

Preliminary Syllabus for Positive Psychology

an OLLI Short to take place from 11 to 15 July 2022

Summary Paragraph:

Positive Psychology strives to enable normal people to optimize their life experiences in contrast to traditional psychology that seeks to bring emotionally disturbed people up to a normal state. The father of positive psychology is Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania. The field has been in existence for about 25 years, although its origins go back to the logotherapy of Viktor Frankl, author of "Man's Search for Meaning". Positive Psychology has a five part acronym, PERMA (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) which we will address successively in the five classes of this course.

Recommended Books:

- *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, 1949
- *The Hope Circuit*, Martin Seligman, 2018
- *The Art of Impossible*, Steven Kotler, 2021

Introduction:

The success of positive psychology - not only in helping normal people to excel, but also in helping severely traumatized people (such as soldiers with PTSD) and in making people more resistant and more resilient to stress.

The 5 contributing components that have been developed in the field of Positive Psychology with the acronym PERMA:

- Positive Emotion/Pleasure;
- Engagement;
- Relationships;
- Meaning;
- Accomplishment

are additive - According to Martin Seligman they are not all necessary for authentic happiness, but the more of each in your life the more fulfilled you will be.

Class 1 - Positive Emotion

- Pleasurable Experiences are good, but the pleasure diminishes quickly and the effects of it do not last
- Other elements of PERMA provide longer lasting fulfillment (according to comparative testing of brain function over time)
- Frankl's concentration camp survival
- Feasibility based on realization that one's inner thoughts remain your property
- Humor as a human defensive/protective tool in contending with stress
- Recognizing Anomalies - Arthur Koestler's Triptych of Humor - Science - Art

Class 2 - Engagement

- Flow - Research by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- The challenge of narrow band consciousness
- Work by Steven Kotler's Flow Research Collective
- The interplay of the conscious and unconscious mind
- Brain function - the mind's guessing game
- The brain's functioning with respect to depression (Why traditional psychology got things backwards)

Class 3 - Relationships

- Emotional intelligence
- Agape
- Reinforcement, sharing
- The love/hate cycle
- Different Strokes
- The 9 types of intelligence
- The 22 basic emotions
- Personality types
- Positive reinforcement

Class 4 - Meaning

- Frankl's work to help people find meaning in life
- Finding one's life purpose - the ikigai
- Spirituality and mindfulness
- Meditation and the mind hack

Class 5 - Accomplishment (and /vigor)

- Self image, self confidence

- Self-testing to recognize progress and reinforce hope
- Getting Jokes and Puzzles as minii-achievements

Vigor

- The additional component to enable PERMA activity from a healthy base
- Eating
- Sleeping
- Exercising

Study Group Leader Bio:

Bob Kolodney

Career: Teaching assistant > Corporate Lawyer > Consultant > Manager > Entrepreneur > Angel investor > Osher Institute Study Group leader. **Education:** Harvard/Columbia Law School/INSEAD (European Institute of Business Administration)

Events organized at OLLI: James Joyce Readings (JJ Birthdays and Bloomsdays); Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75th Anniversary Conference; Viewing of World Chess Tournament; 14th of July Parties, Summer film festivals

Study Groups Led: Venture Capital/Angel Investing, the Nature of Humor, The Roaring 2020s (accomplishing the SDGs through emerging technologies), Exponential Organizations in our Changing World.