Positive Psychology and the PERMA Model - Notes from a talk by Dr. Martin Seligman Transcript

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Positive Psychology Then and Now

Our third talk was a keynote by Dr. Martin Soligman, one of the parents of The Positive Psychology Movement, and he shared with us an update on positive psychology, which was incredibly, just very broad and very beneficial.

So 1994 then versus now, 2024. Then Freud and the disease model of psychology were prevalent. It was about suffering or stopping suffering. There was no real theory of well-being.

We just understood happiness as an epiphenomenon. So that pre-positive psychology model drove the outgrowth of psychology, which is therapy, is of course amazing and beneficial for many people, but he shares that the growth of the positive psychology movement really has been coaching.

So we have acknowledged that we can do better than getting to the baseline of zero. There's actually a ton of territory in the Positive, Which is super exciting and promising for all of these reasons that he shared and reinforced for us.

So now, health and wellbeing are a plausible goal for individuals, for teams, corporations, nations. We have the Global Happiness Report and we actually have lots of information associated with what drives happiness.

Hint, it's not acquiring more things. It's being more liked on social media.

PERMA and the Science of Wellbeing

it is not any of those things We do have this theory with an next, and so much science to support all of the social goods and public goods that come from individual wellbeing and letting that cascade.

So wellbeing theory of PERMA is an acronym where P is for positive emotions, an experience of increased amount and levels of pleasant, subjectively pleasant emotional states or inner states.

Engagement, aka flow state, doing something that you find engaging and rewarding regularly. Relationships that are positive and supportive because we're social creatures, of course, and we are wired to be connected and of service to one another.

M is for mattering, so knowing that we matter, being connected to our meaning and purpose. He asked the question, what would happen if you vanished? And that's how we know we matters.

We can actually look at all the places that would be empty and understand that, we do in fact matter. A is for accomplishment, mastery and competence.

Growth is another way that I would look at accomplishment. So are we always growing into the next version of ourselves that we are developing infinitely while we're alive?

And he said this really gripping statement. He said PERMA could be thought of as the scope of practice for coaching. I think that's beautiful. In terms of measures, there are many validated measuring tools now for happiness and wellbeing.

And he offers his handle to these tools at AuthenticHappiness.org, where there a ton of free tools to measure and many thousands of people use that every day.

So I will be seeking that tool out very, very soon. Thank you for that, Dr. Seligman. His next point is that wellbeing now causes a better life later and that involves health and other things.

success, productivity, longevity, and specific health measures. PERMA causes a better life. I was like, be permanent. We'll play with that word play later.

There were so many article references to support this evidence, but here are some takeaways that I thought were especially compelling. If you exercise regularly, you have the benefit of approximately three years extra longevity.

if you're a non-smoker, that gives you four to five years of longevity, But if your chronically optimistic, your in a positive mindset, in growth mindset.

Six to eight years average increased longevity versus being chronically cynical or pessimistic, equivalent to a three pack a day smoking.

Wellbeing Benefits for Life and Work

If that does not motivate you to make some inner shifts, you do not know what will. I find it highly compelling. He said, misery loves company, but company does love misery.

So the more miserable affect and outlook you have, the less likely you are to be socially connected. And then you get into a vicious cycle of not being connected, feeling more, miserable, not been connected Wellbeing now gives us better social relationships, better productivity, it's linear with how productive happy workers are.

It increases our virtuous behavior, behavior that supports the public good. And he said you can now market coaching as a way to get workers to be more productive.

You can help with profitability by providing wellbeing and coaching to your employees. So employers, corporations, listen up. Tuition reimbursable programs is not a new add to your bottom line.

Make sure that your teams and employees are getting connected to effective coaching in these ways. You will have a happier, more productive, and more aligned staff who are more ready to be creative, innovative, connected and have your work.

He referenced the book Extra Life by Steven Johnson. and referred back to creativity and innovation that also thrive with well-being and resilience increases with high PERMA levels.

Interventions for coaching. Dr. Seligman mentions the evidence-based practice of three good things. I won't go into that, but you can find it, three things, Google.

Signature strengths and active constructive feedback. So you contend the celebratory or positive feedback by getting really active with it. When you are like, tell me where you were when that happened, sensory experience.

What was it like when you heard? more memory making of the positive, right? Because otherwise our negativity bias sweeps it away and looks for the things that are threats.

So really grounding the Positive Experience, looking at why it happened to succeed. Evaluating the antecedents, the reasons, and the context why. Again, rooting it deeper and more permanently in yourself and in your loved ones.

Coaching Interventions and Applications

Also Just saying like, how will you use this to move forward? You know, what exactly do you think helped us to succeed? And how would you do the next thing and make it even better?

So all very different than just saying, high five, that's amazing. Good job. I loved that. There was also reference to website seeinghappy.org. Taking pictures of things that make you happy helps others be happy.

And maybe this is a saving grace we could share about social media, even though there is so much despair in comparison on social medial. One of the reasons that I stay and that have fondness for it is seeing happy, is see other people's happy times.

More about that exists. All right, applications of positive psychology. You talked about applications in the military, in education, um, and corporations that are founded around these principles.

In big letters here it says, coaching makes companies profitable. So HR is not just there to take care of things, it's actually a lever in this view. We can operationalize coaching through the HR framework.

And there are multiple meta-analyses supporting that it works. He goes into coaching with positive psychology here. It is scientifically credible, evidence-based, and can shape a scope of practice as mentioned earlier.

We can increase positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, mattering and purpose through coaching, as well as just a sense of joie de vivre vitality.

Um, we do have validated measures of these outcomes, many. we have Validated Interventions, randomized control trials, multiple sectors. and the desired outcome of coaching is more perma.

It is an evidence-based practice.

AI, Narrative Coaching, and Closing Reflections

Last but not least, Dr. Seligman shared with us about artificial intelligence and narrative coaching. And he gave us this story about an AI model that was built from his voice and his papers and books, and it's actually out there in the world.

It's called Ask Martin. So you give it a 150 word problem with specific details and concrete things. It thinks for about a minute and gives you a 750 word response that will come to you actually in the voice of Dr.

Seligman. So that's kind of awesome. Kind of amazing. I hope that This is intriguing and inspiring for any of you listening who maybe didn't get to come to this conference.

I hope that this extends the ripple of this amazing gift. Thank you.