

## What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing, and an applied approach to optimal functioning.

It has also been defined as the study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities and organisations to thrive (Gable & Haidt, 2005, Sheldon & King, 2001).

Positive Psychology is grounded in the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within them, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play (Positive Psychology Centre, 2016).

*“Positive Psychology is not a self-help movement or a re-packaging of “the power of positive thinking.” It is not American-style “happyology,” and it is not a passing fad. Positive Psychology is a science that brings the many virtues of science – replication, controlled causal studies, peer review, representative sampling (to name a few) – to bear on the question of how and when people flourish.”*  
(Robert Biswas-Diener, 2008).

The field is intended to complement, not to replace traditional psychology.

It does not seek to deny the importance of studying how things go wrong, but rather to emphasize the importance of using the scientific method to determine how things go right.

In 1998 Martin Seligman, American Psychological Association President, suggested that psychology turn toward understanding and building human strengths to complement the traditional emphasis on healing damage.

Psychology had neglected the positive side of life, having spent much of the last half century primarily concerned with psychopathology.

As a result, psychologists and psychiatrists can now measure with considerable precision, and effectively treat, a number of major mental illnesses.

However, this progress came at a cost. Relieving life's miseries made building the states that make life worth living less of a priority (Seligman, 2002).

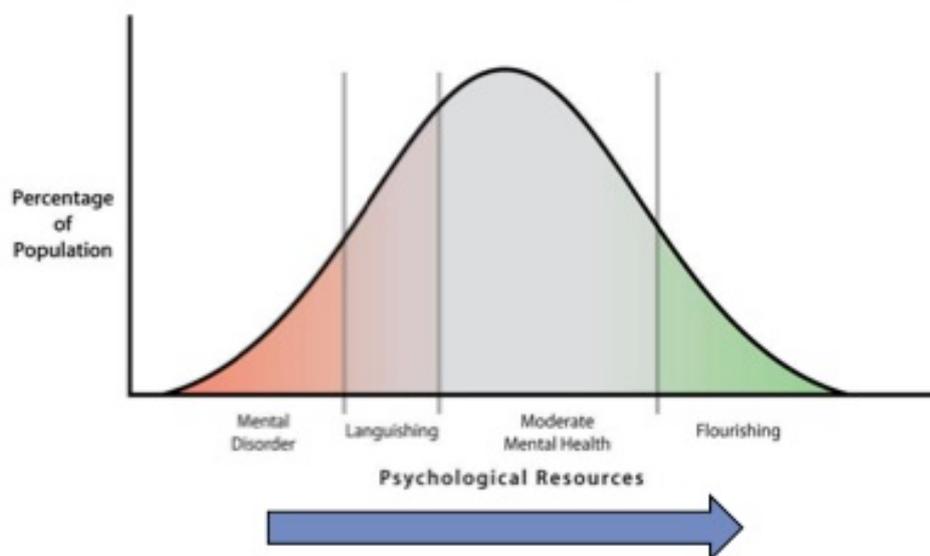
One of the principle aims of Positive Psychology has been to correct this imbalance by propelling the field into supplementing its hard-won knowledge about suffering and mental illness with a great deal more knowledge about positive emotion.

Positive psychology represents a commitment to the sources of psychological wellness, such as positive emotions, positive experiences, positive environments, and human strengths and virtues (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

#### **Four of the major aims of Positive Psychology:**

- Rise to life's challenges, make most of setbacks and adversity
- Engage and relate to other people
- Find fulfillment in creativity and productivity
- Look beyond oneself and help others to find lasting meaning, satisfaction, and wisdom (Keyes & Haidt, 2004)

## **Mental Health Spectrum**



*(Well-being Institute, University of Cambridge, 2011)*