

## Positive Psychology – Lecture 2

Hi. Good morning. I'm so glad that you came. I was worried that no one would show up in this weather. I'm glad you are Ok. Just a couple of announcements. Questions that I received via email. A few things before we jump into the material. First of all, I was asked, "who is this class for? Is it for people-- you know it's positive psychology -- people that are very unhappy? Is it only for people who are depressed? Who is this class for?" Well, the class is for anyone who is interested in Positive psychology and anyone who wants to be happier. If you are extremely happy, you can still be happier. If you are very unhappy, you can still be happier. So the class essentially is for anyone who's interested in the material.

And I would add someone who is really interested to work, to put the kind of effort that we talked about last time. Just not the kind of effort that we would require you to wreck your head about understanding certain concept, but it is effort in terms of applying these ideas to your lives. Now you may want to take this class, because you are interested on academic level in positive psychology that's perfectly fine. And you'll get many-- we'll talk about numerous studies in every lecture, starting next time. We'll talk about study after study after study, so you'll get that element as well. However, if you are thinking about taking positive psychology for personal benefits, you need to put the effort in. And I'll talk more about that today. So the class is for everyone. Anyone who's extremely happy and wants to be happier and anyone who's not happy and wants to be happier.

Pass/fail-- perfectly fine. Again the idea about this class is first and foremost for you. So I would urge you if you do take pass and fail to put in the work, and that's why the one element of pass/fail is not negotiable is that all the response papers have to be submitted. Now the response papers, as you know, are not graded. They are basically reflection papers. Will you reflect about the ideas about things that can be

applied to your life? But they are required. So you hand them in, you pass. If you don't hand them in, you fail. But other than that, by all means, if you want to take this class pass/fail, it's perfectly fine. Third thing, you'll be exposed to many theories, to many ideas in this class. Not everything would resonate of you. There's a wonderful book just came out in 2008, just two weeks ago, called "The How of Happiness" by Sonja Lyubomirsky. And there she talks about the concept-- she's a professor at Riverside (UC), Harvard college graduate and went to Stanford for graduate school she talks about the importance of finding fit, meaning the fit between certain technique, or tool, or idea, and yourself. Not every idea, not every study that you've heard about, not every intervention that you actually practice and you will practice interventions in your life, whether it's doing acts of kindness, whether it's expressing gratitude, whether it's physical exercising, whether it's journaling. You will do all these things throughout the semester. Not everything would be right for you. You'll be exposed to it. You'll try it. And then you'll make up your mind, "yes, this is what I want to incorporate" or "no, this is just not relevant for me." So it's important to keep that in mind. Anything that I talk about is backed by research, but the research doesn't say its right for everyone. It says it's for most people or for many people; this has worked or it is working.

So again be an active participant in this class as opposed to passive recipient of a doctrine. And identify the things that work for you-- not everything. I guarantee not everything will work for you, but a lot of things will. Your response papers that I just mentioned earlier: they are due at 5 pm, sorry, you'll get them by 5 pm on Tuesday, starting next Tuesday. And they will be due at 5 pm on Sunday to your TF. Again the response papers are usually for most people fun, interesting and engaging activities. Not graded, just basically for you to reflect, for you to grow through them. Thesis writers. How many of you are thesis writers? Just so I get a show of hand here. Ok, I am sorry. No I'm kidding. Thesis writers: you'll not need to take the midterms. I

know it's crunch time around that time- being through it myself here. So you'll not have to take the midterm. Your final will account for more. Unless you want to take the midterm, of course you'll more than welcome to. we won't throw you out of the classroom. Your thesis writers may. There'll be many announcements online. Do check the website on the regular basis. We communicate a lot of things. Instead of sending you emails, we'll have the announcements. Check them regularly, about 6 7 times a day. Just kidding. Once a day or once every two days is more than enough.

I'd like Before I do jump into the material and we have a very exciting lecture today, to invite Deb Levy who is the head TF for extension school-- so extension school students, I know there are a couple of you here, those of you at home-- here she is. Deb Levy. Deb Levy: Alright. I have about 20, 30 minutes to talk so I'm gonna start with my childhood. I am just kidding. I am the head TF for the extension school and we are thrilled. We have 296 extension students taking this course online, which means they are going to watch videos, and then extension students you'll be in sections on teleconference, When people are gonna call in, there are gonna be teleconferences which is going to be a great opportunity. Let's say hi to people out there in New Zealand. Hi. France. Kentucky. Lexington. It's really unbelievable. So the other thing is I want to take a picture actually. (Tal: No pictures in the classroom.) You'll take a picture Tal. So I am not going to do any lecturing. But since Tal and I have very similar systematic stuff, so if Tal is absent for any reason, I'll be doing the lecture for you. (Tal: Good.) The other is: people who are extension, I want to you be patient. We are going to get information out there as soon as we can. And you'll all be sectioned in next week or so. And feel thrilled to be here. Great. Thank you Deb.

So I want to start with a story, something that happened to me exactly 2 years ago, just about to the day, when was the last time when I taught positive psychology. As the semester started, it was a very stressful period also, my mentor, who I am

dedicating this class as well as all my future positive psychology class is to, Philip Stone passed away just the day before the class started. Very stressful period. And I got sick. And I got very sick. Somehow I got through the class. I taught the Thursday class. That started 2 years ago. It started on Tuesday. So I taught on Tuesday. Somehow Thursday, completely drugged. This lecture I made it through somehow. And I went to home and I couldn't fall asleep. I was in real pain. I went to the doctors. That was on Friday afternoon, just saying "you know I have to go. The medication I took didn't help." Went to the doctors. Had some blood tests. And finally after days I couldn't sleep because of pain, fell asleep. This was Friday night. In the midnight, there was a phone call. I don't hear it. I am fast asleep. My wife picks it up. Tommy picks it up. It's the doctor. And the doctor says to Tommy, "the test results just came in. And Tal should get to the hospital now." She said to the doctor, "He just fell asleep. He hasn't slept for days. Can it wait till tomorrow morning?"

