

Positive Psychology – Lecture 11

Hi! Good morning! So today's lecture is about change. And things are going to change today. Our relationship is going to change today. So stay tuned.

Last time, last time we ended by talking about the different kinds of change. The first approach—the gradual approach, like water wearing down stone, chipping away gradually slowly taking our time. The second approach—the acute change, the sledge hammer breaking stone creating a new pathway, a new channel. The important thing to keep in mind with both forms of changes, with all forms of changes, lasting change that is—which is what we are about—not just the spike and the return to base level. The thing to keep in mind about change is that neither is quick-fix. Even when we pick up that sledge hammer, even when we pick it up, we need to do a lot of work before the preparation. So for example, gradual change, slow change would be doing the gratitude exercise every day, slowly becoming more and more of a benefit finder, gradually looking more at the positive, creating a new neural pathway neuron by neuron.

Remember neuroplasticity and neurogenesis—two very important concepts. Because just by knowing by understanding that our brain changes in and of itself makes us more likely to change. And this is work done by Carol Dweck, whom I'll discuss in future courses when we discuss perfectionism. And then the sledge hammer example is like the Eureka experience—the great insight that doesn't come in a vacuum. It comes after a lot of hard work after a lot of preparation. You know the 99% of perspiration that leads to that inspiration. So no quick-fix. And the belief in quick-fix, the expectation of the quick-fix—that is one of the reasons why levels of the depression are so high today. Because people are frustrated. They are disappointed. They think there's something wrong with them when they don't succeed in the quick-fix. But they have just...I just write in the book that it's possible if I do these

five things, I'd be happy for the rest of my life. And I do these five things, and I'm not happier. And I begin to question myself. No quick-fix. It takes time. No five easy steps to happiness.

Before we go to the change process, there are a few things we need to understand. The first thing to understand is this—do I, do you really want to change? And it's not a trivial question. It is not a rhetorical question because very often on the conscious level we may be saying yes, but on the subconscious level something is stopping us. Let me show you an example. So this is the study done by Langer and...and Thompson back in the 80s. And here is what they did. They brought students in or participants in. And they asked them whether they wanted to get rid of certain characteristics, like rigidity or being gullible or grimness. And they asked them whether they wanted to get rid of these characteristics and whether they succeeded in becoming better in this area. Were you able to introduce change, so were you able to actually become less rigid, if this was important for you to change, or less gullible, or less grim? So this is the first two questions that they asked. Did you want to improve it? Did you wanna change this? And then after, they answered these questions. There was the second part of the study where they asked them to evaluate the positive...the following positive characteristics. Consistency, is it important to you? Is it important to you to be trustworthy? And how important it is for you to be and to be perceived as a serious person? And here is the interesting finding of this research. Those individuals who rated the positive traits—the ones in yellow who rated them high—as personally important to them were less likely to change the negatives. Do you understand implications of the study? Let's say I do wanna get rid of rigidity. I don't like being rigid. However, at the same time, consistency is a very important value to me. I'm less likely to change my rigidity because they are associated in my mind. And yeah, I don't want to be rigid. But at the same time subconscious is talking here—I want to be consistent. Don't let go of this rigidity because I couple them, I associate

them together. Not wanting to get rid of one because I don't want the baby out with the bath water. And to me they are linked. The same with gullibility and trustworthiness. We can say that the other side of gullibility someone who's trustworthy. Now going to the extreme. I become gullible. However, I don't get rid of my gullibility because I don't want to also get rid of my trustworthiness. Same with grim. I may be grim but that's also subconsciously a sign of my seriousness.

You know for years, literally years, when I've been thinking and writing and analyzing the notion of perfectionism, I couldn't understand why it didn't get better, for very long time. Because I knew perfectionism was hurting me. I read the research. I look through personal experiences. I knew it was hurting me in terms of my well-being for sure, but also in the long term in terms of my success. And yet I couldn't get rid of perfectionism until I read the study. And I asked myself, What's tied in my mind? What goes hand in hand is drive and ambition. And if I had to define myself—this is one of the first things—and because I didn't want to lose these characteristics, my subconscious didn't let me, stopped me from getting rid of the perfectionism, perfectionism which I define as a debilitating fear of failure. We'll have a whole week on perfectionism. So we'll get more in depth if you'll understand what it means. And it was only once I understood that for me these two things go hand in hand, I was able to unpack them to distinguish them. I said I want to keep one not the other. Or for example, worry and anxiety. Look I've mentioned these many times before, next time I'll talk to you about the process that I underwent to overcome anxiety.

Part of me since the time I can't remember myself being anxious whether it's before matches in squash, whether it's before exams, whether it's before speaking up in section when I was an undergrad. And I wanted to stop that. I didn't want that. However, I didn't let go of worry and anxiety because I also sort with responsibility.

Well if I'm anxious, it can mean I'm responsible. So I prepare for class much more as opposed to just let go and become a slacker. So I associated a positive trait which is responsibility. And remember Brandon? No one is coming very important trait—responsibility. But that prevented me from letting go—subconscious level, not conscious of the worry and anxiety that I often experienced.

