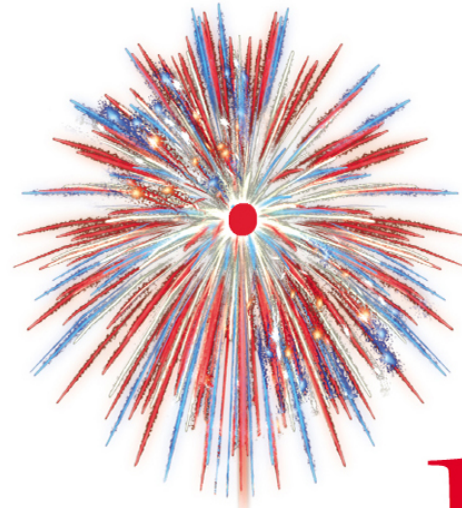


**A Guide on Utilizing Seligman's Visionary New Resource:
To Foster Happiness and Well-being
for Your Staff, Your Students and Yourself**



Flourish

Martin E. P. Seligman

**Try sample activities to begin developing your own
positive psychology toolkit.**

PRODUCED BY JIM KLENZ

FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION 826

FOREWARD

Although the author of *Flourish*, Martin Seligman acknowledges the goodness in treating psychological pathologies like depression, trauma, and schizophrenia, he believes that psychology can and should help relatively mentally healthy people experience greater well-being. This was the initial goal of positive psychology. However, as he and his colleagues developed the field, they discovered that the methods they were employing also benefitted people with mental illnesses formerly treated by traditional psychology alone. This discovery is an affirmation of the power of positive psychology.

The content in this summary unless noted otherwise, is all based on or directly quoted from the book entitled, *Flourish*. Note that in some cases the title of a chapter may vary from the chapter title in the book. This was done to better summarize the book and indicate the key concept of the chapter more efficiently.



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Flourish

Understanding Well-Being

Seligman's purpose with Flourish is not to cure misery, or to help people experience a monoistic feeling of pleasure, but to foster a multi-dimensional sense of overall Well-Being.

1 FAILINGS OF MONOISTIC THEORIES

Seligman contends that a one-dimensional view of happiness is just about feeling good in the moment. He goes on to explain that people need much more than just instant gratification in order to be truly fulfilled;

in order to
FLOURISH!

People need balance in choosing activities that meet several basic human needs. Seligman describes the resulting state as

WELL-BEING.

2 THE 5 COMPONENTS OF WELL-BEING



Understanding The 5 Components of Well-Being

1. Positive Emotion

When you feel happy. The pleasant life.



Online shopping for a new car.

Going to see a movie.



A bite of chocolate cake on your fork.

Regardless of what makes you smile,



it's still important to know, this is only one part of Well-Being.

You can feel this component when it's working. You likely know how to get it; but you need more than just pleasure to experience genuine well-being.

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Understanding The 5 Components of Well-Being

2. Engagement

The things you get totally engrossed in.



Does time stop when you do this activity?

Do you lose self-consciousness?

What is this activity for you?

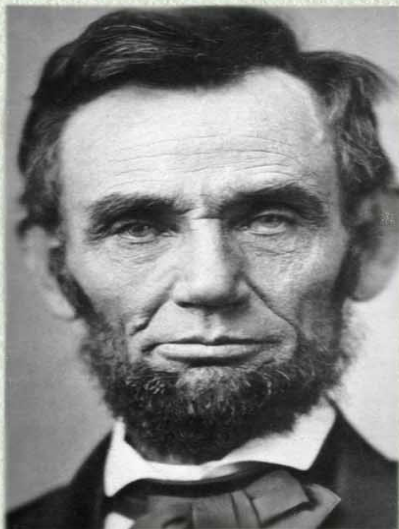
What is this activity for each of your staff?

Are you and your staff making time for engaging activity?

3. Meaning

Most often this is not connected to positive emotion.

Seligman gives the example of
Abraham Lincoln



a person who suffered from
profound depression.

Yet he carried on with that
which gave his life meaning;



ending slavery in the U.S.

He did this in spite of the resulting civil war
which almost certainly felt like maybe he was making
a big mistake.

