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THE 7 HABITS OF HAPPY PEOPLE — NUMBER ONE: RELATIONSHIPS

Express your heart. People who have one or more close friendships are happier. It doesn't seem to matter if we have a large network of close relationships or not. What seems to make a difference is if and how often we cooperate in activities and share our personal feelings with a friend or relative. "Active-constructive responding," which is the ability to express genuine interest in what people say, and respond in encouraging ways, is a powerful way to enrich relationships and cultivate positive emotions.

The top line:

- People who have one or more close friendships appear to be happier.
- The sharing of personal feelings (self-disclosure) plays a major role in the relief of stress and depression.
- Listening carefully and responding in encouraging ways (Active-Constructive Responding) is a very effective way to cultivate positive emotions and deepen relationships.

In 2002, two pioneers of Positive Psychology, Ed Diener and Martin Seligman, conducted a study at the University



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Staff

Editor.....Jim Rink
Writers....Scott Asalone, Aren Cohen,
Frawn Morgan, Elaine O'Brien

Contact Jim at userg@jimrink.com



RELATIONSHIPS continued



of Illinois on the 10% of students with the highest scores recorded on a survey of personal happiness. They found that the most salient characteristics shared by students who were very happy and showed the fewest signs of depression were "their strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them." ("The New Science of Happiness," Claudia Wallis, *Time Magazine*, Jan. 09, 2005).

In one study people were asked on random occasions about their mood. They were found to be happiest with their friends, followed by family members, and least happy if they were alone

(Larson, Mannell, & Zuzanek, 1986). Another study constructed a scale of cooperativeness, i.e. how willing people were to constructively engage in activities with others. This study showed that the cooperativeness of an individual was a predictor of their happiness, though it did not conclusively show if their cooperation resulted in happiness or the other way around (Lu & Argyle, 1991). A study on the quality of relationships found that to avoid loneliness, people needed only one close relationship coupled with a network of other relationships. To form a close relationship required a growing amount of "self-disclosure," or a willingness to reveal ones personal issues and feelings, and without it people with friends would still be lonely (Jackson, Soderlind & Weiss, 2000, Horesh, Apter, 2006). A similar study found that some students who had many friends with whom they often spent time were still plagued by loneliness, and this seemed to be related to their tendency to talk about impersonal topics, such as sports and pop music, instead of their personal life (Wheeler). Having a good close social network at work and maintaining low marital distress also play a beneficial role in one's happiness and life satisfaction (Ruesch et al. 2004; Smith et al 2012).

Listening carefully and responding in encouraging ways (Active-Constructive Responding) is a very effective way to cultivate positive emotions and deepen relationships. (Niederkrötenhaler, Gould, et al, 2016)

Happiness isn't only gain from social support, but may serve more beneficial by providing it (Brown et al. 2003). This study examined how providing social support influences well-being and mortality. It was discovered that the more support provided, the greater the decrease in mortality. We also lose a sense of meaning in our lives if we experience social exclusion and isolation (Stillman et al 2009). This particular study ran four distinct trials where the participant would be rejected or excluded by others. The researchers discovered that loneliness created lower levels of meaning and a greater increase in depression.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Aren Cohen MAPP 2007

Forgiveness in Media and Everyday Life

by Aren Cohen, MAPP 2007

Cory Zadik led a wonderful and well-attended roundtable about Forgiveness in Media and Everyday Life at the 2017 MAPP Fete. Cory opened the discussion by pointing out that currently American society does not have a forgiving culture. In fact, we are largely a culture that, at least within our media ecosystem, seems to value revenge over forgiveness. How can we foster forgiveness? Cory explained that in his investigation on the topic he read Dr. Fred Luskin's book, *Forgive for Good*, and the group examined Luskin's definition of forgiveness as "the peace a person feels when s/he separates from the outcome that created the person's grievance story." Another definition that was considered was "giving up the hope of a better past." The group discussed many versions of public forgiveness. Henry Edwards (MAPP 2017) reminded us of a positive deviance story on StoryCorps about Mary Johnson and Oshea Israel, a mother who adopted her son's killer when he was released from prison, and Leora Rifkin (MAPP 2016) had the group consider the Truth and Reconciliation program created in South Africa after Apartheid.

The conversation also discussed the phenomenon, per Brene Brown, that "we can't hate people up close." Stefan Zonia (MAPP 2008) shared how in his work in detox facilities, he has found that the media coverage of the opioid crisis has helped families find forgiveness more easily when they realize they are not alone in addressing the problem they face. We concluded that forgiveness requires vulnerability to allow ourselves to feel anger and grief and to let it go.