Guilt, again there is good guilt, there is bad guilt. You know it is. Well, I don't want to get rid of guilt because what that means I'm not being empathic and sensitive toward other people. Very often we connect the two. They go hand in hand. Another couple is the notion of simplifying. This is something very personal to me. I wanted to do less because I knew that taking on too many activities was actually hurting me...was hurting my productivity, creativity, well-being. I couldn't simplify. Why? Because I associate it in my mind with losing my edge. So I didn't let go. Or fault-finding—we talked about this a week ago. Why do people not let go of fault-finding? Why do they remain pessimistic? Because they connect it with the sense of realism. I don't wanna stop being realistic. I don't wanna be one of those detached Pollyannas. And therefore I don't let go of my fault-finding.

Happiness. One of the most significant barrier to people's happiness is that they associate happiness with slacking off, because the dominant paradigm. If I'm happy now, I ignore experiencing pain. It means I'm letting go. It means I'm not gonna be successful. It means I'm gonna lose my edge. It means I'm gonna lose my drive and ambition. So our subconscious prefers to keep...keep us unhappy, so that we don't lose the other things that we value highly, things such as ambition, things such as having an edge, things such as our hard work. Now of course, when we look at them we know that they don't necessarily have to go hand in hand. On the contrary, for example, happiness, we know from the broaden and build theory—the positive emotions are actually associated with higher levels of success—whereas I'll talk about

after spring break, when we talk about perfectionism. We know from research, you'll be able to connect it also in the person. Many of you will be able to connect it in the personal level. We know that letting go of this fear of failure and coping, putting ourselves on the line more, learning from failures looking at it as a...as a stepping stone that contributes to our success in the long term. It doesn't need to take away from our drive and ambition on the contrary. And the key if we wanna overcome this fear of failure or the worry/anxiety, or the guilt, or the slack of happiness, or getting a better understanding of these characteristics.

For example, understanding that I want to let go of my fear of failure, the debilitating fear of failure, not just fear of failure, because every one is afraid of failure to some extent, but to let go of the debilitating fear of failure and yet maintain my drive or ambition. So more in nuance understanding that you need to go hand in hand. Or, I can't, you know, I never used to be able to say no to people. You know, such a short word, such an easy word, so difficult at times to say. Why? Because I see myself and now I want other people to see me as empathic as sensitive as under...as a nice guy. And then I unpack the two. And it really doesn't have to hand in hand. I can say no to people very sensitively because very often when I say yes to others, I'm saying no to myself, and in the long term, very often to the relationship. So now I had a better more nuance understanding of when I can say no and when I don't want to say no while maintaining my sensitivity and my empathy without experiencing the same levels of guilt that I experienced before whenever I said no. And the same you can do for every one of these, of these characteristics. So think about what if you wanted to change for a very long time and weren't successful in. Was it perfectionism? Was it, you know, this very serious grimness? And you wanted to be more playful? Well maybe you didn't want to get rid of it because you were afraid of losing you seriousness. And you don't need do. The baby can stay, the bath water can go if we have a more nuance understanding of what it is we want to change.

In section next week, you are going to do an exercise with your teaching fellows called sentence completion. In that exercise, this is exactly what you are going to do, you're going to identify. It's...it's an exercise devised by Nathaniel Branden. You're going to do an exercise that will help you identify what you wanna get rid of and what you wanna keep. Very often, that...just that switch that you make in your mind, subconscious as well as conscious mind can open the flood waters, the gates to a new channel, new pathway in our brain, real lasting change.

We're gonna discuss three distinct, the interconnected pathways to change—the ABCs of psychology which we have mentioned before. The ABCs—the A is the affect, the emotion. The B is the behavior, the action. And C is the cognition, the thought. And what we gonna do is we're going to talk about each one of the three. And for each one we're going to talk about the gradual change approach and the acute change approach. So in a sense we're building a three by two. Affect, behavior, cognition times gradual and the acute. And we're going to talk about six different approaches to change. These six approaches to change are interconnected. It's important to connect them. And ideally we want all three. Why? Quote it up, we used it a few times and we'll use it again, John Dryden, British poet—In order to change a habit, in order to bring about lasting change, we need to have as much of a solid approach as much...um...force in the intervention. It's not just enough to focus on the emotions. It's not just enough to focus on action. It's not enough just to focus on our thinking. We want to focus on the three—the A, the B, and the C. It's...Think about it. It's like a habit can be looked as a flood. There's flood in our mind of certain neurons firing in certain neuron pathway. And what we want to do is to overcome this flood. And to overcome this flood we need as much force as we can, therefore we want to use as many approaches as we can.

Before we jump into the A, one more thing—what do we want to change? What can

we change? And what can we not change? So according to researchers led by the lights of as we're to explain an individual's happiness, we need to look at the three factors. The first factor is the genetic set range, not genetic set point, it's a range. We're all born with certain predisposition toward happiness and well-being. Some people are born more with, you know, the smiley face with the smiley spoon in their mouth; others less so. And we're all somewhere on this, you know bell curve, some people luckier than others. As I mentioned couple of times before, I wasn't born that lucky. I was born more on the anxious side of this curve not with the...with the happy spoon in my mouth, which by the way I think helps me teach this class, because I do these things, I apply these things, I make a difference in my life. you know, been there, done that, doing it. I can speak from personal experiences as you know. Now some people may look at it and say. Well, my answer to that is...it's not terri...it's not good. It's not bad. It is the law of gravity. It's not good it's not bad. It is and nature to be commanded must be obeyed. We need to look at our nature, understand it and then make the best of it.

