health.
- M – Meaning.** The need for meaning and sense of value or worth is also an intrinsic human quality. For many, a sense of purpose in life comes from a profession, but it can also be found through extracurricular, volunteer, or community activities. People who report having purpose in life live longer and have greater life satisfaction.
- A – Accomplishments.** Otherwise known as achievement, mastery, or competence. A sense of accomplishment helps people look at their lives with a sense of pride. Also, achieving intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) leads to larger gains in wellbeing than external goals such as money or fame.