And the doctor said," No. And he has to go to Beth Israel, because they have the best labs for what he needs right now." And she doesn't elaborate it any more. Tommy wakes me up, retells me the story of what's happening. Somehow I get up. She can't take me to the hospital because David, at that time one year old, is asleep. We don't want to wake him up. So we get a cab to take me to Beth Israel. On the way-- so this was the year after I was no longer resident tutors in Leverett. We were (?), driving down the Charles River. Up and drive and then next to Harvard. I look at Harvard. I look at the beautiful river. It's very quiet. Not many cars just after midnight after a Friday night. And I can't help myself but think, "what if there's something really terrible going on?" I mean, why would they call me midnight to the hospital-- Beth Israel, insisting on just one specific hospital? There must be something really wrong. And my mind begins to wander. And I say, "what if I only have a year left? What would I do in that year?" I become very sad because I think I won't see David grow up. I won't see-- I won't have any future children. Be careful up there. And I become very

wistful and sad.

And then I ask myself, "Ok so professionally, what would I want to do in that last year?" So I know personally exactly what I'll do. I'll spend all the time that I can with my family. But professionally what do I want to accomplish in this year? And my immediate response was I want to leave behind a coherent body of work, a coherent course introducing people to positive psychology. While I arrived at the hospital, I had some more checks. It ends up being nothing too serious. They put me on antibiotics. And within a couple of days I am on the way to recovery. I want to share with you today though why. Why is it the most important thing for me at that time and still today, is to leave behind a coherent body of work about positive psychology, to introduce you to this wonderful field? Why positive psychology? Why is it? Its own field? Why is it not--well, just study happiness, wellbeing as part of social psychology or clinical psychology? Why have so many scholars around the world united around this concept of positive psychology? So this is what I want to do today.

In the year of 2000, a research was done by David Myers. Davis Myers, from Hope College-- some of you who've studied social psychology may have read his textbook, did research, looking at psychological abstracts. What he looked at was the ratio between "negative research" and "positive research". Here is what he found. From 1967 to year of 2000- this was around the time when positive psychology started, what he found in the 33 years are over 5000 articles on anger, 5000 research articles on anger. He found over 41000 research articles on anxiety and over 50000 articles on depression. And then he looked at the positive words, positive research. He looked for research on joy. And he found staggering 415 studies. It does get better. He looked at research on happiness and he found close to 2000 articles on happiness in 33 years. Life satisfaction came on top: over 2500 studies. Still, if you look at that, the negative studies versus the positive studies, the ratio that you get is 21 to 1. For every

one article on some positive aspect, some positive element of life, wellbeing, satisfaction, joy, happiness, you get 21 articles on depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, neurosis and so on. Ratio of 21 to 1. Very depressing ratio, I must admit. In fact, it made me very angry and anxious. Studies focus on, primarily on what doesn't work, mostly on what doesn't work. And this is not a new phenomenon.

Here is something from Abraham Maslow, who we mentioned last time, talking about this phenomenon in 1954: "The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illnesses, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations or his psychological height. It is as if psychology had voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction and that darker, meaner half." So what does psychology study? I mean the psychology concentrators here know that, probably guess that. We study a lot of prejudice. We study a lot depression and anxiety. We study a lot about conformity. We study a lot about misjudgments and errors, very much focusing on this aspect and very little-- again, 21 to 1, very little-- on the positive. And when I look at this ratio and I think about it, this is 1954-- hasn't changed much since. And when I think about it and I look into it, I think that psychology needs help. I really do. I mean think about it at a personal level. That if you had a person who 21 hours a day was depressed and one hour in a day felt good? Or one day feeling good and then 21 days feeling anxious and depressed? You would say that this person would need help. And the field I think needs help. But the question becomes "is it the right analogy?" Should we look at it this way? Because the 21 ratio is unhealthy, certainly would be so on the individual level, but it reflects reality in many ways. Because what we are seeing today in more and more research showing that there is more and more depression around the world, that there is more and more anxiety, east, west, north, south-- around the world. And one could argue-- people who argue for continuing to do research in this area, for doing less in positive



psychologies, -- well we should be doing even more than the 21 to 1 ratio, because we want to alleviate the anxiety and depression that people experience.

Today depression is 10 times higher than it was in 1960. Now part of it is because there's more awareness, because we measure better. But that's not all. It's also simply because objectively there's more depression. And one way of knowing that is that the most objective "measure" that we have is unfortunately suicide. And numbers have risen significantly around the world, not just in the United States-- whether it's in China, whether it's Australia-- as well as here. The mean age for depression today is less than 15. Kids at very young age are introduced to the "information highway". And very often, they are not prepared, not able to deal with it in an effective way. So when we look at this data, we say we do need more research to help people overcome depression, to help people overcome anxiety. And I don't want to belittle that. That is important. It is extremely important. What I'm arguing, what I will argue for, is the shift of the pendulum. So it's no longer 21 to 1. There are more, many more studies in positive psychology, -- not to the exclusion of, not at all, but just shifting the pendulum. How about here? In our local village?

