

psychology away; Miller, 1969). Empirically supported self-change interventions could gradually and at least partially replace current psychological treatments and become a transitional step from a science of psychopathology to a science of positive psychology.

3. Existing professional treatments should also be modified to accommodate major therapeutic factors that are related to positive psychology. These include increasing clients' positive expectations and hope about change (psychological placebo; Hubble et al., 1999), general sense of optimism, adaptive or mature defenses (Vaillant, 2000), self-efficacy, and coping strategies. Interventions that enhance people's strengths and positive traits should be components of every treatment, because they can reduce symptoms, prevent relapses, increase quality of life, and bring positive psychology qualities into therapeutic psychology. An integrative-eclectic approach that offers clients the opportunity to change by themselves in therapy as much as possible can further communicate the philosophy of a positive therapeutic psychology (for more on integrative treatments, see Norcross & Goldfried, 1992).

The foregoing suggestions could potentially help psychologists who research and treat psychopathology to transcend the shackles of their training, their pessimistic views of human nature, and their lifelong professional investments. To believe that this will happen without systematic effort and planning is somewhat unrealistic. I suggest that the road to positive psychology should pass through the fields of psychopathology, psychotherapy, and mental health. Positive psychology research should not be limited to healthy populations but should also include clinical samples. As the aforementioned three examples of potential cooperation have suggested, a research-based positive psychology has a lot to offer in the field of mental health treatment. On the other hand, positive psychology also needs to study clinical populations in order to attract attention and funding. Positive psychology and psychotherapy will be best developed in relation to each other, not separately.

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The Need for a Principle-Based Positive Psychology

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I agree wholeheartedly with the assertion of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (January 2000) that psychology should continue to look beyond human weakness, damage, and remediation to discover what promotes human happiness and civility. However, I am concerned by the apparent absence of causal psychological principles to guide the emerging field of positive psychology in its study of optimal human functioning. Without fundamental causal principles of subjective human experience (positive and negative), any explanation of the good life is as possible and feasible as any other. Only principles will bring discipline to positive psychology and provide a consistent standard by which to judge the truth and integrity of its findings and propositions. Without a commonly accepted principle-based foundation, positive psychology (like "negative" psychology) will inevitably splinter into an ever-increasing number of separate and often competing theories, practices, and areas of specialization, each with its own research agenda based on its own set of variables. Thus, the efforts of

positive psychologists to learn and evolve will be made separately and simultaneously rather than systematically and in concert.

A set of the most fundamental psychological principles underlying people's moment-to-moment psychological functioning is presently available for positive psychologists to consider. These principles were literally discovered in 1976 as part of a five-year (1974-1979) NIMH-funded research grant on primary prevention at the University of Oregon. I stumbled on these simple principles in 1988, and after a dozen years of research (Kelley, 1996, 1997, 1998, in press), teaching, and psychotherapy grounded in these principles, I am convinced that they have the potential to help positive psychologists better understand the underlying dynamics of human psychological functioning, the nature and source of mental health, the source of resiliency and empowerment, and the active ingredients in change.

Obviously, this format does not permit a detailed description of these principles. For this, I recommend the most recent writings of the principles' cofounders Roger Mills (1995; Mills & Spittle, in press) and George Pransky (1997). I will, however, use the logic of these principles, commonly referred to as *psychology of mind or health realization* (POM/HR), to illustrate how they lead to a fundamentally different view of one of the most prominent theoretical concepts of positive psychology: Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) *flow*.

Viewed through the principles of POM/HR, what Csikszentmihalyi (1999) called flow is seen as a natural, healthy, subjective psychological experience that all human beings are designed to live in most of the time. Its source is viewed as an innate, intelligent thinking process that engages effortlessly and automatically when people's minds clear (i.e., when they stop deliberately thinking). POM/HR assumes that all human beings are born with a natural source of psychological well-being, an innate thought process (i.e., free-flowing thinking) that is always rational, lucid, and functional. This generic thinking automatically produces a continuous stream of intelligent thought that is unfailingly responsive to the moment. Irrespective of personal demographics and existing circumstances, when people access free-flowing thought, they have the subjective experience of flow. Thus, according to POM/HR, all people have the same built-in potential for psychological well-being and will exhibit different depths of flow depending on their level of mental quietude.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) proposed, however, that flow is acquired, demanding much more than simply a clear mind that allows one's innate healthy thinking to un-

