



Happy Together by Suzann Pileggi Pawelski MAPP, Coleen Marlo, et al.

- They apply positive psychology research to romantic relationships in order to help optimize the good in relationships, rather than simply trying to help couples fight in less damaging ways
- The authors. Both work in the field of positive psychology at UPENN.

Introduction:

- Being happy with others is the easiest and most natural thing in the world...until it isn't.
- They base a lot of their foundation on Aristotle's wisdom about what good relationships look like.
- Positive psychology (PP) is a science that focuses on strengths and potential; along with personal responsibility and well-defined goals that promote well-being and happiness.
- The authors state that in relationships, we tend to focus more on fixing our problems, rather than seeking and building on the inherent good that already exists our relationship.
- The author of positive psychology was Martin Seligman (1998 – UPENN) – President of the APA. He argued that psychology had to balance its important emphasis on repairing the bad (disease and dysfunction) in life, with the equally important work of building on what's already good (strengths and the cultivation of positive emotion).
- Seligman stated that relationships were one of the 5 key elements of flourishing in his model of well-being.
- 4 areas important to making relationships last: (applying PP to relationships)
 1. Passions – are important to our wellbeing. They are what fuel us at work and in leisure
 2. Positive Emotions – are not just a reaction/result of good things, but can also cause good things to happen
 3. Savoring – Opening ourselves as fully as we can to positive experiences is valuable because it helps us make the most of positive experiences we often take for granted.
 4. Character – Knowing what our strengths are and how to cultivate them can guide our life and direct our efforts in ways that yield the greatest results for a life of meaning. And knowing the strengths of our partner can help us avoid some of the frictions and frustrations that emerge due to our differences in personalities and can help the relationship become greater than the sum of its parts.

Ch 1. Is love really all you need?

- Marriage needs: Two super powers: green cape and red cape
Green cape: gives us capabilities to fight for the things in the world we want to encourage and promote. If we choose this – we look for opportunities
Red cape: gives us capabilities to fight against unfair and unjust things in the world we want to end. If we choose this- we look for problems to solve.
- Happiness is not merely the opposite of unhappiness. Fighting against unhappiness doesn't necessarily bring happiness. Getting rid of sadness, doesn't automatically produce joy and getting rid of anger, doesn't necessarily yield love.
- Good news: (we have power for both – a reversible cape if you will) – Bad news: Sometimes we prefer the red cape because of evolution.
- Evolutionary history has instilled in us the ability to look for, anticipate and avoid danger in order to survive – Psychologists call this “negativity bias” – amidst all the problems and worries, we don't always recognize the opportunities for improvement or greater happiness.

Chapter 2: What Aristotle can teach us about building love that lasts.

- Aristotle –says that we tend to love three different kinds of things in people: Those that are useful (where we see the relationship as one of opportunity for profit, status or gain in some way), those that are pleasurable and those that are inherently good.

The First - between people who find others useful. The whole basis of the relationship is on loving someone for “what we can get out of it,” so it is self-oriented and can lead to quarrels when we feel we are getting short changed or the relationship is no longer useful.

The second - Also self-oriented, with the goal for each person having “pleasure from the relationship.” And if the friendship stops leading to pleasure and enjoyment, the relationship has nothing left.

*Both of these are problematic because when we stop getting what we want from them-profit or pleasure- we see no value in the relationship and it dies

The third – He relationships based on goodness is the truest kind of love, superior to the other two. He calls this “mature love” because it's what we graduate to when we move beyond utility and pleasure and begin loving based on the inherent good we see in each other. It's truly valuing our person's character and being committed to helping them grow and develop in healthy directions, while being inspired to want to become better ourselves. It's not self-focused, it's other-person focused.

***“They love each other for who they are, and not for what they can get out of the relationship.”

The authors say this type of friendship is much more enduring than the first two, since it is likely to be brought to an end only if one of the persons involved becomes corrupt and stops being good.

Aristotle believes that profit and pleasure are not good foundations for a mature relationship since they are self-focused and make the relationship conditional. And that **Focusing on the good in the other person and supporting its development should be the emphasis of the relationship.