This article, -- I couldn't find a study that is more recent, this was published in 2004. Harvard Crimson (<http://www.thecrimson.com/>). This article says that, in their 6 months study of this, 80% of Harvard students experienced depression over the past year. Now we are not talking about the regular ups and downs that most people have ten times a day-- I certainly do. We are talking about depression here. For an extended period of time. 47% of Harvard students, according to this, -- and grant it: this is not academic study, but I will share with you academic study in a minute, published in a top-tier refereed journal. But Crimson has founded in its survey that 47% Harvard students over the past year have experienced depression to the point of not functioning. So they couldn't leave home. They were really struggling to just basically

get through the day. 47%. Now when people look at this, they say "well of course, we need to focus more on psychopathology. 21 to 1-- not enough! 30 to 1 sounds more like it."

We see it around campuses. This is not peculiar to Harvard. Not at all peculiar to Harvard. Richard Kadison, who is the head of mental health services here, in the New England Journal of Medicine-- probably the leading journal in the field of Medicine, recently published an article, where he talked about a survey that was done among 13500 college students nationwide, different kinds of colleges, universities, states schools, private schools. And what they found in this very significant study was that 45% of college students nationwide over the past year have experienced depression to the point of not functioning.

So The Harvard Crimson found 47; nationwide, it was 45-- essentially identical, no significant difference among the two. This is a nationwide phenomenon. In this study, 94% of college students nationwide feel overwhelmed and stressed by everything that they have to do. 94% I mean these are supposed to be the best four years of our lives. Something is going on here. Now this is not unique to United States. I just recently came back from a tour. I was in-- spent time in Europe-- in the UK, France; spent a lot of time in China and some time in Australia. In every one of these places, the governments are really concerned; university presidents are very concerned about the growing level of depression, anxiety and general mental disorder, rise of suicide rates in all of these countries that I mentioned. So we have a global epidemic here. And once again going back so: Is it the 21:1 ratio good? Is it important? Shouldn't it be increased? How can we even think about studying happiness and well-being and love and joy? Shouldn't we first deal with the real pressing problem of depression, anxiety, neurosis and so on?

Some truth to that, but again what I'm going to argue for in this class is that we



do need to also, not only, not exclusively, not even necessarily primarily; we need to also focus on the positive. I am going to talk about three reasons why we should do that. The first reason is that it is important to focus on what works, because what works or what we focus on rather creates reality. If we focus on what is working, we'll have more working in our world, more working in ourselves, more working in our relationships. The second reason why positive psychology as an independent field of study as a course in and of itself is important is that being happy is not just the negation of happiness. It doesn't mean just get rid of depression or anxiety that I am experiencing, I spontaneously become happy. That's not the case. That's not how it works. And finally, prevention which is very important today, the most effective way of preventing hardship, -- whether it's depression, whether it's anxiety, -- is actually by focusing on and cultivating the positive. Now I will share with you some studies about this. So for these three reasons, we need positive psychology.

Let me begin with the importance of focusing on what works. In the introduction to the Handbook of Positive Psychology, Martin Seligman who we talked about last time, considered the father of positive psychology, network of scholars, says this: "The aim of positive psychology is to catalyze a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life." Note that he says also. He doesn't say exclusively or even primarily. It's important to focus on what works, -- whether it is in our relationship, whether it's in ourselves, whether it's in others, whether it's in Harvard, whether it's in United States or the world-- in order to have more what works. Now the question is "how do we focus on what works?" And the answer to this question is through the questions that we ask. Let me illustrate through a case study. Psychologists, starting in the late 1940s, studied at-risk population. More and more money-- government money, university money, philanthropist money-- went into study in the cities or places where generally the kids were considered at risk-- more prone to dropping out of school,

more prone to later-on crime, teen pregnancy and so on. So this study they put in a lot of money, a lot of effort into this. The question that the psychologists asked was "why do these individuals fail? why does such a high percentage of students in that as-risk population end up dropping out of school? Getting pregnant? Crime?" --And we'll talk about the statistics later on next week. "Why do so many of these individuals fail?" Now an important question, good intentions of the psychologists, smart people, lot of money, lot of resources going in. However, very little change was introduced. Very little change came about as results of these studies. And the situation in many areas continued to exacerbate. Certain didn't get any better, despite the good intentions, despite the resources, despite the brain power that twined into the researching into this question. Interesting answers-- well, we need better education, we need better buildings, we need more resources, but very little change actually in practice came about.

And then there was a paradigm, quite literally a paradigm shift in the 1980s. Through the work of Antonovsky who I mentioned last time and I'll mention again today, through the work of Antonovsky, and other people like Ellen Langer, other people like Alice Isen, different questions started to be asked by psychologists. Instead of asking what did these individuals fail, positive psychologists started to ask what made some individuals succeed despite unfavorable circumstances? Maybe it was the case that many failed, but not everyone. Some succeeded and succeeded big time. And what psychologists started to do then was to ask why. What is it about them that is so successful? And that, in the words of Frost, made all the difference. The psychologists started to identify elements, aspects of these individuals and studied them in depth, starting to study the successful individuals, and identify elements that they could then teach later in creating interventions based on what they had studied.

