

Positive Psychology – Lecture 7

Is finish up with the beliefs of self-fulfilling prophecy lecture and move on to the lecture on focus and how focus creates reality. Where did we end last time? We ended by talking about Rena and other things. We talked about the model, the Dan Gilbert model, the Philip Brickman model, where after a failure or a success there is a spike up, spike down, but then we recover. And we basically move along a base level of well being through out our lives, with the ups and downs, the vicissitudes. The question then became, or rather there was good news and bad news. we can take more risks, we can put ourselves on the line more. Failure usually, not all failures, but usually is just a temporary decline in our wellbeing level, self esteem level, and then every quickly we jump up again. you know, why should we put any effort into our wellbeing? And the answer to that, and the whole course essentially is an answer to that.

How can we raise that base level? One of the things is coping, putting ourselves on the line. And the reason why coping, why putting ourselves on the line yields positive results in terms of the base level of wellbeing going up, meaning still the ups and downs, but ups and downs looking this way as opposed to around a straight line or a parallel line is that when we cope, we see ourselves coping, we see ourselves trying and through self perception theory, we derive certain conclusions about ourselves: oh, I must be courageous; oh, I must be a person who has high self esteem; oh, I must be a person who has a strong desire to succeed and so on and so on. And then we derive conclusions about ourselves in the same way that we derive conclusions about other people. That is self-perception theory. The second reason is that once we started failing more often, The pain that in our minds we associate with failure is far greater that the actual pain of failure when that comes. Maybe not initially when it happens, but after a while; and then we recover again, and we see, oh,

I can deal with it, I must be a person with resilience. And finally, there is more success as a result of coping. Learn to fail, for fail to learn, there is no other way to succeed.

So what I want to move on to now and just finish up on is how do we become more of an optimistic. So we talked about the virtues, we talked about longevity, people who are optimistic actually live longer. We talked about higher levels of success, higher levels of happiness, more likely to overcome depression. People who are optimistic are eight times less likely to be depressed; they are much more likely to be happy. And again, optimism as an interpretation style, not as a Pollyannaish feel-good kind of approach. So how do we become more of an optimism? I want to talk about three techniques. First is to take action, to just do it, to put ourselves on the line. visualization, many of you are familiar with that, especially athletes as, as a technique. And finally, cognitive therapy, which at least according to research, is the most successful, most effective therapeutic intervention out there today, So let me begin with action, this is based on research by Albert Bendura, his concept basically the idea of having strong believes and he just made it more academic, more scientific and researched for many years and we talked about many benefits of self efficacy.

What Bendura is coming out against in much of his work is what has become known as the self esteem movement, what has become known as feel good movement. Alright, so tell a child how great they are, how wonderful they are. Standing in front of a mirror every morning and tell yourself: hi, gorgeous ten times, and then you will be more successful, it actually hurts in the long term, it actually hurts self esteem it actually hurts the motivation of students who are constantly told you are wonderful, you are terrific no matter what. how we can praise in the right way when we talked about the work of Carol Dweck on mindsets in a few weeks. In the meantime, what Bendura showed, what Carol Dweck showed, very often, its even detrimental to just give the, you know, positive, positive talk, the positive affirmation. Whether it comes

from the outside or from the inside, What Bendura is saying, that rather than talk, we need action. We need to put hard work into whatever it is, we want to be more confident about, and we need to cope. We need to put ourselves on the line. Very simple! Why? Because hard work and coping inevitably leads to success, more success at least than we had before, that success contributes to our self-efficacy, to our self confidence.

And then, that self confidence in turns, in turn motivates us to work harder. We started to believe ourselves more. Now, this is a very simple model, I mean, anyone you know, the five year old could draw that model. However think about the implications for our lives, think about the implications for education, make them actually work hard so that they succeed more, so that they see themselves going back to self conception theory, see themselves working hard, see themselves putting themselves on the line, coping and failing, and getting up again. It works also in a similar way to our physical immune system. You know when we get sick, when we get ill, our body sense anti-bodies and we actually become immune to whatever it is that we had. So our body become immunize through failure. Same on the psychological level, failure is underrated. You know one of the things that I wish for you, and I mean it genuinely.

