



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

2026-2027 S1 Academic Year Syllabus

I. Instructor and contact information:

- A. Ms. Kali Lerner (klerner@rumsonfairhaven.org)
- B. (732) 842-1597 X 856

II. Meeting Time and Location

- A. Room 406 during Period 3

III. Office Hours and Location

- A. Day 1 and 2: During lunch (10:45-11:15am)
- B. Day 3 and 4: Before school (7:20-7:40am)

IV. Course Description

- *Positive Psychology* is a half-year elective course that investigates the science of well-being, dismantling the notions of what aspects of life are supposed to make people happy and instead discovering and promoting the actual factors that allow individuals and communities to flourish. Instead of being built upon a disease model, as typical Psychology courses do, *Positive Psychology* aims to develop an empirical understanding of human growth and satisfaction. Students will attain skills of self-investigation, scientific inquiry, analysis of research studies, and the ability to turn these ideas into healthy life practices.

V. Major Units of Study

- Unit I: *Introduction to Positive Psychology and its Methods*
- Unit II: *Misconceptions about Happiness and Why Expectations Are So Bad*
- Unit III: *Strategies to Reset Expectations*
- Unit IV: *Mentalities That Really Increase Happiness*
- Unit V: *Practices That Really Increase Happiness*
- Unit VI: *Putting Strategies Into Place*

VI. Classroom Rules

- Arrive on time with all necessary materials and be prepared to work when the bell rings.
 - All homework must be completed prior to class.
 - You will not be allowed to return to your locker to retrieve any missing items.
 - Periodic notebook checks may be given to ensure that all students are consistently organized with their classroom materials.
- Once class begins, no one should leave the room. If you must leave the room for any reason, you must ask to leave the room.
- No cell phones. Period.
- Do not bring any food or beverages into the classroom.
- If you are absent, **YOU** are responsible to go to Google Classroom for the notes, handouts, and assignments missed. When you miss class on the day of a quiz or test, **YOU** must email me or discuss your intended make-up date once you are back in class.
- All assigned work **MUST** be completed using your RFH Google Suite student account. All drafting, revising, and publishing must take place on the original document, allowing for transparency in regards to revision history, progress, and growth. Work completed on a separate document, which is then copied and pasted into the assigned document, will not be accepted.
- School policy designates how much time you have to make up the work; it depends on the number of days you have been absent.
 - Major, ongoing assignments will be posted on Google Classroom.
 - It is expected that you will turn in all work due on a day that you have attended school. It is your responsibility to get Ms. Lerner completed assignments on days that *you leave early* or *come to school late*. It is also your responsibility to hand work in on Google Classroom by the assigned due date if it is an assessment, like a project.
- Be respectful and positive.
 - Participation in class discussions and activities is vital for your success.
 - Side conversations that occur while others are trying to learn are **unacceptable** and **will not be tolerated**.

VII. Grading Breakdown

Each quarter grade is based on a percentage model; the major components of *Positive Psychology* are associated with the following percentages:

<u>Category:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>	<u>Examples:</u>
Coursework	40%	Viewing guides, Google Classroom assignments, study guides, homework, short-term research, journal responses
Assessments	60%	Quizzes, large-scale projects, papers, presentations

VIII. Class Preparedness:

Students must have their charged school-issued Chromebook devices with them every day in school. Students must also have their notebooks, pens, pencils, and calculators every day. Students are expected to be ready to participate, answer, and interact with other students when prompted. *If students are unprepared, including missing their school-issued Chromebook when it is necessary for an assignment or assessment, they are subject to receiving a zero for that assignment.*

IX. Important RFH Procedures, Policies, and Guidelines:

- **Cell phones in class:**

All devices must be turned off and put away in classroom caddies when class begins. Cell phones must be placed in the classroom cell phone caddy for the entire block/period.

- **First Offense:** Teacher conference and confiscation of device (returned at the end of the day).
- **Second Offense:** After-school detention and confiscation of device (returned at the end of the day).
- **Third Offense:** Saturday detention and confiscation of the device, which must be picked up by a parent/guardian.
- **Additional Offenses:** May result in further restrictions of student privileges.