And suddenly, there were results, real results, tangible results, after decades of

virtually zero results, simply based on the question. And the main concept that came out at that time, through the research of these psychologists who started to ask the positive question, started to focus on what is working on the successful children. The concept that came out was the concept of resilience. Now today everyone talks about resilience. We talk about resilience in school, at work, in the job, in the bedroom. Everywhere resilience. However, at that time in the 1980s, very few people even talked about or knew what that means. When they studied resilience, which is defined as following, it made all the difference. Resilience,-- a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk. These kids, who succeeded-- ended up succeeding, and they look through longitudinal studies-- 5 years later, 10 years, 30 years later, the kids who succeeded, were resilient. Initially, when they studied these kids, the assumption was these must be super kids, extraordinary kids, one in a hundred, one in a thousand- not really replicable, therefore. However, what they found when they continued to study those people who work, those people who succeeded, despite the unfavorable circumstances, -- what they found was these were not super kids. In fact these were ordinary kids with ordinary characteristics that led to extraordinary results. For example, let me share with you some of the things. These kids were optimistic, -- not optimistic in the detached Pollyannaish sense, -- optimistic in that they believe in things that would work out well, and we'll talk a lot about optimism as an interpretation style, in the work of Martin Seligman and Karen Reivich.

They were optimistic in the sense of thinking, "well, it may not work well this time. It will work out later. I have learned from what had just happened." They had faith and sense of meaning in life. Sometimes it was religious faith, not always. It was doing something that they really believed in. Many of them were idealistic. One of main topics we will discuss in this class is that to be idealistic is to be realistic, because we have a real internal need, innate need for idealism. So these kids

experienced sense of meaning, whether it was meaning in terms of personal success and how I will make it, or sense of meaning in their community contributing, something meaningful in sense of purpose. By the way, when I go through all these, these are no less important for any other person in the world. This resilience as we mentioned earlier is just not important for the at-risk population. It's as important at Harvard. And not just during exam period. It's important that resilience is associated with wellbeing. So think about these characteristics and you display them. And the interesting thing about all these characteristics they can all be learned. that I'll mention here is that they can all be taught; In many ways, this class is about that. And when the psychologists identified these, they started to teach them and the individuals started to learn and that made all the difference. In addition to the faith and sense of meaning, pro-social behavior, helping other people, shifting from helplessness to helpfulness, they were significant. One of the things that we'll talk about is how meaningful it is to help other people. And how much it doesn't just only help others, it also helps us. And we enter an upward spiral between self-help and other-help. Because when we help others, we are helping ourselves.

When we help ourselves, we help others. And so on and so on. So they were pro-social. They were helping other people. They focused on their strength rather than primarily deficiencies. They did not ignore their weaknesses, but they asked, "what am I good at? What am I really, really good at?" And again, part of this course, you'll identify your strength, whether it's through online test, whether it's through reflection papers, whether it's in section. You'll think about it whether it's through your readings. Identify the strength. What are they good at? They set goals for themselves. They were future-oriented, not just thinking about how bad things are today perhaps, but also thinking about "this is where I wanna be 5 years or 10 years from now." We are going to devote three classes to goal setting, very significant part of resilience. They had a role model. Someone who they said about "I want to be like her; I want to be

like him." It could be a teacher. It could be a parent, sibling, and friend. Sometimes, it was a historical figure or a fictional character, someone that they want to emulate, to be like. That gave them strength. That gave them sense of direction. And finally, most significantly, they did not bowl alone. They had social support. They did not say : "well I am tough enough to do it by myself." Rather they said:"I'm tough enough to reach out for help." Because that does require certain toughness. The strength to admit weaknesses as well, the strength to admit a need. Now think about these: do you have these things here for yourself at Harvard in life? And if not, you can cultivate all of these things, whether it's a social support-- and it doesn't have to be a hundred people whom you talk to everyday; it can be one or two close friends, mom, dad, roommates-- makes a big difference. No. 1 contributor to resilience. Now the important thing about social support is identifying the right people. People who, when you reach out to them, will reach back to you and will be able to give back. I want to show you an example now of a not so good role model for social support. And that is an interaction between Grace and Karen from Will and Grace. Will and Grace (From Episode 309)

SALESMAN: This video game makes a nice birthday gift. Do you think your stepson would like that?

KAREN: I don't know, honey. Can he eat it or rub up against it?

SALESMAN: Let's come at this a different way. What are his interests?

KAREN: Ham.

SALESMAN: Why don't I just let you browse awhile?

KAREN: Yeah. Thanks. Ooh, and, uh, do you think there's anything you could do about all these kids in here?

SALESMAN: Ma'am, it's a toy store.

KAREN: Yeah. See what you can do. Move it, Shorty.

GRACE: Hi, Karen. Um... I can't help you shop today. I've got to go.

KAREN: What's going on? What's happening? What's with the geisha hand?

GRACE: Nothing. I just had something zapped at the dermatologist's, and it looks kinda funky, and I just don't want anyone to see it right now.

KAREN: Grace, I'm sure it's not nearly as bad as you think it is. It's probably nothing, a little dot. Come on. Show mama.

KAREN: Aah! Whoa! Oh! Oh, my God! Oh!

GRACE: Shh! Shhhhh! Karen, Will you calm down?

KAREN: How do you expect me to calm down when I can see its heart beating right in front of me?! Aah!

GRACE: Shh! KAREN: Well, uh, alright. Alright, I'm sorry. So how long have you had the herpes? GRACE: It's not herpes. It's not even herpes adjacent.

KAREN: Oh, yeah? Well, it's close enough to be invited to the herpes family picnic.

GRACE: It was a weird freckle, and the doctor wanted to freeze it, and then he told me that it was going to take 10 days to heal. I mean, what made him assume that I could look awful for 10 days? Respond to that, and I will rub it all over your Prada.