Flourish

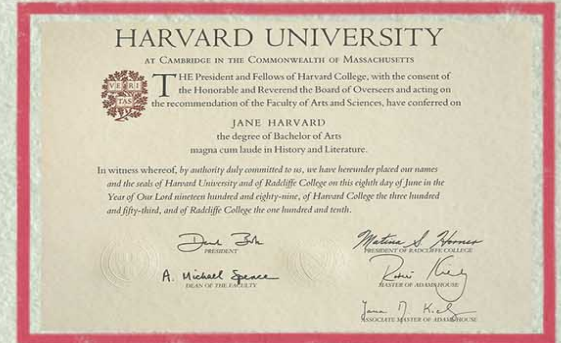
Understanding The 5 Components of Well-Being

4. Accomplishment

Accomplishment for
the sake of
accomplishment.



The "Achieving Life"



Some people pursue it without apology.
Others imagine this to indicate a lack of compassion.

Seligman suggests we all desire it and therefore should make a place in our lives
for the pursuit of
accomplishment.

5. Positive Relationships



Seligman reminds us that
"very little that is positive
is solitary". (p.20)



Sharing your life with others
"is the best antidote to the
downs of life
and
the single
most
reliable
up". (p. 20)



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In summary...

“Well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment. The way we choose our course in life is to maximize all five of these elements”. (p. 25)

As a human resources leader you should know how to assess the well-being of your employees, and when necessary, have the skills to empower them towards a more balanced sense of

well-being so that they can **Flourish**

Chapter 2

Creating Well-Being: Positive Psychology Exercises That Work

“This chapter is about my search for exercises that actually make us lastingly happier.” (p. 32)

After choosing the best exercises from an exhaustive list, Seligman and his colleagues have scientifically tested the efficacy of each. Case studies delineate numerous overwhelmingly positive results.

What-Went-Well Exercise

A “focus on negative events sets us up for anxiety and depression. One way to keep this from happening is to get better at thinking about and savoring what went well.” (p. 33)

What you’ll need:

- 10 minutes before bed nightly for one week.
- journal, computer or tablet; somewhere you can write that you can save your work

What to do:

In the 10 minutes before bed, write down three things that went well in your day. Next to each of these events answer the question “Why did this happen?”

Remember:

“The three things do not need to be earthshaking in importance (‘My husband picked up my favorite ice cream for dessert on the way home from work today.’), but they can be important” (p. 33)

Signature Strengths Exercise

“The pupose of this exercise is to encourage you to own your signature strengths by finding new and more frequent uses for them.” (p. 38) Signature strengths have some key characteristics, such as:

- a feeling of excitement when first displaying it
- a rapid learning curve
- invigoration rather than exhaustion while using it
- the creation and pursuit of personal projects that revolve around it.

What to do:

1. Go to the link below and complete the Values in Action (VIA) Signature Strengths Survey. (it is quick and easy)
2. Create a designated time this week to use one or more of your signature strengths in a new way. For example, If your signature strength is self-control, take 30 minutes out of answering emails or social media interactions and go work out.

<https://www.authenticchappiness.sas.upenn.edu>

Chapter 3

The Dirty Little Secret of Drugs and Therapy and the Active, Constructive Responding Exercise

Seligman identifies that medications and traditional forms of talk therapy have “effects that are what is technically called ‘small’” (p. 47) He illustrates how the placebo effect of most common anti-depressants is between 45 to 55 percent which is barely less than the average actual effect of 65 percent. His also contends that traditional therapy techniques are not easy or fun. When we consider Seligman’s assertion that all medications used in psychotherapy stop working as soon as we stop taking them, there is great motivation to try something else to improve one’s overall well-being.

Active Constructive Responding:

1. Listen carefully each time someone you care about tells you something good that happened to them.
2. Ask the person to relive the even with you; the more time he or she spends reliving, the better.
3. Spend lots of time responding with genuine affirmation.
4. Hunt all week long for good events and record them nightly in the format below:

OTHER'S EVENT	MY RESPONSE (VERBATIM)	OTHER'S RESPONSE TO ME

5. Each morning, spend 5 minutes visualizing whom you will encounter and what good things they are likley to tell you about. Plan your active and constructive response. (P. 48-50)

THIS ACTIVITY IS ONE THAT MANY GOOD LEADERS USE MORE NATURALLY AND RANDOMLY. SOMETIMES IT IS FORMALIZED AS A CELEBRATION DISCUSSION AT STAFF MEETINGS. IF DONE AS SELIGMAN SUGGESTS IT CAN BE A GREAT METHOD FOR APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND CAN BUILD BOTH GROUP WELL-BEING AND POTENTIALLY PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS.

