



## Positive Psychology: What Is It, And Could It Help You?

When I see clients, I often use techniques from the field of Positive Psychology.

This has been described by Martin Seligman, (who is often referred to as one of the fathers of modern *Positive Psychology*) as the: [scientific study of optimal human functioning \[that\] aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive](#).

I like the field of *Positive Psychology* as it is a case of “*Accentuate The Positive*” like in the song of the same name recorded by various singers like [Ella Fitzgerald](#) and [Aretha Franklin](#). (Most of them rather old recordings – I couldn’t find many “younger” ones but did find a [2012 recording](#) on YouTube.)

Instead of looking at the “negatives” (but not denying their existence) I try to help clients look at what they can do to increase their outlook on their life and situation.

This can start by getting them to do the free [VIA Personality Survey](#). This free online survey looks at 24 personality characteristics and puts them in order, to identify what are the most important to you. As they say on the website:

*When you discover your greatest strengths, you learn to use them to handle stress and life challenges, become happier, and develop relationships with those who matter most to you. What are your strengths?*

Having identified what are the individual client’s “*Character Strengths*” we can look at steps they can take to increase that strength. Depending on what is towards the bottom of their assessment, we may also look at ways to seek to increase a characteristic.

There are also other reports that can be purchased for a relatively low cost, after completing the basic VIA Personality Survey, like the [VIA Me Profile Report](#), or the [VIA Youth Profile Report](#).

For example, often with clients who come in to see me about depression or grief, they may have “Zest” (described as being “*Vital, enthusiastic for life, vigorous, energetic, does things wholeheartedly*”) towards the end of their qualities. In situations like this we could use *Positive Psychology* activities like watching movies that show good examples of this quality. Like for example [Harold and Maude](#) (1971), [World’s Fastest Indian](#) (2005) or [Singin In the Rain](#) (1952) these are a few examples of films demonstrating this quality as listed in the book [Positive psychology at the movies : using films to build virtues and character strengths](#) by [Ryan M. Niemiec and Danny Wedding](#) I often use with clients.



Apart from movies, I also refer clients to Positive Psychology books like;

- [100 ways to happiness : a guide for busy people](#), by Dr Timothy J. Sharp
- [The Happiness Handbook – Strategies for a happy life](#), by Dr Timothy J. Sharp
- [Being happy!](#) Written and illustrated by Andrew Matthews
- [Follow your heart.](#) Written and illustrated by Andrew Matthews

In summary, I like this quote from Marcus Aurelius (26th April 121 – 17th March 180AD) Emperor of Rome:

*“When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breath, to think, to enjoy, to love”*

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