- They contrast the love in 2 movies:
-**Jerry Mcguire** and Dorothy – when he said, “you complete me,” - overpowering, but unsustainable. It wasn't based on the strong and stable value of who Dorothy was as a person. It's unclear what Jerry's love would motivate him to do besides make sure Dorothy continues to complete him. It's very self-

serving. Jerry's perspective is very much like the pop-culture or storybook romance view of soul mates, or overidealized person, who will forever complete us and lead to happily ever after.

-Whereas in the movie "**as good as it gets**," the main character was inspired by her inherent goodness and wanted to be better because of it, "you make we want to be a better man."

- **So, what should happiness be in marriage?** They would say, happiness lies in doing well, what we are uniquely suited for (using our strengths)
- **So, relationships should be characterized by three elements:**
 1. Loving the good we see in each other. (not expecting perfection)
 2. Remaining committed to each other's well-being and supportive of our growth. (helping each other reach their potential by providing support and perspectives to help their partner do their own growing.
 3. Being inspired by each other to become better ourselves.
- They also touch on the importance of having **Harmonious passion** – doing things we enjoy is what helps us, as partners, maintain a healthy identity outside of each other, to create a balanced life, which increases intimacy and helps us handle conflict better (because we are happier).
- **How to cultivate harmonious passion in relationship.**
 1. **Become more emotionally attuned to each other.** (ATTUNE – Attention, Turning toward, Tolerance, Understanding, Non-defensive responding and Empathy) –
 2. **Make sure you don't lose yourself in an unhealthy way in your relationship** – (thinking constantly about your partner or feeling unable to apart from them, needing to check in constantly, or cancelling important plans in order to be at your partner's beck and call, or sacrificing your own self-care measures to take care of your partner). **Instead, we must spread our attention across several interests (including our partner), remembering who we were before our relationships. What we enjoyed doing and whom we enjoyed spending time with.** So each partner should have and maintain close and healthy friendships outside of the relationship and these friendships should involve activities of passionate interest.
 3. **Finally, build harmonious passion by taking up new and interesting activities together as a couple.** As the pressures and demands of work and home life cut more and more into our time and take up our creative energy, couples can become trapped in the same dull habits and routines day after day and no longer explore new activities together. **You can fight against this by intentionally looking for new things to experience.** They should be activities both you and your partner enjoy, with the goal being to connect and cooperate, not compete with each other. The idea is to have fun together, not to win, we have to leave our egos at the door. **Examples:** You could cook a new dinner together from scratch, take up a hiking or biking, stay up late watching movies together if your are both movie buffs, read novels that shaped your partner growing up, or go for long walks together exploring new terrains. Also, share good secrets with each other – A childhood memory, a life changing experience or a vivid dream or a hope you have for the future.

Chapter 4.- The importance of Practicing Positive Emotion

- **Relationship should be rich in positive emotion** - Fredrickson's top ten list of most frequently experienced positive emotions: Gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love.