KAREN: What are you lookin' at, prego? Haven't you ever seen herpes before?



Jeez. Fat people are so insensitive.

GRACE: Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Would you look at it in this little toy mirror? It's gotten...bigger. It's like Barbie's dream zit. Thank God I canceled my date with Mark.

KAREN: Yeah, 'cause that thing looks like it needs orange cones and police tape around it.

GRACE: Come on. Let's get outta here.

So Karen may not be a good choice for social support. But there are many people who are. Now think about the power of the question. Think about what a question did. For decades, many kids who potentially could have been helped weren't helped, because the right question was not asked as well. And it was only after positive question, the focusing on the positive question was asked that suddenly psychologists were able to see what was right in front of them for decades. It was right there, apparent evident, waiting to be discovered, but they completely missed it. Smart, well-intentioned, well-funded, but also didn't ask the right question. Questions create reality. They create possibilities. A question begins a quest. What they did in positive psychology again, a great deal through the work of Antonovsky was move us from the pathogenic model to the salutogenic model. Salutogenes is the foundation, the origin of health. And Antonovsky was talking about, he said that it's important to study illness, mental illness, physical illness, but it's equally important to study the healthy people, the healthy individuals to see how they make it, whether it's people at Harvard. Harvard is a stressful environment. However, there are some people who are able to go through it, to do well, to thrive, flourish and-- well still going through the ups and downs, we all do-- overall experience it as a much more positive experience as a happy experience overall. How do they do that? Why?

Antonovsky said we need to study that so that we understand the origin of health. And he studied these things and it made a big difference in the field as a whole. Quote Antonovsky: "All those familiar with the history of science are aware that important advances come with the formulation of the new questions. The question is the breakthrough; the answer comes with difficulty, but it is the new question that is important. The salutogenic question, I submit to you, (that is what is working) is a radically new question, which provides the impetus for formulating a new paradigm to help us understand health and illness. It has serious implications for researcher and clinician, biological and social scientist alike." It was that question that essentially created the field of positive psychology as well as positive sociology. He was a sociologist by training as well as many other fields. Questions make a difference. Questions create reality.

I want to do an exercise with you now. We'll do quite a few exercises in class. Here's the first one. To illustrate the importance of question, now I'm going to ask you to count the number of geometric shapes that you see on the screen-- no, not this screen, the next screen. And you are Harvard students. It's fine. The next screen, I am going to ask you to count the number of geometric shapes that you see on the screen. It's a very difficult question. I've given it to people around the world. I've given it to mathematicians, to artists who are very visual. And the challenge here is you are only going to have 30 seconds in which to do it, 30 seconds to tell me how many geometric shapes you see on the screen. Ready? 30 seconds. How many geometric shapes do you see on the screen? Go. Ok. So that's 31 seconds. So there should be no problem. Now if you haven't done- I know a couple of you have done this exercise before, but if you haven't done- this exercise before, -- and that's most of you, I'd like you to participate. So how many geometric shapes could you count on the screen? Throw out the numbers. 6 8 48 58 44 36 110 38\N6. 8. 48. 58. 44. 36. 110. 38. How many? Up there? You have a good perspective. 8. Anyone more than 110? Yeah, how many? 300?

200. Anyone more than 200 or less than 6?

Ok. So quite a range. But I grant you that it's a tough question. By the way if you have it on your power points that you downloaded, I took it off on the later downloading, but if you downloaded it, don't look at it now please. So we have the rate between 6 and 200. Now it's a tough question. In fact, it is so tough that I have no idea how many geometric shapes there are on the screen. But I have another question for you. Now if you know the answer to this question, just put your hand up --and if you haven't done this exercise before, -- just put your hand up. Don't shout it out. If you know the answer, put your hand up: what time was it on the clock? If you know the answer, put your hand up. If you think you know the answer, half way up. Maybe, quarter. And the rest of you may leave now. Ok, so we have a few halves. So out of the room, --how many were there-- probably 600,700 students here, out of 700 Harvard students, five and a half people can read the time on the clock. But I understand, we all have digital watches today. It's difficult.

So let me ask you an easier question. If you know the answer, just put your hand up. That's right! How many kids were visible on the bus? If you know the answer, put your hand up. If you think you know, half way up. Maybe, quarter. Yeah, most of you think," what bus?!" You know. "What kids?" Well it was there. So out of a room of --again -- 700 Harvard students, there are approximately 11 and 3/4. Who can count? But that's Ok. That's not my 55 (Math 55 course in Harvard) here. I understand. Another question. A little bit easier. What was the color of, the dominant color of the left-most geometric shape on the screen? Not the big one on screen, but the left-most geometric shape on the screen. What was the dominant color? If you know the answer, hand right up. If you think you know, half way. Ok. So that's about 12 1/4 people. According to my estimated research, there are probably between 5 and 7 people in this room who are color blind. Really-- according to the statistics. The rest

of you have no excuse. Let's look. So the time on the clock? Someone difficult to obscure the time? 10:10. Well it's a bit difficult. Visible children on the bus? Here's the bus, for those of you still can't see it. 5. And the color. The dominant color of the geometric shape? Yellow. What happened?

I mean these are not very difficult questions. Even the final of positive psychology is going to be difficult than that. I mean, really. A lot more. Why? Well the reason is I asked you a certain question, and that question directed you to a certain part of reality. And that's a good thing. Because if we were focusing on everything all the time, that wouldn't be a good thing. We would be distracted by every single noise, by every single movement. So it's a good thing that we can focus. However, we also need to remember the consequences of this ability to focus that is not always good it's not always helpful. Because as far as you were concerned, there were no children on the bus.

