

## Chapter II.2 Positive Psychology

Why the redundancy? Isn't all psychology positive? Certainly not. The field of psychology was initially the product of the disease model inherited from medicine, where the focus is on physical defects and dysfunctions, in the quest to alleviate medical disorders. The idea has been to restore the positive, or at least the neutral, by eliminating the negative. Health is defined as the absence of disease. Up to a certain point, this model is helpful. Most of us function quite poorly when we are sick, and are highly motivated to eliminate pain and illness. Negatives tend to dominate positives. If I have a migraine headache, my priority is to eliminate the headache before I can enjoy the ballet, even if I'm sitting in the front row. One prominent positive psychology researcher, Barbara Frederickson, pursued the question of whether positive or negative emotions are more powerful. As you might expect, negative emotional states were found to be stronger, to the point that it took three positive emotions to counteract the impact of one negative emotion. It is not surprising, then, that we might be more motivated to eliminate negative physical or psychological states, than we are to focus on generating positive health or psychological states. Accordingly, a good deal of energy in recent centuries has been invested in identifying medical and psychological syndromes and their associated symptoms, from heart disease and cancer, to schizophrenia, anxiety, and depression, in order to eliminate such diseases, and restore our physical or psychological well-being. And in the following chapters, we will focus on methods of managing a variety of so called negative emotions, in order to reduce our pain load.

But is pleasure simply the absence of pain, and health the absence of disease? Martin Seligman, who is widely considered the father of positive psychology, has stated, "I believe psychology has done very well in working out how to understand and treat disease. But I think that is literally half-baked. If all you do is work to fix problems, to alleviate suffering, then by definition you are working to get people to zero, to neutral. What I'm saying is, why not try to get them to plus-two, or plus-three?" This movement in psychology parallels developments in the field of medicine, toward wellness, holistic health, preventive medicine, and alternative medicine. It's not that the medical model is bad, but just that it is incomplete, as we need to focus on the creation of positives, not just the elimination of negatives. We want to create healthy nutrition and exercise, as well as joy, humor, hope, meaning and purpose, social and spiritual connectedness, self-esteem, resiliency, and a host of other positive mental states that define mental health far beyond the important but mere absence of mental illness. Certainly there are a variety of positive feelings which can be described without having to refer to negative feelings, and pursued for their own benefit, not just to escape negative mood states. Positive psychology focuses upon the identification of psychological strengths and virtues, as well as positive feelings, routes toward happiness and satisfaction, and how to develop them. We will examine a variety of such issues in the pages to come. For an excellent research rich survey of positive psychology, see Daniel Tomasulo's online summary. For a more experiential approach, you may want to visit his list of recommended websites that provide questionnaires allowing you to assess your accumulation of various positive psychology skills. One such website is Martin Seligman's authentic

happiness site: [www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx](http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx), which includes questionnaires such as The Brief Strengths Test measuring 24 character strengths, Approaches to Happiness, which measures overall happiness, and other scales measuring strengths such as gratitude, perseverance, optimism, forgiveness, compassion/love, meaning in life, etc. Likewise, Peterson and Seligman's Signature Strength Survey, again measuring 24 strengths in all, is available at [www.viasurvey.org/Account/Register](http://www.viasurvey.org/Account/Register), and takes only 40 minutes to complete, providing you with a printout of your strengths. You may want to explore this option before proceeding further, in order to obtain a more experiential rather than merely cognitive understanding of positive psychology.

So what are these 24 character strengths anyways? Peterson and Seligman provided a classification of personality strengths as a positive counterweight to the longstanding classification of psychopathology in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (currently DSM 5) of the American Psychiatric Association. They identified a half dozen broad categories of virtue that consistently emerge from historical surveys and the writings of moral philosophers and theologians. Specifically, these six virtues are wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Twenty four "signature" strengths can be placed within one or the other of these six virtue domains, and involve the processes or mechanisms for displaying these virtues. Within the wisdom and knowledge virtue category, we find creativity (originality and ingenuity), curiosity, open mindedness (which requires critical thinking and examining issues from all sides), love of learning, and perspective (wisdom). The virtue of courage employs strengths such as bravery, persistence, vitality (vigor, enthusiasm) and integrity (authenticity, honesty) to accomplish goals in the face of internal (e.g., fear) and external opposition. The virtue humanity involves tending to and befriending others, via the exercise of strengths such as love, kindness, and social/emotional intelligence. Justice is a virtue pursued via the character strengths of citizenship (social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork), fairness and leadership. The virtue of temperance involves strengths that protect us from excess, such as forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence (being careful to prevent regrettable choices), and self regulation. Finally, the virtue of transcendence refers to strengths that provide meaning in life and build connections with the larger universe. These character strengths include appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder), gratitude, hope (and optimism), humor (and playfulness), and spirituality.