About 50 percent of our levels of well-being of the variance in explaining happiness can't be accounted for by genes, which explains some of the results, or for example, the twin studies. Why there were such similarities among the twins even if they were, or between the twins, even if they were real depart. Because genes matter. Not good, not bad. It is. They matter 50 percent, not 100 percent—thank God—but 50 percent of the variance. The important thing to keep in mind is that we have a lot of control what we do with these genes, and I'm just throwing out numbers. I don't know what it is exactly. But successful basketball players is determined 50 percent by genes in terms of how much fast twitch versus slow twitch they have in their muscles, or how high they can jump, how coordinated they are, how tall they are. All these things matter. However, if Michael Jordan hadn't worked on his basketball, I would be a better player than he is. If he didn't work on his basketball at all, and I did and do. In

other words, also with genes, people who don't work on their happiness even if they have the best of genes will not do as well as people with less happy genes who work on it. So work matters a great deal.

The second thing that matters which makes up the hundred percent of variance of happiness is external circumstances. Of course, external circumstances make a lot of difference, whether we're living in a free country versus oppression. That makes a lot of difference. However, in general, external circumstances beyond the extremes, beyond being homeless on the street make very little difference, in fact, about 10% of the total variance. So genetic genes 50%, external circumstances such as place of residence, such as income, such as weather—and again not for people, for example, who have seasonal affective disorder. Then of course it matters whether we get sun or not. I'm talking about...um...most people, not people with SAD. So out of these extremes, external circumstances make, matter about 10%, not much.

The third thing, the rest of the 40% is accounted for by intentional activities. What that means is what we do, how we act, what we think about, how we interpret the world, what we focus on. In essence, what 1504 is about. What we have discussed since the first class, what we're gonna discuss even more in the second half of the semester. These intentional activities, our focus, these are essentially our ABCs. This is what real meaningful change comes. And this is where we are gonna focus. It would be nice if we could do something with our genes. It would be nice. Cannot. It would be nice if we had more control of our external circumstances. But even if we did and many people do, many people sitting in this room or watching at home, do have more control doesn't make that much of the difference. What makes the most difference that we have control over are the internal activities, our interpretation of the world and our action. So let's jump into it.

The A—Affect, emotion, the heart, it's a connection between—and it's a more

logical connection—linguistic connection between emotion, motivation, motion. Emotion to move away. Without emotion we wouldn't move. You read about it in the book. Or you will read about it in the book about Elliott, who just lost his emotional faculty and with it lost all motivation to act or do anything even though his cognition was in place. We need emotion in order to move. So I wanna talk about again, two aspects within emotion. The first—gradual change. The Second—more acute change. The gradual change is a mindful meditation. Mindful meditation is arguably the most powerful intervention for bringing about calm and equanimity. A lot of research on it, we're gonna spend a whole week talking about it. Today what I wanna do is just to introduce it, the basic, the foundation of the spiral of mindfulness.

Jon Kabatt-Zin who in many ways is responsible for bringing serious research into this realm. He along with people like Tara Bennett-Goleman, people like Herbert Benson from the medical school here, brought serious research to this what was considered a mystical field. "Cultivating mindfulness can lead to the discovery of deep realms of relaxation, calmness and insight within yourself. The path to it in any moment lies no farther than your own body This is the amazing thing about mindfulness." When we talk about research, quite literally mind-boggling, I mean they change the way our mind works, transform our brain just by focusing on the breath, by focusing on parts of our body, by being present. "All of us have the capacity to be mindful. All it involves is cultivating our ability to pay attention in the present moment." Let's experience it just for a minute or two. So here is what I'd like you to do once again if you feel comfortable with it. So sit back on your...on your chair with your back against...against the back rest. Make yourself as comfortable as you can. Plant both feet on the ground comfortably. And if you feel comfortable, if you feel comfortable, just close your eyes. And move your attention to your breathing. Take a deep breath in, into your belly. Slow, quiet, gentle exhalation. Deep slow inhalation, all the way into your belly. Slow, gentle, quiet, long exhalation. If you

mind wanders, just return to your breathing. Now in your mind's eye, just scan your body—your forehead, your eyes, your nose, mouth, your neck, your chest, your upper back, lower back, your legs, all the way down to your feet. Just scan your body while continuing to breathe deeply, slowly and gently. And through your scan, find a part of your body that is a little bit more tense than the others. It could be your jaws. It could be your neck. It could be your shoulders, your stomach. You're feeling a little bit of disease. Could be your legs, your knees, your feet. Identify that one part of the body that is a little bit more tense than the others and focus on it and continue to breathe. Take a deep breath into that part of your body. And when you let go and you exhale, also let go of the tension that's there. Just relax it. And take a few deep breath into that part of your body and relax it and let go. Return your focus to your breathing. Take a deep breath in. Slow gentle quiet long exhale, relaxing with the exhalation. Deep breathing in, deep slow gentle long exhaling. At the end of the next exhalation, gently slowly quietly open your eyes. Once again if the person next to you is asleep, just gently wake them up. If someone is speaking in their sleep, please wake them up.