- According to the Broaden and build theory of positive emotions –While negative emotions narrow our attention and urge us toward a specific action tendency, Fredrickson argued, positive emotions do the opposite.
 - They broaden our attention
 - they increase the range of possible thoughts we might have and actions we might take
 - help us take more in visually, allowing us to see more of what is in our periphery than we otherwise would.
 - They can also make us more creative, think of more possibilities and help us solve complex problems more quickly.
 - Examples:
 - Interest makes us want to explore and learn;
 - serenity makes us want to savor our experiences;
 - People who experience more positive emotions enjoy lower levels of stress hormones, higher levels of beneficial hormones resulting in lower blood pressure, less pain, fewer colds and better sleep.
 - Psychologically, they make us more optimistic, more resilient, more open, more accepting and more driven by purpose.
- **What good are PE in marriage?**
 - The more we kindle positive feelings in our relationships, the more connected we feel, because we are more curious and open to each other.
 - They also help by contagion. Just as we can pass colds to our partners we can pass along our feelings to our partners through emotional contagion - we are built to mimic each other, we synchronize our facial expression, vocalizations, postures and behaviors with those around us. And just like those that are more susceptible to catching colds, there are those who are more sensitive than others to their emotional environment, and thus are more likely to pick up the emotions of those around them.
 - We see more possibilities and are less likely to get caught up on the day to day problems and annoyances in our relationships. It's easier not to sweat the small stuff.
- **So, couples who regularly carve out time to do novel and exciting things together such as hiking, dancing, attending musical performances, or cooking classes, enjoy higher quality marriages.** It provides a “consistent stream of shared micro-moments of positivity resonance.” Just like vitamin and minerals boost our physical health, PE serve as nutrient rich bursts for our relationship that accrue over time and make our bond even stronger.
- **How do we cultivate PE?**
 - *Positive emotions are not the simple opposites of negative emotions. So merely ridding ourselves of unhelpful negative emotions is insufficient for cultivating positive emotions.
 - 1. Prioritize PE** – Means making decisions and organizing our lives in ways that are likely to result in the natural experience of positive emotions. Perhaps its checking out a new exercise class at the gym that is fun, completing a do it yourself home repair project that fills you with pride, or reading non-fiction stimulates interest. **The point here is not to force PE but rather to put yourself in contexts where they naturally tend to arise.**
 - 2. By acting out how we want to feel, we can indirectly influence ourselves to feel that way.** Although our emotions aren't under the direct control of our will, our actions often are. So, by regulating our actions we can indirectly influence our emotions. So, dancing in the kitchen can make us feel playful.

Surprising our partner can make us feel amusement. Tell a story of something that brings joy from your childhood.

3. The more we cultivate PE in our own lives, the more likely we are to pass them along to our partners, magnifying their beneficial effects in our relationships. – Most people experience significantly more NE than necessary and significantly fewer PE than optimal. So, the more we cultivate PE, the more likely we are to help our partner, magnifying the effects in our relationship through contagion.

****If one partner is in a negative mood** – remember NE have the advantage here because they are typically stronger than PE. And the partner in a good mood can't work hard to pass along their mood because that puts pressure on one person to make the other happy AND when you're feeling NE, it can be invalidating and annoying to have someone trying to cheer you up. So, the goal would be for the partner who's in the negative mood to try opening him or herself up to being infected with the other partner's positive energy remembering that it is in both partner's interest for PE to win out.

Ch. 5 Slowing down to Savor

- **Savor your relationship, by valuing it like you did on the day your spouse asked for your hand in marriage.**
- Sometimes our no nonsense, pragmatic, hard-working personalities garner us compliments in our careers, but not so much in our personal life. When our partner asks for some much needed attention to tell us about their long day with the kids or suggest they hang out on the couch to connect, it's easy to say you don't have time or you're tired or you have a lot of work still to do.
- What partners who make a bid to connect are looking for, is sensitivity not sensibility.
- **Helen Keller once said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched-they must be felt with the heart."**
- **Sometimes we get so caught up in our work or in our own needs that even if we do have free time, we are focusing on our work, or our own goals the things we want to get done rather than taking advantage of these available moments to spend time together.**
- **Savoring is defined as the processes underlying our capacities to attend to, appreciate, and enhance positive experiences.**
- **We can savor a date doing all we can to get the most out of it. We can clear** our schedule so nothing competes for our attention, we can choose a calm and leisurely place that allow plenty of time to chat, we can do it on a Friday to make sure we have plenty of time to relax and we don't have to feel rushed to get back for work tomorrow, we can take in the décor and attend as completely as possible to the experience of being at dinner together . We can deeply enjoy the conversation but take moments to pause and savor the meal, the taste, complexities, texture and aroma of the food. And we can have gratitude reminding ourselves of how fortunate we are to be able to enjoy this meal together.- What's important then? **Duration and pace of the experience, choosing a low stress time for both, and degree of attentional focus.**
- **Savoring may actually be more effective at communicating love to our partner than acts of service, gifts, affection, touch and words of affirmation. Why? Because each can be done as a duty without necessarily feeling or connecting to the experience.**
- **How do we savor?**

