



# USING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY TO HELP YOUR CLIENTS THRIVE

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## What Is Our Goal For Therapy?

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Symptom control

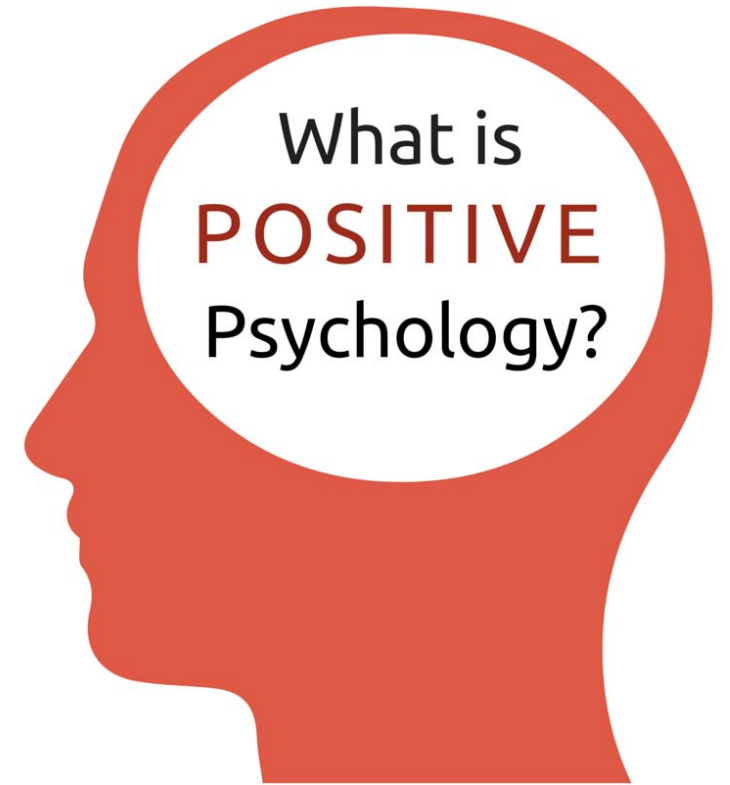
Or a life filled with happiness & meaning

# Positive Psychology: Beyond Symptoms

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**Positive Psychology** is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

Univ. of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center



# *3 Pillars of Positive Psychology*

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## **1. Positive Subjective Experiences**

Overall sense of well being a person has regarding his/her life (pleasurable experiences, social network, personal meaning)

## **2. Positive Traits and States:**

Character strengths & positive behaviors & habits

## **3. Positive Institutions**

Social justice, supportive services, economic stability, inclusion, national priorities

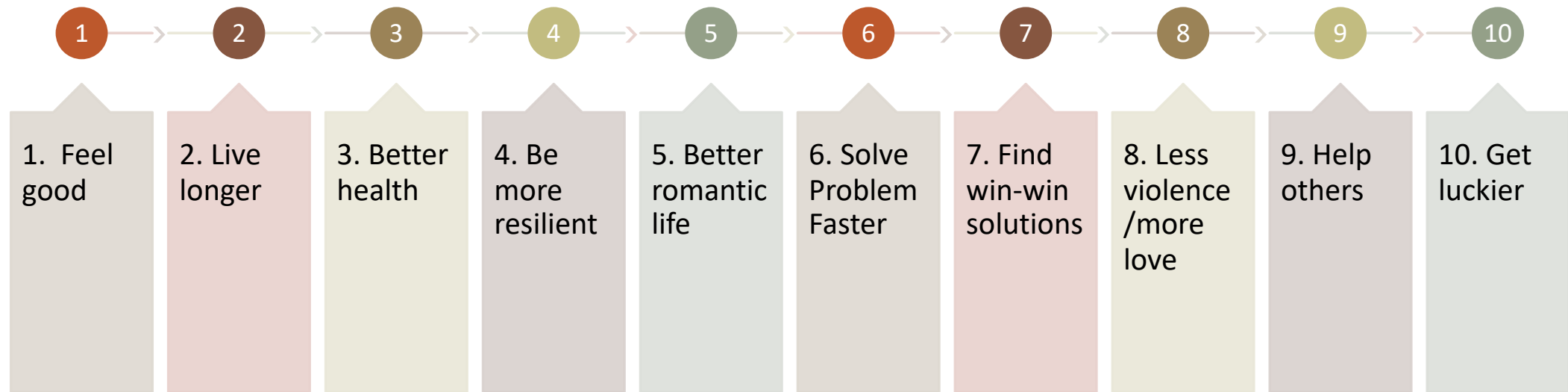
# Positive Psychology Focuses on Authentic Happiness

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- ❑ High levels of positive emotion
  - ❑ Active engagement in life and with others
  - ❑ Deep sense meaning



# 10 Great Reasons To Help Your Clients Be Happier

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# Traditional Therapy Has Not Been Happiness Centered

Control symptoms

Improve functioning

Reduce crises

Return to baseline



# Positive Psychology vs Abnormal Psychology

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Traditional psychology studies dysfunction

Traditional psychology reduces symptoms

Traditional psychology moves people to baseline

Traditional psychology learns from people at their worst.

