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HUMAN HAPPINESS

Cultivating Resilience through Positive Psychology and Mindfulness

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Research in the field of Positive Psychology has shown that positive life changes often accompany the experience of stressful life events.
The psychological struggle with difficult events can include negative psychological effects, but it may paradoxically also include highly meaningful outcomes.
Janus, is the ancient Roman god of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages, and endings. He has two faces, able to see the complexities of the past and benefits of the future.
Posttraumatic growth (PTG) or benefit finding refers to positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity and other challenges in order to rise to a higher level of functioning.
Boost Your Happiness!

Cultivation of mindfulness, engagement, positive emotions, vital involvement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, practicing gratitude, and experiencing flow are ameliorative and increase our capacity for positivity and resilience.
Happiness is the Centerpiece of Positive Psychology

By cultivating happiness and resilience, we deploy our highest strengths that lead to more positive emotion, to more meaning, to more accomplishment, and to better relationships.
Happiness increases Personal Flourishing

We flourish by cultivating (PERMA):
Positive emotions: self-esteem, optimism
Engagement: vital involvement
Relationships: meaningful connections
Meaning in Life: cultivating resilience
Accomplishment: self-determination
Positive Emotions, Well-Being and Authentic Happiness

Ecstasy
Warmth
Openness
Kindness
Creativity
Inspiration
Rapture
Positive Relationships

Interpersonal connections are vital to happiness. Learning to forgive, adapt, and accept others are key skills in social relationships. Trust and intimacy are fostered by being emotionally flexible. Isolation is decreased. Intimacy increases empathy.
Engagement

Life requires our Vital Involvement. It is important that we serve a purpose higher than ourselves, find meaning in actions that absorb us in the present, creating a flow of positive immersion into the activity. Engagement increases our happiness and self-worth.
Meaning in Life

Knowing what our highest strengths are and using those skills in service of something greater than ourself; we draw meaning from multiple sources such as family, work, love, spirituality, personal projects. Seek the profound and life-altering.
Meaning and Cultivating Resilience

Meaning may deepen in the aftermath of trauma. Positive religious and spiritual coping increases a readiness to face the purpose in one’s existence and one’s mortality.
“Do you conceptualize an event as traumatic or as an opportunity to learn and grow?” (G. Bonnano, Columbia University)

Resilience is a set of skills that can be developed by everyone.
Reframe the Narrative

We can reframe and reinterpret a negative situation by adopting a positive perspective; find the silver lining; this intention and practice leads us to experience positive emotions and happier results.
Meaning and Appreciation of Life

The confrontation with great difficulties, reminds us of our mortality, leading to self-assessment about our purpose. Positive opportunities emerge from struggles, opening up perspectives that were not there before.
Accomplishment

Having explicit goals in life, even small ones, and making efforts to achieve them increase well-being.

We seek accomplishment and achievement in that it optimizes self-esteem and self-efficacy.
Resilience and Adversity

We can become less resilient or more resilient. We can create or exaggerate stressors. That is the danger of the human condition. Human beings are capable of immersion in worry and rumination. Frame adversity as a challenge, practice become a more flexible thinker by learning and enhancing your personal growth.
Supercharge Your Resilience

*Express gratitude.* When you acknowledge the goodness in your life, you begin to recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside yourself, whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.
Before going to bed, set aside a few minutes to think about five experiences of today that you are grateful for. Create a gratitude journal and in your writing be specific and remember what each experience means to you.
Leverage your strengths. Certain strengths are most closely linked to happiness. They include gratitude, hope, vitality, curiosity, and love. These strengths are so important that they are worth cultivating and practicing in our daily lives, even if they don't come naturally.
Savor the "good." We are primed to experience the pleasure in special moments, like a wedding or a vacation. Everyday pleasures can slip by without much notice. Savoring is placing our attention on pleasure as it occurs, mindfully savoring the experience as it unfolds. Multitasking is the enemy of savoring.
Turbocharge Your Inner Strengths

Reframe the narrative, “I can change the way I look at the situation.” Cultivate optimism by avoiding blaming; see adversity as temporary, shift from learned helplessness to action. See crises as surmountable. Seek connections and ask for support.
Emotional Strength and Resilience

“If I lived through that, I can face anything.” The experience is paradoxical in that the person is stronger yet more vulnerable; personal discovery enhances inner strengths and coping skills, fostering resilience.
In the Buddhist meditative traditions, it has been known for centuries that the sustained practice of mindfulness can have profoundly healing and transformative effects.
The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.

Thich Nhat Hanh
Mindfulness meditation helps us become aware of what is already true moment by moment. We could say that it teaches us how to be unconditionally present; that is, it helps us be present with whatever is happening, no matter what it is.
Mindfulness is defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed a stress-reduction course based on Buddhist meditation techniques, as "paying attention on purpose moment by moment without judging".
Mindfulness helps us to be aware of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations without self-criticism. It allows us to accept our experiences as they are, rather than how we want them to be, including painful emotions. Over time we respond more skillfully instead of reacting automatically through our habits and conditioning.
Mindfulness and Resilience
As we become more mindful, we broaden and build several inner resources that help us strengthen our resilience. (Fredrickson, 2001).
How Mindfulness Improves Well-Being

Decreases anxiety and impulsivity
Lessens stress, fear, and depression
Enhances self-acceptance
Improves resilience against adversity
Increases optimism and relaxation
Helps develop positive connections
Improves mood and emotional intelligence
Positive Reappraisal increases neuroplasticity, changing the shape and functioning of our brains over time
Improved attention and focus
Increase in memory retention
Expansion of creative thinking
Decreases distractions
Self-Compassion

We hold the intention not to judge ourselves or others and to engage in self-care and self love.

If mindfulness brings the wisdom to see clearly, then compassion brings a loving heart (Neff, 2011).
Mindfulness Optimizes a Happier Body

Improves immune system
Improves breathing and heart rate
Reduces blood pressure
Increases quality of life
Decreases inflammatory responses
Lessens premenstrual and menopausal symptoms
Increases respiration
Mindfulness Meditation (shamatha):
Body, Breath, and Thoughts

Pick a spot. Take a posture that is upright but not rigid. Feel the skin of your palms resting on your thighs. Allow your eyes to close or gaze gently. Let your front be open and your back be strong.
Body
The body is always in the present. Allow yourself to scan your body, beginning with your head. Slowly scan down your body, checking in with your head, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, upper thighs, lower legs, and feet.
Breath

Bring awareness to your breath, noticing the inhalations and exhalations of each breath. Feel how each breath flows in and out of your body, filling your lungs and then releasing through your throat and mouth. Begin to lengthen and deepen each breath. Observing your breath is a mindfulness practice. With each breath you become relaxed.
Any time we are distracted by noises or thoughts, go back to observing our inhalations and exhalations. Any time we experience unpleasant thoughts or emotions, return the focus to our breathing.
Thoughts
As we practice, we will notice thoughts arise. When we notice thoughts or emotions coming up label them as *thinking*. Return attention back to the breath. If we notice our thoughts wandering, acknowledge by saying, *I am observing my thinking.*
Focus on the present

It is easy for our minds and emotions to jump to the future or back into the past, but our body is always in the present moment. If we find our minds wandering, return to breath. Try to focus only on one breath at a time.
Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.

Rumi
Citations:

http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/
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the end
Namaste

Peace