Positive attitudes can extend your life. In the famous nuns study by Danner and his colleagues, autobiographies of women in their early 20s, seeking entry into the convent, were coded sixty years later for presence of positive, neutral, or negative content. Nuns who expressed more positive emotions had typically lived ten years longer! Sonja Lyubomirsky's Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic tool examines five activities that she associates with happiness: expressing gratitude, practicing acts of kindness, learning to forgive, savoring life's joys, and committing to your goals. Underscoring individual differences, however, she emphasizes that happiness increasing strategies may work differently for different people, requiring an understanding of the fit between the person and the activity. From a cognitive behavioral perspective, feelings cannot be manufactured directly; we must change

thoughts and behaviors if we want to either increase positive or decrease negative feelings. Positive psychology research demonstrates its utility when it establishes the benefit of various thought and behavioral practices in generating or increasing positive emotions.

Let's take a closer look at a select few of these character strengths, and methods of enhancing them, both by changing our thoughts, and by adjusting our behaviors. We will examine gratitude, authenticity, and resilience as examples. Along the way, we will also detour into an extended discussion of mindfulness, and look at character strengths through the prism of 12 step programs. We begin with the value of gratitude. A willingness to step back and count our blessings is a way of reminding ourselves of our good fortune in life, while tempering our frustration and disappointment. We count our blessings at the Thanksgiving table on a day designated for celebration of blessings, and when we teach our children to give thanks to God during their prayers. Sometimes we count our blessings when we see bad fortune befall others, and other times we manage our own traumas by reminding ourselves of what we still have, and that we could be worse off. As we work through our grief, we gradually transition from a focus on who and what we lost, to gratitude for the presence of the deceased person in our life. But what if we accessed our gratitude more frequently? Consider using the Three Blessings exercise each evening, as you might use prayer or meditation to end your day. Allow yourself to think about three things that happened during the day that pleased you the most, and why you believe they happened. Emmons and McCullough found that doing this exercise on a daily basis for just one week resulted in increased joy and sense of well being while decreasing depression. Moreover, this improvement was still evident six months later. Try keeping a gratitude journal, in which you write down what you are grateful for, on a daily or at least weekly basis. Journaling can be helpful in monitoring and strengthening other character strengths as well. To enhance humor, try writing down a couple of the funniest events or interactions of the day. Or take time at the end of the day to write down your acts of kindness. It's difficult to change if you don't maintain awareness of your goals and progress. Gratitude is also an antidote to envy, a preoccupation with what others have that we do not. And gratitude can give life meaning, by venerating life itself as a gift. In a closely related vein, "savoring" is a term used to describe thought practices that increase our awareness and appreciation of positive experiences in our lives. It involves an application of the mindfulness practices discussed below. We have the option to set aside time for savoring, for example, carving out time in our busy day to watch the sunset. But we also can learn to catch opportunities to savor experiences on the fly, being mindful rather than mindless. We can wolf our food down while watching television or while driving to our next appointment, perhaps aided by our now vast fast food industry, thereby practicing time management via multitasking, and proving that we have mastered the English, German, American emphasis on goal directed productivity. Or we can be mindful during our meals, and savor the flavors with each bite, while experiencing gratitude that such a meal comes so easily nowadays, without having to hunt, gather, or farm ourselves.

Which brings us to an extended discussion of the concept of mindfulness, an import from Buddhism. We will later revisit mindfulness as an approach to

managing both anxiety and depression, but for now, we will pursue an initial understanding of mindfulness as a positive practice on its own, aside from its benefit in reducing psychopathology. This concept has a few core components, perhaps most notably the practice of being in the moment, and the radical acceptance and open experience of various mental states, including noxious ones. In the first wave of imports of eastern religious practices into western consciousness, transcendental meditation was popularized in the 60s after the Beatles trip to India. I still have my faded purple copy of "Be Here Now" by Baba Ram Dass (formerly known as psychologist Richard Alpert prior to his transformation from social scientist to yogi), which challenged my traditional western thinking. Various forms of meditation have been increasingly practiced in the west in recent years, and are a welcome addition to our growing arsenal of relaxation practices. Moreover, to a greater extent than in western religions, spiritual practices are valued over beliefs in eastern religions. These practices can be adopted into our tool box of psychological coping skills. In a second wave of eastern religious imports early this century, the practice of mindfulness has been actively integrated into psychology, both as a positive resource for well being, and as an antidote for depression, anxiety, and other negative emotional states. Let's take a closer look at its components and their benefits.

