

POSITIVE INSPIRATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

For most of its history, psychology has been focused on pathology - the study of “What’s wrong with you?” But, even as early as the 50s, Abraham Maslow and others introduced a new idea in psychology: Positive Psychology.

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology focused on the character strengths and behaviors that allow individuals to build a life of meaning and purpose—to move beyond surviving to flourishing. Theorists and researchers in the field have sought to identify the elements of a good life. They have also proposed and tested practices for improving life satisfaction and well-being. They are just as interested in “What’s right with you?”

In the last 25 years there has been a rise in the integration of spirituality and psychology as typified by transpersonal psychology and the mindfulness movement rooted in meditation practices in the service of healing trauma, promoting wellbeing, and building emotional resilience. This integration is best understood as Positive Inspirational Psychology.

When you ask somebody if they could change one thing in their life, you would almost never hear them say, “My mind,” or, “I wish I could change the way I see certain situations.” When asked this question, most people reply with wanting to change the person, place thing, or situation outside of themselves because they believe that is what causes their unhappiness.

Positive Inspirational Psychology tells us that there are only two roots to all our emotions. The entire drama of our emotional life stems from either love or fear. The experiences we have can be traced back to their origins in childhood and it is very easy to see the difference between experiences born out of fear and those born out of love

One of the most liberating personal discoveries I have made is the knowledge that whenever I am upset, there is another way of looking at any situation, person, or condition. I can shift my perception, be led to peace, and can respond with compassion where a moment ago I may have believed there was something to be upset, blaming, or angry about. In fact, such a shift in perception is precisely what it means to awakening to our true nature.

If we are truly honest with ourselves, most of us have an ever-evolving and ever-growing list of what we think we must change in order to be at peace or to be happy including partisan politics, family bickering, bureaucratic controls, lack of money, indifferent partners, coronavirus, and so on and so on. But what if we are mistaken? What if nothing needs to change other than our perception of what we see?

Whatever the question, the answer is love.

Each moment we choose to water one of the two roots: love or fear. The root that gets most of our attention is what colors our life. This choice is often unconscious due to deep-rooted developmental trauma and stress around low self-worth, insecure attachment, being shamed, and not being fully loved. A feeling of being abandoned is very common in most people. We are not always aware of our choice for fear and yet it is what we do. We are hard wired for fear from birth. But, love is the certain pathway to liberation.

When we choose for love, it is always expansive and all-inclusive. It is always giving of itself without needing anything back in return. Love does not place conditions nor does it attempt to control anything. Love is the true essence of who we are and it is always present in our lives and in our hearts. Fear can mask it and create an illusion that love is not present. The moment we choose to realign with the underlying reality of love, fear disappears like it was a dream. The key is to stop judging our feelings as good or bad. It is only by accepting them as they are that we can raise our emotional intelligence and experience more wellbeing, resilience and lovingkindness.