One of the things that I wish for you is that you fail more. And, coupled with that, I hope that when you fail, you will also learn to interpret it in a different way than most of us usually interpret failure. there is no other way for growth, we will talk about it much more when we talk about perfectionism. A healthy life, a real life, and a happy life ultimately looks like this, a spiral with ups and downs, not as a straight line. When we see ourselves cope, when we see ourselves work hard, we derive conclusions about ourselves, our self confidence goes up, our motivation goes up, our belief goes up and so on and so on in an upward spiral of growth. that comes

inevitably when we cope, when we try, when we have high expectations. Not to dare is to lose oneself, Because this model also works the other way around. When we constantly avoid challenges, when we constantly shone difficult experiences, a downward spiral is created, in terms of our self esteem, in terms of our success, in terms of our well being.

Second technique: imagining success. especially last time was a real milestone in our relationship. or potential clients in the future. I get really nervous before lectures. I get very nervous, in fact for me, whenever I stand in front of a large audience, when I talk about large audience its anything above five. So, this is a real challenge, And this is been a challenge since the dash I decided that I want to be a teacher and I decided that I want to be a teacher when I heard Marva Collins, and I said: this is my calling. And here is what happened then. I said, how can I be a successful teacher and effective teacher if I get so nervous when I stand in front of an audience?

And remember the three components of success, the secret of success? It was optimism, believe in oneself; it was passion, loving what you do; and it was hard work. So I had two of the three components. I worked extremely hard, in fact my motto has become, one that I got from Professor Richard Hackman, as my thesis advisor as an undergrad here. and what he said when he goes into a classroom is the following: prepare, prepare, prepare, and then be spontaneous. So I followed his advise, now I read over my notes, I have all the notes written down and then I can let go. So I prepare a lot, I have the hard work, not a problem. I have the passion, I love learning, But I lacked the third thing, I lacked optimism, and I lacked confidence. And then I asked myself: how can I raise the third components because it is important component of wellbeing, remember the research on athletes? 56% of the variance is accounted of success, is accounted for by the sense of optimism or belief in yourself. Remember the John Carter study? Twenty years along when you look at Harvard

Business School graduates, one of the two components that differentiated the most successful from the rest, one of them was belief in themselves, confidence.

So what did I do? I went back and thought about what happened when I played squash, what my coaches used to teach me, and that was visualization. And I started reading up and it actually started off centuries ago in religious practices, was brought to athletics through east European athletes who would imagine themselves, say, running around the track and then standing on the podium, receiving the gold medal. And more and more psychologists started to implement it. Sales people use it very effectively, seeing themselves actually striking the deal, going through with it, doing it and succeeding. And that made it much more likely to come true. Why is it so important? Why is it so good? Why is it so effective? Why it being used so widely and successfully? And the answer goes back to the structure of our brains. This is research done by the head of psychology department, Professor Steven Kosslyn. What he shows was that when we see something, There are certain neurons in my brain that are firing, that actually take on the shape of this hand. My visual cortex, the back. Now, the exact same neurons are firing.

In other words, my brain does not know the difference between the real thing and the imaginary thing. Which explains why dreams can be so vivid, n the middle of the night, pitch dark, and you are dreaming about mid of the day, walking around the yard. Our imagination, least for the brain is no different than the real thing. Now, when I imagine success, what happens in a sense is that this is the real thing. between the real thing and the imaginary thing. Now if I imagine success over and over again in my mind, remember what the mind does not like is inconsistency. In other words, if I create success in my imagination and I persist with it, not just visualize it once or twice, but over and over again, And therefore, it will bring up the external reality to match this internal schema. the difference in the real thing and imaginary thing. Just

like Thomas, just like Roger Bannister run the four minutes a mile and after that, after that what happened was that everyone had a different schema: Oh, four minutes a mile is possible and 37 runners run it, over 300 runners run it the following year. Because they had a difference schema: we can do exactly the same thing through the simulator.