Positive psychology studies happiness

Positive psychology increases well being

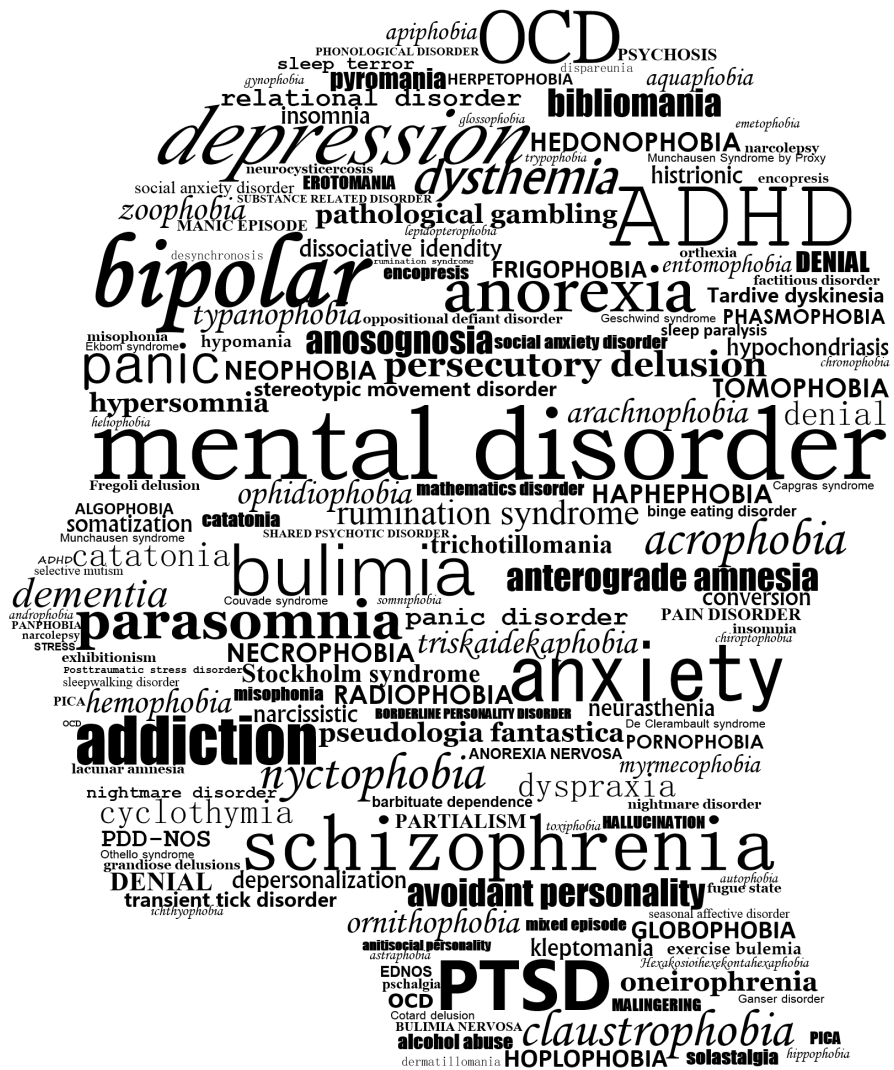
Positive psychology helps people to flourish

Positive psychology learns from people at their best



# Positive Psychology Is *Not* The Core Of Therapist Training

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- Psychology training is illness based
- Reimbursement is diagnosis driven
- 21 to 1 ratio of journals articles on pathology to articles on positive psychology topics
- Curing illness is a great goal But we need a balance.



# Positive Psychotherapy's Goal

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*Increase positive emotion, engagement, and meaning rather than directly targeting psychiatric symptoms.*

*The core focus is on moving away from “what’s wrong” and recognizing and building on “what’s good and positive.”*

*It does not ignore symptoms of psychiatric conditions, but symptoms themselves are not the focus.*

# A Shift That Drives A Different Focus In Therapy

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**What works well in your life?**

- Rather than, why are you failing?

**What will make you happy?**

- Rather than, what are your symptoms?

**When are you most comfortable and at peace, or most alert and energized?**

- Rather than, how can you get organized and focus on the work?