“Mindfulness means seeing things as they are, without trying to change them. The point is to dissolve our reactions to disturbing emotions, This is what permission to be human is all about.” Along the emotion, experiencing the emotion, and just breathing through it. And very often when we do that—not always, but very often—it dissolves. And with it, with the emotional dissolution of the emotion comes also the psychological dissolution of this painful emotion. Again we'll talk much, much more about this very important intervention after spring break. This is about gradual change. What we'll see when we talk about research is that even if this is gradual change, within as little as 8 weeks of regular meditation, our brain actually starts to change its form to transform. Our immune system strengthens after as little as 8 weeks of regular daily meditation. It doesn't have to be 5 hours a day. As little as 30 minutes or 20 minutes a day can already affect change. This is gradual, slow, hopefully something

that you'll take up as a life time, life long intervention.

Here is an example of more acute change when it comes to our emotion. So when I thought about filling in this box in the 3 by 2 model, how do I find the acute emotional change? Immediately my mind went to research in clinical psychology, specifically to post-traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder—something that has been studied thousands and thousands of articles; research done in our department too. And when I look at it, I said: Because what happens when we have a trauma, many people after the trauma are changed forever, for the rest of their lives if they have PTSD. It actually has changed...changes the chemical that flow through our brain. It changes the structure of our brain, creates new neural pathways, kills a lot of old neural pathways as a result of a single experience. It's a sledge hammer. It is very widespread unfortunately. I mentioned it last time. 30 percent of Vietnam vets have PTSD. 30 percent. 80 percent from the first Gulf War have PTSD. As I mention, we don't have the exact data yet from the second Gulf War. But the numbers are likely gonna be higher than that. After 911 or before 911 right there were 20,000 individuals with PTSD south of 110th street New York. Right after 911, 60,000 individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder. Now this has consequences. Again it has consequences on the way our brain functions, very often, not always, but very often for the rest of our lives. So this is an acute change. It comes immediately one trauma, 911 or seeing something terrible in war. And then that often has an effect for the rest of, for the per...for the entire life. It's a shock treatment, a negative shock treatment. Now when look at PTSD, when I thought about it, I asked...I mean this is clinical psychology.

First of all, a lot of research started only 1998, again 10 years ago, the time when positive psychology came in to the scene, research on post-traumatic growth. And what was found was that in fact more people experience growth as a result of a trauma

than post...than PTSD. However, we don't talk about post-traumatic growth. Everyone knows about PTSD. But again this is another example of where the light is not shed on something that is actually working well. And what is working here? Most people are extremely resilient able to withstand trauma. And that is a very empowering understanding to have. We'll become more of a self-fulfilling prophecy, and more people will experience post-traumatic growth if they only knew that it was a possibility that it was common. If they didn't feel guilty about experiencing growth as a result of trauma, how can I grow after what I saw, what I viewed, what I experienced in Vietnam. It's wrong. Again things don't happen for the best, but some people are able to make the best of things that happen. Post-traumatic growth, it happens when people begin to focus on the benefit.

So what is the benefit of this trauma? It didn't happen for the best. But what if I learn from my cancer, for example, well...to be closer to my family, to appreciate the breath, to appreciate the flowers, to enjoy my friends more. Didn't happen for the best. Benefit finding. Or many people are able to find meaning in it through journaling. We'll talk about journaling next class. Or people who are able to share their experience of the trauma. Remember the difference between holocaust survivors and Vietnam vets? Holocaust survivors shared, talked about it, wrote about it. Vietnam vets ruminated about it.

Going back to the Lyubomirsky study. And when you just ruminate without sharing, without...without taking it out, it becomes stronger and it's more likely to become PTSD. But it doesn't always do that. And it's important to understand the magnetism of post-traumatic growth. So here is the question that I have. This is a positive psychology course. Remember what positive psychology is...is that it focuses on what works. So the question that I asked myself as I was preparing for this course was this—is there a positive equivalent to trauma, something that is so powerful yet

positive that will change the way our brain functions in an instance like a sledge hammer? Is there something like that? Or in other words, what I asked is, can a single positive experience create a positive channel that will lead to a permanent increase in wellbeing, calm and positive memories? In other words, the opposite of PTSD. And again asking you shall receive; a question begins a quest. And as soon as I ask this question, it open up channels that I didn't see before that were literally right in front of my eyes. And this was the work that I've studied for many years of one of my intellectual heroes—Abraham Maslow who talks about the peak experience. Now, what I'm gonna talk about now is more hypothesis than well grounded research. It's a hypothesis that I hope some of you will, will research either here as your senior thesis, or in the future, or will encourage people to research these ideas. Everything that I share in this class is based on very rigorous research. This is one area where it's a hypothesis. But bear with me and see what you think of it, of this hypothesis when I finish explaining it. Because there is some, some research on it, not enough you know, for a stand of approval yet. But think about it. Does it make sense?

So let's see what a peak experience is. Maslow's definition of a peak experience: for the happiest moments of life, for experiences of ecstasy, rapture, bliss of the greatest joy. I found that such experiences came from profound aesthetic experiences such as creative ecstasies, moments of mature love, perfect sexual experiences, parental love, experiences of natural childbirth and many others. Everyone or most of people have the experience, peak experiences again, whether it was with your girlfriend boyfriend, whether it was reading a book, whether it was listening to your favorite piece of music. Just being one with the experience, it was...um... Many of theologians talk about as the religious experience, as spiritual experience where you just walked through the yard and suddenly felt one—it was a John Harvard—maybe not. But experience just one with everything. This is the experience they talk about in Zen, being connected to the present, feeling so good so complete like you don't need anything else. Everything

is right here. Now I know I experience with my family at times. You know last night having dinner with my family and friends. You know we were sitting around. I just felt this is it, you know, what else do I need. Just being so complete, so in the moment. A peak experience. Now these peak experiences usually don't last for very long. They come and they go. It's a peak. However, they can and often do have repercussions.