As far as you were concerned, there were only geometric shapes. In other words, my question, for most of you, created a very specific reality, a reality which there were geometric shapes and no children on the bus. Now that has very important implications. Think about the following question: what question is mostly asked by couples beyond the honeymoon phase? so they go through the honeymoon phase whether it's a month, a year or sometimes two years. What questions do they begin to ask after that period of time? "What's wrong? What's not working? How can we improve the relationship?" Now that's a very important question to ask. Very important. But if that's the only question or the only questions that we ask, then that is the only thing we will see. The only things that we will see are our deficiencies, the things that are not working, the things that need to be improved, the weaknesses of my partner, of the relationship. If the only questions that I ask are "what is not working", "what's wrong", "what do I need to improve"-- and again, these are not

questions we need to do away with, they are important. However if they are the only questions, and usually they are the only questions that are asked or primarily asked, then as far as the couple is concerned, not objectively, but as far as the couple is concerned, good things do not exist in the relationship. Just like as far as you are concerned, there were no children on the bus, even though they were right there in front of you, staring at you. But they do not exist. Or think about it at an individual level. This is very important. What is the question that we, most Americans, most Australians, most Chinese, most Israelis, most Europeans, Africans-- what is the question that is mostly asked about the self? And the reason why I mentioned all these places is because this is cross-cultural study. People mostly ask themselves, "what are my weaknesses? What do I need to improve?" Very often to the exclusion of "what are my strengths? What are my virtues? What am I good at?" And if the only question that we ask ourselves are the only questions that are "what are my weaknesses? Deficiencies?", then the only thing we'll see in ourselves are weaknesses and deficiencies. And as far as we are concerned, the good things-- our strengths, our passions, our virtues-- the wonderful things within us do not exist. Just like as far as you are concerned, the children on the bus did not exist.

Now I ask you, could a person who only or primarily focuses on weaknesses and does not see, does not appreciate their strength, their passions, their virtues-- can a person like that experience high levels of self-respect, self-confidence, happiness? And we wonder, why do so many relationships fail? And we wonder, why depression, anxiety and low self-esteem are increasing so much? The intentions are there. They are good. We are asking "How can we improve? What can we do better?" But if we don't also ask the positive question, that part of reality will not exist as far as we are concerned. Just like for the psychologists for decade, the answer to their questions, the solution to the problem that they wanted to solve did not exist, even though it is right there, in front of their very eyes within the successful kids, within their resilience.

Questions create reality. The questions we ask very often determine the quest that we will pursue, the path that we will take, the life that we will lead, whether it's individually, whether it's interpersonally, whether it's organizationally. What is the question? Many of you I know are going into consulting. What's the question that most consultants ask, Either explicit question or implicit question, the first time when they meet a client? --"What's wrong? What can we improve? What are the weaknesses that we need to strengthen them?" Again, important questions to ask. But if you only ask these questions, then you are ignoring the strengths, the virtues of the organization. And what you are doing, you are enervating, you are weakening the organization over time. It is as important, if not more important, to also appreciate what is working, organizationally, interpersonally, as well as individually. It is important to appreciate what is good.

I mean, look at the word, and “appreciate Two meanings: first meaning-- to say thank you for something, not to take it for granted. And that's a nice thing to do. We shouldn't take for granted our virtues, our successes. We shouldn't take for granted others. That's a nice thing to do. But appreciate has a second meaning, which is to grow. Money appreciates in the bank. The economy hopefully appreciates. When we appreciate the good, the good appreciates-- the good grows. Unfortunately, the other side of the same coin applies as well. When we don't appreciate the good, when we take it for granted, the good depreciates. And that's what happens in most relationships after the honeymoon phase. That's what happens to most people, especially to very driven people who want to improve, who want to get better. And that's good thing, if that is what makes you happy. At the same time, it's equally important to also appreciate what is good inside me what my strengths, what my virtues are. And we are going to do a lot of that in the course. And again, not to go to the point of narcissism. If anything narcissism-- and we'll talk about it in the second last lecture in the semester- narcissism is not about self-confidence, about self-esteem.



It's exactly the opposite. We are talking about grounded self-confidence. Grounded, generous, benevolent happiness. In order to lead that kind of life, we need to also appreciate what is working, to also focus on, metaphorically speaking, the children on a bus. Stavros and Torres in the wonderful book on relationships, "We see what we look for and we miss much of what we are not looking for even though it is there. Our experience of the world is heavily influenced by where we place our attention."

Questions very often create reality. The first important thing to understand about questions is that we need to understand the questions. And here I want to defer to a very important philosopher, a 20th and 21st century philosopher, who illustrates the importance of understanding questions-- Homer Simpson. If you can just turn down the voice, the sound a little bit, because this is very loud. Thank you. The Simpsons SCULLY: Now we're gonna run a few tests. This is a simple lie detector. I'll ask you a few yes or no questions and you just answer truthfully. Do you understand? HOMER: Yes. Love it. Love it. So the first step is really understanding the question. But once we understand it, it is also important to know what questions are we going to ask. I mentioned earlier that one of the most important things in cultivating resilience is having a role model. I want to share with you now my role model, in fact, the person who is the reason why I decided to become a teacher.

Her name is Marva Collins. Marva Collins was born in Alabama in the 1930s. Her father was African American; her mother, Native American. she was born at a time in a place where there was a great deal of discrimination. Fortunately, for Marva, her father really believed in her and said to her from a very young age, "Marva, you can make something of your life. You can become a secretary." Now the reason why he said secretary is because that was where the glass ceiling, or rather concrete ceiling exists for a person of her ethnic background, a person of her gender. Marva Collins worked hard. She was smart. She succeeded. She made it. And she became a secretary.

