

Major Developments in Positive Psychology

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Positive Psychology, the pursuit of understanding optimal human functioning, is reshaping the scholarly and public views of the science of psychology ... and it is helping us understand how college students transform their minds, hearts, and lives in just a few short years. The rigorous study of what is right and positive about people and institutions has yielded many new findings and resources that will inform educators' efforts to promote college student development.

Two major developments in Positive Psychology have attracted the public's attention during this early part of the 21st century. First, the scholarship on psychological potentialities has led to the development of the Clifton StrengthsFinder (completed by more than 5 million people) and the Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer (a tool recently launched for 10- to 14-year-olds). With the availability of these measures, strengths development programs are becoming common-place in schools, businesses, and places of worship. Second, social scientists have learned more about how people respond to emotional experiences in productive ways. Indeed, we know more than we once did about curbing the effects of negative emotions, about making the most of positive emotions, and about how these

practices lead to positive life outcomes. The literature on these major developments has been summarized in issues of journals such as the *American Psychologist*, the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, and *The Counseling Psychologist*, and in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Oxford; a 700-page scientific overview by 50 leading scholars) and *Positive Psychology: Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths* (Sage; a textbook introducing positive psychological principles to undergraduates). In addition, there is a string of very successful trade books such as Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Harper Perennial), Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* (Free Press), and Rath and Clifton's *How Full Is Your Bucket?* (Gallup Press) that attest to the value such a perspective brings to the community at large. The scholarly works and the mainstream coverage tell a compelling story of the significance of focusing on the best in people. Indeed, Positive Psychology is a primary focus of scholars and practitioners in the "ivory tower" and the talk of the community on "Main Street."

Reviews of Positive Psychology literature undoubtedly will provide educators with new ideas and tools for changing students' lives.