

What makes you happy? Martin Seligman, father of positive psychology



Martin Seligman, known as the father of **positive psychology**, says that **happiness can be learned and put into practice**.

This expert took part in [Wellbeing 360](#), a conference organized by [Tecnimlenio's Institute of Wellbeing and Happiness Sciences](#), where he shared **tools** for making an impact on personal development.

*"A **positive attitude** doesn't just help you to be happy. There are studies that have demonstrated it can help you to achieve **career and personal success**," he said.*

Seligman also said that **positive thinking** is important in times of uncertainty, such as those we're experiencing due to the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.

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5 factors that boost happiness

Seligman proposes a **5-factor model**, which he believes can be put into practice and developed to **boost levels of satisfaction and personal motivation**.

The emeritus president and co-founder of the [International Positive Education Network \(IPEN\)](#) called this model [PERMA](#):

- **P** for **Positive Emotions**: peace, gratitude, inspiration, love, and hope are examples of this type of emotion.
- **E** is for **Engagement**: the pact we make with ourselves, our strengths and the tasks that motivate us.
- **R** is for **Relationships**: as we are social beings, interactions with others can become a factor of support and protection.
- **M** is for **Meaning and Purpose**: this is seeking to reach or belong to something that is bigger than ourselves.
- **A** is for **Accomplishment**: this means setting goals and the satisfaction of achieving them.

The psychologist says that working on one or more of these aspects can make people have **greater wellbeing** and thus become **happier**.

*“We can’t all be **joyful** or **happy**, but I think that we all have an **opportunity** to get involved, to have good relationships, meaning, achievements, and purpose,”* he said.



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However, Seligman added that each of these **aspects** of **PERMA** may be **different** for each **culture**.

For instance, having good relationships may **mean** something **different** for eastern or western countries and even differ within the same country.

*“It’s important that these **exercises** be done **individually**. It’s important for measurement and intervention to be culturally sensitive,” he added.*

Simple exercises for each day

When Seligman was asked whether **happiness** is something that can be **taught**, he says that there are **exercises** which have been proven to work, for both **children** and **adults**.

These exercises include **listing at least 3 things at the end of the day that were positive and which you feel grateful for**.

*“**Gratitude** is one of the most useful tools. It leads to you being able to **sleep better**, to **lower your levels of depression**. It’s an **extremely powerful** exercise,” says Seligman.*



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Another strategy is **learning your individual personal strengths** through the [VIA survey](#).

These **strengths** are grouped into **six categories**: Wisdom and Knowledge, Creativity, Curiosity, Open-Mindedness, Love of Learning, and Perspective.

*“For instance, I had a **student** who was **waitressing** while she was studying, and she realized that her **key strength** was **social intelligence**.*

*“Although she didn’t like being a waitress, she began to **use her strength** on customers and began to **enjoy it more** and her tips went up,” the expert explained.*

What's more, he said that it's becoming more **important** for **teachers to apply these tools in the education** they provide to **children and young people**.

*"This should be given by **teachers** who are **steeped** in the **culture** and know the children,"* he said.



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BIENESTAR EN EDUCACIÓN

MARTIN SELIGMAN

Presidente Emérito y cofundador de IPEN
(Red Internacional de Educación Positiva)

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Positive thinking for the COVID-19 age

During his talk, **Seligman** was asked whether **positive thinking can help** in these times of the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

The psychologist said that there are **studies** in which people who are **happier** tend to **get sick less** and also **overcome** adverse social situations.

*"Those who are **resilient** can **rebuild** themselves. People who have **hope** know that **optimism** is what's needed for reconstruction,"* he said.



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Seligman said that this **mentality** can **help** not only to overcome traumas such as **post-traumatic stress** but also to **grow** in **certain aspects** by taking advantage of adversity.

This phenomenon, says Seligman, is known as **Post-Traumatic Growth** and he says that it is also **related to people's health**.

*"There's a **study** in which people have been infected with a **mild virus**. The **positive, happy, and joyful** people had a **cold** with **less impact** and **shorter duration**,"* said Seligman.

*"If you're in **quarantine, have fun, eat, enjoy, and be happy**. That can **reduce** the possibility of **infection**,"* he explained.

Wellbeing 360: tools for wellbeing

The **Wellbeing 360 conference**, organized by [Tecmilenio](#) and previously called **Foro Felicidad 360 (Happiness 360 Conference)**, brought together **experts** on subjects related to **human wellbeing**.

This summit was organized by Tecmilenio's [Institute of Wellbeing and Happiness Sciences](#) and was followed online by **more than 49,000 people in 160 countries**.

*"We want to see how **being positive and resilient** can help us take advantage of a situation that may be overwhelming for many people,"* said Bruno Zepeda, Rector of Tecmilenio, at the event.

*“At Wellbeing 360, we want to **provide tools for a changing world that is full of challenges** and transform those challenges into an opportunity for personal growth,”* explained Rosalinda Ballesteros, Director of the **Institute of Wellbeing and Happiness Sciences**.

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