

# The Effects of Positive Psychology on Healing

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# Objectives

- Describe three key components of positive psychology.
- Explain the physiological effect of positive psychology.
- Demonstrate an example of a mindfulness exercise.

# Positive Psychology

- It's a supportive theory for emotional well-being, not a substitute for conventional treatment.
- Focuses on what is *right* with an individual. This boosts character strengths and fosters growth.
- Origins go back at least 120 years, but it was revived at the turn of this century by Martin Seligman and his colleague, Christopher Peterson.
- Traditional psychology focuses on what is *wrong* with the individual. It emphasizes the reduction of symptoms and prevention of relapse.

# Benefits of Positive Psychology

- The greatest potential benefit of positive psychology is that it teaches us the power of shifting one's perspective.
- Physiological benefits have been shown to improve physical health and longevity resulting in reduced risk of chronic diseases.
  - Reduced stress response
  - Immune system enhancement
  - Cardiovascular health
  - Improved sleep quality
  - Lowered inflammation

# Seligman's PERMA Model

- Positive Emotions: Cultivating feelings like joy, gratitude, serenity, and hope.
- Engagement: Experiencing "flow"—a state of being completely absorbed in stimulating tasks or activities.
- Relationships: Building strong, supportive, and loving connections with others.
- Meaning: Serving a purpose greater than oneself; finding value and direction.
- Accomplishment: Pursuing and achieving goals, mastering skills, and feeling competent.

*Seligman (2011)*

# Positive Emotions

- Fostering positive feelings such as hope, compassion, pride and gratitude
- Reframing negative emotions
- Positive emotions improve habitual thinking and behavior, contributing to resilience and well-being

# Engagement

- Becoming deeply absorbed in an activity
- Fostering confidence and autonomy
- Turning challenges into opportunities
- Building relationships beyond immediate circle

# Relationships

- Encompasses all types of interactions beyond family and friends
- Builds a sense of belonging, acceptance and personal growth
- Creates a supportive environment
- Strong social environments are key to preventing cognitive decline and contribute to better physical and mental health

# Meaning

- Involves finding a renewed sense of purpose or meaning in life, which can lead to greater life satisfaction and fewer physical and mental challenges.
- It can be pursued through a profession, volunteer or community activities, a creative project or religious/spiritual beliefs.
- Personal values guide a sense of purpose.

# Accomplishment

- Comes from working towards and achieving goals, learning a new task and being self-motivated to complete one's goals.
- Focus on intrinsic goals tend to result in greater well-being compared to external goals.
- Results in increased self-confidence and a sense of personal empowerment

# Positive Psychology Interventions

- Gratitude Journaling: focusing on positive aspects of life
- Mindfulness: reconnecting with the present moment
- Self-care: improving emotional, physical, and mental well-being
- Cultivate connections: prioritizing relationships to build a strong support system
- Strength Identification: building self-esteem and resilience
- Seek professional help when needed

# Recap

- Applying principles of positive psychology to support healing has been shown to enhance physical health, improve mental well-being, and strengthen resilience in coping with the challenges that arise during illness.
- Key practices include gratitude exercises, mindfulness activities and strength identification
- For more information about incorporating Positive Psychology into your own life and nursing practice, please visit <https://positivepsychology.com/>

# References

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