- **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

*At RFH, we approach this moment with both hope and caution. We believe Artificial Intelligence has the potential to transform learning in powerful ways by enhancing understanding of course material, promoting student-centered and problem-based learning, and fostering digital literacy, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. However, students must be active decision-makers, consistently evaluating and using these tools ethically and responsibly, without compromising academic integrity. We expect our use of AI in the classroom to evolve as the school year goes on. **Your teacher will provide guidance on the appropriate and acceptable use of AI for this class, but it is your responsibility to adhere to their instructions.** Should you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your teacher.*

- **Laptop Devices**

- No student shall use another student's district-issued log-on credentials.
- No privately owned electronic device may be attached to any Rumson Fair Haven Regional High School network.
- Violation of school or district policies, local, state, and/or federal laws while using a personal electronic device on the RFH wireless network will result in appropriate disciplinary and/or legal action as specified in the Student Handbook and Conduct Code, School Board policy

- **Attendance Policy and Assessments**

- A student may be dropped from or denied course credit when absent 14 or more classes for a full-year course; the change from 18 to 14 absences aligns with the rotating drop schedule.

→ *If a student comes in late or leaves early and misses a class during which an assessment is administered or due, the student may only retake the evaluation or turn the assessment in late if they have a doctor's note or an absence excused by the state; otherwise, the student receives a zero for that assignment.*

- **Short Term Assignments and Major Assessment Information**

→ Homework will be due at the beginning of the class period the next time the class meets. Assignment dates will be posted in Google Classroom. Students are encouraged to upload their work.

→ **Short-Term Homework Assignments** - Short-term homework assignments are given on an ongoing basis in all academic courses. Credit for short-term homework assignments will only be given if they are submitted on the due date at the designated time. Students are expected to follow the guidelines established in the RFH Student Handbook for the submission of work if they are absent on the due date for the entire school day. Specific IEP stipulations and 504 Plan modifications are exceptions to this policy.

→ **Major Assessments** - Major assessments are required course components in all academic courses, and they will be evaluated using corresponding rubrics. Failure to complete any of the designated criteria for a major assessment or minimal demonstration of effort on any facet of a major assessment will have a negative impact on student performance. Students are strongly advised to develop their projects beyond the minimum passing levels as determined by the instructor, and they are encouraged to confer with the instructor on ways in which they can develop their final products. Timely completion is a fundamental criterion for all major assessments: late assignments will be penalized according to the established policy:

→ 10% grade reduction off of the final grade if the major assessment is not submitted on the due date at the designated time. Additional 10% reductions will be given for two days subsequent to the due date. After this time has passed, the grade is reduced to no credit (0).

→ If a student is in school on the day in which a major assessment is due and is absent from class, the assignment must be e-mailed or submitted to the instructor by the end of the school day. Failure to do so will result in the established late penalty. Exceptions to this policy will be up to the discretion of the instructor and/or the department supervisor if there are extenuating circumstances. Specific IEP stipulations and 504 Plan modifications are also exceptions.

→ **The consequences for a violation of academic integrity on a major assessment will correspond to the penalties outlined in the RFH Student Handbook.**

→ **Students are expected to follow the guidelines established in the RFH Student Handbook for the submission of work if they are absent on the due date for the entire school day.**

X. Assignment and Assessments/Academic Integrity Policies

- Short-term homework assignments are given on an ongoing basis in *Positive Psychology*. Credit for short-term homework assignments will only be given if they are submitted on the due date at the designated time. You are expected to follow the guidelines established in the *RFH Student Handbook* for the submission of work if you are absent on the due date for the entire school day. Specific IEP stipulations and 504 Plan modifications are exceptions to this policy.
- Major assessments are required course components in *Positive Psychology*, and they will be evaluated using corresponding rubrics. Failure to complete any of the designated criteria for a major assessment or minimal demonstration of effort on any facet of a major assessment will have a negative impact on your performance in *Positive Psychology*. You are strongly advised to develop your projects beyond the minimum passing levels as determined by Ms. Lerner, and you are encouraged to confer with Ms. Lerner on ways in which you can develop your final products. Timely completion is a fundamental criterion for all major assessments: late assignments will be penalized according to the established district policy:
 - 10% grade reduction off of the final grade if the major assessment is not submitted on the due date at the designated time. Additional 10% reductions will be given for two days subsequent to the due date. After this time has passed, the grade is reduced to no credit (0).
- If you are in school on the day in which a major assessment is due and are absent from class, the assignment must be e-mailed or submitted to Ms. Lerner by the end of the school day. Failure to do so will result in the established late penalty. Exceptions to this policy will be up to Ms. Lerner's discretion if there are extenuating circumstances. Specific IEP stipulations and 504 Plan modifications are also exceptions.
- The consequences for academic dishonesty on a major assessment will correspond to the penalties outlined in the *RFH Student Handbook*. You are expected to follow the guidelines established in the *RFH Student Handbook* for the submission of work if you are absent on the due date for the entire school day.
- If directed to do so by Ms. Lerner, you will submit designated project work for *Positive Psychology* to her account on www.turnitin.com by the posted time. You must attach the receipt verifying submission to www.turnitin.com to all designated project work. Texts submitted after the posted time will receive a 10% grade reduction off of the final grade for failure to comply with this established policy. Earned points for work not submitted to www.turnitin.com will not be recorded until compliance is demonstrated. You may submit work to www.turnitin.com after conferring with Ms. Lerner and explaining why you failed to comply with the established policy. Again, the receipt verifying submission to www.turnitin.com must be attached.

