

Character Strengths: Self-regulation, Hope, Wisdom, Gratitude

Lecture 9

Rev. Dr Sahaya G. Selvam
selvam@donbosco.or.tz



Institute of Youth Studies
Tangaza University College, Nairobi



Meaning of Self-Control

- Positive psychology:
Self-regulation...
- Self regulation is how you exert control over your impulses and behaviour so as to pursue your goals while maintaining moral standards.



1. Elements of Self Regulation?

- It is a process of exerting control (agency) over your thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- It is a rhythm of Life that facilitates Self-efficacy.
- Delay of gratification: resist the temptation to choose an immediate, small reward so as to obtain larger benefit - even if the latter may be delayed.
- SR involves establishing goals, and monitoring and evaluating behaviour.

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2. Self-regulation acts as a muscle!

- 1) Muscles can be trained to get stronger over time;
- 2) If weak, a muscle can be easily fatigued.



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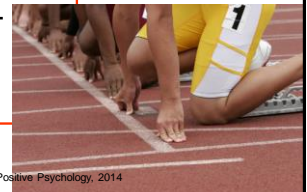
Exercise Self Control



Baumeister: Each time you lose control over something it becomes harder to say no next time. On the other hand, if a person trains their self-regulation, then it becomes easier to say yes.

3. Begin with anything...

If you do ANYTHING that requires self-regulation, then that makes it easier for you to have self-regulation in EVERYTHING.



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Hope

- “Hope, optimism, future-mindedness, and future-orientation represent a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance towards the future” (Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 570).
- this stance consists in “expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about” (Peterson, “The Values in Action” 33).

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Seligman: Hope as optimism

- Optimism is understood in two ways: as specific optimism, perceivable in hopeful expectations in given situations, and as “dispositional optimism,” a relatively enduring characteristic that changes little across time and context, whereby an individual generally expects positive outcomes to emerge most of the time.

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Snyder: Hope as Pathways to Desired Goals

- Snyder defines hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy) and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991).
- Goal can be identified as the element that links agency and pathways. Someone with high levels of hope possesses the capability to develop pathways to their desired goals, and to motivate themselves through agency-thinking to achieve those goals.

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Damon: Hope as a sense of purpose in life

- William Damon suggests that one-fifth of young people between the age of 12 and 26 in the USA are thriving.
- They are highly engaged in activities that they love, experience a lot of energy, and enjoy general wellbeing. On the other hand, the other four-fifths of the young population are wasting their energy, and without effective mentoring they may not reach their full potential. The difference between these two groups of young people is their “sense of purpose” (Damon, 2008).

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Emmons: Hope as ‘Ultimate Concern’

- For Emmons, an ultimate concern is something in which maximum value is invested, that directs one’s whole life. Therefore, an ultimate concern is “that above which no other concerns exist. It is literally at the end of the striving line.” However, the ultimate concern is often not just a singular goal, it is a collection of strivings that provide the utmost meaning to life, hence Emmons uses the plural form, ‘ultimate concerns’ (Emmons, 1999).

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Wisdom

- Perspective or wisdom is conceptualised “in terms of wise processes, wise products, or wise people” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.182). It is distinct from intelligence, and represents a higher level of knowledge and judgement.
- Wisdom is closely related to self knowledge, meaning of life, and being able to use right judgement in relationships. Thus, this special type of knowledge is used for the well-being of oneself and others. In this way, wisdom has a intra- and inter-personal dimension (Kunzmann & Stange, 2007, p.306).

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Caroline Bassett: Emergent Wisdom



<http://www.wisdominst.org/emergentwisdom.html>

Wisdom & Age

- Findings suggest that wisdom related performance, as measured by Berlin Wisdom Paradigm, increases sharply during adolescence and early adulthood, then begins to stabilize thereafter (between 25 and 75 years). Peak performance is noted in the 50s and 60s. However, wisdom-related performance may begin to decline in old age, around the age of 75 (Baltes, Gluck, & Kunzmann, 2005, p.334).

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Gratitude

- “The willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Bertocci & Millard, 1963, p. 389); and,
- “An estimate of gain coupled with the judgment that someone else is responsible for that gain” (Solomon, 1977, p. 316).
- The benefit, gift, or personal gain might be material or nonmaterial (e.g., emotional or spiritual).

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Gratitude

The aspects that affect the intensity of gratitude:

- The desirability of the event (appealing, unexpected)
- The degree of judged praiseworthiness (acknowledgement of intentionally performed action; recognition of sacrifice on the part of the agent);
- The deviation of the agent’s action from role-based expectations (for instance, we might be more grateful to a stranger than to a parent for an act of kindness).

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Gratitude and Wellbeing

- Trait gratitude measures are strongly correlated with various measures of subjective well-being (e.g., McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003b; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008),
- Longitudinal studies have found that gratitude predicts increased well-being over time, and gratitude is one of the strongest predictors of happiness amongst the strengths identified by the Values In Action (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
- Experimental studies have provided promising evidence that gratitude exercises may actually enhance immediate mood state (Watkins et al., 2003b), and long-term subjective wellbeing (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005)

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