In the real thing and the imaginary thing. but it works a great deal. What I do every time when I give a lecture is visualize. I imagine myself stand in front of the audience, calm, excited, passionate. And then when I go into the real thing, When I go into the real thing, I do feel that. I still get nervous, I still get anxious, Raising my levels of beliefs, levels of confidence by practicing, would practice in a simulator before they take you on across the Atlantic. The mind as a simulator, this is why it works. The key here, this is a mistake that many people make, a lot of the self-help books that talked about visualizations. The key is to focused not just on the destination, Shelley Taylor, UCLA, did this research where she divided students in two random groups One student imaging themselves getting an A on the exam and imagine it over and over again. The second group, imaging themselves getting an A but also saw themselves work and persist in the library, prepare for it, and then, get to that final A. The second group that imaging both the journey and the destination was much more successful, much better result in the exam. So visualize the journey as well as the destination, this is your response paper for this week, to visualize both your destination of getting there, your journey of getting there, as well as the destination itself. Arguably, the most, or certainly one of the most influential Why?

Because beyond its beauty, its rhythm and its importance, it also captures what is means, what it means to create an image of success. Cause this is what he did for this country and defined generations to come. So first of all, I want to read some excerpts from it. It is about visualizing a better future, He says:

“I have a dream, I say to you today my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow I still have a dream. This is all about imagination, but through the imagination he created a better reality. Look at how he talks about the process; we want equality at the end.”

He talks about how we will get to this outcome. So let me read you a couple of excerpts: “This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off let's not just sit here and wait and imagine that things will happen, And he says explicitly: “In the process of gaining our rightful place, “We must forever conduct our struggle on the high play of dignity and discipline. We must not allow “Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights Another thing that we need to do when we imagine success is to make it as real as possible by involving as many senses as we can. Why? Because the more senses we can imagine, the more our mind is fooled to believe that it is the real thing. Once again, Martin Luther King does this beautifully. Let me read you a few excerpts: “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters I mean, you can feel the water, you can feel that stream, you can see it, you can visualize it. “Or, let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom People connect to it, making it real, concrete. “One day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with I mean, you can see that circle of the kids holding hand, again making it real, you can visualize it, you see it. By the way, these are the characteristics of all great speeches. They are not abstract, look at the great communicator Ronald Reagan.

Look at Kennedy. They gave amazing speeches because they created a picture, they involve the senses, they created a picture of success.

“I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, weltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed You can actually feel the heat, This is what makes good, successful images. This is what makes great speeches. you wanna really be excited about what you are doing, or else

it will fall flat. Nothing, no change will happen. Again, the connection between the words emotion and motion: without emotion, there is no motion. If you want to move yourself or others, you need to evoke emotions.

“From every mountain side, let freedom ring! And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that: Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring. And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last! Free at last! Imagine if you said at the end:

Free at last! Free at last! God Almighty, free at last! Would that have the same effect? Boring, dry, you have to evoke emotions to create motion, whether is in our imagination or in a speech to the nation the third technique. So the first one was: work, put yourself on the line, cope, invest. The second: use your imagination, use the simulator that you have right here, one of the most if not the most powerful simulator we know of. The third is cognitive therapy. Cognitive therapy has been used very successfully over the last, over forty years, Martin Seligman was one of the founders of the cognitive therapy approach. He studied with, with Beck, who was the official founder of this technique in this approach. And what cognitive therapy is about is the following. Its basic premise is that thoughts drive emotion.

So for example: there is an external event. I perceive that event, and what I do then after I perceive that event, there is evaluation of that event, in other words, a thought about that event. And then, as a result of that thought, that evokes an emotion. So for example, an event, a lion is running toward me, The emotion: fear, and that of course leads to motion, run away or stand up bravely and fight the lion. Or, another one: I see an event, a gorgeous woman walking down the street, my evaluation: oh, it's my gorgeous wife, and the emotion: love. Event ,evaluation, thought, emotion, and then that leads to action. What cognitive therapy says is that if we want to change emotions where we need to intervene is here, is that the level of evaluation and the level of thought.

And if we can change that, we also change our emotion. Specifically, what cognitive therapy saying is that we need to restore sense of rationality, a very important try out coming up and I get nervous. Cognitive therapy is not saying stop feeling nervous, But what it is saying is that sometimes our thoughts are irrational, and immediately I classified myself as stupid or the fact that I will never succeed in tests again. Or, you know, I asked someone out and he says no, and suddenly nobody wants me. That event led to an irrational thought, irrational evaluation of the situation.

