

Positive Psychology: Seligman Protocol

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Objectives

- Check-In: how's it going with practicing positive psychology interventions so far?
- Module 3:
 - Understand your “explanatory style” when encountering a set-back or problem
 - Identify and dispute pessimistic thoughts



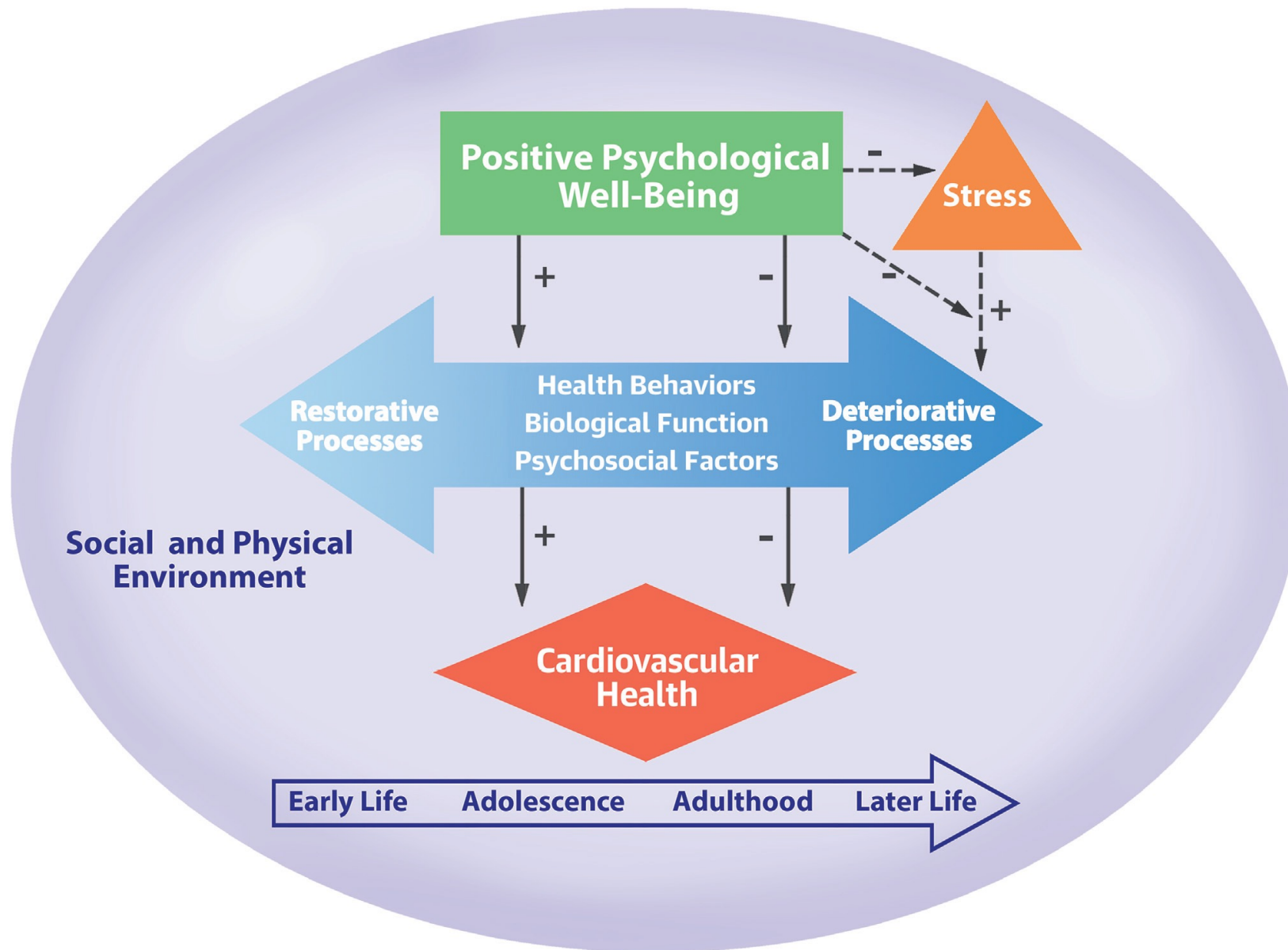
Goals

Increase

- **Positive Emotion** (happiness, joy, gratitude, love, hope, life satisfaction)
- **Engagement/ “Flow”**
- **Relationships** (Feeling supported, loved, and valued by others)
- **Meaning & Purpose**
- **Achievement** (intrinsic goals, sense of pride)

