

Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D.

# AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS

Anne Rapley, EADM 826, Sept. 11, 2020



**Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment**

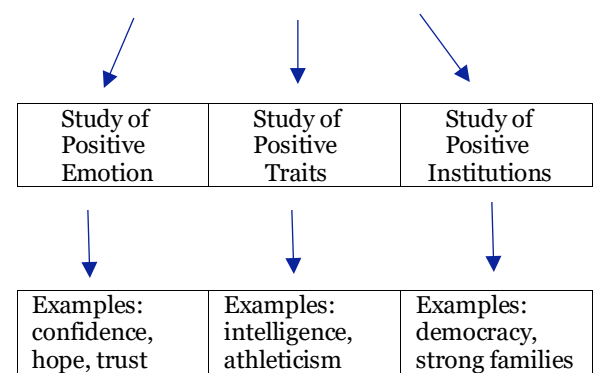
## What is Positive Psychology?

### Positive Emotions:

- joy
- flow
- glee
- pleasure
- contentment
- serenity
- hope
- ecstasy

“So Positive Psychology is about the meaning of those happy and unhappy moments, the tapestry they weave, and the strengths and virtues they display that make up the quality of your life” (Seligman, 2002, p. 7).

### Pillars of Positive Psychology



## About the Author

Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the Positive Psychology Network.

His areas of study include positive psychology, learned helplessness, optimism, depression, and ethnopolitical conflict.

He is the recipient of several lifetime achievement awards, and has published over 20 books and 170 articles, including the national bestseller *Learned Optimism*.



### In this Issue:

- What is Pos. Psychology? ..... page 1
- About the Author ..... page 1
- Research Background.....page 2
- What is a Meaningful Life?.....page 2
- Happiness Equation.....page 2
- Signature Strengths.....page 3
- Positive Emotions.....page 4
- Increasing Happiness.....page 5
- Mansions of Life: Work.....page 6
- Mansions of Life: Parenting...page 7
- Mansions of Life: Love.....page 8
- Discussion Questions.....page 9
- Book Summary.....page 9
- Critical Evaluation.....page 9



“Authentic happiness comes from identifying and cultivating your most fundamental strengths and using them every day in work, love, play, and parenting” (Seligman, 2002, p. xi)

## Research Background

After World War II, there was a need for more therapists for veterans returning from the war. Psychologists largely filled this role. There was also a change of funding research to focus more on mental illness. This led to a disease model of remedying deficits. In recent years, there has been more of a focus on increasing people’s strengths.

Dr. Martin Seligman’s learned helplessness research showed that 1/3 of dogs never gave up in situations where they had no control over what happened to them, and 1/8 of the dogs were helpless to begin with. This led the researchers to ask what buffering strengths certain animals possessed and whether these strengths could be increased?

### Why do we have positive emotions in the first place?

Studies have shown that happy people live longer, are more productive at work, endure pain better, have more of a social life, and are more altruistic (Seligman, 2002, p. 39-42). “By activating an expansive, tolerant, and creative mindset, positive feelings maximize the social, intellectual, and physical benefits that will accrue” (Seligman, 2002, p. 44).



## What is the Meaningful Life?

### The Pleasant Life:

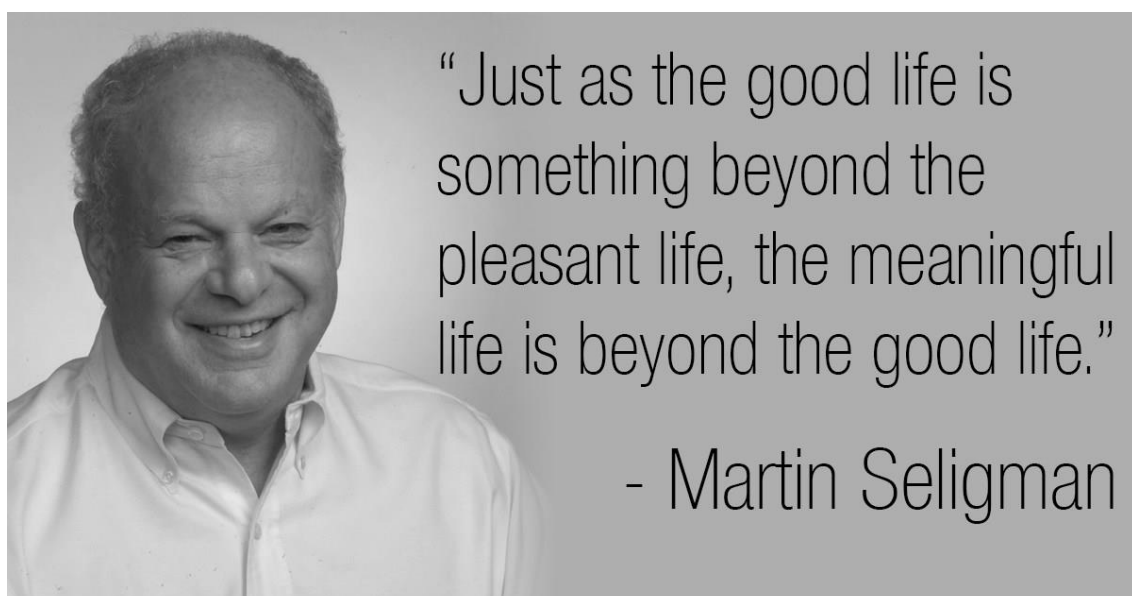
- pursuit of positive feelings (momentary states)
- shortcuts to happiness: eg. chocolate, drugs, shopping
- inauthentic