1. **Appreciative sharing and mutuality** – Something as basic as being open to sharing and savoring the details of the story can be important.
2. **Self-disclosure** – we often keep our inner world hidden, but being willing to share this world with our partner can open the door to savoring. Make your inner world available to your partner
3. **Minding** – consciously attending to your partner and what they are like. As you carefully observe your partner, you get to know them better, learning things about them you would likely miss in normal everyday life. It gives you more nuanced information
4. **Collaboration** - Can you think of a time when you felt truly in sync with your partner, working on something together? planning a vacation, cooking a special dinner, a house project?
***Gottman recommends this by nurturing the fondness and admiration system – intentionally thinking and talking about positive aspects we appreciate and value in our partner. It is vital we spend time reconnecting to the good things in our partner and in our relationship. If it's too hard to do now, think back to things you valued in your partner in the past. Remind yourself of the good so you know what to look for in the present.**
***While it's important for couples to cope during the tough times and work to fix problems that arise, research has found that the way couples respond to each other's good news may be more important to their relationship quality than their response to negative situations. Flourishing couples do well at acknowledging, calling out, and savoring things that are going well in their relationship and with each other. Be it something small, such as a good deed their partner has done for them, or something big like a promotion, those couples who respond supportively to good news increase their chances of having a healthier and more lasting and fulfilling relationship. A passive and unengaged response to a partner's good news, with a comment like "that's nice sweetheart" then returning to what they were doing, is almost as detrimental to a relationship as ignoring or directly criticizing a partner's good news.**
 - **ACR – Active Constructive responding –**
-Stop what you are doing and focus your attention completely on your partner.
-Help her savor the moment by asking her questions and actively celebrating the news.
-Match and mirror emotions.

Ch 6. Know thyself – Identifying your strengths

- **Aristotelian love is when partners are attracted by the good they see in the other person and are motivated by it to become better themselves. (like Jack Nicholson in As good as it gets when he sees the good in Helen Hunt and tells her, you make me want to be a better man)**
- The more we focus on the identification and cultivation of our individual and collective character strengths, the more we can support each other in our quest to become better versions of ourselves (realizing more of our potential, developing more fully into the unique and wonderful individuals we already are.
- Signature strength exercise – Take survey VIA survey of character strengths. At buildhappytogether.com. – This provides a helpful guide to aid us in understanding ourselves and realizing more of our potential.
 - VIA classification of character strengths and virtues:

- **The great thing about character strengths is that you can't go wrong.**
- **Whatever your top 5 strengths, it's a great set of strengths. Each collection of 5 strengths is a powerful asset to have in our lives and our relationships.**
- **And although it only takes minutes to identify these strengths, it takes a lifetime to develop the potential they represent. Identification of our strengths is a great first step on the journey of reaching our potential on this earth and (contributing meaningfully to our relationship and society as a whole).**
- **There is nothing magical about limiting signature strengths to your top 5, so we should feel free to focus on our top 7.**
- **Signature strengths seem to be natural - strengths we just can't help exercising. They seem to be a natural part of us and things we just can't help but practice, as if they are wired into our DNA. Even a few negative encounters (like unkind people), don't usually stop someone with the strength of kindness from being kind.**
- **Our strengths can explain a lot about ourselves and the life choices we have made –**
- ****Research says that cultivating a particular strength intentionally over time can result in its eventual appearance among your top 5. So if there is a particular strength you value that is not currently among your top 5 or 7, feel free to work specifically on cultivating it.**
- **Knowing our strengths also helps our partners better understand us:**
- **Couples who have taken the VIA have said it has helped them see their partners in a completely different light. Instead of continuing to be annoyed by something they saw as one of their partner's character flaws, they began to appreciate the positive value of the behavior so that we can interact with the more effectively. It gives a new language to discuss your similarities and differences.**
- **So, while it is important to know and use our strengths, it is also important to know and enable our partner's strengths. Your combined group of strengths is an asset of your relationship and is a key part of what will keep both of you growing – and growing together. (Remember we are mutually responsible for helping our partner maximize their potential and to use our union for good).**