XI. Required Materials

- A fully charged school-issued Chromebook for accessing online resources
- A binder or notebook for note-taking
- A folder for relevant handouts (you should place this in your binder or notebook)
- A writing utensil (pen or pencil) for note-taking
 - Being prepared is an important component of your classroom participation. The inability to bring the necessary materials to class will negatively impact your class grade.

XII. Film Appropriateness Information

- *Curricular Choices*
 - Some of the movies and/or clips we will work with as class this year in *Positive Psychology* may have received an R rating (Restricted) by the Motion Picture Association of America's at either the time of their release or when they were subject to rating by the MPAA. Such films have been chosen because of their significant cultural influence or their coverage of course content. Every effort has been made to choose films that meet all of these criteria and receive a rating softer than R. However, many of the best and most important films become the best and most important because they elicited strong feelings from viewers and challenged cultural norms at the times of their production. These are most often the situations that called for R ratings when the films were released. We encounter all texts in this class critically, questioning the decisions of the authors and asking queries about the texts and their respective cultural contexts. You will be informed of the rating of each film we watch. You are expected to respond to these films/situations maturely by following class procedures for critical viewing. If you feel uncomfortable, please let Ms. Lerner know and other arrangements will be made.

IX. Positive Psych Projected MP 1 Schedule

Unit Goals (Big Ideas)	Timeline	Topics/Themes/Concepts	Activities and Assessments*
□ <i>Unit I: Introduction to Positive Psychology and its Methods</i> seeks to establish student understanding of the history of Positive Psychology, identifying key figures and their impacts on the evolution of the field as a scientific discipline. Students will also investigate the historical schools that led to the modern-day perspectives of Psychology, developing a comprehensive understanding of the approaches that drive critical psychological thought. In <i>Introduction to Positive Psychology and Its Methods</i>, students will also learn and apply the methods of psychological research, including experimental design.	Week #1	• Classroom expectations/guidelines • Defining “positive psychology” and its components • History of positive psychology • G.I. Joe Fallacy • Signature Strengths identification	• Lecture and discussion • Journal entry 1: “Why am I interested in Positive Psychology?” • PERMA scale and Authentic Happiness Inventory • Signature Strengths articles • G.I. Joe Fallacy activity
	Week #2	• Introduction to research methods • Non-experimental research methods • Experiments • Correlation versus causation	• Lecture and discussion • Journal entry 2: “If It Makes You Happy...” • Journal entry 3: “My Signature is Strong” • Research methods review • Research methods quiz

□ <i>Unit II: Misconceptions about Happiness and Why Expectations are So Bad</i> begins by having students predict the aspects of life that they believe bring people the most happiness, identifying common misconceptions about happiness. Although most people will list the same items, these misidentifications actually demonstrate the annoying features of the mind, which held evolutionary value but do not hold the same weight in today's world. These problematic features include a mind built heavily on intuition, on reference points, on adaptation, and on a lack of self-awareness.	Week #3	• Predictions about happiness • Good job and money • Good grades and materialistic stuff • Love and good looks	• Lecture and discussion • Gratitude journal rewirement • Journal entry 4: "Misconceptions about Happiness" • TED Talk on Seligman's "A New Era of Positive Psychology"
	Week #4	• Our minds' strongest intuitions are often totally wrong. • Our minds don't think in terms of absolutes. • Our minds are built to get used to stuff.	• Lecture and discussion • Savoring rewirement • Social media and comparison project • Journal entry 5: "I'm So Excited"
	Week #5	• Our minds are built to get used to stuff. • We don't realize that our minds are built to get used to stuff.	• Lecture and discussion • Savoring photo activity • Journal entry 6: "Comparing and Contrasting Social Media and Savoring"
□ <i>Unit III: Strategies to Reset Expectations</i> allows students to be proactive about their subjective well-being for the first	Week #6	• Introduction to strategies used to overcome biases • Investing in experiences, not stuff • Hedonic adaptation	• Lecture and discussion • Expert group work/ jigsaw on various strategies