Mindfulness encourages a "being" mode rather than a doing mode, expressed more playfully as becoming a human being rather than a human doing. It reconnects us with our all too often lost childhood capacity to be fully present in the moment, rather than allowing our consciousness to be divorced from our behavior. It takes years for us to teach our children to "stop playing around" and get to work, and this transformation is necessary to become productive, accomplish goals for our future, and launch into adult self-sufficiency. But I have argued that mental health typically involves a combination of opposites, and the ability to dial up and down between these opposites to optimally adapt our behavior to a given situation. We must be careful not to lose either our childlike playfulness, or our ability to be in the moment. It is so easy nowadays to become so focused on crossing off our goals for the day, and securing our future stability, that we lose sight of the value of the moment. In "Beautiful Boy," one of most pleasant songs John Lennon ever crafted, he sang to his son, "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans." We can be so preoccupied in the future, and perhaps anxious about it, and so busy dwelling on the past, and perhaps depressed, that we lose the opportunity, gift, and glory of the moment. This error is rudely confronted in Alcoholics Anonymous when one is told "You have one leg in the past, and one leg in the future, but you're pissing on the present." Jon Kabat-Zinn, the early guiding force in both the clinical use and public awareness of mindfulness, defines mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment." Notice the words attention, present, and nonjudgmental. More succinctly, Siegel defines mindfulness as "awareness of present experience with acceptance." In their Mindful Way Workbook, which you may find useful as a mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) workbook designed to help you learn how to practice and not just understand mindfulness, Teasedale and his colleagues provide an audio CD of guided meditation practices. They explain, "Mindfulness means being able to bring direct, open-hearted

awareness to what you are doing while you are doing it: being able to tune in to what's going on in your mind and body, and in the outside world, moment by moment." From another angle, mindfulness can be contrasted with "flow." Csikszentmihaly conducted some of the earliest positive psychology work, in the 1970s, focusing upon an experience common to us all, the experience of timelessness when we are totally engaged in an activity to the point of being lost. But this type of feeling lost feels like being found. What is lost is our consciousness of self, and the ego boundaries that separate us from our environment, as we flow with our activity, fully connected and immersed. In essence, we are anything but mindful of our experience when we flow, and are more likely to be mindless. Though we might briefly become mindful of our flow and treasure it, excessive self observation tends to destroy it. While somewhat opposite in their degree of self-consciousness, mindfulness and flow are each valuable skills, again illustrating the benefit of carrying opposite strengths in your tool kit.

In addition to focusing one's attention on the moment, a second component of mindfulness emphasizes a nonjudgmental approach to our experiences. Marsha Linehan, who developed dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), initially to treat borderline personality disorder by developing emotional regulation and distress tolerance, emphasized "radical acceptance." This involves letting go of one's struggle against reality, and letting go of our excessive attempts to chase after high moods while running from negative emotions, which can put us on a treadmill, impairing our ability to be connected to ourselves, in the moment. Headlong avoidance of negative emotions also results in suppression and accumulation of such feelings, unwittingly multiplying our misery. Allowing ourselves to attend to and experience distressing feelings improves distress tolerance, helps us deal with the inevitable portion of pain in our lives, and allows us to attend to mental processes that manufacture the unnecessary portion. Taking a nonjudgmental stance involves experiencing and noticing our mental states and the events and people around us, without automatically labeling them as good or bad. From a different perspective, the process of simultaneously observing ourselves feeling, as we feel, can provide just enough detachment to insulate us from a flood of emotion, while not avoiding it in a more wholesale manner. In one DBT visualization exercise, you imagine that your mind is the sky, and that your thoughts and feelings are clouds floating by. You place additional thoughts and feelings into the clouds, and watch them drift toward the horizon, rather than remaining immersed in them.

In "The Mindfulness Solution," Ronald Siegel provides an articulate introduction to mindfulness. He notes that the pleasure principle, referring to our typical orientation toward seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, and our capacity for planning and thinking, are both adaptive to a point, but maladaptive beyond that point. There is a threshold beyond which our attempts to change our current emotional states becomes too compulsive and detracts from our ability to just be. We rush around trying to change this experience in order to create another. And there is a limit to the tremendous usefulness of our planning and thinking skills, beyond which we are overly preoccupied with and worried about the future, and divorced from the moment if we are too compulsive in our attempts to change it. Mindfulness is the counterweight to excessive thinking, planning, and mood

manipulation. Instead of trying to eliminate painful moods, we move toward them and learn to increase our ability to bear them. In a seeming paradox, embracing pain reduces suffering, but only because it reduces the second stage of emotional pain, that is, our negative reaction to the initial presence of emotional pain.