Decrease

- **Depression**
- **Anxiety and Worry**
- **Perceived Stress**



PPI Program Guidelines

- You are invited to **commit** to this program
- Complete the **surveys**
 - Baseline (before 1st class today), if you forgot or haven't yet, you can still do it after this class!
 - Complete same survey once every month
 - Evaluate me, the presenter/facilitator, right after every class
- Set **personalized goals** at the end of every class
- **Complete the “minimum dose”** for all positive psychology strategies between classes, when that is specified
- **Keep track** of what you do on a tracking sheet (self-monitoring form)

Seligman PPI

Module 1: Increase Satisfaction About the Past

Module 2: Enhance Happiness in the Present

Module 3: Optimism About the Future

Module 4: Renewing Strength and Virtue

Module 5: Valuing & Using Strengths & Virtues

Module 6: Enhancing Meaning in Life



Discussion

- Which positive psychology strategies have you tried so far?
- What was the result?
- What did you learn?





Increase Optimism About the Future



Module 3



What is Optimism?

- The word “optimism” comes from the Latin word *optimum*, meaning “the best.”
- Hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something.
- Reacting to problems with a sense of confidence and high personal ability. Specifically, optimistic people believe that negative events are temporary, limited in scope (instead of pervading every aspect of a person's life), and manageable.
- In psychology, optimism or dispositional optimism is a set of beliefs and traits that help individuals reflect on the positive aspects of life rather than the negative ones
- It is a personality pattern that displays resilience and personal strength.
- **Optimism can be learned!!!**

Optimism and Cardiovascular Health

- **Lower incidence of CVD** in the Veterans Administration Normative Aging Study
- **Reduced CVD and total mortality** in the Elderly Dutch Men and Women Study
- **Reduced coronary and all-cause mortality** in the Women's Health Initiative
- **Reduced incidence of heart failure in men and women** from the Health and Retirement Study and Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis

Likely
mechanisms:
Optimism-
CVD link

- Adopting and maintaining **healthy life-styles** (nutrition, exercise, physical activity, not smoking, not drinking alcohol)
- **Promoting other social and psychological factors** known to be protective against CVD (**e.g., social support**)
- Through **direct biological mechanisms** such as immune system effects, gene expression, lipid levels, heart rate variability, and other aspects of autonomic function



Identify Your Explanatory Style

Strategy #1

Explanatory Style

Optimists and Pessimists differ in the way they explain why positive and negative events, regarding the “3P’s”

Permanence:

- Optimists tend to view bad times as temporary
- Optimists tend to be better able to bounce back after failures or setbacks
- Pessimists are more likely to see negative events as permanent and unchangeable.
- Pessimists are often more likely to give up when things get tough.

Pervasiveness:

- When optimists experience failure in one area, they do not let it influence their beliefs about their abilities in other areas.
- Pessimists view setbacks as pervasive – if they fail at one thing, they believe they will fail at everything.

Personalization:

- Optimists tend to blame bad events on external forces or circumstances
- Pessimists are more likely to blame themselves.
- Optimists tend to view good events as being a result of their own efforts, while pessimists link good outcomes to external influences

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Permanent: Bad Events

Permanent (Pessimistic)	Temporary (Optimistic)
“I’m all washed up”	“I’m exhausted”
“Diets never work”	“Diets don’t work when you eat out”
“You always nag”	“You nag when I don’t clean my room”
“The boss is a bastard”	“The boss is in a bad mood”
“You never talk to me”	“You haven’t talked to me lately”



Permanent:
Good Events

Temporary (Optimistic)	Permanent (Pessimistic)
“My lucky day”	“I’m always lucky”
“I try hard”	“I’m talented”
“My rival got tired”	“My rival is no good”



Pervasiveness:
Specific vs.
Universal

People who make universal explanations for their failures give up on everything when a failure strikes in one area

People who make specific explanations may become helpless in that one part of their lives, yet march on in the others

Pervasiveness:
Bad Events


Universal (Pessimism)	Specific (Optimism)
“All teachers are unfair”	“Professor Seligman is unfair”
“I’m repulsive”	“I’m repulsive to him”
“Books are useless”	“This book is useless”

Pervasiveness:
Good Events

Specific (Pessimism)	Universal (Optimism)
“I’m smart at math”	“I’m smart”
“My broker knows oil stocks”	“My broker knows Wall Street”
“I was charming to her”	“I was charming”



Personalization

- If something bad happens, a pessimist will attribute it to internal (personal) factors
 - Optimists tend to externalize and attribute negative events to external factors
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Summary

People who make **permanent, universal, and personal explanations for good events, as well as temporary and specific explanations for bad events**, bounce back from troubles quickly (are resilient) and get on a roll easily when they succeed once.