It was just once, it was temporary, and that led to difficult emotions such as resignation: nobody will ever want me again. And what cognitive therapy does is just restore but, you know they are, what? 3200 other men at Harvard. Cognitive therapy has been shown to be extremely effective, more effective than any of the other intervention, the jury still out when it comes to extreme cases of psychopathology, but in terms of most psychopathologies, most anxiety, most depression, it has been shown to be the most successful, and it works the fastest. Not the only thing that works, but it works the best and much more promptly than the other interventions.

On the whole, not right for everyone, but for most people. And finally, and this is

the important thing we can learn it. So we talk about right? The five-year Cambridge Somerville study that failed. Well, Karen Reivich teaches these cognitive skills in a two week program. And that two week program helps kids in inner cities, at risk population, reduce the likelihood of falling into the trap of depression, of drug abuse, increases the likelihood of wellbeing and success in the long term just as a result of two weeks teaching them cognitive therapy or these techniques, and this is the important thing about it. and you are going to apply it in the next two, next two classes, but you need to do more than that.

So let me share with you a summary of cognitive therapy And what I did there was to put together essentially the work of Karen Reivich whom I just mentioned, the work of Martin Seligman, and the work of David Burns. Some of you may heard of him, The Feeling Good Handbook, who is also a student of Aaron Beck. So this is putting together their work into 3Ms subdivided each into 2 suggestions. you could usually relate to one or tow of the 3Ms. Things that you do yourself. So beyond the lookout ask yourself: “Where do I distort the reality? Where do I have distortion in terms of evaluation? That lead to certain negative emotions that are unnecessary, because if I restore rationality I will not feel the same emotion to the same degree. So ask yourself when you look through the 3Ms. The 3Ms...essentially the 3 traps of irrational thoughts.

The first one is magnifying. you know induction is something very natural. A kid sees this and will call it a stool and then they see another stool in the bar when they go out at the age of one and then they see another stool. After they see 20 stools they begin to form a concept they induce that this is a stool. And now they see one even one that they have never seen before they know what it is. Just like I see a person in the street whom I never encounter before I know this is a person, because I induce from all the other events that happened before that this is also a person.

But sometimes we take this too far and we over generalize. Here is a student. Over generalization, the evaluation, the thought, irrational. Or he just said no to me. Everyone is gonna say no. not seeing failure as an opportunity, as a stepping stone but seeing it as the end of the world. Not finding a job ever. All or Nothing. Either straight As or complete failure. from putting ourselves on the line. The other side of it, which is actually other side of the same coin is minimizing. This is something I do very often. This is my trap that I still have to be aware of, I still think about today, even though I became aware of it years ago.

Only now I catch myself doing it much promptly. So the first idea of minimizing is what Karen Reivich calls tunnel vision. And out of these 620 students 618 are engaged in the material. One is looking at the ceiling, at the lights. And another one, out of the 620 students, is asleep. Tunnel Vision is when I focus on that one person who is asleep. And I say to myself, " Wow, I'm giving boring, sleep inducing lectures." Or the other way around: I have 620 students,618 are asleep. what cognitive therapy does is bring realism into the equation. Again this is something I often fall into. I know many of you saw the Jon Stewart show. still contemplating and thinking and saying So I fell behind and I felt slow. And I also said something that I later regretted. It was just one sentence. No big deal. But that is what I focus on. You know I flew home after. I went back to Israel. The whole flight that what I was thinking of. Ignoring the other things. You know the fact that 2 hours after the Jon Stewart show, the book became a best seller. Completely ignore that. It was just that one sentence. How could I say it? And I zoomed out. I looked at the bigger picture. so many of your friends have watched and enjoyed it. It was a great opportunity. I looked at the bigger picture.