Mindfulness exercises and meditations have been designed to help develop one's appreciation of the moment. Detailed mindfulness exercises are available in CD format from Jon Kabat-Zinn ([www.mindfulnesscds.com](http://www.mindfulnesscds.com)), Susan Woods ([www.slwoods.com](http://www.slwoods.com)), and Ronald Siegel ([www.mindfulness-solution.com](http://www.mindfulness-solution.com)), and in the CDs accompanying both Sears and Teasedale's books. Meditation itself has many applications, and comes in myriad forms, the full description of which goes well beyond the scope of this chapter. However, meditation techniques can be classified under two broad headings, concentrative versus mindfulness meditations. The many concentrative forms of meditation are designed to empty the mind of thought, and restrict awareness to a single object or focus of attention. While quite useful for their own purposes, these forms of meditation are in stark contrast to mindfulness meditations, in which we deliberately practice noticing what our minds are doing. Nonetheless, since mindfulness requires controlled attention, concentrative meditations can be a good starting point for developing mindfulness. These concentration practices typically identify a target for us to attend to, e.g., a visual object such as a candle, a sound such as running water, or a bodily sensation such as breathing. Using breathing as an example, whenever we notice our mind drifting from our breathing, we return to the breath. But we must do so gently. If we are too intense in our insistence that we not think about something, we become more likely to think about it (I dare you to try to not think about that lamp across your room). If you notice your attention drifting away from your breath, gently nudge competing thoughts or images from your mind, and return your focus to your breath. Even when attending to your breathing, there are various possible foci, e.g., a focus on your rising and falling belly, versus a focus on the sensations at the entrance of your nose during breathing, etc. These concentration practices teach us to both empty and focus the mind, but their value in preparing us for mindfulness meditations is to teach us to focus, even though our goal in mindfulness is to notice what runs through our minds, not to empty it. After developing our concentration skills, we will focus our attention on whatever runs through our minds, whether they be thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, impulses, or whatever. In between, we can transition between the two meditation practices by briefly noticing what it is that we nudge from our minds while returning our focus to our breath.

Siegel provides examples of other concentrative meditations involving various targets of attention, including walking and eating meditations. He notes that mindfulness can be cultivated during these meditations, by noticing where your mind drifts, with an accepting attitude toward whatever thoughts, feelings, or sensations arise. We are thereby transitioning between emptying the mind via pure concentrative meditations, and mindfulness meditations involving a full focus on the content of the mind. One of my favorites is the raisin meditation, which is also a good antidote for eating like a wolf. You begin with a breathing meditation, for perhaps ten minutes, and then take ten or more minutes to experience and consume a raisin? Ten minutes?! Perhaps you protest that you could starve to death eating this way.

Obviously the intent is to slow down and appreciate your eating by exploring the opposite extreme from mindlessly gobbling down your meals. But your initial resistance is typical of what most neophytes experience when trying to slow down and be in the moment. Siegel notes that going to a retreat is like being “trapped in a phone booth with a lunatic,” because in extended idle gear, without your speed throttle, you feel crazy, like a fish out of water. You have to break through this wall to get to the other side, where you can relax in the moment. In my own rush to save space and get to the next paragraph, I myself have succumbed, providing this abbreviated version of the raisin meditation. Hold a single raisin in your hand, examining its color, texture, and any thoughts or feelings you have as you hold it (e.g., my thoughts drifted to its former grape self on the vine). Perhaps you close your eyes to better focus on your sensations of touch as you experience its texture between your fingers. Eventually you hold it beneath your nostril and inhale deeply, hoping to sample its aroma. Later still you capture the raisin from your thumb and forefinger with your tongue, and attend to the sensations as you roll it around your mouth. Later still you hold it between your molars, attending to your urge to bite down, while remaining in the present, experiencing the essence of the raisin. Ultimately, you bite down, just once, sampling the taste sensations and how your mouth and mind are reacting to the raisin, before recapturing it with your tongue and rolling it around your mouth, examining changes in its texture and taste. Attend to the raisin further as you chew it, noticing any urges to swallow it. Etc. Etc. As Siegel notes, we don’t usually approach eating a raisin as a gourmet experience, though we do during this mindfulness exercise. In so doing, we experiment, and begin to recapture our lost childhood awe and joy with the little things in life, and the joy of the moment.

Concentration practices can be used as mindfulness practices, if instead of immediately returning to the target of attention (e.g., the candle or breath), we linger a bit, noticing where our mind drifts. We can pursue the former to strengthen our concentration, or the latter to develop mindfulness. As we proceed with the cultivation of mindfulness, we focus not just on noticing the content of our mind, but also on accepting it without judgment. This may be difficult at times, as we can be harsh toward ourselves regarding supposedly unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or impulses that enter our minds (e.g., selfish impulses), or otherwise intolerant of the distress they bring us (e.g., grief regarding a lost loved one). Loving-kindness meditations are sometimes utilized to develop more compassion toward ourselves (or for that matter others) when we find ourselves judging ourselves (or others) harshly. We thereby cultivate our ability to experience our own thoughts, feelings, impulses, and behaviors less judgmentally, and with less need to avoid or run from them. As we succeed, we can begin to practice mindfulness informally, noticing our sensations as we brush your teeth, or the beauty of the trees as we drive at a comfortable pace rather than racing to our destination. Moving beyond neutral and positive experiences, you may notice your hands clenched to the steering wheel, and your irritation in response to the loud music from the car of teenagers passing you. With loving kindness, you recall your own teenage years, and thank your parents for their tolerance, while accepting the teenagers passing you, and your own irritation toward them, as entirely normal events in the course of your gift of life. And perhaps

you pass the cemetery, and notice your sadness that you can no longer share such thoughts with your mother, while thanking her for what she shared with you while alive, and accepting death as part of that very gift of life. The negative is not just rationalized away, but accepted as inextricably entwined with the positive, as yin spoons with yang, tucked within their common circle. This nonjudgmental, accepting attitude toward common everyday negative feelings can be extended to treat full blown depressive and anxiety syndromes, as we shall see in later chapters.

