

Positive Psychology and Mindfulness

If you could feel happier, boost your self-confidence, feel more energetic, be less stressed and feel more effective – would you do whatever it takes? It can be as simple as finding your strengths and putting them to work.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that empower individuals and communities to thrive. We all have strengths and identifying our best attributes can have a positive effect on work and life in general.

First identified in 2004 by renowned psychologists Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson in *Character Strengths and Virtues*, the 24 character strengths are the guiding morals and qualities that make us who we are. They are linked to the six human virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, and knowledge in all of us.

Since discovering positive psychology I have used the strengths based approach personally to lift my game and professionally coaching clients to use their strengths in new ways to flourish. The results are life changing.

The art of flourishing

Flow - or flourishing - is a state of deep focus that occurs when you're engaged in challenging tasks that demand intense concentration and commitment. It's a peak moment that occurs when the challenge is high and well matched by your ever increasing skills and capabilities.

Some people flourish playing golf, running a marathon, writing a report, working in the garden or creating a masterpiece. Flourishing is also a mindfulness experience - of being in the moment. It's an act of deliberately paying attention in a particular way. This particular way involves bringing our attention back to the present moment and being non-judgmental - doing what comes naturally without judgment or self-criticism.

Mindfulness and character strengths

Mindfulness is a form of self-awareness training adapted from Buddhist mindfulness meditation. The 2,600-year old tradition of Buddhist psychology has been helping people redirect these emotions for many years. It's about being in the moment not thinking about the past or worrying about the future.

According to the experts mindfulness reveals the secrets to living a happier life - one that's less anxious, less stressful and less exhausting. Among its many benefits there is clear evidence that mindfulness practice is a very useful way to reduce stress, depression and anxiety and boost creativity, happiness and wellbeing.

Character strengths are a natural part of mindfulness and few would disagree there is a mutual synergistic effect between the two. In essence mindfulness training is about taming your "monkey-mind" and character strengths development is about realizing your potential for lasting fulfillment

Flourishing Mindfully

It now appears that mindfulness and character strengths positively impact one another. For instance when you pay attention to your strengths or dimension of character strengths such as love, compassion, acceptance, and gratitude you flourish easily and effortlessly.

In *Mindfulness and Character Strengths*, Ryan Niemic brings alive the synergy between the rich body of mindfulness teachings and a pioneering model of Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP). You can discover your character strengths at www.viacharacter.org

Whenever I'm coaching, training or making art I'm using strengths such as love of learning, creativity and perspective to bring out the best in myself and others. Time stands still I lose track of time totally engaged in the process. This is the art of flourishing mindfully.

Using strengths mindfully helps us perform better because we're focused and engaged doing something we're passionate about and feel good at it – without

judgment or criticism. Our level of success matches our capabilities making it possible for us to realize our potential for lasting fulfillment.

When was the last time you flourished mindfully?

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