### The Good Life:

- using signature strengths to achieve gratification
- what is gratification? Meeting a challenge by calling on your strengths; to rise to the occasion

### The Meaningful Life:

- using signature strengths for some larger purpose
- All 3 lives = A full life



## THE HAPPINESS EQUATION

$$H = S + C + V$$

H = Enduring happiness  
S = Set range

C = Life circumstances  
V = Factors under voluntary control

Continues on P3

## 24 Strengths

- Curiosity
- Love of Learning
- Ingenuity
- Social Intelligence
- Perspective
- Valor
- Perseverance
- Integrity
- Kindness
- Loving
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Leadership
- Self-control
- Prudence
- Humility
- Appreciation of Beauty
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Spirituality
- Forgiveness
- Humour
- Zest

## What are virtues?

Virtues are common to many religions and philosophical traditions



*“Building strengths and virtue is not about learning, training, or conditioning, but about discovery, creation, and ownership”*

*Dr. Martin Seligman, p. 136*

The routes to these virtues are called strengths (which are measurable and acquirable). Strengths are moral traits and can be built. Talents (eg. perfect pitch, running speed) are nonmoral and are more innate.

## Virtues:

- Wisdom & knowledge
- Courage
- Love & humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Spirituality & transcendence

“The Mansions of Life” to use your signature strengths in:

- Work
- Love
- Parenting

## What are your signature strengths?

Take the strengths test at [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org)



### Strengths:

- traits
- valued in its own right
- states we desire that require no further justification
- others are elevated and inspired
- supported in culture by institutions, etc.

### Signature Strengths:

- deeply characteristic of a person
- a person self-consciously owns, celebrates, uses everyday
- build on these to achieve deepest emotional satisfaction
- feel invigorated rather than drained when using signature strengths



“...formulation of the good life: using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of your life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness” (Seligman, 2002, p. 161).

# Positive Emotions

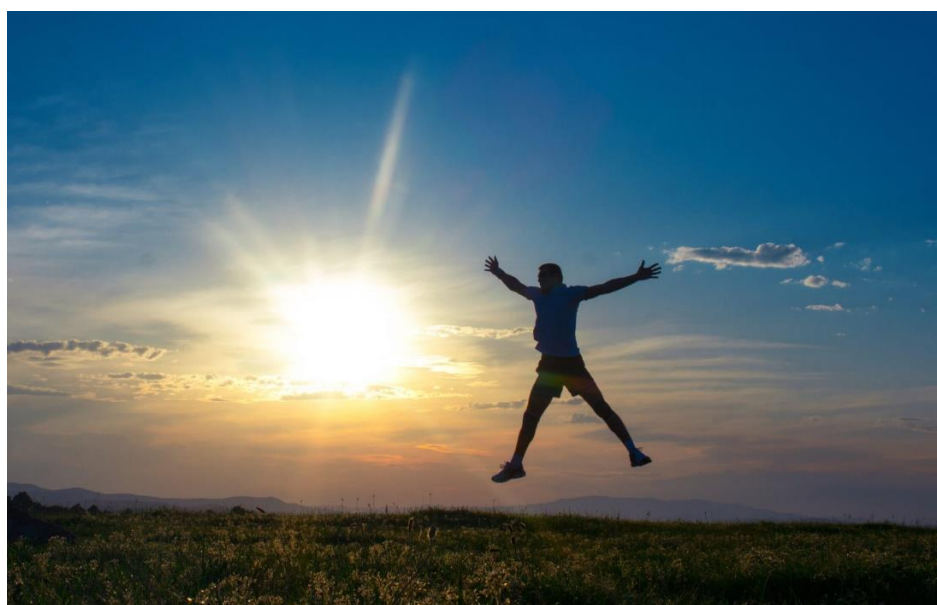


About the Past:	About the Present:	About the Future:
-satisfaction -contentment -fulfillment -pride -serenity	-joy -ecstasy -calm -zest -ebullience -pleasure -flow	-optimism -hope -faith -trust