Conversely, **people who make permanent, universal, and persona explanations for bad events, and temporary, specific, and external explanations for good events**, tend to collapse under pressure across life situations (NOT resilient) and rarely get on a roll after a success.



Identify and Dispute Pessimistic Thoughts

Strategy #2

How to Identify & Dispute Pessimistic Thoughts

Adversity = something that comes up in your life

Belief = automatic thoughts triggered by adversity

Consequence = usual consequences of the belief

Disputation = disputing/arguing/challenging the routine belief

Energization = emotional response to disputing/challenging the belief

ABCDE Strategy: example

<u>A</u> dversity	<u>B</u> elief	<u>C</u> onsequence	<u>D</u> isputation	<u>E</u> nergization
Arguing with husband at first dinner alone since birth of 1 st child	"I read an article that said lots of marriages end after birth of 1 st child – looks like we're headed in that direction." "How will I raise my child alone?"	Deep sadness and disappointment; panicky; could barely eat dinner; could hardly look at my husband	It's hard to feel romantic when I haven't even had 3 consecutive hours of sleep in over 7 weeks! One bad dinner does not mean divorce. We've been through much tougher times than this. The next dinner could go better.	I felt better, more calm, more hopeful, some relief.
Recently started a new exercise plan but you are having trouble sticking with it	"I'm no good at following my workout plan," "I'll never be able to reach my goals," "Maybe I'm not strong enough to reach my goals."	Felt weak, helpless, defeated. More difficult to stick with my workout plan. Skipped workouts, & put in less of an effort in the gym.	I have successfully done tough workouts.. I set a goal to rehab my knee after surgery, I worked towards it, and finally recovered.	Felt hopeful, accepting of my struggles, self-compassion. Surprisingly felt more motivated and willing to accept whatever workout I was able to do

How to convincingly dispute your pessimistic thoughts

Use evidence: show your belief is factually incorrect, or only partially correct

Find alternatives: most bad events have more than one cause – scan for all possible contributing factors

Describe the implications if your belief is true: “de-catastrophizing” may help. Examples: recognizing that one bad dinner does not make for divorce, struggling to exercise regularly does not mean you can’t still do something & improve your health

Usefulness: ask yourself, even if my belief is true, is it useful? Is it helpful in any way?

ABCDE Model & Cognitive Therapy

Seligman's ABCDE strategy is basically using cognitive therapy techniques to identify, evaluate, and challenge negative thinking – specifically targeting thoughts and beliefs that cause pessimism

Reviewing the list of cognitive distortions can also help us see the falsehood in our thinking

Challenging questions from Cognitive Therapy can also help us improve our ability to dispute with pessimistic thoughts

Cognitive distortions that promote pessimism

- Overgeneralization = You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.
- Filtering: You take all the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.
- Personalization = Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who is smarter, better looking, etc.
- Catastrophizing: You think that if something negative happens, it will become a disaster with a terrible outcome – often this follows over-estimating
- All-or-Nothing Thinking: Things are black or white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you are a failure.
- Over-estimating: You believe that a negative outcome is more likely that it actually is.
- Control Fallacies: If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.
- Global Labeling: You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgement.

Testing Your Thoughts (Challenging Questions)

- 1. What is the situation? **Select an “adversity”**
- 2. What am I thinking or imagining?
- 3. What is the cognitive distortion? **(optional)**
- 4. What makes me think the thought is true?
- 5. What makes me think the thought is not true or not completely true?
- 6. What’s another way to look at this?
- 7. If the worst happens, what could I do then?
- 8. What’s the best that could happen?
- 9. What will probably happen?
- 10. What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?
- 11. What could happen if I changed my thinking?
- 12. What would I tell my friend or family member **[think of a specific person]** if this happened to him or her?
- 13. What would be good to do now?

Summary

Optimism can be learned!

Our thinking about the challenges, adversities, and set-backs we face determines our level of optimism, and it plays a BIG role in whether we are resilient

Pessimists see bad events as permanent, never-ending, generalize to many more (or most) other parts of life, and are the consequence of personal weaknesses and failing.

Optimists are the opposite: set-backs are temporary, time-limited, only relevant to that thing or part of life, and are the consequence of external causes.

Boost optimism by disputing and combatting with distorted thinking that promotes pessimism

The ABCDE strategy can help – anyone with experience with CBT or stress management has seen it before. We are just applying it now to pessimism!

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