

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY



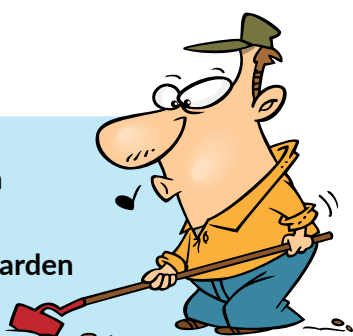
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Positive psychology didn't just appear. Even 2,000 years ago, Greek philosophers were pondering how 'the good life' might look.

And while many others have asked the same question since, it wasn't until psychologist Martin Seligman's research into 'what's good about life?' that we see the beginnings of positive psychology in its modern form (Seligman, 2006).

And it began with something that happened in his garden one afternoon.

Seligman was gardening and got increasingly grumpy.



His five-year old-daughter Nikki was singing, dancing, and throwing weeds in the air.



She ran off crying, only to return later with this to say: "Daddy, do you remember before my fifth birthday, how I whined every day? When I turned five, I decided to stop.

That was the hardest thing I've ever done. If I can stop whining, you can stop being a grouch" (Seligman, 2019, p. 4).



After a while, he lost his cool, got angry, and yelled.



And Nikki was right. I had spent "the last ten years as a walking nimbus cloud in a household radiant with sunshine," said Seligman (Seligman, 2019, p. 4).

The impact of that day was profound. He decided to change himself and, as head of the American Psychological Association (APA), transform the entire field of psychology from the inside out.

While the traditional 'disease model' focused on what was wrong and the problems people faced, positive psychology was going to look at what is right – the 'good life.'

He wanted to use psychology to answer the following questions:

What makes life worth living?

And

How do we focus on people's strengths rather than their weaknesses?



His research showed that to thrive or 'flourish' requires "a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment" (Seligman, 2011, p. 25).

So positive psychology does just that; it focuses on positive emotions, relationships, and meaningful engagement, leaving us energized and uplifted, and motivated toward positive change (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019).

Dr. Jeremy Sutton

References

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