After a few years of working as a secretary, doing well, she decided this was not for her and what her calling in life. Her real passion was in teaching. She wanted to be a school teacher. She went to night school. A few years later, she got her teaching certificate, got married and with her husband moved to Chicago. There she joined the public school system in inner city, Chicago. The reality that she found, that she encountered there was a reality of much crime, much drugs and more than anything, hopelessness. The hope of the teachers was to keep the students in school for as long as possible. Why? --So that they don't join the street gangs at the age of 12; so that they are protected from the drugs, from crime. "How can we keep the students in school for as long as possible?" asked the teachers. Marva Collins walks into this reality and says, "Things are going to be different."

On the first day of class, -- she teaches first graders to fourth graders-- --on the first day of class, she says to her students, "We are going to do a lot of believing in ourselves." And she repeats this message over and over and over again, like a broken record throughout the semester and the year and years. "I believe in you. You can do well. You can succeed. Take responsibility for your life. Stop blaming. Stop blaming the government. Stop blaming your teachers. Stop blaming your parents. It is up to you to succeed." And she continues with this message over and over and over again. Having really high expectations of her students, looking at what they are good at, their strength and cultivating those. Miracles begin to happen. These students, considered by many of the teachers to be "unteachable"- these "unteachable" ones by the time that they are in fourth grade are reading Euripides, Emerson and Shakespeare. These "unteachable" ones at the age of 10 are doing high school mathematics. Now rumor begins to spread about Marva Collins, because how can she keep these students in class for so long, when all the other students are just trying to get out of school? She must be using force.

And Marva Collins has enough of these rumors, leave the public school system, opens up her own school in her own kitchen with 4 students and initially, two of them her own kids. Gradually, more and more students join the Marva Collins school, Westside preparatory she calls it. All the students that initially joined the school are public school dropouts. Marva Collins is the last resort before the street. And the miracles continue. Gradually more and more students come in. She has to move out of her home. They wretchedly rent a small shack in Chicago place, freezing in winter, scorching hot in summer. And yet the students are driven by their passion. And they continue. Miracles continue to happen to them. Every one of Marva Collins' students graduates from elementary school. Everyone goes to high school and graduates from high school. Every one of her students ends up in college and graduates from college. Yes, those "unteachable" ones. Marva Collins lives in a dire poverty for decades, somehow making ends meet. After all, most of her students can't pay. But somehow, months to months, she makes it. 1979 it changes overnight. A producer, from the television CBS program "60 Minutes" finds out about Marva Collins and creates a 15 minutes segment on her. Overnight she becomes famous. November, 1980, new President elect Ronald Reagan calls up Marva Collins. offers her to be his secretary of Education. So I guess her father was right. Marva Collins turns his offers down and says, "I love to teach too much. My place is in the classroom. 8 years later almost to the day, new president elect George Bush Sr. calls Marva Collins once again, offering her to be his secretary of education. Once again," I love to teach too much." My place is in the classroom. In 1995, a wealthy philanthropist donates tens of millions of dollars to Marva Collins. Now there are Marva Collins schools all over the country where thousands of students learn, where hundreds of teachers from all over the world come and see the miracle of Marva Collins. Today there are Marva Collins graduates who are politicians, business people, lawyers, doctors, and more than anything, teachers. Because they know what their teacher has done for them.

I want to show you a brief excerpt of this extraordinary woman. You can turn the volume up a little bit please. This is soft. Marva Collins "Positive Learning" I think I did pretty wonderful. I think I'm bright. I think I am unique. And I'll teach every child of me to think that. When they misbehave, their punishment is they have to write 100 reasons why they are too wonderful to do what they are doing. And they have to be alpha order. I am adorable. I am beautiful. I am courageous. I give them the first ones until they get the hang out of it. I am delightful. I am effervescent. I am fabulous. I am heavenly. I am idolized. I am just wonderful. I am a kindred spirit. I am lovable. I am momentous. I am never, never under line. And it goes on to z. And if they do it again, then they have to use another synonym. They can't use adorable any more. Now the children will say to a new student, I know why you don't behave.

Coz I'm tired of telling Ms. Collins how wonderful I am. Now she is wonderful. Here is her book. Now for all those-- I know that there are quite a few of you who are interested in teaching, and there's one book you want to read. It's this. For all those of you who are interested in leadership and there's one book you want to read. It's this. For all those of you who are or are interested in the future of becoming parents, and there's one book you want to read. It's this. For all the rest of you, if there's one book you want to read.

So what's her message? First of all, she herself is the message as a role model. And she studied with her kids, role models. They read fiction books. They read historical books. They read books about heroes and talk about heroes. They all identify role models. They identify role models in their neighborhood, in their families, constantly doing that, which is exactly what you need to cultivate resilience. First and foremost, she herself is the role model. She has high expectations. We are going to do a lot of believing in ourselves. We are going to do well, succeed. She expects a lot. She sees the potential. She appreciates that potential in each individual.