Now, maybe you can see now where I'm going with this. So do I. What I thought about when I thought about peak experiences was maybe...just maybe this is the positive equivalent to the trauma. Maybe it's a shock treatment of ecstasy that can have effect beyond just the experience itself, just like PTSD has effect beyond the experience itself.

There're people today who are living and reliving 911, still affecting them, still affecting their brain, creating new channels, new pathways that didn't exist before 9/11/01. So is peak experience shock treatment of ecstasy. If peak experience is the positive equivalent of a trauma, then the equivalent of a post-traumatic stress disorder is what I called post peak experience order. I know, cheesy, but I think there is something behind it. Some research on it. Some, very...um...very little. But I think it actually works. So one of the research studies. She studied...um...women after child birth. And what she found was that sometimes—not always, in fact not most times, but often—these women experience peak experience. And it changed their lives. As a result of it, they became more confident, more generous and benevolent, and happier, just as a result of a single experience, a shock treatment of ecstasy, something which was...which happened to them, which meant so much to them. Now they did this research in the early 50s or late, no, early 50s.

Today it may also happen more often with men because men today are more likely to be present when the child is born. You know, I burst out crying. It was a very powerful experience when it happened, certainly peak experience for me. Here's what

Maslow says about peak experiences. And again not talking specifically about post peak experience order, but alluding to it. “They can do the same there as psychotherapy, if one keeps his goals right, and if one knows just what he is about, and if one is conscious of what he is going toward. We can certainly talk, on the one hand, of the breaking up of symptoms, like the breaking up of cliches, of anxieties, or the like; or on the other hand, we can talk about the development of spontaneity, and of courage, and of Olympian or Godlike humor and suchness, sensory awareness, body awareness and the like.” So what he's saying here is that these effects can have consequences beyond just the peak experience if we do certain thing such as follow up on it. William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* talks about such moments that change lives and how they change lives. Peak experience can quite literally lead to a new brain order. And again the jury still out on the research. But there are more and more suggestions. And we'll talk about it next time as well that show that there is something there, that it can be the positive equivalent of a trauma if we know what we do, to do with it.

And here's the important issue. The question is—first do we experience peak experiences and experience more of them? And second, after we experience peak experience, how can we make it more likely that we enjoy PPEO? Because just like not everyone after a trauma experience PTSD—in fact the majority don't—Just in the same way, most people don't experience PPEO after a peak experience. How do you increase the likelihood...first of increasing peak experience and second of increasing the likelihood of post peak experience order? So to enhance peak experience, just very briefly because essentially the course is about that. So I'm gonna just throw out a few ideas that we've talked about and some that we'll talk about.

First, permission to be human, acceptance, accepting emotions. Why? Because if we don't accept painful emotions, if we don't give ourselves permission to be human,

we're blocking our emotional pathways. And positive emotions and painful emotions often flow through the same emotional pathways. And when we're limiting one, we're very often limiting the other. So if we open up the pathways, give ourselves the permission to be human and give ourselves the permission to cry when we're sad or ecstatic. That very often opens up, makes it more likely that we experience positive emotions as well, paradoxical, but this is the paradox of the permission to be human. When we give ourselves permission to experience painful emotions, we're more likely to experience the positive emotions. Mindfulness, being present. Lot of time when we are listening to music, for example, really listening to music, not just having it as background while text messaging, doing homework and talking to our friends. But when we really listen to music that we love, very often we have a peak experience being present. According to Maslow's research, these are two of the most likely, most likely areas where we can experience the peak experience. And by the way this I believe is...is innate. You know even I see with...with Sherio, my one year old daughter. You know when there is music, when we dance, she laughs. This is not something we taught her. We were born with, with this inclination for music and dance. We need to take time for that. Having a meaningful goal. When we're on purpose, when we're doing things that we love to do, when what we are, we are doing is meaningful and significant to us, we're much more likely to experience peak experiences. Finally one of the greatest barriers in our culture—time. It's very difficult to experience peak experiences when we're on the rush, when we're stressed and anxious. These are peak experience killers. Whether it's when making love, whether it's when listening to music, whether it's with...when spending time with friends or all of the above together.

How do we enhance the likelihood of PPEO once we have experienced peak experience? First thing—replaying an image. Remember the mind doesn't know the difference within the imaginary and the real. It plays it over and over again. And when

we play it over and over again, the neural pathway is reinforced. The sledge hammer begins the neural pathway. And then we reinforce it through replaying through imagination. Writing about it. This is gonna be a response paper next week. Writing about a peak experience. When we journal about it, describing it, not analyzing it. Remember the difference with Lyubomirsky. Positive emotions, positive experiences is not as helpful to analyze. So just to describe it, once again reinforce the neural pathways. We relive it. We replay it. Once again taking time, taking time. And finally taking action which is how we can reinforce the initial experience of the...um...the peak experience, reinforce the neural pathways. So I had it inside, an Ah-ha moment as a result of this peak experience. Now I'm gonna do something about it and act, which leads me to the second point, which is B—behavior.