**What can we learn from that situation?**

- Rather than, what would you do differently next time?



# Positive Psychology Is A Universal Toolkit

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- People with clinical conditions want more positive emotion, engagement, & meaning (happiness) in their lives
- Positive emotion, engagement, & meaning may not “cure, but they make treatment easier and improve outcomes
- And often positive emotion, engagement, & meaning fully resolve symptoms



# Positive Psychotherapy Is A Whole Person Approach



# Positive Psychology Evidence Based Treatment Strategies

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Mindfulness

Savoring

Gratitude Strategies

Kindness & Compassion Boosters

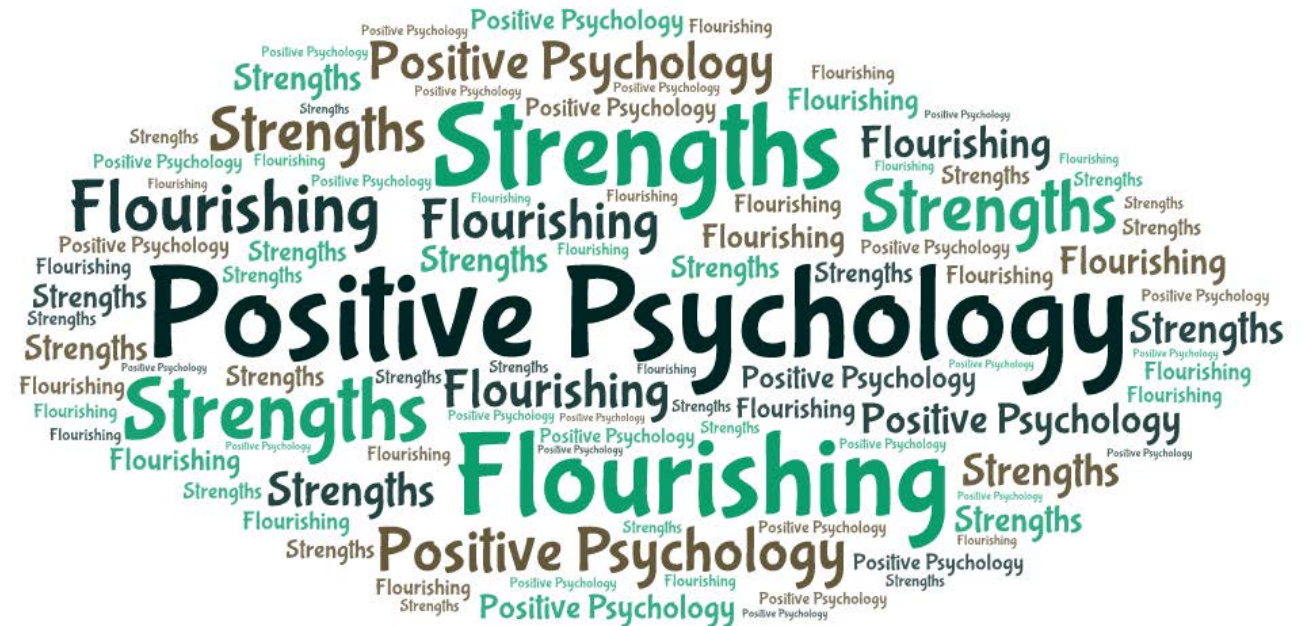
Optimism Interventions

Identifying & Building Strengths

Mind/Body Interventions

Meaning Oriented Interventions

Choice & Creating Your Reality



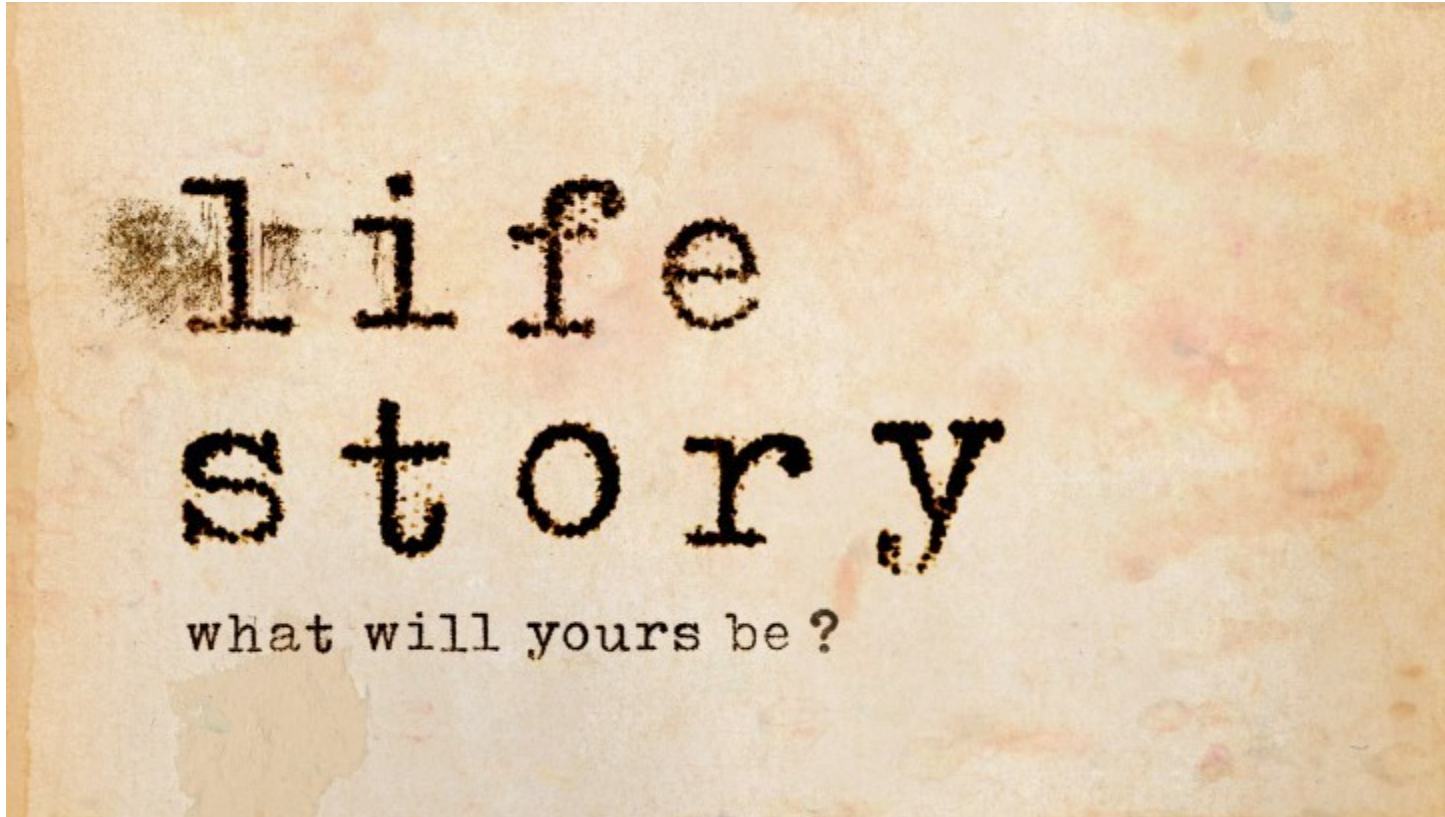


## And If You Find Ways To...

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- Have purpose and meaning?
- Manage your physical health?
- Are creative and learning?
- Have strong social connections?
- Feel good emotionally?

***Has psychotherapy been a success?***



# Tell A Better Story

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POSITIVE COGNITIVE  
BEHAVIORAL THERAPY



**It's not the things that  
happen to us that  
make us unhappy.**

**It's the stories we tell  
ourselves about the  
things that happen to  
us.**



It's chaos.  
The situation is tense.  
Roads are blocked. People are  
desperate. It's been 24 hours and  
the aid has still not come to the  
people who need it.

Amidst the  