Stop blaming others. Take responsibility for your life. Marva Collins is no push-over. If you see her in the classroom, she is tough. She is demanding. At the same time, she respects each individual. She is not one of the Pollyannaish "feel-good", "let's make them all feel good" at all cost. Not at all. She believes in them. She respects them. And she is tough and demanding-- important combination for leadership. It's why I mentioned earlier in the context of great leadership book. There are many very nice ex-CEOs whose primary aim was to be nice and to be liked, the keys to get the job done, to get the work done, while being respectful. Sense of optimism. You can do well. You are going to do well, helping them set goals for themselves and for community. And finally, from focusing on deficiencies to focusing on strength. Howard Gardner from the ED(Education) school here talks about multiple intelligences, says that we need to stop asking whether or not a student is smart. What we need to ask is what is the student smart at. And when we identify what that student is smart at, strong at, virtuous at, good at, then we appreciate it. And when we appreciate it, it and the whole person appreciates. What would happen to a seed-- seed is potential-- flower, tree-- what would happen to a seed, if it is not watered, if no light is shed on it? It will wither and die.

The exact same thing with human potential. If we don't water it, if we don't shed a light on it, it will wither and die. The same with interpersonal relationship potential. If we don't-- we'll talk a lot about relationships: how to cultivate healthy long-term relationships-- if you don't water it, if you don't shed light, if you don't appreciate the good, the good will depreciate. Essentially, what Marva Collins does is create for students-- what the research in resilience does is create a very different model than the conventional wisdom. The paradigm shift essentially is from being a passive victim because the government is not putting enough money, which is an issue, not belittling it. It's important to have those external affect the internal like more resources. But that's not enough. From an inactive, from a passive victim, she changes her

perspective to be an active agent. You are not "unteachable". You can thrive. You can do well. You can succeed. And what she does, essentially, is take them to the extreme of continuum, because every event, every person can be situated somewhere along this continuum, I mean different places with different things. Think about your own life. What are you, passive victim in different situations or an active agent? For example, let's say my girlfriend leaves me. I know when I was an undergrad here. This was top on my mind: girlfriends leaving me. Yes. We'll talk about that later in this semester when we get to know one another a little bit better. I'm a little bit shy at this point.

But let's say my girlfriend leaves me. If I am the passive victim, what I experience is self-pity. Feel sorry for myself. Roominate-- remember the word? Roominate about the situation and how terrible it is. From a passive victim, I then move to blame: she's terrible; it's her fault; I blame her; I blame my parents, the way they raise me; I blame her parents; I blame President Bush or whomever. And after I blame, I experience frustration as well as anger. Anger toward her, toward my parents, her parents, President Bush, Hilary, whoever it is. I feel anger. And results-- very few results. Because I wallow in illumination and self-pity.

Let's take the other extreme of the active agent. First of all, by definition, I take action. I take responsibility. I go on to places after experiencing the pain-- it's painful, and next time we are going to talk about the importance of experiencing the pain of giving ourselves what I called the permission to be human, but once I experience it, I take action. I go out there to places where I will meet someone. I go to Pinocchio's (Pizza place at Harvard). Or another meeting place, the Stax in Whitener (?). Well I guess things have changed at Harvard since I was an undergrad. I take responsibility for it. And then as a result of that-- and we'll talk about research on self-perception theory, research by Daryl Bem. We'll talk a lot about it. You don't need to write it



down now. I'll take action and action will increase our level of confidence And then more hope and optimism is a result. As we talk about belief in self-fulfilling prophecy lecture, hope and optimism become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I'm much more likely to find someone. I'm certainly much more likely to be happy. Once again, being an active agent does not mean not giving ourselves the time, the space, the permission to experience painful emotions, to go through the emotion. Yes, by all means, we go through it. However, what it is also saying is that we need to find the right time-- it could be immediately, it could be a day or two later-- to take action, to take responsibility, to do things so that our confidence levels in our hope and optimism increase. I want to just say a few things about this idea of being an active agent and responsibility. It applies to your life here at Harvard. It is up to you. It is your responsibility to make the most out of your Harvard experiences. It is your responsibility to make the most out of this class. We, the teaching staff, are certainly going to create conditions for it. We are going to support you in every way that you need.

However, ultimately, it's your responsibility to do it in section. It's your responsibility to make it. One of the first questions that you'll be asking question in section next week when they start to meet is "how can you make this an excellent section?" "What can you do?" "what can you bring? What strength can you bring into the section so that it's an excellent section?" As opposed to blaming, other students, TF, Bush, Clinton, whoever Taking responsibility for it.

There is a wonderful story about responsibility in the book by Nathaniel Branden. We are going to read some stuff by Nathaniel Branden when we talk about self-esteem. Nathaniel Branden talks about six pillars six important pillars in self-esteem. One of those pillars is self-responsibility. People who have high self-esteem take responsibility. People who want to cultivate high self-esteem and

create confidence, take responsibility for their lives and so on. So in his workshop, one of the main things that he says there in his book is that understanding that you have to take responsibility for your life is recognizing understanding that no one is coming. No one is coming to-- the knight in shining armour who will take you to the happily-after land. No one is coming to make your life better for you. No one is coming. You are responsible for your life, for your self-confidence, for your self-esteem, for your happiness. No one is coming. So he was talking about this in one of his workshops that's a three-day workshop. And this was already on the third day and the workshop was going well. The participants were getting a lot out of it. And he said, he told them about this idea that no one is coming. And one of the participants raises his hand and says, "Dr. Branden, that's not true." And Nathaniel Branden asks him, "What do you mean?" And he says, "Dr. Branden, you came", to which Branden responded, "Yes, I came. But I came to tell you that no one is coming." No one is coming.

It's up to you to make the most out of this experience, 1504, your sections, your Harvard experiences and beyond. And we, as the teaching staff, can't wait to create the right conditions for that to happen. See you on Thursday.