STRENGTHS –

Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge –

- **Creativity** -Thinking of new ways to do things is a big part of who you are. You enjoy originality and making a positive contribution to the lives of others. You also tend to be curious, liking exploration and discovery.
- **Judgement** – You tend to think things through and examine them from all sides. You are very analytical by nature, and prone to critical thinking, weighing evidence fairly, thinking things through, and examining situations from all sides rather than jumping to conclusions. You possess a core “strength of the head” — a very thinking-oriented character strength. However, those with this strength can also be open-minded and able to change their mind in light of new evidence, other arguments and new perspectives.
- **Love of learning** -You have a passion for learning and mastering new skills, just for learning’s sake. *You are motivated to acquire new knowledge and deepen your existing knowledge in a significant way.*

Strengths of Courage –

- **Bravery** - You do not shrink away from challenges, difficulty or pain (physical or psychological) and can speak up for what’s right even if the opinion is unfavorable. It’s valuing a goal or conviction, over what’s popular.
- **Honesty** – You try to live your life in genuine, sincere and authentic ways, *presenting yourself and your reactions accurately and you tend to take responsibility for your feelings and actions.” You are a person of integrity — you are who you say you are — and you act consistently across the domains of your life rather than being one way in the community and a completely different way in your family. This strength involves accurately representing your internal states and intentions both publicly and privately. Your goals tend to accurately represent your implicit interests and values.*
- **Perseverance** - You work hard to finish what you start, *despite obstacles. The pleasure received from completing tasks and projects is very important to those who are high in perseverance even though sometimes they have to dig deep to muster the will to overcome thoughts of giving up. Perseverance involves the voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action despite the presence of challenges, difficulties, and discouragement.*
- **Zest** - You tend to approach everything you do with excitement, energy, and enthusiasm, *not halfheartedly. People who are high in zest are excited to get up in the morning, and they live their lives like an adventure. Zest is a dynamic strength that is directly related to physical and psychological wellness. This strength has the strongest ties to overall life satisfaction and a life of engagement.*

Strengths of Humanity –

- **Kindness** – You tend to be genuinely nice and generous with others, and can often be described by others as a great friend or a wonderful mentor. You are inclined to give of your time, money, and talent to support those who are in need. As a friend you are compassionate and caretaking, out of your deep concern for the welfare of others. You may enjoy doing favors for others and performing good deeds. Your kindness tends to stem from the belief that others are worthy of attention and affirmation for their own sake, and not out of a sense of duty or principle.

- **Love** – You tend to value close relationships with those who are important to you and tend to put their needs above your own. You easily express warmth and caring and are likely a compassionate listener. This refers to the degree to which you value close relationships with people, and can contribute to that closeness in a warm and genuine way. It is a reciprocal strength, referring to your ability to both give and receive love from others.
- **Social intelligence** – *You tend to be aware of and understand your own feelings, as well as the feelings of those around you. You tend to be able to say and do the right thing whether in a boardroom or the janitorial room.*

Strengths of Justice –

- **Fairness** - One of your abiding principles is to treat people fairly, not letting your personal feelings bias your decisions about others. You tend to want to give everyone a fair chance and believe there should be equal opportunity for all. Your fairness is founded upon justice- weighing principles to determine moral rights and is driven by empathy, the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes.
- **Leadership** -You excel at encouraging others to get things done, while maintaining good relationships with people in the group. Leadership involves being committed to the goals of the group, building coalitions, and being able to smooth over ruffled feathers. You tend to be able to provide a positive vision or message that inspires followers to feel empowered and inspired.
- **Teamwork** - You excel as a member of a group and are committed toward being a contributing member of the team's success, whether a group project, a sports team, a family, or a marriage. You tend to be a good citizen of your community or country, and more broadly to a sense of social responsibility for particular groups or even all of humanity. No matter the setting, you tend to be committed to the good of the group. You tend to be dedicated and reliable.