fold. He stated that "the flow experience . . . requires skills, concentration, and perseverance. . . it can be induced by environmental cues . . . or by focusing attention on a set of stimuli with their own rules, such as composition of music" (p. 825). Thus, Csikszentmihalyi suggested that a complex interface between external and internal factors is required to attain a proper balance at every moment for flow to exist. POM/HR advances, in contrast, that a mind that is cleared, either spontaneously or on purpose, will usher in optimal psychological functioning automatically, without effort, notwithstanding external factors.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) continued, saying that flow is "how people feel when they are thoroughly involved in something that is enjoyable or meaningful . . . separate from the routines of everyday life. . . . A universal condition of flow . . . is that the person feels that his or her abilities to act match the opportunities for action. . . . when challenges are in balance with skills, one becomes lost in the activity and flow is likely to result" (p. 825). First, viewed through the principles of POM/HR, the experiences of enjoyment and meaningfulness are not seen as functions of activities. Rather, they, like all other deep human feelings, are produced solely by free-flowing thought. Likewise, flow is not tied to particular pursuits. When people access free-flowing thinking, the so-called routines of everyday life are as joyful and meaningful as the most complex activities. Second, because flow occurs effortlessly when people's minds clear, it is totally unconnected to skill levels, analyses of challenges, outcome expectations, and so forth. Rather, flow is an inside-out, generic, thought-created experience; it is activity, circumstance, personality, and socialization independent.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) went on to say, "during the flow experience people are not necessarily happy because they are too involved in the task to have the luxury to reflect on their subjective states" (p. 825). Is reflecting on their subjective state necessary for very young children to experience happiness? Do such children have to recognize joy to be joyful? Do people have to reflect on the subjective state of physical well-being to live in its experience? POM/HR asserts that when people access free-flowing thought, they are happy by definition (i.e., totally absorbed in the natural experience of healthy, 98.6-degree mental functioning).

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) continued, saying, "Flow alone does not guarantee a happy life. . . . it is necessary to find flow in activities that are complex . . . activities that provide a potential for growth over the entire life span" (p. 826). Here Csikszentmihalyi tied both flow and personal growth to particular (i.e., complex) pursuits. POM/HR suggests that flow, as well as personal growth, is

a product of the profound, positive life experience produced by free-flowing thought. Although having total access to memory, free-flowing thinking is also the source of a profound human intelligence (i.e., wise, insightful, creative thought) that transcends memory and culture. When people realize for themselves the power of this thinking, understand its source, and trust it to guide them through life, some will be inspired to pursue complex tasks, whereas others will choose simpler ones. To the degree that people live in free-flowing thought, however, they will find happiness and personal growth in whatever they do—simple, complex, or anything in between.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) concluded by citing several limits of flow. For example, he stated that people may find flow in destructive, dysfunctional activities (e.g., compulsive gambling) or may become addicted to flow in functional activities (e.g., workaholicism). Although this is absolutely true, POM/HR asserts that this condition does not reflect limits of flow. Rather, it reflects limits in people's insightful understanding of principles of human psychological functioning. People become innocently addicted to flow in any activity (positive or negative) because they don't realize the profound connection between thinking and subjective personal experience. POM/HR proposes that the personal recognition of principles is all that people need, that people will naturally move toward more happy, fulfilling, virtuous lives as their understanding of principles deepens.

Presently, I am working on a more extensive, principle-based review of Csikszentmihalyi's flow, as well as several other prominent positive psychological models (e.g., Seligman's learned optimism, Maslow's self-actualization, Goleman's emotional intelligence). I hope that this brief sample will intrigue readers, encouraging them to examine the principles of POM/HR and reflect on their potential contribution to the noble mission of positive psychology.

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Reply to Comments

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The comments on the January 2000 special issue of the *American Psychologist* dedicated to positive psychology were so many and varied that space precludes replying to them all in detail. Instead, we take this opportunity to expand on some of their critical themes.

Perhaps the most frequent criticism has been that we did not recognize enough the contributions of previous attempts to achieve the goals we have set out for ourselves, contributions by humanistic psychologists, but also contributions by psychologists working in other cultural traditions, such as Asian approaches to understanding human behavior. We would like to make it clear that in focusing attention on positive aspects of human functioning, we do not intend to form an exclusive movement, one that pretends to hold some monopoly on the correct way of thinking about psychology. Obviously, positive psychology has been strongly influenced by our predecessors, and we hope that whatever we do in the future will be informed and will help inform good work done by a variety of other thinkers, no matter what label they attach to their approaches. Indeed, as the comments suggested, positive psychology is relevant across many endeavors, from Buddhist psychology to humanistic psychology. We do not, however, wish to blur the boundaries completely between the positive psychology we hope to see emerge and these worthy traditions. We are, unblushingly, scientists first. The work we seek to support and en-