I've been teaching and participating in workshops and seminars and classes on self improvement psychology, positive psychology and clinical psychology for almost 20 years since I was...since I was...well before I was 20. And what I noticed in other people's workshops, or in my workshops in seminars in classes is the following. Most people, if the workshop or the class is good, exit the classroom, or the weekend or the semester. If they were here before, they usually experience a relative high after. But there're two groups of people. Both groups experience a relative high. The first group—which unfortunately are the majority—after that high go back to their base level of happiness, something we're familiar with. The second group, not majority, but not a small minority experience that high after. That high doesn't last forever. However, they go back, but when they go back, their base level of wellbeing is higher than it was before. And they continue to have their vicissitudes, but this time along a higher base level of happiness than before. Now needless to say, I want to understand why people experience this, some people and other people experience this, because I want people who take my class to enjoy lasting change as opposed to temporary. Nice, feels good, not enough. It doesn't justify the effort that they put into the workshop.

And it doesn't justify the effort that I put into my work. So I want to understand the difference between the two. And here is the single most important difference that I identified between these two groups. Group 2, the distinguishing characteristic was that after the workshop or class or seminar, not at the end of the semester if it was a semester long class, after each class or after many of the classes introducing immediate behavioral change. I'll reevaluate my life and see how I do. Immediately introducing real behavioral change, doing exercises that we talked about in class, taking risks that they haven't before but introducing change immediately, not waiting. And those introduce change immediately don't have a high or peak experience constantly. But their base level of happiness goes up as opposed to going down returning to where it was before when there was no behavioral change. And now I start every workshop and seminar when I have a few days of workshop or seminar introducing this model of change.

What do we know from a lot of research in psychology is that there is a relationship between attitudes and behaviors. And we talked about it, we illuded into it already in the past. So we all have attitudes whether it's attitudes about psychology, whether it's attitudes about another person, whether it's attitude about myself. And these attitudes affect our behavior. So for example, if I have a positive attitude towards psychology or positive psychology, I'm more likely to take 1504 than if my attitude towards psychology and positive psychology is negative. Or if I have a good attitude toward a certain belief about a certain person, I'm much more likely to want befriend this person if I like him than if I don't. So attitudes affect behavior. That's very clear, easy to understand. But what psychologists have found, the likes of Alice Eagly, Daryl Bem and others. What they have found is that behavior also affects attitude. It works both ways.

So if I behave in a certain way, it is likely to change my attitude in accordance with

my behavior. And remember we talked about it. Why? Because we have an attitude and our behavior is the outside world. The mind doesn't like when there is incongruence between the inside and outside. So if we behave in a certain way, the attitude is gonna be pulled down to reflect that behavior. If we behave in this way, the attitude...the mind doesn't like incongruence, it's going to create equality between the two, congruency consistency between the two. And the way it'll do that is either by changing our behavior—and here is the key—or more often by changing our attitude. Now all of us here, whether you are 18 or whether you are 80, we all have habits. And again, we first make our habits and then our habits make us. Habits are behavioral patterns, thinking patterns. Behaviors are more powerful. Action is more powerful than words. If we have a certain behavior that we had before the class, what the class does is changing your attitude about a certain thing. But if it doesn't match with your behavior, after the class the mind looks for consistency. The attitude is gonna be pulled down back to where it was before unless your behavior changes to match your change of behavior. All the class can do, whether it's 1504 or Justice or Psych 1. All the classes, all workshops and seminars, all they can do is to introduce attitudinal change. In this class, attitudinal change is one, for example, self-esteem. What is self-esteem—the attitude that I have toward myself. High self-esteem positive; low self-esteem negative.

What is the benefit finder versus the fault finder is the attitude toward the world. Do I see this positive as a resource for wellbeing? Or do I focus on the negative as a fault finder. Perfectionism—it's an attitude toward failure. But all this class can do, all I can do, all your TFs can do is to introduce or to encourage attitudinal changes, to convince you through research that to learn to focus on the positive. However, if you don't follow up with behavior and that means doing the gratitude study...um...the gratitude exercise—that means writing the letter you are responsible for this week but doing it regularly. Unless behavior is gonna follow, the attitude will go back and

reflect your attitude and your behavior from before the class or before the intervention. There has to be behavioral change.

Let me show you some studies showing the impact of the behavioral change. This was done in American prisoners of war during the Korean War. And what Edgar Schein who's just across street here at MIT showed was that the captors of the Americans got them to change their minds about Communism, about the Chinese. Captors, how gradually by simply asking them write about the good things within Communism. We know we don't like Communism. We wouldn't be fighting if we did. But write about the positives of it. Write it to your prison-mates. Write letters home, telling them how you being treated and making sure of course they only focus on the good. So they didn't ask them to lie necessarily though often they did. But they asked them to focus on the positive. Over time, the attitude actually changed. And they became actually more open and more positive toward their captors. Because their behavior, writing letters, talking to their friends about it, they have to give lectures on it, and their attitude over time actually changed. And they became more positive.