CONSIDER THE POSITIVTIY THAT WILL BEGIN TO BENEFIT STUDENTS!

“IS THIS HEAVEN?” “IT’S IOWA.”

(Gordon, Gordon & Robinson, 1989)

DREAM OF SHARING POSITIVITY THROUGH OTHERS

In this chapter, Seligman demonstrates not only the rigor that goes into preparing people to be practitioners of positive psychology, but also further delineates the substance of positive psychology and well-being theory through the origin story of MAPP. Leaders can learn a valuable lesson from this chapter. When you set a goal and are positive about achieving it, the personnel you attract will mirror your positivity and enthusiasm.

DREAM OF AMAZING STUDENTS

Consider the entrance requirements for the MAPP program:

- Mature successful professionals from around the world with outstanding post-graduate academic credentials.
- Willing to travel to Pennsylvania and provide their own accommodations for nine long weekends per year.
- Tuition of \$40000.

In spite of perhaps ridiculously high expectations, the applicants were exceptional. Out of the 120 who applied, they accepted 35. The successful applicants included a Harvard mathematics graduate, a neurosurgeon, the director of a major federal government department, and a best-selling author.

DREAM OF HAVING AMAZING PEOPLE WORKING FOR YOU

The instructors they hired to teach these amazing students were equally exceptional. They had to be as the goals of the MAPP program are to teach intellectual content that is “challenging, personally applicable, and fun” (p. 77). As the program took off, so too did the field, all the while maintaining its focus on positivity.

THE WHOLE POINT IS BEING POSITIVE AND BUILDING POSITIVITY IN OTHERS

One of their top instructors illustrated the significance of this in her focus on the Losada ratio. She pointed to the statistic that companies with at least a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative statements are flourishing.

WHAT IS YOUR LEADERSHIP DREAM? IS IT A CALLING?

Seligman contends that positive psychology is not a choice; it is a calling. This is a challenging distinction, but please consider that when you believe that good things will happen to you, your life tends to unfold in that manner. The proponents of positive psychology already believed that good things were going to happen. When the pupil is ready, the teacher will appear. When Martin Seligman was ready to begin sharing positive psychology, the same effect took place; which he eloquently illustrated in his reference to the movie Field of Dreams. If you do not understand the significance of that allusion, then you as a potentially great leader, must do some research and discover what it means for yourself. Watch the movie, you will learn....

FIELD OF DREAMS



Flourish

“Contentment, Confidence, Happiness, Balance, Health, Good Stuff”

Seligman starts this chapter off by giving us an overview of the answers that thousands of parents gave to the question, “What do you want for your children?”

Up to this point, a lot of the learning we could take from Flourish likely seemed most applicable to our work with other adults. However, like Seligman, we probably have started to realize that while we may teach some of this either indirectly or occasionally, it is certainly not directly evident in our curricula.

Application to Saskatchewan Education

As many of you may already know, the Tell Them From Me survey that many Saskatchewan schools have already been using is now referred to in the Education Sector Plan created by the ministry of education. This survey has many different components that check on student well-being. While the survey may not have been developed with positive psychology in mind, the results most definitely would be improved if students were taught how to increase their well-being.

Aside from curricular and non-curricular connections, it is doubtful that any of us in the field of education or parenting, would turn down the opportunity to enhance the overall well-being of children.

Case Studies

It was decided that if schools were to engage in teaching well-being, there would need to be data clearly indicating significant benefits. For this purpose, programs in specific schools that mirrored or utilized the principles of well-being theory were chosen as case studies. The key findings of one such case are found below.

The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP)

Independent evaluations of program revealed the following:

- Program focused on adolescent students where depression was found to be significant.
- School had diverse ethnicity in student population.
- Training and supervision of teachers delivering program was rigorous and ongoing.
- Programming reduced incidence of depression, anxiety hopelessness and conduct problems.
- Programming had noteworthy positive physical health benefits.
- Program curriculum included the Signature Strengths, and Three-Good-Things exercises illustrated in this book summary.

Whether we teach stand-alone courses in well-being or embed it in the curriculum the investment of time and energy will certainly give back more than it took as the findings presented in this chapter are clearly indicative of.



How do high academic performers do it?

