Learning Outcomes

• Define a number of core concepts in positive psychology and articulate their importance.

• Identify major research initiatives in positive psychology and applications in higher education.

• Learn about ways to integrate these concepts into student staff training and development—and your own life!
Activity

Please split into two groups!

**Group A**

Define Grit

- Mental toughness & courage
  - Perseverance
- Courage and resolve
- Determination
- Strength of character
- Tendency to pursue long-term goals
  - Tenacity

**Group B**

Define Resiliency

- To spring back or rebound
- Recover quickly from difficult conditions
  - Optimistic
- Recover from misfortune
  - Strength to recover
Grit

- “mental toughness and courage” (Merriam Webster)
- “perseverance and passion for long term goals” (Duckworth et. al, 2007)
- “the tendency to pursue long-term goals with sustained zeal and hard work” (Von Culin et al., 2014)

Resiliency

- an ability to recover from or easily adjust to misfortune or change” (Merriam Webster)
- This word comes from a Latin verb resilere, which means “to spring back, to rebound” (Merriam Webster)
- Psychological research has shown resiliency is closely linked to optimism.
Why are we talking about this?

– “The American College Health Association (2012) reported in a sample of 76,000 students from a variety of diverse backgrounds and identities, 86% felt overwhelmed, 82% felt emotionally exhausted, 63% felt very sad, 58% felt very lonely, 52% felt enormous stress, 51% felt overwhelming anxiety, 47% felt hopeless and purposeless” (Nash & Jang, 2015, p. 5 – 6).

– A 2013 survey from Gallup and Purdue of 30,000 college grads found that only 3% of these graduates felt that their education helped them to achieve well-being and human flourishing (Nash & Jang, 2015).
Positive Psychology: Grit Matters!

Angela Duckworth: University of Pennsylvania, Department of Psychology

- “Deliberate Practice” (Ericcson, 1994)
- The Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007)
  - Adults, West Point Military Cadets, College Students, Scripps National Spelling Bee participants
What did they find out about gritty people?

• Grit and IQ
• Grit and age
• Grit and career changes
• Grit, GPA, and SAT score

Remember, grit is more than just hard work or effort – it is sustained.

Full Grit Scale:
https://sasupenn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9H6iT93yv4rozeB
Some caveats from this study…

• Self-reporting and sample
• More research is needed on how grit relates to other characteristics which have been shown to impact achievement and success – like resiliency and optimism!

So the question is…
Can you get grittier and how do you do it?

So the answer is...

KEEP CALM AND DO MORE RESEARCH

But here are some findings...
Cultivating Grit: Growth Mindset

• Growth Mindset – Carol Dweck
• You can develop your intelligence – it is NOT fixed.
• Reframe how you experience setbacks – focus on the effort and not on the ability.
• Receiving or giving praise purely for intelligence actually has been shown to be far less effective in helping students cope with setbacks than praising for effort.
• Craving challenges, not fearing failure.
• Building resiliency.
Fixed Mindset
Intelligence is static

- Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...
  - avoid challenges
  - give up easily
  - see effort as fruitless or worse
  - ignore useful negative feedback
  - feel threatened by the success of others

All this confirms a deterministic view of the world.

TWO MINDSETS
CAROL S. DWEECK, PH.D.
Graphic by Nigel Holmes

Growth Mindset
Intelligence can be developed

- Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...
  - embrace challenges
  - persist in the face of setbacks
  - see effort as the path to mastery
  - learn from criticism
  - find lessons and inspiration in the success of others

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.
All this gives them a greater sense of free will.
Resiliency & Optimism

Martin Seligman: University of Pennsylvania, Department of Psychology

“Father of Positive Psychology”

• setbacks and challenges as “temporary, local, and changeable” (Seligman, 2011)
• And how can you train people to be more like this, even if they are not?
Train people how to think like optimists!

• Thinking about your thoughts - metacognition
• Cognitive behavioral methods – keeping track of your thoughts and reframing your thoughts
• “Generating alternatives, producing counter-evidence, and putting it into perspective” (Description of PRP Lessons, 2007)
What else improves well-being?

• Reflecting on what matters to you
• Learn about your strengths
• Set goals and reflect on them while monitoring progress
• Seligman’s “PERMA: positive emotion, engagement, goodness in relationships, meaning, and accomplishment” (Seligman, 2011).
The PERMA Model and Flourishing

Introducing a New Theory of Well-Being

PERMA

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Positive Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment
Well-Being Interventions in Higher Education

• David Yeager and “U.T. Mindset” in 2012 online pre-orientation (Tough, 2014)
  – 45 minutes of presentations and writing exercises
  – Control group and treatment group received different messaging
  – Treatment group results showed especially promising results in helping to close the attainment gap for first-gen students, low SES students, and minority students

• The Stanford Resilience Project: https://undergrad.stanford.edu/resilience
  – Collaborative campus effort with lots of resources focused on mindset and resilience
  – “Stanford, I screwed up”
How can you apply this in student affairs and OTR?

• Create a training session for your student staff on these positive psychology topics – give them the framework and concepts to identify what they are doing already and how they could improve

• Ask BIG questions, strengths assessments, and goal setting

• Mindfulness training, thought logs, reframing, gratitude exercises
What are you doing and what is your campus doing?
Modeling Well-Being Yourself

“We have to be willing to fail, to be wrong, to start over again with lessons learned.”

-Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

-Albert Einstein

“For no matter what your ability is effort is what ignites that ability and turn it into accomplishment.”

-Dr. Carol Dweck

“When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity.”

– Dr. Martin Seligman
References


Please complete an evaluation of this presentation.

Thank you!

Evals can be dropped off next to the registration desk.