Positive Psychology: A very short history with a very long past

- Since World War II, psychology focused on human problems and how to remedy them.
- DSM and ICD sponsored by WHO (1990) gave rise to a family of reliable assessment strategies.
- Positive Psychology proposes to challenge the disease model.
- It focuses as much on strengths as on weaknesses; building the strengths and repairing the worst (Seligman, 2002)

Assumptions of Positive Psychology

- Human goodness and excellence are as authentic as disease, disorder, and distress. It's time to challenge the disease model (Maddux, 2002)
- Human beings have the potential for good and that we are motivated to pursue a good life (Linley and Joseph, 2006)
- Shift from fixed mindset to growth mindset; solution focused rather than problem focused.
- There are several empirical studies to support the assumptions of Positive Psychology.

Positive Psychology

- A science of well-being and optimal functioning. (Martin Seligman and Mihaly, 2000)
- Focuses on "what's right about people" instead of "what's wrong with people".
- A shift from the notion of mental diseases and healing to personal growth; average or normal to the ideal or upper limits of human potentiality.
- A scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive.
- Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.
- The scientific study of what makes life most worth living.

Some research findings

- There is a paradigm shift from misery studies to happiness studies. (Seligman 2000; Diener 1984)
- Happy people see the bright side of affairs, pray and directly struggle with problems. (McCrue & Costa 1986)
- Happy people are involved in goal activities which they value. (Emmons, 1986)
- Happiness can be increased by believing in a larger meaning or force in the universe. (Ellison 1991; Pollner 1989)

History of Positive Psychology

- Many philosophers, religious figures, and theologians – Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and many others posed deep questions about the meaning of good life and its attainment.
- Positive Psychologists do not claim to have invented the notion of happiness and well-being, rather to give an umbrella term to a field of inquiry related to things which make life worth living.
FAQs of Positive Psychology

- Is Positive Psychology Happiology?
- What is the relationship between Positive Psychology and Humanistic Psychology?
- Is Po. Psy. anything more than what we know from common sense?
- Are Positive psychologists indifferent to sufferings?
- Is Po. Psy. A luxury?
- Is Po. Psy. value laden?
- Is rest of Psychology negative?
- Is this a paradigm shift?
- Do you have to be happy to be positive psychologist?

Classification of Virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

1. Wisdom and Knowledge: Creativity, Curiosity, Open-mindedness, Love of Learning, Perspective
2. Courage: Bravery, Persistence, Integrity, Vitality/Zest
3. Humanity: Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence
4. Justice: Citizenship, Fairness, Leadership
5. Temperance: Forgiveness and mercy, Humility/Modesty, Prudence, Self-regulation

Goals of Positive Psychology

- Building of positive qualities at three levels - Subjective, Individual, Collective.
- Areas of research: Pleasant life (Life of enjoyment) Good life (Life of engagement) Meaningful life (Life of affiliation)
- Character Strengths and Virtues (CSV) Manual of Positive Psychology
- Acknowledges six main virtues in the cultivation of happiness:
  - Wisdom and knowledge
  - Courage
  - Humanity
  - Justice
  - Temperance
  - Transcendence

Criteria of character strengths as satisfying

- Strength needs to be manifested in the range of an individual's behaviour
- Strength contributes to good life for self and others.
- Each strength is morally valued even in the absence of beneficial outcomes
- Strengths inspire others to develop their own strengths
- Society provides institutions for cultivating strengths
- Character strengths of a person are his cardinal traits

Outcome of signature strengths

- Acceptance of self and others
- A feeling of excitement
- Well-being
- Life satisfaction
- Happiness
- Higher work performance
- Recovery from illness
- Post traumatic growth
- Transcendental leadership traits
- Healthy family and communities

Contd....

- Rogers (1951) - Fully functioning person
- Jahoda (1958) - Mental health
- Allport (1961) - Mature individuality
- Erikson (1963) - Stages of development
- Maslow (1949-1971) - Self actualization
- Deci & Ryan (1985) - Self Determination Theory
- Csikszentmihalyi (1990) - Flow-optimal experience
- Ryff & Singer (1996) - Psychological well being
- Seligman (1991-2006) - Learned helplessness, optimism, authentic happiness
Happiness and Positive Psychology

- The concept of happiness is the cornerstone of Positive Psychology
- Two main theoretical perspectives to understand happiness:
  - Hedonic
  - Eudaimonic
- Positive Psychology view happiness from both perspectives

Happiness

- All of us want to be happy
- Happiness means different to different people
- Positive Psychologists are interested in finding out the unique ways to make people happy
- Positive psychologists talk about achieving happiness with the help of savoring (subjective)
- Ten techniques for savoring have been suggested by Bryant (2006)

Techniques of Savoring

PRESENT
- Get absorbed in the moment
- Remind yourself of how quickly the time flies
- Sharpen your sensory perception
- Shout it from the rooftops
- Compare the outcome with something worse
- Avoid killing yourself
PAST
- Take a mental photograph (visualization)
- Share your good feelings with others
- Count your blessings and give thanks
- Congratulate yourself
FUTURE
- Anticipate the upcoming good event

Let us think??

- Is happiness a feeling or a thought?
- Which orientation of time (past, present or future) can lead us to maximum happiness?
- Is happiness a goal or journey?
- Despite the usage of advanced science and technology in our life, the level of our internal happiness has gone up or down? why?

Insight from Indian Scriptures

- Happiness is the quality of soul not the body.
- It is not dependency; comes from freedom (ignorance, fear, greed, attachment, jealousy, and ego).
- It is our decision or choice.
- We are representing God on earth.
- A balanced time perspective generates happiness.
- Happiness is a journey.

Contd....

- Spirituality can shift our focus from external to internal
- Happiness comes from feeling of security
- Happiness comes from purity
- Happiness comes from true self knowledge
Contd...

- Who am I?
- What is the meaning and purpose of my life?
- Where I am going?
- Am I truly happy?

‘Koshas’ within the human body

- Core consciousness
- Sheath of soul
- Sheath of joy
- Sheath of energy
- Mental

God Spot

- There is a God Spot in the human brain.
- The area is located among neural connections in the temporal lobes of the brain.
- Scans show that these neural areas light up whenever a subject is exposed to discussion of spiritual topics.
- God Spot is culture specific.

How to develop SQ?

- Develop self-awareness.
- Be positive and creative.
- Explore possibilities to go forward
- Get comfortable with paradox.
- Feel strongly that I want to change.
- Ponder the problem of pain.
- Discover and dissolve obstacles (reframing).
- Commit to a path but be prepared to change it.
- Live to serve.
- Cultivate spiritual practices.

Power of Subconscious Mind

- Conscious Mind 10%
- Subconscious Mind 90%
Techniques of developing SQ

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Visualization
- Positive self talk
- Reading spiritual books
- Challenging dysfunctional beliefs about God, Self, Others and life.

Cultivating positive thinking

- Positive thinking is about seeing the positive situations in life.
- Positive thinking help reduce stress, improve health and leads to more happiness.
- It does not mean to ignore negative events rather to look for opportunities/challenges.
- Positive thinking works through positive self talk

Negative self talk

- Thinking of the worst
- Magnifying the worst
- Take everything personally
- Its either black or white

Here we are.....

Thank you

Insaan kehta hai, khushi aaye to main muskurau
Aur
Khushi kehti hai, Tum muskarao to mein aau...

Phir milenge.....