Consider the ideas of an applicant to the PhD program in positive psychology (they only accept one per year). She was a Harvard graduate and had been pursuing a PhD in the science of dyslexia at Oxford on a prestigious fellowship, when her desire to improve outcomes for struggling students in the public education system took over. She had this to say about the school system:

“To help chronically low-performing but intelligent students, educators and parents must first recognize that character is at least as important as intellect.” (p. 103)

What follows this in Flourish is an insightful philosophical explanation of the truth behind the above statement. A focus on what traits make for the highest levels of ability in learning, reveals the following.

Speed of Thought: The quantity of mental processes and sub-processes that we can do with complete automaticity determines the depth and quality of thinking we can do.

Slowness: the purposeful slowing down we do to plan, refine, check for errors and be creative.

Rate of Learning: how quickly we can fully incorporate new learnings into our schema.

However, these abilities alone do not guarantee a phenomenal learner or master achiever. Those elusive categories are at least equally determined by a drive towards intense effort, or what is referred to in positive psychology as...

GRIT

While it is true that self-discipline may lead to concerted effort in a variety of areas in one's life, the map to greatness in a field requires more than that. A review of the successes of super-achievers reveals that it is a combination of self-discipline and a deep passion for their chosen area of endeavor, that leads them to invest thousands of hours in developing the related skills that have taken them to these highest levels.

The same PhD student who was quoted above (she was accepted to the program), developed a simple test to measure GRIT. While you may hesitate to take it, (“What if I get a low score?”) consider the theme of positive psychology is that when we understand the components of well-being, we can begin to foster those traits in ourselves.

Respond to the 8 items below using the following scale:

1= Not like me at all, 2= Not much like me, 3= Somewhat like me, 4= Mostly like me, 5= Very much like me

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from old ones.* _____
2. Setbacks don't discourage me. _____
3. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.* _____
4. I am a hard worker. _____
5. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.* _____
6. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.* _____
7. I finish whatever I begin. _____
8. I am diligent. _____

*Asterisked items are reverse scored.

To get your score:

1. Add your score on statements 2,4,7, and 8.
2. Then add items 1,3,5, and 6 and subtract that total from 24.
3. Then add the two steps together and divide by 8.

The Highest levels of GRIT are indicated by a score of 2.5. An average score is 3.37.
(pp. 121-122)

What builds GRIT is still being studied. However, the knowledge that passion and effort are keys to success can help us move forward as leaders as we acknowledge and foster these traits in ourselves and in others.

Others like young people?

“We do not want our legacy to be the streets of Washington full of begging veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, addiction, divorce, and suicide.” (p. 126)

Do we really need more effective soldiers?

The above statement was made by U.S. Army colonel Jill Chambers, who was speaking to the author of *Flourish* in her role as head of Pentagon programming for soldiers returning from combat. The demand for assistance with developing psychological fitness in the U.S. Army was mirrored by its chief of staff, General George Casey. Chambers’ desire was far more humanitarian than General Casey’s goal of improving the ability of soldiers through psychological development. It may be difficult to agree that it would be beneficial for the United States military to become even better at killing. However, consider the potential humanitarian outcomes of making positive psychology part of military training.

There is clear statistical evidence to show that regardless of which military force is occupying an area, there is a significant increase in war related crimes. Consider that selection and training for the military have in the past focused on the kind of moral ambiguity required to follow orders to kill. Then think of how this might change if an assessment of overall well-being were used in the selection process for soldiers.

The first step that was taken when the U.S. Army embarked on building a psychologically fit army was to work with members of the positive psychology professional community to develop a comprehensive psychological fitness test. The result was the Global Assessment Tool (GAT). Consider this question taken from the test:

“Think of actual situations in which it was possible for you to lie, cheat or mislead. How often did you show honesty in these situations?” (p. 132).

Although this could be a way to ensure solid morals on the part of soldiers, it could also be a method to determine which recruits would be willing to commit immoral acts and then mislead the public about it. That might concern us if we did not know that the army uses this assessment to determine what areas of psychological development its soldiers need to improve in.

The psychological fitness team took on the task next of developing training modules to enhance lagging areas identified on the GAT. Included in this programming were modules on Family, Social, and Spiritual Fitness. Suddenly we have to start thinking of soldiers able to create and maintain deeply meaningful relationships with others. Further to that, when we begin to envision soldiers who seek an interconnectedness between all living things, a picture of self-guided thoughtful peacekeepers begins to take shape. Imagine the potential outcomes if future conflicts are inhabited by soldiers with these values.

