

## **UNIT 7. POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

### **1. Read and translate the key words.**

1. affirmation
2. consumption
3. to dismiss
4. dysfunction
5. extrinsic
6. impact
7. intrinsic
8. outcome
9. positive mindset
10. sound mind
11. subset
12. treasure
13. virtues
14. volunteering
15. kindness
16. happiness
17. relationship
18. share
19. support
20. to enrich
21. external
22. to cultivate
23. gratitude
24. mindfulness
25. hope
26. grateful
27. spiritual

**2. Work in pairs. Share your ideas as for the notion and the task of Positive psychology.**

**3. Work in small groups. Brainstorm and write a list of your associations with Positive psychology. Report to the whole class.**

**4. Read the text. While-reading the text, underline the ideas which are similar to yours, expressed in previous activities.**

### **What Is Positive Psychology?**

Positive psychology is the study of happiness. Psychology has traditionally focused on **dysfunction** and how to treat it. Positive psychology, in contrast, is a field that examines how ordinary people can become happier and more fulfilled. Positive psychology studies what makes life most worth living.

Positive Psychology is a **subset** within the broader field called the Science of Happiness, which extends to the natural as well as social sciences. For example, Positive Psychology is largely focused on the study of positive emotions and “signature strengths”, yet the Science of Happiness extends, for example, to such areas as exercise and psychological well-being as well as the **impact** of social media on happiness in human relationships. Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. It is a call for psychological science and practice to be as concerned with strength as with weakness; as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst; and as concerned with making the lives of normal people fulfilling as with healing pathology.

Nowhere does this definition say or imply that psychology should ignore or **dismiss** the very real problems that people experience. Nowhere does it say or imply that the rest of psychology

needs to be discarded or replaced. The value of positive psychology is to complement and extend the problem-focused psychology that has been dominant for many decades.

Positive psychology is science and science requires checking theories. Accordingly, positive psychology is not to be confused with untested self-help and footless **affirmation**. Consider what has been learned in recent years about the psychological good life, none of which was mentioned in any of the psychology courses a few decades ago:

- Most people are happy.
- Happiness is a cause of good things in life.
- People who are satisfied with life eventually have more reason to be satisfied, because happiness leads to desirable outcomes at school and work, to fulfilling social relationships, and even to good health and long life.
- The good life can be taught.

This latter point is especially important because it means that happiness is not simply the result of a fortunate spin of the genetic roulette wheel. There are things that people can do to lead better lives.

**5. Look at the words in bold in the text above. Choose the correct meaning: a) or b).**

- dysfunction
  - a) unhealthy interaction; b) abnormal functioning;
- subset
  - a) division; b) portion;
- impact
  - a) pressing together; b) direct effect;
- dismiss
  - a) to reject; b) to permit to leave;

- affirmation
- a) emotional support or encouragement; b) pronouncement;
- outcome
- a) result; b) walking out.

**6. Read about the seven habits of happy people. Put them in the order of importance personally for you (where 1 – is the most important, 7 – the least important).**

### **The 7 Habits of Happy People**

#### **1. Relationships**

Express your heart. People who have one or more close friends are happier. It doesn't seem to matter if we have a large network of close relationships or not. What seems to make a difference is if and how often we cooperate in activities and share our personal feelings with a friend or relative. "Active-constructive responding", which is the ability to express genuine interest in what people say, and respond in encouraging ways, is a powerful way to enrich relationships and cultivate positive emotions.

#### **2. Acts of Kindness Cultivate kindness.**

People who volunteer or simply care for others on a consistent basis seem to be happier and less depressed. Although "caring" can involve volunteering as part of an organized group or club, it can be as simple as reaching out to a colleague or classmate who looks lonely or is struggling with an issue.

#### **3. Exercise and Physical Well-being**

Keep moving and eat well. Regular exercise has been associated with improved mental well-being and a lower incidence of depression. The Cochrane Review (the most influential medical review of its kind in the world) has produced a landmark analysis of 23 studies on exercise and depression. One of the major conclusions was that exercise had a "large clinical impact" on depression. Many studies

are proving the ancient adage, “sound body, sound mind”, including the recent discovery of a “gut-brain axis”, and a possible link between excessive sugar consumption and depression.

#### 4. Flow

Find your flow. If we are deeply involved in trying to reach a goal, or an activity that is challenging but well suited to our skills, we experience a joyful state called “flow”. Many kinds of activities, such as sports, playing an instrument, or teaching, can produce the experience of flow. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a pioneer of the scientific study of happiness, flow is a type of intrinsic motivation. In his words, “you do what you’re doing primarily because you like what you’re doing. If you learn only for external, extrinsic reasons, you will probably forget it as soon as you are no longer forced to remember what you want to do”.

#### 5. Spiritual Engagement and Meaning

Studies demonstrate a close link between spiritual and religious practice and happiness. Spirituality is closely related to the discovery of greater meaning in our lives. As the psychologist Martin Seligman emphasizes, through the meaningful life we discover a deeper kind of happiness.

#### 6. Strengths and Virtues

Discover and use your strengths. Studies by experts such as Martin Seligman in the new field of Positive Psychology show that the happiest people are those that have discovered their unique strengths (such as persistence and critical thinking) and virtues (such as humanity) and use those strengths and virtues for a purpose that is greater than their own personal goals.

#### 7. Positive mindset: optimism, mindfulness and gratitude

Treasure gratitude, mindfulness, and hope. Of all the areas studied in the relatively young field of positive psychology, gratitude has perhaps received the most attention. Grateful people have been shown to have greater positive emotion, a greater sense of belonging, and lower incidence of depression and stress.

**7. Compare your results in groups. Justify your answers.**

**8. Role play. Work in pairs. Choose your roles. Make a conversation.**

Student A You are a positive psychologist. You have done a lot of research. A patient comes to you with his/her problem. Listen to the complaints and give advice.

Student B You have recently started feeling depressed. You don't see the sense of your life. You go to a specialist to get consultation. Invent all necessary details.

*Use the following structures to give advice:*

I think you should/shouldn't...

You'd better....

If I were you, I'd...