## What determines how happy we are?

- The Happiness Thermostat – personal set range for happiness, mostly inherited
- The Hedonic Treadmill – get used to good things in life and come to expect more
- Having more negative emotions doesn't necessarily mean you'll have less positive emotions (not polar opposite relation)
- Women found to have both more positive and negative emotions than men (Seligman, 2002, p. 57)
- Increased age not related to less happiness, but less intense emotions overall
- Happier people are more social
- Being married is related to happiness (but could it be that happier people are more likely to get married?)
- Subjective perception of how healthy you are is related to happiness
- Education, climate, race, gender all not related to level of happiness
- Religious people somewhat happier than nonreligious people

Depression Rates in wealthy nations have been increasing over the past 40 years. We have created more shortcuts to pleasure (T.V., drugs, etc.). Self-absorption is a symptom of depression.



## Does Money Buy You Happiness??

The answer seems to be no!

“In very poor nations, where poverty threatens life itself, being rich does predict greater well-being. In wealthier nations, however, where almost everyone has a basic safety net, increases in wealth have negligible effects on personal happiness”  
 -Dr. Martin Seligman, 2002, p. 53



# Increasing Happiness

## Ways to Feel More Happiness about the Past:

- Increase your gratitude about good things in your past
- Forgive past transgressions
- Escaping tyranny of determinism (let go of idea that your past determines your future)

## Ways to Feel More Happiness about the Present:

- Breaking habituation (space out pleasures over time more, so don't get used to them)
- Savoring (deliberate conscious attention paid to pleasures, sharing with others, memory building, self-congratulation, sharpening perceptions, absorption)
- Mindfulness (shifting perspective to see situation as fresh, slow state of mind, origins in Buddhism)



## Ways to Feel More Happiness about the Future:

- Increasing hope and optimism through disputing (arguing with yourself)
- Learning to argue with yourself: evidence, alternatives, implications (decatastrophizing), usefulness
- Optimism: Optimistic person sees bad events as temporary and specific / good events as permanent and universal. Pessimistic person sees bad events as permanent and universal / good events as temporary and specific.
- Hope: "Finding permanent and universal causes of good events along with temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope" (Seligman, 2002, p. 92)

### *Increasing Optimism & Hope*

- A – Adversity
- B – Belief automatically occurring
- C – Usual consequences
- D – Disputation of belief
- E – Energization occurring from successfully disputing



## The Mansions of Life – Work

Money now matters less than life satisfaction (beyond the safety net, more money adds little to well-being)

Job – do for a paycheck

Career – personal investment in the work

Calling – passionate commitment to work for its own sake

### **What is flow?**

*Flow – positive emotions about the present; time stops when you are doing something you really enjoy; often with the absence of emotion at the time; no conscious feeling attached*

*“Gratification dispels self-absorption and the more one has the flow that gratification produces, the less depressed one is” (Seligman, 2002, p. 119)*

Any job can be a calling, and any calling can be a job.

Ways to increase your satisfaction at work:

- use signature strengths everyday
- see one’s work as contributing to greater good
- having flow at work
- recraft your job to use your signature strengths more and experience flow more often



# The Mansions of Love: Parenting

*Techniques for building positive emotions:*

- sleeping with your baby
- synchrony games
- limit use of “no” (except for danger or limits)
- selective praise & punishment

- sibling rivalry – worse if attention & affection is scarce
- bedtime nuggets (best moments, dreamland)
- making a deal

## Building Children’s Strengths:

Up to age 7, the main task is to increase positive emotions. Reward all displays of any of the strengths. Allow child to display strengths in the course of regular activities.

Test of children’s strengths available at [www.authentic happiness.org](http://www.authentic happiness.org)

“...positive emotion leads to exploration, which leads to mastery, and mastery leads not only to more positive emotion but to the discovery of your child’s signature strengths” (Seligman, 2002, p. 231).

“Augment positive emotions in your children to start an upward spiral of more positive emotion” (Seligman, 2002, p. 211)



*Positive emotion “...broadens and builds the intellectual, social, and physical resources that are the bank account for your children to draw upon later in life” (Seligman, 2002, p. 209)*

# The Mansions of Life: Love

## Types of Love:

1. Love of people who give us comfort (eg. children’s love for parents)
2. Love of those who depend on us (eg. parents’ love for children)
3. Romantic love – idealization of another

-Marriage incorporates all 3 types of love

-marriage invented by natural selection, not culture (infants needing parents to bond with and look after them)

-married people happier than non-married; have lower rates of depression

-marital satisfaction declines over first decade

## Ways of being loved:

1. Secure
2. Avoidant
3. Anxious

-suggestion that how a child bonds to mother in childhood mirrored later in life in romantic relationships