In Canada, we already have a sense of what kind of good humanitarian peacekeepers do. Imagining a world inhabited by more people like this is an encouraging thought.



When we consider what goodness already comes from the field of education, we might envision a very bright future if we were to undertake a similar model of wide-scale positive psychology training for our teachers.

Encountering Trauma

Sooner or later in the field of education, we encounter people who have been traumatized. Often this is in the form of students; some of whom may still be living in traumatic situations. Occasionally it is a colleague or member of our staff who we realize has been coping with unhealed trauma for some time. I speak from experience when I say that there is nothing that makes a leader feel as helpless as going through the steps of trying to support these people with little other than the hope that they might eventually see a counselor a few times.

What if we could teach them skills that they could use to heal themselves?
What if we could help these people turn their traumatic experiences into strength?

First, consider the technical diagnostic criteria for Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

TRAUMA

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition, (DSM-IV) specifically defines a trauma as direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior.

(American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000, p. 463)

PTSD

- A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event.
- B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced.
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness.
- D. Duration of the disturbance is more than one month.
- E. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

(Seligman, 2011, p. 155)

PTG?

If we were to dwell on the above conditions, especially in reference to people we know or have known who may have experienced this, the positive focus of this summary would likely be greatly over-ridden. Time to start thinking about PTG. Post-Traumatic Growth is not an area many of us know about. Yet it is a documented occurrence. There are well-documented cases of people who have been highly traumatized but after an initial period of suffering have climbed to new heights of moral and psychological development. When General Rhonda Cornum returned from captivity in Saddam Hussein's army she was still only a major. A colonel said to her, 'It's too bad you are a woman, Major, otherwise you could be a general.' Of course she proved that colonel wrong and became a general. She did so in the wake of having the helicopter she was piloting shot down, the deaths of five of her crew in that crash, suffering three broken limbs, being taken prisoner and being raped and tortured by her captors.

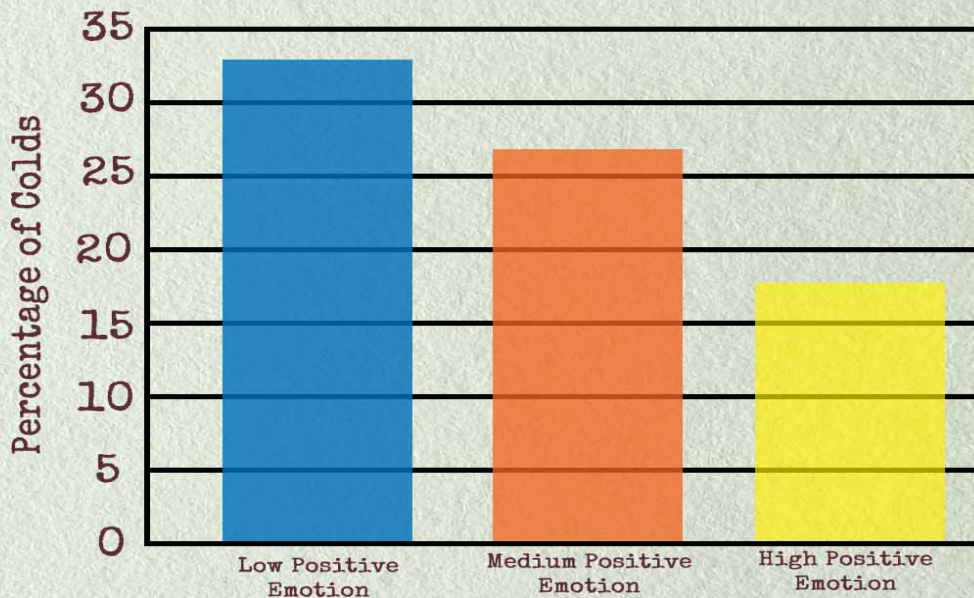
The general went on to develop the Master Resilience Training program for the U.S. Army. The core feature of the program is developing trainees' ability to fight off catastrophic thoughts while under intense stress. The program has at its core, two of the same basic principles that we have already encountered as key exercises in positive psychology; hunting the good stuff (aka Three Blessings) and using character strengths (as uncovered in the Values in Action Signature Strengths survey). This is the third time you have encountered these exercises. It is assumed that you are familiar with them by now. The real question is, how will you incorporate these essential methods into your leadership repertoire in order to not only build stronger students and staff, but also to help potential trauma survivors to turn their experiences into growth?