destruction, survivors and local  
organisations are working to reach  
the victims. They are clearing roads  
and setting up communication  
points so that aid can  
get through.



# Challenging Beliefs

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**Determine “why” beliefs**

**Identify alternative “why” explanations**

**Evaluate the evidence for all beliefs**

**Identify what can influence and how**

# How Automatic Stories Can Stress Us

<b>Stressful Event</b>	<b>The teacher told me to sit down and be quiet</b>
<b>Automatic Story We Tell</b>	<b>The teacher hates me. That's why I got a bad grade. There is nothing I can do about it. I'm going to fail.</b>
<b>Deeply Held Beliefs</b>	<b>I am worthless and doing well in class is impossible.</b>
<b>Emotional Consequences</b>	<b>Shame, guilt, anger, hopelessness</b>
<b>Behavioral Consequences</b>	<b>Isolation, not studying, misbehaving in school, hooking up with other struggling kids</b>

# What If We Slow Down, Examine The Evidence, & Make A Choice?

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**No patience?** I can be distracted at times, but I am usually really interested in listening; people tell me I am patient

**This teacher speaks his mind?** Teacher runs a tight ship and says what is on his mind. Good to have a strong teacher!

**I am on edge today?** Yes! Problems at home and I have not talked to anyone about it.

**My teacher was uneasy with me (due to my behavior)?**: Good chance of this; I was being loud. It has happened before.

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**What Do I Choose To Do?** Focus? Listen closely? Talk to someone about stuff at home? Apologize to my teacher?