-securely attached people have higher marital satisfaction

-styles of love affects – caregiving, sex, and coping with bad events



## **RESPONSIVE LISTENING**

-validation

-eliminate inattention

-don't prepare rebuttal while listening

-emotional state is a barrier

-hot-button issues – use speaker-listener ritual of only speaking when holding piece of carpet; listener paraphrases





## Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

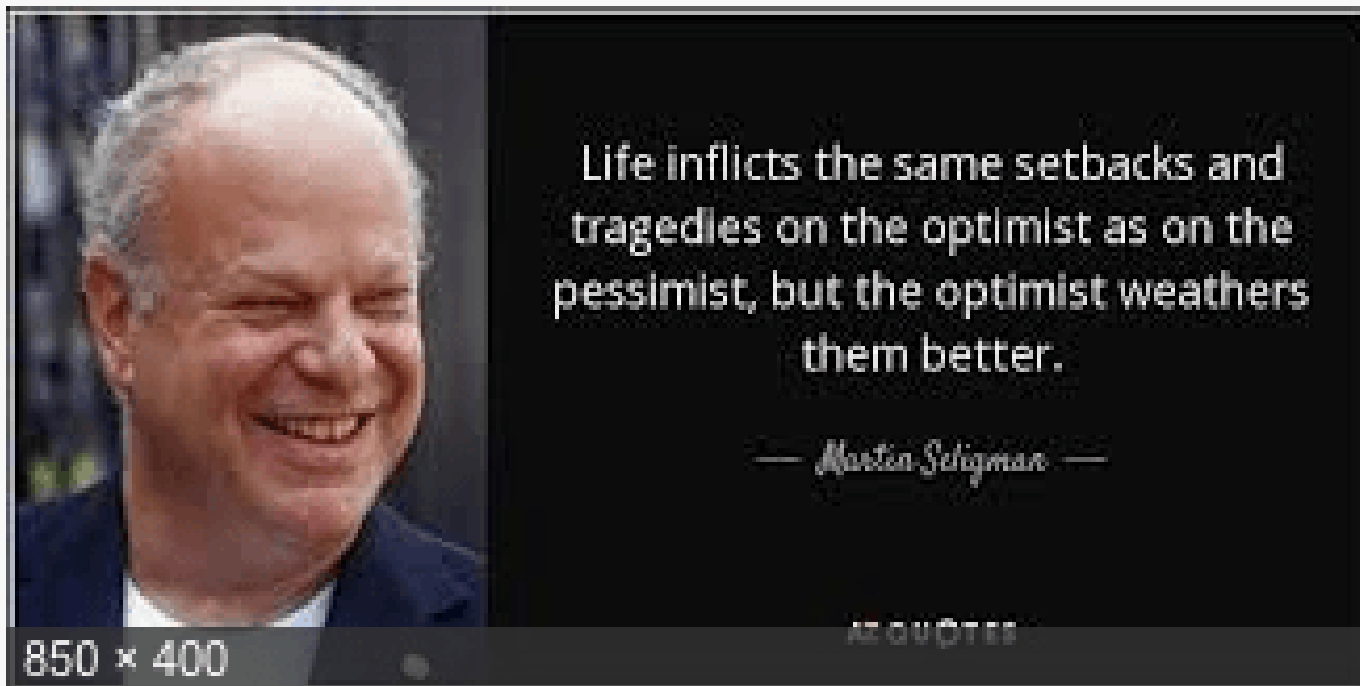
1. What are your signature strengths?
2. How can you recreate your position at work to better make use of your signature strengths on a daily basis?
3. Have you ever experienced "flow" before in your work where you are completely absorbed in the moment and time seems to stand still?
4. Would you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist?
5. Do you agree with Seligman's definitions of the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life?

## Book Summary:

Dr. Martin Seligman explains to readers how to achieve what he refers to as "the pleasant life", "the good life", and "the meaningful life". Seligman believes the key to achieving authentic happiness is by utilizing one's signature strengths in the "mansions of life" including work, love, and parenting. The 24 different strengths are detailed in the book and the readers is directed to the author's website where he/she can take an online test to determine what his/her own signature strengths are. Then each of the areas of work, love, and parenting are discussed in detail, with specific examples given of ways to improve on each of these.

## Critical Evaluation:

*Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* is written in an easy to follow manner. Seligman uses the act of storytelling to effectively engage the reader and to illustrate the points he is making. Many concrete examples are given for ways to increase happiness in each of the mansions of life. The online resources where the reader can take numerous tests are an added benefit. The final chapter of the book may be a stretch for some readers to buy into, however, as Seligman attempts to argue that although God may not presently exist, a God may be brought into existence through people striving to have a more purposeful life.



Reference: Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: Atria Paperback.