Strengths of Temperance –

- **Forgiveness** - You extend understanding and forgiveness to those who have wronged or hurt you. This speaks to your ability to be merciful and accepting of people's shortcomings or imperfections. This also speaks to your ability to let go of the painful feelings associated with the offense. It's your ability to humanize those who have done you wrong. This doesn't mean you condone the action (think it's fine) or forget it (stop being aware). Just that you are more likely to give others a second chance.
- **Humility** - You do not seek the spotlight, and others might know you for your modesty. You tend not to draw attention to yourself, or talk about your accomplishments. You have a good sense of who you are, but do not view yourself as more special or important than others and are aware of your own mistakes and imperfections. You are content not being the center of attention or getting praised for your accomplishments. A common misconception is that humility involves having a low self-esteem, a sense of unworthiness, and/or a lack of self-focus. However, true humility involves an accurate self-assessment, recognition of limitations, and a healthy perspective of self. Those high on humility tend not to feel the need to defend themselves or distort information to present more positively.

- **Prudence** - You are a careful person and prefer to stop and think before acting. You tend to not take unnecessary risks, and don't do things that you might later regret because you consider the long-term consequences of your actions. You have the ability to examine the potential consequences of your actions objectively, and to control yourself based on that examination.
- **Self-regulation** - You are a disciplined person. You tend to be good at controlling and regulating what you do and because of that you have good confidence about what you pursue because you are likely to achieve your goals. Others tend to admire you for your ability to control your reactions to disappointment and insecurity. Self-regulation helps keep a sense of balance, order, and progress in life.

Strengths of Transcendence –

- **Appreciation of beauty and excellence** - You tend to notice and appreciate beauty, excellence and skill in all domains of life from nature to art to math and science. Those who express this strength are responsive to beauty and excellence in that it compels and energizes them to pursue their own goals and become better themselves.
- **Gratitude** – You tend to both feel and express a deep sense of thankfulness in life. You take the time to genuinely express that thankfulness to others. You are aware of good things that happen and how much others contribute to your life and you don't take it for granted. Your gratitude helps you experience a variety of positive emotions, and those emotions inspire you to act in more virtuous ways. Gratitude tends to foster strengths of kindness and love.
- **Hope** - You tend to expect the best in life and you work to achieve it. You tend to be optimistic and focus in on the good things to come. It is an action-oriented strength that involves confidence that goals can be reached, and that there are many effective paths to getting there. Your optimism also helps you explain bad events to yourself in ways that keep you hopeful, interpreting positive events as internal, stable and global and negative events as external, unstable and specific.
- **Humor** – You tend to be able to make other people smile or laugh, and doing so is important to you. You are able to recognize what is amusing in situations, and to offer the lighter side to others. It may also be one of your valuable methods of coping with distressing situations.
- **Spirituality** – This means your faith tends to shape your actions and is a source of comfort to you. As a character strength, spirituality involves the belief that there is a dimension to life that is beyond human understanding. This strength involves the degree to which your relationship with God, impacts the range of virtues you live by as a result of that relationship. It is living in search of our connection with “the divine.”

Ch 7. Know your partner: Applying your strengths in your relationship

- **It is important to focus on understanding and developing the strengths of each person in the relationship, and on integrating both partner's strengths so that the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts.**

- **We must learn to use our strengths in a wise and balanced way.** And Aristotle made a similar point about virtue, understanding it as the mean between vices. Same holds true with our strengths. Using our strengths may be easy, but using them in the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way is not. That takes a lifetime of practice. For instance, if someone is overly sensitive to the needs of others because of a strength of kindness, but is not taking proper care of themselves because they are continually helping those around them, then they are overusing that strength.
- **A strength is balanced and healthy when it works for both you and others. Finding this balance can be a challenge and requires practice.**
- **In general, it seems that when it comes to wellbeing** – those who concentrate their efforts on working on their lesser strengths end up more frustrated and are more likely to stop trying prematurely before the strength is cultivated so it doesn't contribute to well-being. So, the better approach tends to be focusing on cultivating and doing activities that focus on our signature strengths. Because we are more likely to keep doing things we find enjoyable and the more we do them, the more likely we are to benefit from them.
- **But what if kindness is in your bottom 5?** we can't just outsource that to others. So, in this case, we have to use our other strengths to help us with it. For instance if curiosity and zest are signature strengths, you might ask yourself how you could use those strengths to be kinder. Perhaps you could be curious about the effects of your kind acts on others, or maybe you could note how practicing kindness can help increase the level of energy and vitality in both you and others.
*****Exception: There are five strengths that have been found to be most closely connected to flourishing. And if these are not already among your top 5, it is recommended that you spend some effort on cultivating them. The 5 strengths are Love, Gratitude, Zest, Hope and Curiosity.**

