

A Primer in Positive Psychology (Oxford Positive Psychology Series)

By Christopher Peterson

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Positive psychology is the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between. It is a newly-christened approach within psychology that takes seriously the examination of that which makes life most worth living. Everyone's life has peaks and valleys, and positive psychology does not deny the valleys. Its signature premise is more nuanced, but nonetheless important: what is good about life is as genuine as what is bad and, therefore, deserves equal attention from psychologists. Positive psychology as an explicit perspective has existed only since 1998, but enough relevant theory and research now exist to fill a textbook suitable for a semester-long college course.

A Primer in Positive Psychology is thoroughly grounded in scientific research and covers major topics of concern to the field: positive experiences such as pleasure and flow; positive traits such as character strengths, values, and talents; and the social institutions that enable these subjects as well as what recent research might contribute to this knowledge. Every chapter contains exercises that illustrate positive psychology, a glossary, suggestions of articles and books for further reading, and lists of films, websites, and popular songs that embody chapter themes.

A comprehensive overview of positive psychology by one of the acknowledged leaders in the field, this textbook provides students with a thorough introduction to an important area of psychology.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Chris Peterson, one of the founding fathers of Positive Psychology, has written a wonderfully engaging and deeply stimulating introduction to this swiftly growing field. Intellectual history is interwoven with data, research findings with backstage gossip, to produce a delightful classic." -- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Director, *Quality of Life Research Center* and C.S. and D.J. Davidson Professor, *Peter F. Drucker School of Management, Claremont Graduate University*

"This excellent text gives readers a clear and interesting introduction to the field of positive psychology. Students will find the book easy to read, yet informative, and others can read the book because it covers fascinating material that is relevant to living a successful life." --Ed Diener, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Psychology, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign* and Editor, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, and *Journal of Happiness Studies*

"This is the definitive textbook in Positive Psychology. But more than that, it may be the single best textbook on any subject that I have ever read. It's fun to read and it's authoritative-written as it is by one of the main investigators in the field. I can't remember reading a textbook before that both made me laugh out loud and brought tears to my eyes." --Martin E.P. Seligman, Fox Leadership Professor of Psychology, *University of Pennsylvania*, and Director, *Positive Psychology Center*

"Peterson offers his readers a marvelous blend of lucidity, originality, humor, kindness and scholarship. This is a book that should entice many thousands of readers into a lifetime of interest in psychology." --George Vaillant, Senior hysician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Professor of Psychiatry, *Harvard Medical School*

"This is a splendid book that presents the principles of positive psychology in a very understandable way. The exercises are well done and bring the material to life. This is a wonderful volume in the Oxford publishing tradition. It challenges the reader to see clients in a new way which will enhance psychological growth. As clinicians, we tend to focus on pathology, but positive psychology helps us to look beyond the obvious difficulties and see potential. Psychologists and psychology students need to be inspired; this book will do that and more."--*Doody's*

"Peterson moves gracefully, with gravitas and humor, and provides an honest account on positive psychology. Peterson provides a good overview of research findings on important themes...he also does a fine job of critical evaluation in many subdomains of psychological science...an excellent introduction to the

area of positive psychology."--*PsycCRITIQUES*

"No one teaching, studying or intending to teach or study positive psychology should walk past this book...A masterful storyteller, [Peterson] leads the reader through the history, discoveries, victories, pitfalls and unresolved issues in positive psychology. One of the greatest virtues of the book is that it is full of personal examples and sometimes even a bit of professional gossip, giving it almost a novelistic read. Yet, a serious scholarly rigor is fully preserved - hundreds of research findings are presented in a clear, logical and engaging fashion."--*Psychology Teaching Review*

About the Author
Christopher Peterson has been at the University of Michigan since 1986. He is Professor of Psychology, the former director of clinical training, and an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, awarded in recognition of his accomplishments as an undergraduate instructor. Peterson is a member of the Positive Psychology Steering Committee, a consulting editor of the Journal of Positive Psychology, and a Templeton Senior Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center. He took the lead in creating the Values in Action (V.I.A.) Classification of Strengths, the most ambitious research project to date explicitly undertaken from a positive psychology perspective. Co-author of Character Strengths and Virtues (O.U.P. 2004), Peterson is among the world's 100 most-frequently cited psychologists during the past 20 years and has long-standing research interests in optimism, health, character, and well-being.

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James Sanchez:

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Randy Anderson:

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