Gave myself the permission to be human. To regret it. But then overall, I could see it in a much more rational light than before. In the past, it would take me months

to get over this one sentence. Whereas now, zoom out. Evaluation thought, irrational. And recover much more promptly. Dismissal of positives or negatives. So the person who are engaged or asleep. The person who dismiss the positives see those how I just failed or what I just did wrong. So for example, When I was a senior, I applied for fellowships and I got a fellowship to go to Cambridge. And I got the John Elliot Fellowship. And there are 4 fellowships that go to Cambridge: then there is the John Harvard fellowship. So I got the John Elliot, one of the 4. Immediately when I got it, I know that I got it obviously. Now there is no difference between them except for the names. that was very important experience for me because I said the importance and the power of our evaluation. And how that can determine or even ruin what should have been a celebration. But once we recognize it, once we understand it, we can dispute it. We can challenge it. We can reframe it and see the positive as well.

Making up or fabricating the 3rd M. This is when we create something ex nihilo, from nothing. So for example, we personalize it or we blame. We see this very often with people who are abused. So an abused wife will very often say Instead of rationally saying It can also be the other way around. You know, I just did poorly on an exam and I blame my boyfriend or girlfriend for it. You got to remember Nathaniel Branden. No one is coming. Take responsibility rather than blame. One of the key ideas that Marva Collins communicates to her students.

And finally, emotional reasoning. I am envious; therefore I must be a bad person. before a tryout therefore it must be dangerous. Taking an emotion and making it into reality whereas instead of understanding an emotion is an emotion, it is my evaluation of reality. correcting for the track, correcting for these errors. Or feeling that, and because I feel that, my evaluation of it is, well, I must really be second-rate and no good, instead having the rational belief of, well, let me try out, let me see how things go, correcting the distortions. The key, once again, is to get real. How do we get real

through the questions that we ask? I am going to give you just a few examples here; you are going to practice with those on your own. But here are just some of them.

First of all, is my conclusion tied to reality? Second, is it rational? They are interconnected. Am I ignoring something important? Like the fact that---you know the book did well afterwards--- like the fact that there are other cool guys in 1504, and so on. What important evidence do I still need to take into consideration? there are also children on the bus. And this is what questions do. They open us up, they open our vision and they create in your reality. What am I magnifying? What am I minimizing? Am I falling into the traps? Am I ignoring anything that is going well? Am I ignoring anything that is not going well? What is the big picture. To conclude, Ed Diener and Martin Seligman did very important research on extremely happy people. This is tip of the stamp research. Looking at the 10 per cent of the happiest people out there, people that we can learn from. And what they found was very interesting.

First of all, these people did not experience painful emotions any less times than the rest of the people, say the bottom 10 per cent or the mid 10 per cent. They experience painful emotions, the difference between them and the rest was that they recovered more promptly as a result of different interpretations. So when they felt down, they were optimistic instead of saying What can I learn from it? What happen? And then they recovered more promptly than the pessimists, the people who remained depressed for a much longer time. You see, events happen, things happen in the world, very often out of our control. And some of the events are bad, some are negative. What matters more is what we do with them after, how we evaluate them. And what happens is that our evaluation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and believes our self-fulfilling prophecies.

If I believe that it will last for six months, And what we do with our beliefs is we create a downward spiral of depression, unhappiness, sadness or an upward spiral,

capitalizing positive emotions and having more and more of them, what Barbara Fredrickson talks about There are no short cuts. There are no easy steps to wellbeing, to success, to high level of beliefs in ourselves. and then we are all set, we are all inoculated for the rest of our lives. If you want to continue working, we have to continue working at it. Because just like if we focus on specific element of an event or not makes a difference, it applies on the macro level to our entire life. What I am going to do now is elaborate, go up higher level of the spiral of understanding and learning, of something that we have talked about time and again.

Ed Diener, who is also, I just mentioned his research, he is also the president, first president of the International Positive Psychology Association, it appears that the way people perceive the world is much more important to happiness than objective circumstances. Now if you think about it, that makes a lot of sense. We know a lot of people who seemingly have everything, all their dreams have come true, and they are still miserable. While there are people who have very little, who have experienced hardship after hardship and who never cease to celebrate life. Then there are people who have everything going for them and really appreciate it, what matters more is the internal. Happiness is not contingent on our status, or the state of our bank account, on what we choose to focus on. Because our emotions are determined by external circumstances as well as internal, interpretation matters.