# Better Stories Help Us Thrive

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## **Awareness:**

What happened, what am I thinking?

## **Evidence:**

That's not true because...

## **Alternatives:**

A more accurate way of seeing this is....

## **Implications:**

A more likely outcome is... and I can... next actions





# Your Best Self

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ONE OF THE BEST  
STORIES!

# What Is “Your Best Self”?

A best self story is based on the resource activation model. It is an activity where a client is asked to write about a time when they were at their best.







Best

Better

Good

# Your Best Self Makes A Difference!

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Best Self Stories have the potential to generate positive emotions. Research has shown that the recall of positive memories plays an important role in mood regulation.

Client has the opportunity to reframe, reappraise, and refile important parts of the self from which they can draw personal strength.

When we know when we are at our best in life, we have a blueprint for generating other peak moments that allow us to use our strengths in natural and successful ways.



# The Positive Introduction

HELPING YOUR CLIENT MEET THEIR BEST SELF

*“PSYCHOLOGICALLY DISTRESSED CLIENTS CAN BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND SERVED IF THEY ARE TAUGHT TO USE THEIR HIGHEST RESOURCES, BOTH PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL – TO MEET LIFE’S CHALLENGE.”*

(MARTIN SELIGMAN)



## *About The Positive Introduction*

The Positive Introduction encourages a client to recall a significant event or experience that ended very well.

*“Think about a time when you handled a tough situation in a positive way. Write about this situation. Make it in the form of a story with a beginning, middle and a positive end.”*

# *Introducing The Positive Introduction*

*Ask client to reflect on the following:*

How might this story have impacted your self concept?

What helped you deal with the situation?

- Personal attributes: persistence, optimism, faith;
- Environmental attributes: support from close friends, family members, or professional relationships.

Are significant others in your life aware of this story in the same spirit or way that you recall it?

After the reflection and writing, facilitate a discussion.



# *Supporting The Positive Introduction*

Clients can also tell their story through a montage of images: can use photographs, souvenirs or mementos such as awards, certificates and letters of appreciate to anchor their stories.



To extend the benefit of this practice, reflect on stories you tell, to yourself and to others about yourself:

- Do your stories change, or change in nuance, according to who you are talking to?
- What are your values?

Most conversations in psychotherapy have the potential to form a sequence of stories and narratives.

- Inquire about and amplify the stories.
- Remember key themes.

The Positive Introduction can help client recall other stories of growth. Encourage client to share other similar stories.

# Applications

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- Ask client to write about a time when they were most resilient. Prior experience as a resource. (Dr. Reivich)
- Clients struggling to recall and write a Positive Introduction can ask close family members or friends to write a story about them.
- If clients are unable to benefit they can write about any real life story about overcoming challenges that they find inspiring and can gradually move toward their own real life story or experience of resilience.
  
- Best Possible Future Self.
- The research has found that this simple writing exercise
- (done for 3 days in a row, 20 minutes at a time)
- boosts self-esteem and gives people deeper personal awareness of motives and strengths.
- It also improves self-regulation because pathways to success become more immediately apparent, and it's easier to spot what you can control and where you can make changes to begin the process of growth.



grow

# Choosing A Better Approach: A Shift In Focus From Illness To Wellness

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STRENGTHS AND  
WHAT IS WORKING



WHAT YOU CAN  
CHANGE, ON  
CHOOSING YOUR  
PATH



BOUNCING WITH  
AND LEARNING  
FROM ADVERSITY



INCREASED  
AWARENESS &  
APPRECIATION



BEING CONNECTED  
TO YOUR OWN LIFE  
AND OTHERS  
AROUND YOU

What is the ***One Thing*** you will ***Choose To Do Today*** to improve your resilience and well-being?



# Positive Psychology

in Clinical Settings



Week 1: Introduction to Positive Psychology and Clinical Work

Week 2: SPIRE: A Universal Framework for Clinical Work

Week 3: Building Resilience: The Common Toolkit

Week 4: Positive Psychology and Post-Traumatic Growth

Week 5: Positive Psychology and Depression and Anxiety

Week 6: Positive Psychology and Substance Abuse

Week 7: Positive Psychology and Child and Family Work

Week 8: Developing the Habits of Positive Psychology

Registration:

<https://wholebeinginstitute.com/positive-psychology-in-clinical-settings/>



Thanks for joining us  
today!

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