Ch 8. The Gratitude Dance

- **Gratitude defined** – a feeling of authentic appreciation for something or someone
- **Gratitude is known as one of the most important of the positive emotions**
- **Gratitude is also known as one of the most important of the character strengths - for overall well-being - It's one that if isn't already one of your top five, we recommend you put special effort into developing it, because it focuses our attention on what we already have, rather than on what we lack.**
- **Benefits of gratitude:** Grateful people tend to have more positive interactions with those around them. Grateful people also tend to be better at empathy and forgiveness, and more willing to help others. Gratitude leads to better sleep, greater life satisfaction, optimism, increased positive emotions and prosocial behavior.
- **One of the most well-known exercise in all of positive psychology is known as the:**
- **Three Good Things Exercise:** In this exercise, we keep a gratitude journal noting three good things that happened to you throughout the day and why they happened.
- **Many relationships flounder and fail because over time, people forget the reasons they were attracted to their partners in the first place and start to take them for granted.** This leads couples to feel underappreciated by their partners and disconnected from each other. In contrast, research shows continually showing appreciation builds intimacy and strengthens bonds over time.

Ch. 9 “It takes two to Make a thing go right”

- Bids – Defined by Gottman as an attempt a spouse makes to establish a positive connection with his or her partner. Making a bid is looking for attention, acknowledgement, affirmation, and affection. It could be verbal - by asking for help around the houses or to spend time together, or non-verbal- through gestures, a sigh, laughter, facial expressions, a special look, or actions – a hug or playfulness.
- Happy couples make bids for each other’s attention regularly throughout the day. AND tend to respond to their partners bids 86% of the time. (where as those couples who later divorced, were shown to respond to those bids only 33% of the time)
- Making bids is important, but also how we respond to them is important – So, the interplay of initiation and response is incredibly important the health of relationship:

The Interaction model of character strengths:

- So, what are the steps involved in successful initiation and response, of a character strength in your relationship? (Gratitude in your relationship for example)

To initiate it:

1. Cultivation: Identify and practice a strength. You must first cultivate it in your own life. You choose to work on developing gratitude by spending time counting your blessings – start the three good things exercise every day before you go to bed at night.
2. Contextualization: Consider how that strength can help your relationship. In this step you think specifically about your romantic relationship and consider how you can best use that strength to support your partner in positive ways. Where could you insert more gratitude. Think about where you have not been consistent in expressing appreciation for your partner. Perhaps it’s their calm demeanor or careful attention to detail, or their great energy and creative ideas , or their ability to keep track of finances, or doing the grocery shopping every week.
3. Construction: Use the strength to build your relationship. Third, you are ready to implement what you identified. You express your appreciation to your partner for various aspects of the good you see in them, with authenticity.

Response:

1. Awareness – Notice your partner is using a particular strength. If we are intentionally looking for ways our partner is using their strengths, we are much more likely to pick up on this. Practicing awareness can be particularly difficult in the fast pace of our lives, when we’re often distracted by pressing things and not really paying attention to our partner or actively looking for their good.
2. Assessment – This is where you carefully consider the effect your partner’s initiation of a specific strength is having on you and your relationship. For example, you may note that your partner expresses more appreciation for the good they see in you, it raises your level of well-being and motivates you to cultivate your own your own gratitude more or

encourages you to cultivate your own strengths and goodness. Now, maybe some of the things you are being noticed for doing, become less of a chore and more of a meaningful commitment to caring for your family or a contribution toward your loved ones.