Changing gears, we now transition to an examination of another of Peterson and Seligman's 24 character strengths, authenticity. Within the domain of strengths involving courage, these authors combine integrity, authenticity, and honesty as a unified, single character strength, despite the differences between these similar traits. Honesty refers to truth telling rather than deceit, while authenticity implies genuineness and depth of character, and integrity has a moral component. But all three involve genuineness to some degree, as one synonym for dishonesty is "disingenuous," and one lay definition of integrity is what you do when no one is looking, i.e., when there is no punishment for being yourself. Movement toward greater authenticity is an implicit goal in most psychotherapy. Authenticity can be viewed as true-self behavior, involving an owning of, and expression of one's true inner thoughts, feelings, and values. It can be contrasted with false-self behavior, involving phoniness, deceit, secrecy, imposter behavior, and self suppression. Many of these false-self behaviors are center stage in our conceptualization of codependency, which we discuss in a later chapter. Codependency involves a failure to individuate, to develop or fully express your own separate identity, and a failure to successfully complete adolescence, the bridge between childhood and adulthood. Susan Harter notes that middle adolescents struggle most painfully with authenticity issues, as they have developed the cognitive ability and introspection necessary to identify true versus false-self behavior, without yet mastering the skills to resolve such conflicts. She adds, however, that child-rearing practices earlier in life contribute to later authenticity, or lack thereof, depending on the degree of validation or punishment a child receives from parents when expressing oneself, and the degree of compliance demanded from the child. In particular, extreme or chronic abuse, particularly sexual abuse, results in shame and secrecy, both of which are enemies of self-expression and authenticity. Harter's research showed that adolescents with the highest perceived true-self behaviors were those who reported the most unconditional support from their parents and peers, while those whose support was most conditional acknowledged the most false-self behavior. This makes intuitive sense. If you are punished for being above ground, and rewarded for being invisible, or perhaps for being a mirror or clone of your parents, you learn to take your selfhood underground. You divide yourself into public versus private selves, literally for self-survival. Harter also found that adolescents reporting the highest degree of true-self behavior reported higher self-esteem, more positive emotions, and more hope for the future than the minority of adolescents reporting high levels of false-self behavior. Authenticity should not be confused with mere autonomy, however, as authenticity requires autonomy, but can also be fully expressed in a connected, intimate relationship.



In order to further illustrate the mechanics and value of various character strengths, we now turn to the 12 Step Program, which from one angle, might be viewed as one of the most widely used embodiments of positive psychology. When trying to manage an addiction through Alcoholics Anonymous or the other 12 step programs, there is an important distinction between sobriety and recovery. Sobriety is the absence of the negative, the removal of pathology, specifically the absence of chemicals such as alcohol or crack cocaine, or the absence of compulsive behaviors such as gambling or masturbating to pornography. Recovery on the other hand is the presence of the positive, that is, the development of positive character traits which will help you to better cope with negative emotional states, behavioral decisions, ethical dilemmas, etc. The mere absence of the negative, e.g., alcohol, without the addition of the positive character traits, simply leaves you as a dry drunk, who is sober, but struggling, with a high risk of relapse. In my experience, the combination of individual psychotherapy, and a 12 step program which includes an active sponsor who insists on written step work, is the gold standard for an effective and enduring recovery from addiction. The positive psychology is embedded in the steps, and written step work is far more effective than mere reading if a recovering addict wants to absorb and adopt such positive coping skills. So what are these positive traits, values, or skills within the 12 step program which improve coping skills and reduce relapse risks? A beginning list of the more basic skills would include humility via surrender, serenity, forgiveness, making amends, honesty with both oneself and others, spirituality, and going toward bothersome emotional states to resolve them rather than avoiding them. Note that humility, forgiveness, honesty, and spirituality are all included amongst Peterson and Seligman's signature strengths.

Surrender sounds quite negative, as if one is giving up, but it refers to giving up one's rigid insistence on pursuing life "my way," which has embodied attitudes and behaviors that led to one's addiction in the first place. Surrender essentially involves accepting the wisdom of the 12 step program as an alternative to one's own faulty approach to life. It involves the surrender of ego, and of egotism, and the adoption of humility, without humiliation. Humility involves acceptance that we are all flawed, and that any of us could end up in this position, but that the way out is to rely upon faith until understanding prevails, and to accept the wisdom of a program which has paved the recovery road for millions of other addicts. Humility does not require humiliation, although it is not unusual to initially feel humiliated when trying to surrender your will by publicly (in a 12 step meeting) acknowledging your loss of control over your substance of choice or compulsive behavior. Humility (healthy shame) involves tempered self-esteem, that is, a combination of self-valuation and recognition of one's limits, in between the extremes of humiliation (toxic shame) and narcissism (lack of even healthy shame). The first step in AA reads: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable." This acknowledgment of powerlessness, of loss of control, both requires and enhances humility, and is an initial step in surrendering one's own faulty will, to the wisdom of a higher power and the 12 step program itself. One eventual payoff is healthy humility, illustrated by twelve-step "old-timers" who can tell harrowing stories of their own addictive behavior without loss of self-respect. The "self" is not enshrined or overdefended, but is valued and respected. The

addictive behavior is denigrated, while both the value and limitations of the person behind the behavior are respected. We are surrendering what doesn't work, and adopting humility as we accept our capacity for error, while surrendering to the wisdom of a program that does work.