For example, look at what Edison did, 5,000 failures to the external observer, for him the evaluation was very different. The internal evaluation, the subjective evaluation, Do we celebrate successes or take it for granted? Do we perceive failures and hardships as a disaster or as an opportunity for growth? Emerson: And Shakespeare: but he is to a great extent right. A person in and to derive, and to look at the positive in that situation. Same for a person living in a concentration camp. So there are external circumstances that matter. A person, a homeless person, you know,

if you give them enough money for a home, for food, for basic education, of course they will become happier because of the change of external circumstances. However, beyond the basic needs, beyond the basic freedoms, it is mostly about how we perceive reality, and we are able to make it into a heaven or a hell. So I have a question for you: how many geometric shapes?

Remember this, how you created your reality just based on the question that you asked. We think when we look at the picture, you know not everyone of course is looking on the children on the bus on the clock, right? most of you, did not see it, because it is a question of focus. Very often we complain about life and we think, you know, things are terrible and awful not realizing and then beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies, or, because we just focus on what is not working. And one thing and this does not mean that there are no objective terrible circumstances out there. But to a great extent, a great extent, we co-create our reality. You know one of the students who was in 1504 two years ago recommended this book to me--- you know coincidentally this parable, so I want to read it to you *The story that Dan Millman*, the author, tells: I met him on a construction site in the Middle West.

When the lunch whistle blew, all the workers would sit down together to eat. And everyday Sam would open his lunch pail and start to complain. “not peanut butter and jelly sandwich again! He whined about his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches day after day after day, until one of the guys in the work crew finally said: “Sam, if you hate peanut butter and jelly so much, You know, very often we make our own sandwiches the questions that we ask determine our reality: a peanut sandwich, or geometric shapes, or children on the bus, or salami, whatever it is. We very often create our own reality. And if we understand this, we can transform, change the way that we perceive, change our focus, change our questions, whether it's questions disputing irrational evaluations, and questions create a new reality.

There are essentially two archetypes that I would like to discuss here, two archetypes that capture in many ways how we can cognitively reconstruct, enhance, create our reality. The two archetypes are the benefit-finder and the fault-finder. First of all, the fault-finder, the fault-finder is a person on the peanut butter and jelly, on things that are not going well on problems in the relationship, on problem in him or herself, problems with the job---the consummate complainer. Now, we all exist on the continuum of between extreme fault-finding and extreme benefit-finding. You know there is no one who is all the way on the extreme this way or that way, everyone is on somewhere on the continuum. from the fault-finding toward the benefit-finding, because there are many benefits to it that I'll discuss later.

The fault-finder, I got the name from the work of Henry David Thoreau, the fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. The extreme fault-finder experiences resignation, learned helplessness. Why? Because he or she begins to really believe that the terrible reality is very much out there independent of what he or she thinks, not recognizing that they create that reality, they begin to believe that no matter what they do, no matter what job they find they have a terrible boss, no matter what partners they have they are always awful and inconsiderate, no matter what restaurant they go to the service is always awful, and they always keep on getting the same peanut butter and jelly sandwich that they made for themselves. And they resigned to the reality and that becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy of course, their existence. A fault-finder makes lemonade out of lemons, sorry, makes lemon out of lemonade.

The benefit-finder, research Julian Bauer, now at UCLA, the benefit-finder is the opposite, focuses on what works. The benefit-finder looks on the bright side of life, finds the silver lining in the dark cloud, makes lemonade out of lemons, The benefit-finder finds the miracle in the common, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the consummate benefit-finder, focusing on the positive and what works. Now the

problem here may be that the benefit-finder may be detached, this is one of the criticisms of people who always see, you know, the bright side of life, and that is the problem if that is the case.

Again, this class is not advocating focusing only on the positive; its focus is advocating reality. And reality comprises both good and bad, reality comprises both geometric shapes and children on the bus, and the key is to focus on both. So the detachment, the detached benefit-finder is certainly not an archetype that I would advocate nor would it lead to mental health in the long run. However, we are co-creator. Let me read you extensively from William James, “Now however fixed these elements of reality may be, we still have a certain freedom in our dealings with them. Take our sensations, THAT they are is undoubtedly beyond our control; but WHICH we attend to, note, and make emphatic in our conclusions depends on our own interests; and, according as we lay the emphasis here or there, quite different formulations of truth result. We read the same facts differently. So, for an optimist philosopher the universe spells victory, for a pessimist, defeat. What we say about reality thus depends on the perspective into which we throw it.

