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## Positive Psychology

By Dr. Harold Hoyle, Ph.D.



www.drharoldhoyle.com Harold can be contacted by phone or email: 510-219-8660, jhoyle@mac.com Harold is licensed clinical psychologist and a lecturer and in the School of Counseling Psychology, Education, and Pastoral Ministries Santa Clara University. With his wife and two children he is a 14-year long resident of the Lamorinda area. He is a sought after speaker in the areas of parenting, education, behavior with adolescents and children. He has a local small private practice.

A psychologist who uses the techniques of positive psychology will have you focus on your strengths. If you have had a yearly review or been to a team building training you have been exposed to the positive psychology principals. You might be thinking, "Ok Dr. Harold, you want me to just think positive thoughts and my life will get better? Really! Really?"

Yeah I know, so here are three researched-based techniques for you to look at for this year:

- 1) Review your experience and locate those times when you were the most creative, had the most passion, felt the most intelligent and identify the values you had that were associated with those experiences. This is often the first step in an executive coaching plan at work or a life plan in your personal life.
- 2) Create a plan that seeks to increase the possibility that those types of experiences will happen more often. If you loved to sing in college then take a look into joining a group or choir or volunteer to teach choir at an elementary school that doesn't have a music program. An artist I am working with recently told me I should write poetry; so I did. The poetry was horrible, but it changed the way I looked at the world a bit. It brought me a perspective that I hadn't visited since my college creative writing class. And you know what? It was kinda fun.
- 3) Get some support. I work with a very successful client who, at age 15, decided he needed a Board of Directors for his life. (I personally was deciding between Coke and Pepsi at 15.) Having a mentor is a lost art in our society. Get a mentor or get together with friends more often. Human connection is vital and often a place where we can find meaning or clarity about our lives.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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My column in January on mindfulness received a record amount of positive feedback. Simply put, people enjoyed hearing about positive psychological practice. One person I talked to at a Saint Mary's game (congrats for winning the tourney by the way) asked me if there were more things she could do to keep herself psychologically healthy.

There is an entire field of study in psychology now called positive psychology. In my practice I often find people dealing with the question, "What is wrong with me?" Positive psychology is more interested in answering the question, "What is right with me?"

So, in real life what does positive psychology look like?

Positive psychology is the study of what is going on in our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors when we are at our best. What is happening when we create something? What is happening when we find meaning in something? What aspects of our psychic world are impacted when we feel connected to another human being? How can friendship or a walk on the beach with our shoes off make us feel better?

It is the study of what goes right in life from the beginning to the end. Think about how often have considered what was going on in your life when you did your very best work or had your best relationships. Psychologists have traditionally worked with people and the disorder in their lives. Psychologists who work in this do not ignore or dismiss the low times, but they do believe that the connected and creative times in our lives deserve as much research focus as the low times.