Such surrender and humility requires honesty with ourselves and others. All of us are adept at deceiving ourselves some of the time, in our attempt to protect our sometimes fragile self-esteem. But the path to addiction involves increasing dishonesty with oneself. It requires denial of the extent of one's loss of control, and the impact of our behavior on others, while pretending that we can have our cake (substance) and eat it too (avoid consequences). Dishonesty with others is also extensive as addiction escalates. A great deal of deceit with, and manipulation of others is required to protect one's addiction. We hide our bottles, try to present ourselves as straight when we are stoned, try to convince others that they are crazy if they think otherwise, and manipulate them into enabling our addictions. If caught, we promise them anything, and delude ourselves and them into thinking that everything will be better once we recommit ourselves to improved control, though by definition, addiction already involves progression beyond the point of such control. Improved honesty with ourselves develops as we accept that our rheostat has devolved into an on-off switch, that is, that our previously flexible control over our use of a substance has deteriorated to the black or white point where we can either use or not use, but will use addictively if we do use. In acknowledging this and our other flaws publicly, in AA and within our families, we gain their support for change, and develop healthy humility, while changing rather than defending our unhealthy behaviors.

In this process, we go toward bothersome realities regarding our behavior, and learn to temporarily tolerate and eventually better cope with the negative feelings (e.g., shame) that accompany our addiction, our self-image, and our relationships with others. Instead of denying the basic realities of our deteriorated lives, we relentlessly embrace the truth, for without it, we cannot change. Instead of avoiding, we approach the truth of our behavior, and open ourselves up to healthier attitudes, behaviors and coping skills. We use the 12 steps to develop these skills. Thus, we learn to make amends in order to manage guilt, we learn to forgive in order to let go of our self-destructive anger, and we use the serenity prayer in order to reduce both the worrying that produces anxiety, and the excessive expectations and blaming that drive frustration and anger. Our honesty with ourselves requires a "fearless moral inventory," as we go on a search and destroy mission to identify and change our flaws, and pursue honesty with our sponsor, our spouse, and select others throughout this process.

From the perspective of attribution of responsibility, we can view guilt and anger as opposites. When determining who is responsible for a negative event, we can, accurately or falsely, blame ourselves and thereby create guilt, or blame others and thereby manufacture anger. It is not unusual to find angry, blaming individuals married to guilt ridden, self blaming spouses, as the guilt/anger axis becomes an import export business, with one partner excessively exporting responsibility, and thereby dumping anger onto the guilt prone partner who imports this responsibility. These issues are further discussed in later chapters on anger, guilt, and couples

work, but the 12 steps also have a lot to say regarding anger and guilt. Some sayings in AA are off-color but quite to the point. One of these sayings directly addresses the issue of characterological anger (anger as a character trait rather than a healthy response to an event of injustice): "If you meet more than one asshole a day, look in the mirror." Some people consistently manufacture injustices via blaming, and thereby set up a consistently angry demeanor. Essentially they need to become more honest with themselves and take responsibility regarding their own role in conflicts. Forgiveness is another approach to anger that is championed in 12 step circles. While both characterological anger and forgiveness are discussed at length in our chapter on frustration and anger, our shorter point here is that 12-step wisdom recognizes that unresolved anger often negatively impacts the angry person more than his or her target. Forgiveness is one potential solution to such unrelenting anger. At the other end of the spectrum we have unresolved guilt. As noted in our chapter on shame and guilt, there is a major distinction to be made between codependent guilt and moral guilt. Codependent guilt involves an assumption of excessive responsibility for other people's feelings and outcomes, whereas moral guilt involves a violation of one's conscience and moral values. In the process of developing an addiction, or just living life, it is easy to accumulate a guilt laden list of errors or sins involving the mistreatment of our brethren, and a host of character defects that produce such mistakes. When we conduct a fearless moral inventory (step 4, and later in step 10 of the 12 steps) we come face-to-face with these violations. Our willingness to admit and then remove these errors and character defects (steps 5 through 7) precedes making amends to others when appropriate (steps 8 and 9). In essence, half of the twelve steps involve honesty with ourselves and others regarding deficiencies in our character and behavior, and a willingness to deal with appropriate moral guilt by either making amends, or at least by changing behavior via greater awareness and self-monitoring.