Finally, the group considered the notion of self-forgiveness. We are often hardest on ourselves, both in terms of our feelings about how we treat others and how we feel about our own actions. Aren Cohen (MAPP 2007) asked the group to consider how self-forgiveness differs from the work done on self-compassion by Dr. Kristen Neff. The group agreed that overall, forgiveness for oneself or others, requires empathy. Thank you to Cory for leading such a thoughtful and engaging roundtable discussion!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aren is a learning specialist working with academically, motivationally and emotionally challenged students in the leading private schools in New York City. Aren uses the tenets of positive psychology to teach her students to use their strengths of character to change educational challenges into educational triumphs.

WHAT IS “RESILIENT WELL-BEING”?

by Frawn Morgan, MAPP 2017

Rick Hanson, Ph.D. was our Sunday afternoon plenary speaker at the 2017 Summit. Hanson is a psychologist, Senior Fellow of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, and New York Times best-selling author. In his engaging and entertaining style, shot through with humorous personal anecdotes, Hanson walked us through the highlights of his research into what facilitates “resilient well-being”.

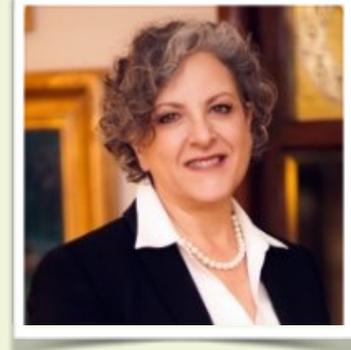
Hanson explained how we can use mental resources to cement learning from positive experiences. He explained that our vulnerabilities and the challenges we face can be mitigated by our personal resources.

These resources include character strengths, executive function, and resilience. Although many of these resources are heritable, he explained they can, to a large extent, also be learned. With this good news as a foundation, Hanson went on to explain the neuropsychology of learning and how we can aid and support the exponential learning curve.

In explaining these steps, Hanson touched on the benefits of meditation in learning and cognition retention, the importance of internalization of positive experience, and how mental resources are acquired in stages. He also explained that evolutionary psychology supports how stressful, painful, and harmful experiences are internalized on a fast-track, something recognized as the negativity bias. In Hanson’s words, humans have “Velcro for negative experience and Teflon for positive experience”.

The good news is that “learning is the super-power of super-powers”, according to Hanson. Because of the power of learning, we can focus on the positive and link positive experiences to negative experiences, thus using the positive experience to “clear out” negative material. The positive factors implicit in learning benefit the human brain in a variety of ways, including training the attention, requiring the psyche to be active rather than passive, and resulting in treating oneself kindly. These implicit factors may “sensitize the brain to the positive and fuel positive cycles”, according to Hanson.

In closing, Hanson instructed us to “be” with our experience, work with our minds (including using disputation to right-frame our perceptions), and grow the good. In his words, “Let be, let go, and let in”. “Let be” by allowing ourselves to fully experience. “Let go” by releasing the negative thus robbing it of its power. “Let in” by acknowledging and growing the positive, allowing it to overtake the negative. Hanson’s presentation slides and additional resources can be found on his website at www.rickhanson.net.



Frawn Morgan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frawn Morgan researches well-being; specifically how fostering well-being in working mothers can improve the working mother experience, the mother-child relationship, and build emotional health and well-being in children, building protection against adolescent depression.



HEALTHCARE AND PROVIDER THRIVING

by Elaine O'Brien, MAPP 2008

Karen Garman, Ed.D., MAPP, PCC, an ardent leader in the area of positive psychology and health care, and physician education, gave the Alumni Speaker presentation on Healthcare and Provider Thriving at the 2017 Summit. Karen brought down the MAPP house with her humor, authenticity and candor. Karen is also lifting up the medical profession and positive health with her dedication, experience, knowledge, and innovation. I had just returned from the AMA and Mayo Clinic sponsored, Stanford Medicine Conference on *Joy in Medicine*, which addressed the crisis of burnout and suicide in physicians, and was thrilled to learn more from Karen. I had previously attended a terrific IPPA Pre-conference presentation Karen led on Positive Health and Medicine, and knew she was a wealth of information.

Here are some of the stark statistics she shared:

- 54%. More than half of physicians surveyed in 2017 rate their morale as somewhat or very negative and said they often or always experience feelings of burnout.
- Only 28.3 would choose to be physicians if they had their careers to do over.
- Only 14% of physicians believe that they have what they need to provide the highest standards of care.