Cognitive distance, those of you who have taken Psych 1 or others heard about it. Cognitive distance is when there is incongruence between two thoughts when two beliefs are conflicting. We don't like it. We want there to be a match. Or when there is a conflict between behavior and a belief. And what cognitive distance says is that this is... has to be resolved. And the way we resolve it is usually by getting our attitudes, our thoughts, our beliefs to match our behavior. Again behavior is more powerful than words. Self perception theory—we talked about a lot. I'm not gonna elaborate on it any more. We see ourselves. And we derive certain conclusions about ourselves. Facial feedback hypothesis. If you put on a frown now or a nice gentle smile, your body chemistries are actually going to change to reflect whatever your face is showing. So this is a quote by...where is it...by Thich Nhat Hanh. Kind of difficult to

pronounce his name—a Buddhist monk. "Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy."

So we actually influence our body. We actually influence our mood through our face. That's why actors very often can get into whatever character they're playing simply by acting. Because there's the facial feedback to the rest of your body. You actually release chemicals according with the face that you are making. William James. "Whistling to keep up courage is no mere figure of speech. On the other hand, sit all day in a moping posture, sigh, and reply to everything with a dismal voice, and your melancholy lingers... Smooth the brow, brighten the eyes, contract the dorsal rather than the ventral aspect of the frame, and speak in a major key, pass the genial compliment, and your heart must be frigid indeed." What essentially William James is talking about is something beyond the facial feedback hypothesis. It's something where there is not much research just a little research on, which is the body feedback hypothesis. If you sit down all day like this versus upright in proud, it will affect your mood. It will affect how you feel about yourself in a few ways. First of all, the message you communicate to yourself—self perception theory—but also in terms of how other people perceive you. If you shake hands like this limply versus shake hands firmly, you are communicating message to the person with whom you are shaking your hands. And that message comes back right at you both in terms of how they perceive you and that impacts you but also in terms of how you perceive yourself.

You know one of the ex-students from 1504. She played...er...she was on the hockey team, just graduated last year. So I met her over the summer. And she came over and she shook my hand. And I was in tears. It hurt so much. And I thought she must have listened in class. So don't exaggerate, just firm, nice. I mean really I think she broke some of the bones in my hand. But it matters. It communicates a message. You know I'm not gonna mess with her ever. I'm scared of her right now. It

communicates a message of strength and confidence. If we walk around proud, we're communicating a certain message. If we walk around stooped, we're also communicating a message to the environment that then reflects on us, but also to ourselves and that also reflects on us too.

And finally, I must share a study with you. This is by Hammerly. This is a study done... you know what, actually I'm gonna leave that to next time because I wanna get to something important. So I'm gonna start next time with this, with this study. Because it's said it's a long study. But it's a very important study. So I will, I will talk about it next time first thing in class. I want to get to something before we end, something that will change our relationship. Fake it till you make it. David Myers has done a lot of important work in this area of positive psychology. What he showed was it very often even if we act happy, even if we act with high self-esteem, even if I act joyful as William James said, that affects our mood. The question now becomes what about permission to be human. Well, first of all, there are times when we don't want to fake it till we make it, we wanna cry, we wanna be miserable and we wanna act that way. However, we need to find when is it the time to get out and to go to that party even if it's the last thing in the world that I wanna do. And the difference here is about active acceptance. I can still accept up my emotions. I can still accept my pain and experience it and still choose to act in accordance with how I deal more, most appropriate or most helpful. So I can accept the fact you know I was just dumped say by my girlfriend, I can accept the fact that I feel terrible about it and awful but then three days later go out to Oaks and party, go wild. So faking it again because of the facial feedback hypothesis, because of the body feedback hypothesis, because of self-perception theory. The behavior will affect my attitude. And after a crazy night out in Oaks, I will actually feel better and healthy...well...maybe not, but better.

Here's a quick video of Marva Collins, talking the...talking about some of her

experiences. “I think that maybe what I am is my parents and their consistency I mean I wanted to be as successful as my parents, my grandparents. In those days, it was quiet rare to be black and to be successful. So I think the determination of my parents and grandparents, they are...we would get chest high. As I said I was 14 years older than my one sister. But if we walked in church and didn't hold our heads up, my mom would say...she would scream down the street, People...I've often heard them comment to her: “I can always tell you child are on the playground.” Get your head up; walk up straight when you watch Marva Collins. That's how she walks. That's how she carries herself. And that communicates a message to her students, to other people, to herself. I'm gonna jump to this point. So very often, behavioral change is gradual. So what is the acute change? The acute change is about coping. It's about putting ourselves on the line. And when we cope, it's to do something we don't feel comfortable doing. In other words, it's about exiting our comfort zone and entering our stretch zone.