The Serenity Prayer is also a central feature in any 12 step program. Why is it such a powerful technique? As we shall see in our chapters on anxiety and frustration management, the Serenity Prayer directly addresses the cognitive errors which tend to produce both anxiety and frustration. Errors in assessing what we can and cannot control, though often subconscious, can easily produce needless worrying regarding issues beyond our control, which results in anxiety. And misguided, excessive expectations regarding what we should be able to control or receive in life are often at the heart of frustration, which via blaming, produces anger. Anxiety, frustration, and anger, if added together, perhaps constitute up to half of our negative emotions in life. If daily adherence to a single prayer or principal could help you minimize up to half of your unwelcome feelings in life, would you be interested? If so, the initial core component of the Serenity Prayer, by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, reads: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." By going to the third part of the prayer first, we identify what we can and cannot control, at which point the road forks toward either acceptance of the uncontrollable, or initiative to take charge of what can be controlled. We thereby minimize worrying, identify appropriate expectations, and minimize the anxiety and frustration which result from errors in each, while directing our attention more

wisely into issues we can indeed control, thereby becoming more powerful and effective.

While some people make errors on one side of the Serenity Prayer, trying to control people or events beyond their reach, others make the opposite mistake, failing to take charge of issues that are potentially within their control. Such individuals may lack initiative, and may have learned, perhaps in response to pronounced external control or abuse, that they are relatively helpless in life. Seligman's early research with dogs, leading to the concept of learned helplessness, is instructive. While the ethics of such experiments is debatable, and involve considerable anthropocentrism (human centered values), the results are quite enlightening, and contributed significantly to our options in conceptualizing depression. In short, Seligman exposed caged dogs to electric shocks, initially with no opportunity to escape. Later, the dogs did have the opportunity to escape when shocked. You would probably expect them to escape, to terminate their pain. But they didn't. The interpretation was that they had learned, from their consistent inability to escape, that they were helpless. The same might be said for many depressed people, who are often found to feel helpless, as well as hopeless and worthless. Sometimes the lessons we learn from our experiences are overlearned (excessively generalized), and are resistant to change under different circumstances. We must remain flexible enough to identify and challenge our assumptions, and try out new behaviors, or even abandoned old behaviors in new circumstances. Just because we were helpless in the past doesn't mean we can't become powerful in the present. Just because we were victimized in the past doesn't mean we have to adopt or maintain the identity of a victim forever. Furthermore, our potential to take charge and change our lives not only involves learning to control and change our behavior, but our thoughts as well. I'm not sure about you, but I was repeatedly told how to change my behavior as a child, without much focus on my thoughts, perhaps because thoughts (and their impact) are less visible. The realization that we can exercise control over the flow of our minds, control our thoughts, and choose rather than just observe how we think, is empowering. The behavior therapy of old has evolved into cognitive behavior therapy in recent decades, as we recognize the many ways that thoughts precede and determine feelings and behavior. Worrying is a thought process that creates anxiety, excessive expectations predictably lead to frustration, and blaming yields anger, just as excessive self blame and assumption of responsibility for others' feelings and outcomes leads to codependent guilt. Our later discussions of anxiety, frustration, and depression included a more detailed focus on the workings of the Serenity Prayer, and our approach to managing each of the primary negative feelings in life will include examination of the cognitive underpinnings of such feelings. But positive psychology teaches us that positive thinking is not just an antidote to negative thinking and the psychopathology it generates, but also a benefit that stands on its own, producing positive feelings and satisfaction.

Spiritual enhancement is another central feature of the 12 step program. As we discuss later in our section on connectedness, spirituality and religion are not synonymous. Rather, religion is one approach to spirituality. While religious spirituality focuses upon connection to spirits, i.e., gods, all spirituality involves

connectedness, typically to something larger than oneself. Given the narcissism and self-entitlement that is increasingly evident as addiction escalates, humility and connectedness to something larger than oneself is a healthy antidote. Likewise, given the alienation that often accompanies the social consequences of addiction, connectedness is a welcome alternative. On paper, the 12 step program is supposed to be a large tent, which welcomes all forms of spirituality, though in practice, one often hears complaints regarding the pushing of Christianity in meetings, in part because most members are Christian. Adherents of other religious faiths, as well as agnostics and atheists, may need to do some mental translation if they are to effectively pursue their own spirituality under such circumstances. But whatever your form of spirituality, the resulting feeling of connectedness is emotionally enriching.

Finally, we visit the concept of resilience, a recently popular concept, and the subject of currently intense military training and research. As Masten and Reed note, developmental researchers in the 1970s began to focus on the variables that predicted success amongst children most at risk. They summarize the ensuing decades of research on resilience amidst adversity, including personal, family, and community factors associated with resilience. The most powerful individual features cluster around cognitive capabilities (intelligence, attention, and problem solving skills), and an easy going, not easily upset, adaptable temperament. Other personal traits associated with resilience included positive self perceptions and self-efficacy, faith and a sense of meaning in life, a positive outlook on life, good self-regulation of emotions and impulses, a good sense of humor, valued talents, and attractiveness and appeal to others. The most important family attributes involved the quality of parenting, including love and support, structure and monitoring, and high expectations, as well as a positive family climate without much marital discord, post secondary education of parents, and the advantages associated with high socioeconomic status. Community characteristics fostering resilience included effective schools, involvement in social organizations, and safe, cohesive neighborhoods with high levels of informal social control.