William James said these back in 1890, understanding how we co-create our reality. Isn't it strange, how princes and kings, and clowns that caper in sawdust rings, and common-people like you and me, are builders for eternity? each is given a list of rules, a shapeless mass and a bag of tools; and each must fashion your life is flown, a stumbling block or a stepping stone. Very often what we get in the beginning is a large piece of stone. What do we do with it? Chipping away the excess stone? Or, is it a barrier to our success? And very often it is up to us, as we co-create our reality. The stone is there, we are not responsible for it; but what we do with it, we are responsible for.

Cognitive reconstruction is about learning to interpret things optimistically, 0in

other words, in the positive light. Ann Harbison, colleague of mine, used to teach also with Philip Stone, Crises have the potential through growth. One of the books that we will talk about when we talk about relationships is *Passionate Marriage* by David Schnarch, who talks about crucibles in marriage. a relationships, not that have been, you know, all fine and dandy for years. These usually fail after a while. But the relationships that go through crucibles, that have crises, disagreements and then, you know, Thesis and Antithesis and then there is a Synthesis, and there is a growth as a result of these hardships. And he says that there is no other way, again learn to fail or fail to learn, there is no other way for a long-term success of a relationship. Relationship does not, cannot look like this. It has to have these ups and downs.

Never let a good crisis in a relationship go to waste, and there are some that could end, and should end a relationship. But most crises can be solved and need to be dealt with. Same on individual level, work by Warren Bennis, he is from USC, taught for a few years here at the Business School, has identified the leading leaders, He has a book called *Geeks & Geezers*, where he talks about the differences between the two leadership styles, approaches, passions, interests and there are numerous differences. For example, you know, the geeks---the younger one talk about work-life balance, You know it was usually, he, a man, worked while the woman took care of the family and the man. So that was for the geezers, for the older generation.

The younger generation, they talk about work-life balance and how they can incorporate all the elements of their lives. There are of course many more women in the geeks than the geezers Numerous differences among the generation, one similarity. All the great leaders, whether they were thirty-year-old or eighty-five years old, all of them had been through very rough crucibles and leave to tell the tale. Our most people go through crucibles, but there are certain people who are able to find benefit in these crucibles and grow as a results. Never let a good crisis go to waste, what you are

experiencing. But four years ago or five years ago, when I was still a resident tutor in Leverett house, and we had one of these pre-business events where we talked about the upcoming year and the recruiting and so on. That particular year was a terrible year, Credit Suisse, First Boston they were laying off as well, Deutsche Bank, first time in his history was laying off employees really bad market. And we talked about this, each of us gave it, what should be about the market and what they can do, very sober presentation.

And then one of the students, you know my students Sean Fieldscoy, was a senior then, was sitting there, Had studied positive psychology there. He put up his hand and said: and negative picture, but as a teacher of Positive Psychology few chuckles in the audience and then silence. And everyone is looking at me, And then, I do believe that some people are able to make the best of things that happen, and there is a very big difference here. where people are hiring, where they all come to me on a silver platter and offer me a job. Of course, I would much rather have that. but there are some people who accept the situation and then are able to make the best of it. The same with any crisis. Do you think the leaders, whether they are the eighty- or ninety-year-olds, invited those crucibles into their lives want these crucibles to happen?

Do you think partners go into a relationship and say Of course not! But when it happens, You know, stuff happens, and we can either let it pollute or make fertilizer out of it. I want to show you an example once again of a leader, who is a consummate benefit-finder. [MUSIC] Wow. We are honored to be talking with Neilson Mandela, the former president of South Africa, whose unshakable courage, his faith and integrity have inspired millions to see what is possible in their own lives. on a couple of occasions before and I will tell you, to be in his presence is really, to be in your presence is like being a presence of royalty and grace at the same time. I would think,

I wonder how does a man spend 27 years in prison, put there by an oppressor, and come out of that experience with not a heart of stone, not a cold heart but a heart that is willing to forgive and embrace.