Sometimes Data is Very Helpful

It is difficult to illustrate that throughout this interesting personable and seemingly candid book there are woven threads of clearly delineated scientifically derived data sets and conclusions. Seligman chose not to bore us with excessive amounts of these details but the reality is that whenever he has experienced rejection of the theories that he and his colleagues put forward, he has illustrated a high volume of scientific proof for those theories.

Optimism Makes us Healthier

This is one of those contentious theories that Dr. Seligman has chosen to prove the scientific evidence for. Fortunately he did not need to do the research all on his own. Studies from around the world have proven conclusively that people who are positive and have a balanced sense of well-being are less likely to suffer major illnesses. Consider this study of the effects of positive emotion on the likelihood of getting a common cold.



(p. 198)

Study after study, with serious diseases like cancer and cardio-vascular disease to far less serious illnesses like the common cold, there is a wealth of solid data which proves that positive people are significantly healthier than pessimistic people.

The reasons may be as simple as positive people are more likely to engage in regular exercise or get enough sleep. They may have to do with positive people attracting other positive people, like health care practitioners. Or it may be to do with the less understood mind-body connection of a more holistic approach to medicine. Regardless, it all adds up to the same thing for those of us who supervise other people.

Positive staff members will get sick less, and recover faster when they do get sick.

Do you need another reason to invest in improving the well-being of the people you supervise?

Imagine how much money it would save your school division if you significantly decreased the amount of sick time your employees took.

Money Can't Buy Happiness

The cliché may seem to be just that and not an actual reality when we see what amazing experiences wealthy people can have. Certainly there is a connection between people who have high levels of well-being and material wealth. However, there is also evidence to suggest that it is more likely the well-being that allows wealth rather than the opposite.

Consider a study that measured the overall life satisfaction of various groups of people around the world.

Forbes magazine's richest Americans	5.8
Pennsylvania Amish	5.8
Inughuit (Inuit people in Northern Greenland)	5.8
African Masai	5.7
Swedish probability sample	5.6
International college student sample (forty-seven nations in 2000)	4.9
Illinois Amish	4.9
Calcutta slum dwellers	4.6
Fresno, California, homeless	2.9
Calcutta pavement dwellers (homeless)	2.9

(p. 226)

The evidence is clear, economic status is not a determinant of well-being. However, there is also evidence to suggest that optimism breeds financial prosperity. Here Seligman illustrates how optimism affects the backbone of finance in the world, the investment market. There are some analysts who claim that optimism is what creates recessions. However, it does not take a financial analyst to know that it is in fact viral pessimism that causes investment markets to implode.

Bottom Line: Do you want more opportunity to pursue greater well-being?

If the answer is yes, the first and only step you need to take is...

to pursue greater well-being.

Flourish: A critical review

The book is not a tough read but like everything in life, you get out of it what you put into it. If you are hoping for a hand-holding route map to a life filled with pleasure, you will be disappointed. If you are looking for a simple step-by-step self-help guide to happiness, you are looking in the wrong place.

Flourish is an in-depth account of the history of positive psychology and well-being theory that has woven into it, the meaning and basic methodology of empowering yourself and others to become healthier, more prosperous and more satisfied with life.

The chapters and the topics of each can at times seem to be disconnected from the theme of the book. That is where the reader needs to slow down and consider the underlying message of the book. If you are willing and able to do that, you will discover a richly interesting story that has many ways to teach you the same lesson over and over, until perhaps you are ready to start learning it.

The lesson is that if you are somewhat successful and happy you can become overwhelmingly so. If you are somewhat unhappy or unsatisfied with your life, you can completely re-write this apparent fate to become as prosperous as you choose to imagine. There is no easy way to learn this lesson. Fortunately, Martin Seligman has offered a significantly helpful guide to those who wish to invest the time and energy to learn what he is teaching.

About the Author of Flourish

“Martin E. P. Seligman, PhD, is the author of the bestsellers *Authentic Happiness* and *Learned Optimism*, among others. His work in Positive Psychology has been supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, the Templeton Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies, and the MacArthur Foundation. He is the Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and lives near Philadelphia with his family.”

(Back inside cover, 2011)



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