The American Psychological Association's Road to Resilience provides an online summary of ten ways to build resilience. Specifically, these include

- 1) Making Connections – with family, friends, and group support;
- 2) Avoid Seeing Crises as Insurmountable Problems – focus on your response rather than the stressor, and imagine a successful outcome;
- 3) Accept that Change is a Part of Living – accept what you cannot or can no longer control and focus on what you can;
- 4) Move toward Your Goals – focus on producing small steps toward realistic, attainable goals;
- 5) Take Decisive Actions - rather than detaching from and avoiding problems;
- 6) Look for Opportunities for Self Discovery – for growth in the midst of loss, trauma, and adversity;
- 7) Nurture a Positive View of Yourself – improve your self talk and trust your instincts;
- 8) Keep Things in Perspective – view stressors from a broader, long term perspective to avoid overreacting;

- 9) Maintain a Hopeful Outlook – optimism and visualizing what you want works better than worrying about what you fear;
- 10) Take Care of Yourself – pursue enjoyable and relaxing activities, as well as exercising and taking care of your body.

Many of these guidelines for a resilient lifestyle seem like common sense, but each of us can probably find a few that we typically neglect.

Resilience research illustrates positive psychology's emphasis on what is healthy about us, and how to enhance such positive states of mind via various cognitive and behavioral practices. Positive psychology is not a replacement for the more longstanding tradition in which psychology classifies psychopathology and attempts to alleviate negative emotional states and syndromes, but it is a welcome counterweight. Accentuating the positive is different than eliminating the negative. Adding the positive may help eliminate the negative, but goes beyond it, and can enhance our emotional well-being, even in the absence of temporary emotional negativity or more wholesale psychopathology. Whether you are currently engaged in psychotherapy or not, I encourage you to explore positive psychology resources that allow you to assess your various character strengths, and develop practices to enhance them. I will close this chapter by integrating the positive psychology and psychopathology traditions, noting ways of positively approaching negative emotional states. We have already discussed Linehan's concept of "radical acceptance," and the nonjudgmental approach of mindfulness toward noxious thoughts, feelings, and impulses. In "The Upside of Your Downside," Kashdan and Biswas-Diener caution against "gung ho happiness" and the danger of ignoring the potential benefits of negative emotional states. They note that "Avoidance is the tectonic issue of our time," and illustrate that "...when anxiety is concerned, there is only one underlying problem: avoidance." In our anxiety and depression chapters, we will underscore the role of avoidance in maintaining anxiety, and the role of depressive withdrawal in the exacerbation of depression. We will also distinguish between healthy and unhealthy approaches to negative emotions. On the positive side, we will view anger as a response to injustice, sadness as a reaction to loss, guilt as a method of alerting us to our moral violations, and anxiety as feedback regarding potential threats. On the negative side, anger can become a habitual defense leading to "characterological anger," and a willingness to take responsibility for our actions can overbloom into "codependent guilt" involving excessive perceived responsibility for the feelings and outcomes of others. Likewise, awareness of the need to manage potential threats can malignantly multiply into obsessive preoccupations and extreme anxiety, while reasonable sadness and grief can morph into chronic depressive states. Our task is to allow ourselves to experience negative emotions nonjudgmentally, and to utilize them as feedback that can enhance our growth and direct our behavior, rather than consistently running from and suppressing these emotions, only to accumulate them and require more drastic defenses to further suppress them. Kashdan and Biswas-Diener also describe the dangers of "comfort addiction," which might in everyday parlance be referred to as being spoiled, resulting in failure to develop sufficient tolerance for negative emotional states. They also propose an 80:20 rule of thumb for describing wholeness, which "describes those who experience positivity roughly 80% of the time but who can also avail

themselves of the benefits of negative states the other 20%.” The key is to learn how to accentuate the positive, and utilize negative emotions productively without allowing them to malignantly multiply into psychopathology.

Others have also expressed concerns regarding runaway happiology, contending that conclusions drawn from positive psychology research have been overblown in the popular press, and have ignored individual differences in what works for whom. Csikszentmihalyi, who along with Seligman, coined the term “positive psychology” in 1998, has cautioned against following the “smiley face people” at the fringes of the positive psychology movement. Like most research in psychology and other sciences, things get more complicated once you get in the weeds. Unexpected variables impact when a principle does or does not apply, including individual differences affecting who does and does not benefit from a given approach or technique. For example, Julie Norem (2002) acknowledges that being positive and optimistic may help many people, but has found that “defensive pessimists,” by following their preferred strategy of processing negative possibilities, relieve their anxiety and work harder to prevent feared consequences. Positive psychology research is still young, and we must be nuanced in our thinking, without trumpeting overgeneralized results. Overall, however, the perspective of positive psychology has added a welcome counterweight to the single-minded pathological focus of the disease model.