time in the course in this unit. Instead of learning about those things that seem to provide happiness but do not, they will learn strategies to be intentional in their cultivation of happiness. Through the discussion of various research studies, students will see the value in shifting the priority off of material possessions, overcoming hedonic adaptation, and resetting the reference points that hinder them from being their best selves.		- Negative visualization - Make this day your last - Gratitude	Journal entry 7: “Best Experience of My Life”
	Week #7	- Gratitude - Negative visualization - Make this day your last	- Lecture and discussion - Gratitude letter rewirement “It’s a Wonderful Life at RFH” Project - Journal entry 8: “Reflecting on the Gratitude Letter”
	Week #8	- Reset your reference points - Concretely reexperience and reobserve - Avoid social comparisons - Interrupt consumption - Increase variety	- Lecture and discussion - Exercise rewirement - Decrease your social media challenge - Journal entry 9: “Reflection on Exercise” - PSA Project introduced
	Week #9	Lasting lessons from MP 1	- PSA Project - Journal entry 10: “Most Important Lesson in MP 1”

Projected MP 2 Schedule:

Unit Goals (Big Ideas)	Timeline	Topics/Themes/Concepts	Activities and Assessments*
□ <i>Unit IV: Mentalities that Really Increase Happiness</i> asks students to continue to investigate changes that they can make to rethink their mental wellbeing by examining mentalities and states of mind that lead to increased happiness. They	Week #1	- Introduction to stuff that makes us happy - Wanting the right parts of things we already want - Revisiting signature strengths - Achieving flow - Overjustification effect - Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	- Lecture and discussion - Journal 11: “You’re Hired! Signature Strengths” - Flow Chart activity - Critical viewing: <i>Soul</i> and flow

will discover their signature strengths and begin to implement them into their daily lives, while also working to achieve moments of flow. Finally, students will examine the benefits of a growth mindset, which prioritizes the experiences rather than the end result, as well as kindness, which prioritizes the benefits of others rather than for yourself.	Week #2	• Achieving flow • Kindness	• Critical viewing: <i>Soul</i> and flow • Kindness rewirement • Interview with Elizabeth Dunn
	Week #3	• Growth mindset	• Lecture and discussion • Social connection rewirement • Journal 12: “Static Electricity: Is Intelligence Innate?” • Growth mindset activity
□ <i>Unit V: Practices that Really Increase Happiness</i> seeks to have students complete their prioritization of the positive behaviors that lead to increased happiness by examining the physical actions and habits that promote this happiness. By making social connections with friends, family, coworkers, peers, and strangers, individuals become both happier and healthier. Additionally, positive habits such as meditation, exercise, and	Week #4	• Social connection • Purpose of meditation • Default mental network • Types of meditation	• Lecture and discussion • Journal entry #13: “Reflecting on Social Connection Rewirement” • Sleep rewirement • Meditation group project
	Week #5	• Types of meditation • Sleep cycle • Theories about sleep • Theories about dreaming • Sleep disorders	• Lecture and discussion • Student presentations on types of meditation • Journal 14: “To Sleep, Perchance to Dream” • Journal 15: “Strange Sleep Disorders”
	Week #6	• Sleep cycle • Theories about sleep • Theories about dreaming • Sleep disorders • Time affluence	• Lecture and discussion • Sleep review • Sleep quiz • Journal 16: “All the Time in the World”

sleep all lead to positive mindsets and physical benefits including less stress, more energy, and better overall health. Finally, the use of money to buy time through time affluence allows students to understand how to better acquire and maintain happiness through experiences, social connections, and the healthy habits outlined above.			
	Week #7	• Importance of exercise • Types of hormones and neurotransmitters	• Lecture and discussion • Time affluence rewirement • Journal 17: “Getting Moving”
□ <i>Unit VI: Putting Strategies into Place</i> finalizes students’ understanding and commitment to positive psychology by looking towards the long-term implementation of the lessons and strategies discussed throughout the course. Students will complete a final rewirement challenge by selecting a past rewirement and completing it again over the course of several weeks. Students will understand how to create	Week #8	• Going beyond just knowing that we should want this stuff • Situational factors • Promote healthy environments • Goal setting • WOOP	• Lecture and discussion • Final rewirement challenge • Journal 18: “Genie in a Bottle” • Post-PERMA scale measurement • Journal 19: “Compare/contrast PERMA results”
	Week #9	• Creating a new definition of happiness • Lasting lessons from the course	• Lecture and discussion • Poster project on happiness • Critical viewing: <i>Happiness</i> documentary • Journal 20: “Suggestions For Next Students”

and adhere to a long term plan for maintaining their happiness through strategies in goal setting, obstacle clearing, and specific planning in their daily lives.			
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***schedule is subject to revision**