I remember talking to you one night of our dinner, and you had said to me that our hatred for the oppressor was so intense we did not see the value of talking to him. So at what point did you see the value of letting go of that hatred and begin the process of talking? Well, let me say first, that is a great tragedy to spend the best of your lives in prison. But although it looks ironical, there are advantages in that. I would not be able to achieve the most difficult, a task in life, and that is changing yourself. I would not have an opportunity. I had that opportunity because in prison you have the opportunity to sit down and think, which is an important part Did you need 27 years of it though? You could have taken a few days, a week, a vacation. Did you need 27 years? Now, did it happen for the best that he spent 27 years of his life?

Certainly when he experienced it, it was painful, it was awful, but he was able to transform this. And to, even in that situation, to see the positive. And when we transform that, those who know the history of what happen to him, when he started to look at the positive, even there are the opportunities in prison when he changes his mind set. In other words, not the external circumstances, the external circumstances actually begin to change. Another benefit-finder, “a pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, I want to end by telling you a story, a personal story about my experiences throughout the years. Some biographical detail, something that most of you did not know. And I am going to tell it to you first from the perspective of the fault-finder. I have a mild case of ADD, it makes things very difficult for me, and I really struggle with it constantly.

When I was in high school, I really wanted to get into a lucrative program in mathematics, did not pass the entry exam, I was very disappointed, I did not make it.

Becoming a professional squash player was a dream for me since the age of 11. That is the thing that I thought about constantly, that was the most important thing for me at the time. I wanna to be a professional player. At the age of twenty, I was about to complete my military service in Israel and I got injured on the squash court and pulled the muscle in my back. The doctor gave me an option of being operated on, which was a big risk, or giving up my professional career. I chose to give up my professional career, a dream that I had from a very young age.

It was a real blow. I went to Cambridge, after graduating from Harvard and I enrolled in a PhD program. I was the only student in my PhD program to fail, I was thrown out of the program. It was humiliating; it seemed like a waste of a year. It was a real tough experience. At Harvard, as a graduate student, I took, with all the other students, my qualifying general exams. Out of all the graduate students who took that exam, I was the only one who failed it. Once again, a really humiliating experience, walking around William James and everyone knows their results, it was tough. Not only that, I was given provisional, the provisional option of staying in the program.

when you take it with the next class, you have to pass it with flying colors or you are out. So, while the rest of the semester, while working on the dissertations, writing, almost graduating I had to go back to the basics and go over the whole material again.

God, I am so unlucky. I want to share with you some biographical facts about my life, you know, I have a mild case of ADD, which is great, you know why? Because, it actually forces me to only study things that I love, things that I care about, because anything else, my concentration just goes away. that forces me to focus on the ultimate currency, on things that make me happy. And You know, when I was in high school, I really wanted to get into a certain program, I failed the entrance exam, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because it gave me so much more time to practice and play squash, and I ended up winning international championships in the

following year, When I was in the University of Cambridge, I was in a PhD program, and I was the only one in my class, and as far as I know, the only one in years to be thrown out of the program. And it was actually a very important experience, you know, I got out of Harvard, I was arrogant, I thought I was holier than thou, and this was a real humbling experience that was especially important for me, because the next year I went to work in Asia, and there, the worst that I could do was to be arrogant. So this humbling experience actually helped me a great deal in my future career, as well as helped me put things in perspective.

When I came to Harvard, I was the only one in my program to fail the general qualifying exams, it was a hard blow, it was difficult, but it turned out to be a very good experience, you know why? Because I had to study the exact same material and these huge books and articles all over again, and know them not just at the basic level, I had to know them extremely well because that was the condition that the professors gave for me staying in the program. And it was so good because I learned the material so well that I know social psychology today probably better than anyone I know, and that helps me a great deal. It helps me a great deal in putting together this course 1504, and there is no place I would rather be than here. God, I am so lucky. Thank you. Same reality, different interpretations. Just remember, much of what we experience, we co-create. See you next week.