Now what I wanna do now is share with you two stories from, from my past, two stories that initially you will see unconnected but as you will understand soon are very much connected. One a difficult story ,the other a difficult story. My first memory, you know most people can...most people have a first memory—the first time, the first thing that you remember. My first memory is from September 1973. I was almost 3 years old. And it was Yom Kippur—the holiest day of the year. And I remember being at home and suddenly the phone ring. Now the phone my parents orthodox.I was raised orthodox. The phone never rings on Shabbat, on a Saturday, let alone Yom Kippur. But the phone rings. Both of my parents...I remember they jump up and run to the phone. My dad picks it up. And I'm standing between my parents. He looks at my mom and say something by whispering. Couldn't hear what it was, but my mom's face changes. And there's terror, fear in her eyes. And I begin to tear. And my dad picks me up and says: “I'm going for a few days, but I'll be back.” Now I know what

happens. So what happened was that my parents got a call from my uncle who at that time was doing his reserves in the military. He's in...he is in intelligence and war had just broke out. Young people are at the holiest day of the year in Israel. The Israel military is most of the people are not the boarders...are not protecting. It is a complete surprise, 5 Arab armies launch a war against Israel. My dad puts me down, goes to his room from the top of the...I still see him taking out his army uniform putting it on, taking his M16 sub machine gun putting it on, putting on his shoes, tying them. And my mom all the while is with him, making him things. They are talking once in a while smiling at me. But I sense a tension there. I don't know why. We then walk down to my dad's car. He had a turning—old turquoise Ford Cortina. He takes shoe polish and paints the lights of the...of the car. Why? Again later I know because at night when you drive with your lights on, you don't want the lights to be too bright in case of an air raid. So he paints the lights. And I watch him do all that. And then he picks me up and hugs me. He gets into his car, and I begin to sob uncontrollably. One of our neighbours whose name is Sharlon, he is too old to go into the army. So he is standing there. We all look at my dad going off in the car. He picks me up and I'm crying. And he looks at me and says: "like your dad when you grow up?"

And I didn't cry for almost 20 years after that. Then I came to Harvard. And I started to study psychology. You know where I'm going right? I started to study psychology...and studying psychology. I realized one of the things that I wanted to work on...one of the most important things that I wanted to work on was getting in touch with my feminine side, the anima the animus. I wanted to be more in touch with of my feminine side because I knew that it wasn't healthy to repress emotions. I was repressing painful emotions. The exact same thing happens with positive emotions. Same emotional channels. But I grew up in a culture that's very macho. Men don't cry. Nor do soldiers, or tough. We can handle anything. And that's the culture that I grew up. And again this was my first memory. I heard the same thing over and over and

over again, the same message. It's not cool. It's not manly to show emotions. It reminds me up after losing one of the most important squash tournaments for me, losing the national championships after I'd won it the year before. Surprise. Wasn't supposed to lose it; was supposed to win. I go to my house with my girlfriend after. And we're just hanging out. And suddenly she begins to cry because she understood how important it was for me. And this is how I basically experience my childhood, teenage, being tough, being macho. And then I came here and understood I need to let go. I need to be more in touch with the feminine side. So this is story number one.

Let me move on to story number two. One of the students that I had here—some of you may know her, class of 04—was Lindsay Hyde. Lindsay Hyde studied with me. We had one on one tutorial as well. We worked a lot together—a wonderful organization part of PBHA. She found it, now a national organization. I was also one of the funding board members of that organization. Wonderful site swsg.org for those of you interested. I was invited by Lindsay to give a talk for other women from other colleges around Boston. And I gave a talk. And here's Lindsay. She was with one of the students—3rd grade student, who she mentors and other Harvard students mentor and do wonderful work. And I believe in this organization. I support it from the...from the get-go almost and I gave a talk. And the talk was about teaching the importance of role modeling, was about integrity. I talked to them about Marva Collins and about the important work that they were doing. And at the end of the talk which went well, I think for myself for the participants, I got a present, a gift, a token of appreciation. And the present was a shirt. It wasn't any shirt. It was a pink shirt—the color I don't normally wear. Certainly I never wore it in Israel. Not only it was a pink shirt, it was, since it was the Strong Women Strong Girl shirt. It was also a very small shirt, more suited for the 3rd graders than for older ones. But still they said: “we wanted you to have it as a token of our appreciation.” And then I made a mistake. And I said jokingly of course. I was teaching 1504 at the time. And here it is the shirt

that I got. And then there was another student of mine from 1504, Tory Martin, who was...who run the organization at that time took over from Lindsay at Harvard. And I laughed and then almost cried. Because...“I mean I was joking,”She said, “look, you just talk to us about the importance of integrity.” which I did, I mean, look at here, integrity. So what am I gonna go back on my word? That's one of my core values, integrity. And then my whole childhood flashed before my eyes. And I thought about something that Churchill said so I looked for the opportunity. And here it was an opportunity handed to me in a pink shirt, to be more in touch with my feminine side.

So ladies and gentlemen, now I know...I know you're gonna find this hard to believe. But believe me when I say that this for me was going out of my comfort zone. In fact maybe it was going out from my stretch zone a little bit, but into my panic zone. I was telling the TFs before class that when I prepared for this class. You know I have...I have all my notes you know. And here I write. Every time I went over it, when I initially wrote it on my notes, it was like a...adrenalin rush in my stomach, going out of my comfort zone. Now I'm also out of my comfort zone which is why I have to have it at the end of the class as opposed to the beginning of class. But the key is to attain optimum levels of discomfort. I may have a little overshock...a little bit. But the key is optimum levels of discomfort. And why? There is no other way to change. I can think about it all day long and say I want to be in touch with my feminine side or I want to be more courageous, I want to get out. I can think about it all day long. Nothing will happen. Nothing will happen unless we bring about real actual behavioral change, real actual behavioral action. And when we do that, then the sky is the limit.

Thank you! I will see you on Thursday.