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centre for
positive psychology
and health

The Science of Health and Happiness

NOTES: LECTURE 1

<http://rcsi.com/happinessresources>

MARCH 2021

RCSI Science of Health and Happiness: NOTES LECTURE 1

- **WHO definition of health** as '*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*' <https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>
- **20th/21st century:** modernisation and rapid rise chronic diseases associated with lifestyle: (decreasing activity, obesity, high processed diet, smoking and alcohol)
- **Five conditions** – diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and mental health disorders – account for an estimated **86%** of the deaths and **77%** of the disease burden in the European Region. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>
- **The biomedical model:** body seen as machine – limited view – alternative: bio-psycho-social model
- **New discoveries:** gut-brain interactions, low grade inflammation (metaflammation)
- **Lifestyle Medicine** focuses on educating and motivating people to change their personal habits and behaviors in relation to nutrition, physical activity, sleep, managing stress, avoiding risky substances and building and maintaining positive social relationships.
- **Mental health:** a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en

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- **Positive Psychology** is the scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive
- **Hedonic tradition:** pleasures; happiness here seen as the good life in terms of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain
- **Eudaimonic tradition:** gratifications; happiness seen as achieving one's full potential; the pursuit of virtue and meaning
- The **pleasant life** is devoted to the pursuit of positive emotions (hedonic well-being)
- The **good life** involves using ones dominant characteristics to to engage fully in things – to create a state of *flow*
- The **meaningful life** is about using your strengths in the service of something greater than yourself
- **Temperament:** 50% genetic; 10% circumstances; 40% under our own control
- **The PERMA Model of Happiness.** Positive Emotions; Engagement; Relationships; Meaning; Accomplishment.
- **Increasing PERMA:** *Positive Emotions:* The 3 good things exercise; *Engagement:* Learning to use your best strengths especially for things you don't like doing; *Relationships:* Improving relationships through improved compassion and communication skill; *Meaning:* Considering your values, goals and purpose in life. Writing your vision and your obituary (through your grandchild's eyes!); *Accomplishment:* Achieving through self-discipline and grit – savouring your accomplishments

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Optimism is characterized as the general expectation that good things will happen, or the belief that the future will be favorable because one can control important outcomes. Linked to a range of positive outcomes including how long we live.

Tackling pessimism: (i) Tune in to your most catastrophic thoughts; (ii) Treat them as if said to you by someone whose goal in life is to make you miserable; (iii) Argue back and dispute as you would to a person, rationally; (iv) Imagine worst scenario; (v) Imagine best scenario; (vi) Imagine most REALISTIC scenario; (vii) Plan accordingly.

Further reading:

Bonniwell I. (2012) *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Carr A. (2020) *Positive Psychology and You*. Oxford, Routledge.

Chatterjee R. (2017) *The 4 Pillar Plan*. London, Penguin Life.

Siegel RD (2016) *Positive Psychology: Harnessing the Power of Happiness, Mindfulness and Inner Strength*.

Boston, Harvard Medical School.

References 1

- O'Boyle C (2020). The “Positive Paradigm” and the Future of Healthcare. Future Health Summit Blog: <https://futurehealthsummit.com/fhs-blog/the-positive-paradigm-and-the-future-of-healthcare/>
- Rozanski A, Bavishi C, Kubzansky LD, Cohen R. Association of Optimism With Cardiovascular Events and All-Cause Mortality: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2019;2(9):e1912200.
doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.12200
- Seligman M. (1998) *Learned Optimism*. NY, Alfred Knopf
- Seligman M (2002) *Authentic Happiness*. New York, Free Press
- Seligman MEP (2011) *Flourish*. NY: Free Press
- Seligman MEP, Csikszentmihalyi M (2000). Positive Psychology: an introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.
- Sherwin E, Dinan TG, Cryan JF. (2018) Recent developments in understanding the role of the gut microbiota in brain health and disease. *Ann N Y Acad Sci* 1420, 5-25.

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- Bullmore E. (2018) *The Inflamed Mind*. Picador
- Diener et al (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. J Pers Ass 49(1), 71-75
- Lee LO et al (2019). Optimism is associated with exceptional longevity in 2 epidemiologic cohorts of men and women Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/early/2019/08/20/1900712116.full.pdf>
- Ince S. (2011). Positive Psychology: Harnessing the power of happiness, mindfulness, and personal growth. Harvard Medical School Special Health Report. Harvard, MA.
- Lopez SJ, Snyder CR (2009) *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (2nd Ed.)* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lyubomirsky S. (2007) *The How of Happiness*. New York: Penguin

Further exploration – videos/websites

Rangan Chatterjee. How To Make Diseases Disappear

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaY4m00wXpw>

Beth Frates: RCSI MyHealth: Paving the Path to Wellness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSv6-jvT02M>

Martin Seligman: The New Era of Positive Psychology.

https://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_the_new_era_of_positive_psychology?language=en

RCSI MyHealth Series

<https://www.rcsi.com/society/national-leadership/myhealth/lecture-series>

RCSI Science of Health and Happiness: <http://rcsi.com/happinessresources>

RCSI Coronavirus Hub: <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/coronavirus/information-for-the-public/positive-mental-health>

RCSI Coronavirus: Information for the public: <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/coronavirus/information-for-the-public>