Karen described how Keiser Permanente (KP) began to focus on Positive Health, rather than health care (really "sick care" as Prilleltensky has described it), and how KP now leads the way offering a model of integrated health care, financing, and delivery. KP has been leading positive change since 2004, when KP, realigned, changing its mission for people to positively affirm: "KP empowers me to maximize my well-being and live a happier, healthier life...to "thrive!"

Karen described her concerted efforts, working with KP to promote physician wellness through physician education. Karen described the KP School of Medicine, REACH method: Reflection, Education, Assessment, Coaching and Health and Well-Being curriculum, Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine. The medical curricula she applies includes Marty's PERMA model of well-being: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement along with The Dalai Lama's Top Ten:

1. Reflection
2. Emotional Hygiene
3. Mind Training
4. Compassion
5. Self Compassion
6. Forgiveness
7. Appreciation
8. Gratitude
9. Resiliency
10. Wellness

Other positive innovations included her description of "Back to Bedside, the 6th Vital Sign," reconnecting with your patients. Karen described the power of Continuing Medical Education and Adult Learning. Raising the bar, she described the 5 Pillars of Physician Wellness:



1. Prevention
2. Professional
3. Practice
4. Collegiality
5. Healthy

Karen concluded her presentation with an exciting description of her "Horse Course, Partnering Physicians With Horses," and "She described how she helps teach physicians, to" move from your head to your heart." Karen described how horses are sentient animals, who live in the present. Horses have no frontal cortex, no judgment, and Karen described horses as "honest," and a "1200 pound bunny rabbit." Horses have "no agenda" and Karen has had great success helping people learn about relationships and care. Karen demonstrated how the Predator--Prey dynamics are helpful for human to learn about deepening relationships. What a beautiful thing! Karen Garman is making great strides to humanize medical training, create discipline rich residency programs, to advance positive physician education, and to inspire "24/7 Access to Wellness."

Thank you Karen!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elaine O'Brien, Ph.D., MAPP, CAPP, CPT is an positive educator, trainer, program designer, producer, writer, presenter, and pioneer in Health/ Fitness Promotion, Positive Aging, Positive Exercise, and in the Art and Science of Positive Psychology and Human Movement. Elaine is Creative Director/CEO of Lifestyle Medicine Coaching & Training, a consultancy, and FitDance: Move2Love, delivering positive community/group exercise programming, and training protocols to help boost exercise safety/ standards, motivation, adherence, enjoyment, whole health and well being across the domains of life.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

New Power vs Old Power

By Scott Asalone, MAPP 2008

We want the MAPP Alumni Association to rock! Yet could some mental models be getting in the way of us utilizing the most important element of our resources — you alumni? Are we fostering alums to change the world for good in the best way possible? This is all I think about.

In my reflections I happened to be reading the new book by Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms: *New Power*. It is about the rise of power in a hyper-connected world. Heimans and Timms differentiate between “old power,” which is top-down, centralized power and “new power,” which is crowd-sourced, decentralized power. I would offer that we, in our alumni association and even in positive psychology, use old power. Perhaps it's time to consider moderating that focus.

First, for the MAPP Alumni Association, we have so many incredibly intelligent, creative, passionate alums that we are not connecting with or if we are connecting, we are not utilizing. The old power model where ideas are only generated from the top or from a few must be reexamined. We want to hear from all the alums how to create a platform that will help us change the world for good.

If there are ways that we can strengthen or expand our platform for the Alumni Association so that MAPPsters can be more successful, creative, able to make change, then we need to know. We have an amazing and hard-working board, but we might not be able to come up with the ideas or resources that some of you can. And we hope that by working toward more inclusivity we can engage alums who haven't found the Alumni Association valuable. So please let us know how we can make this platform better.

But second, if I can be so bold, we need to reexamine the old power model of positive psychology and we alums are the perfect people to do so. The old power model in positive psychology is evident when all of the expertise is seen to be in the hands of the anointed few. They are the ones who research, but also verify the acceptable practices so all the power is in their hands. Many of us who apply positive psychology have amazing new ideas, interventions and applications that can be break-throughs. New power looks to the group, not only to be creative, but to find new ways to test what happens in the world. We need efficient ways of testing and examining ideas and practices that are fluid and flexible and not centralized.

None of this is to say that we will throw out all aspects of the old power model in either the Alumni Association or positive psychology. Some centralizing can be efficient and cleaner. But it is time to expand our knowledge and our involvement in the world. The power to do that doesn't come from just a few chosen ones, but from all of the alumni. It's time for the new power to arise.

—Scott