3. Action – Behave in such a way that it continues to honor the spirit of what’s been initiated. This is where you think about what can you do to carry forward what your partner has began. That might mean responding in a more sensitive way to your partner. It might mean responding by spending less time deflecting and more time truly savoring your partner and the moment of appreciation. Perhaps you tell your partner directly how much you appreciate their acknowledgement. Maybe you also begin initiating your own expressions of gratitude to balance out (not at the same time) what your partner is doing. Maybe you begin cultivating a strength of your own to begin using more effectively in the relationship. Maybe your strength of humor has not been used much due to being so busy lately. So, their gratitude, inspires you to initiate more playfulness.

Kindness: Kindness is critical for cultivating compassionate relationships.

Kindness is an orientation of the self toward others. It’s not just something we do to fulfill a duty or to show our respect for others. Nor is it something we engage in for the purpose of eliciting kindness in return, burnishing our reputation, or guaranteeing some benefit. It’s motivated by an emotional connection, a sense of common humanity. It’s at the core of a relationship based on goodness.

Gottman reports that happy couples in his studies overwhelmingly prioritize kindness and build it into their relationships. They make five times as many positive as negative comments to each other. And they make an effort to be kind in their daily interactions. This is true EVEN when they are arguing! In disputes, they LEAD with kindness and gentleness, truly seeking to understand their partners. Whereas, couples in troubled marriages tend to belittle and degrade their partners, which can lead to the development of contempt for each other.

You can be kind in the mundane moments of life. Doesn’t have to be a grand gesture!

However, one study showed that concentrating our acts of kindness to one day each week, where we do more than usual to practice kindness has more of an effect than one kind act everyday. Also, studies also show that those who repeat the same activity have less effect than those who vary their acts of kindness. How can you show kindness? So the idea here is to keep it varied and meaningful.

Again, just like with gratitude, the way kindness is received is just as important as the way it is given. Remember, the initiation model:

1. So, how might you initiate more kindness in your relationship? First step is cultivate. This is where you begin practicing it more in your own life. Commit to doing 5 intentional acts of kindness one day each week. Be sure to vary what you do. Then,
2. Context- Consider how to best incorporate kindness into your relationship. Take into account your partner’s likes and dislikes and then think of things you could do to help them feel good.

Maybe you could help more with chores or offer to watch the kids so she can go to the gym if she values her health.

3. Construction – Implement

Strategies for using interaction model well:

1. Mindfulness – Awareness is one of the most important aspects of a successful dance. It's crucial to be aware of your own and your partners passions, emotions, and strengths. AND it makes a huge difference where we train our attention. You can focus on the dark corners and unpleasant elements in your relationship, or you can hone in on the strengths and positive qualities of your partner and the uplifting moments of connection you have in your relationship. Also, meditate or use a guided meditation (or pray) for 40 minutes (or 20) each day. Among the most important change we see is the ability to be less reactive and more responsive to each other. Instead of reacting quickly and automatically, we were better able to pause and reflect and this allows our responses to be more thoughtful, kind and helpful.
2. Relationship Rules – This is about the basic, overarching principles we use to guide our relational lives. Principles that inform our everyday actions and behaviors, the habits we cultivate the decisions we make about how to treat our partners, and the expectations we have for how we ourselves should be treated. **The Golden Rule** – treat others the way we would want to be treated, as if we were in their shoes. BUT! We're not. And others don't always want what we want. We often have the faulty assumption that our partner wants the same things (this is made evident in the 5 love languages). **The Platinum Rule** – Which instructs us to treat others as *they* wish to be treated. It's an advance on the golden rule, but for this to work, we have to actually get to know what they would want. But what if we are wrong, what if what they want is not good for them? **The Aristotelian Rule** – Treat others they way their best self would want us to treat them. This rule encourages us to focus on the good we see in others and treat them in such a way that it will help their good to grow and develop. This rule is oriented toward helping each person in the relationship build on their own unique qualities.