

## **Positive Psychology Manifesto**

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### **1. Definition**

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning. It aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive. The positive psychology movement represents a new commitment on the part of research psychologists to focus attention upon the sources of psychological health, thereby going beyond prior emphases upon disease and disorder.

### **2. Goals**

To meet these objectives we must consider optimal functioning at multiple levels, including biological, experiential, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global. It is necessary to study a) the dynamic relations between processes at these levels, b) the human capacity to create order and meaning in response to inevitable adversity, and c) the means by which "the good life," in its many manifestations, may emerge from these processes.

### **3. Applications**

Potential applications of positive psychology include:

- Improving child education by making greater use of intrinsic motivation, positive affect, and creativity within schools
- Improving psychotherapy by developing approaches that emphasize hope, meaning, and self-healing
- Improving family life by better understanding the dynamics of love, generativity, and commitment
- Improving work satisfaction across the lifespan by helping people to find authentic involvement, experience states of flow, and make genuine contributions in their work
- Improving organizations and societies by discovering conditions that enhance trust, communication, and altruism between persons
- Improving the moral character of society by better understanding and promoting the spiritual impulse within humans.

### **4. Implementation of Goals**

In order to create the optimal conditions for the flourishing of positive psychology, we propose the following: 1) The circle of researchers who call themselves positive psychologists should be broadened, funded, nurtured in their career development, and kept in close contact. 2) We must produce useful and inspiring products, such as articles, books, and effective interventions. Specific strategies for bringing about these ends include:

a) The formation of “Positive Science” research networks. Each network would include members from several social sciences. Below are three emerging network foci:

- Positive subjective states. What characterizes and promotes optimal experiencing?
- The good life/good person. What characterizes and promotes admirable persons and lives?
- The good society (including groups such as families, corporations, and communities). What characterizes and promotes fully functioning groups?

It is recommended that networks have a chairperson, but no permanent members. Potentially interested scientists will be invited to participate in specific activities. Networks will select concrete tasks to work on, such as designing interventions to foster moral development in late childhood.

b) Fostering contact among positive scientists

- Holding at least one large meeting per year in a positive location conducive to the development of new insights and collaborations.
- Maintaining a current positive-psych listserv: [positive-psychology@lists.apa.org](mailto:positive-psychology@lists.apa.org),
- Supporting special topical meetings (in addition to those of the networks described above). It may be useful to schedule more than one subgroup meeting in the same time and place to facilitate cross-fertilization.

c) Facilitation of funding for positive psychology researchers. Senior members of the Akumal group are taking the lead in identifying and contacting interested foundations. As one example, the Templeton foundation has created a yearly prize for the most innovative research done in positive psychology by young scientists.

d) Finding high profile outlets for promoting positive approaches. Current and upcoming publications include:

- A special issue of the *American Psychologist*, which appeared in January 2000, in which senior researchers explore the applicability of positive perspectives within their work (edited by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi).
- A special section of the *American Psychologist* on positive psychology, to appear in March 2001, in which researchers describe their emerging research findings which are relevant to positive psychology (edited by Sheldon & King).
- A forthcoming book series on subtopics within positive psychology (edited by Aspinwall & Staudinger).
- A forthcoming Handbook of Positive Psychology (edited by Snyder & Lopez)

e) Fostering the careers of positive psychologists: As practitioners of positive psychology rise in prominence, so does the field. Positive psychologists should:

- Be willing to host graduate students from other universities in post-docs or short-term visits

- Invite positive psychologists to present colloquia at their universities

f) Spreading positive psychological principles and perspectives to the broader public. For example, positive psychology might be incorporated into high school psychology curricula or within public health initiatives.

5. For more information, please see <http://www.positivepsychology.com>