

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, PART I: A STRENGTH BASED APPROACH TO WORKING WITH GAMBLERS

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The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling



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Learning Objectives

- Learn what Positive Psychology is and how it can be applied
- Learn how a strength-based approach to gambling treatment helps to improve treatment outcomes
- Develop a greater understanding of how to employ the principals of Positive Psychology into healthy lifestyle choices for the gambler and their families
- Learn how to create the therapeutic conditions to allow our clients to thrive

To Begin



Breathe

Deeply – Slowly

CALM



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“Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at the moment.”

— [Eckhart Tolle, A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose](#)

Your Best Self

Exercise # 1

Imagine a time in your life when you were your best self. What was the experience? What aspects of your self were most prominent? What strengths and attributes did you use?

Write down the list of strengths.

What are your signature strengths? Character strengths that people identify with, appreciate having, and enjoy using.

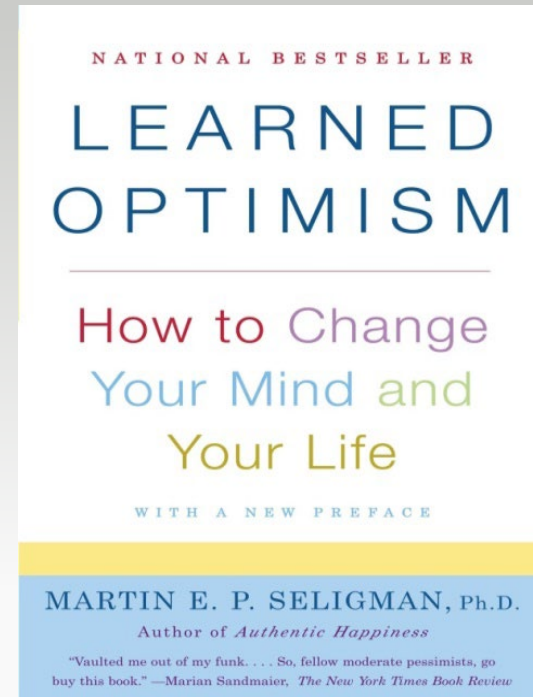
Positive Psychology

■ Background and Development

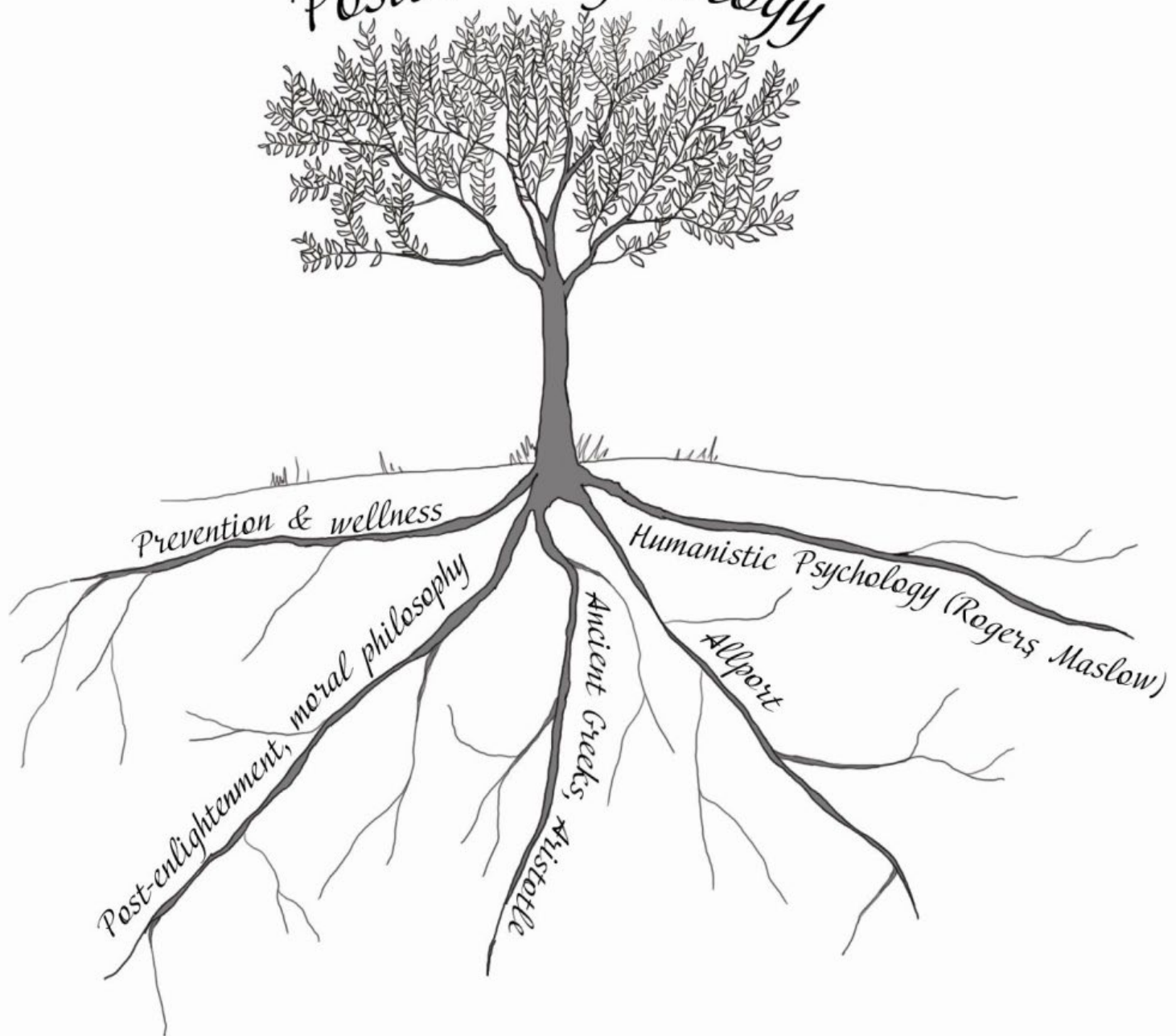
Ancient Philosophers - Aristotle

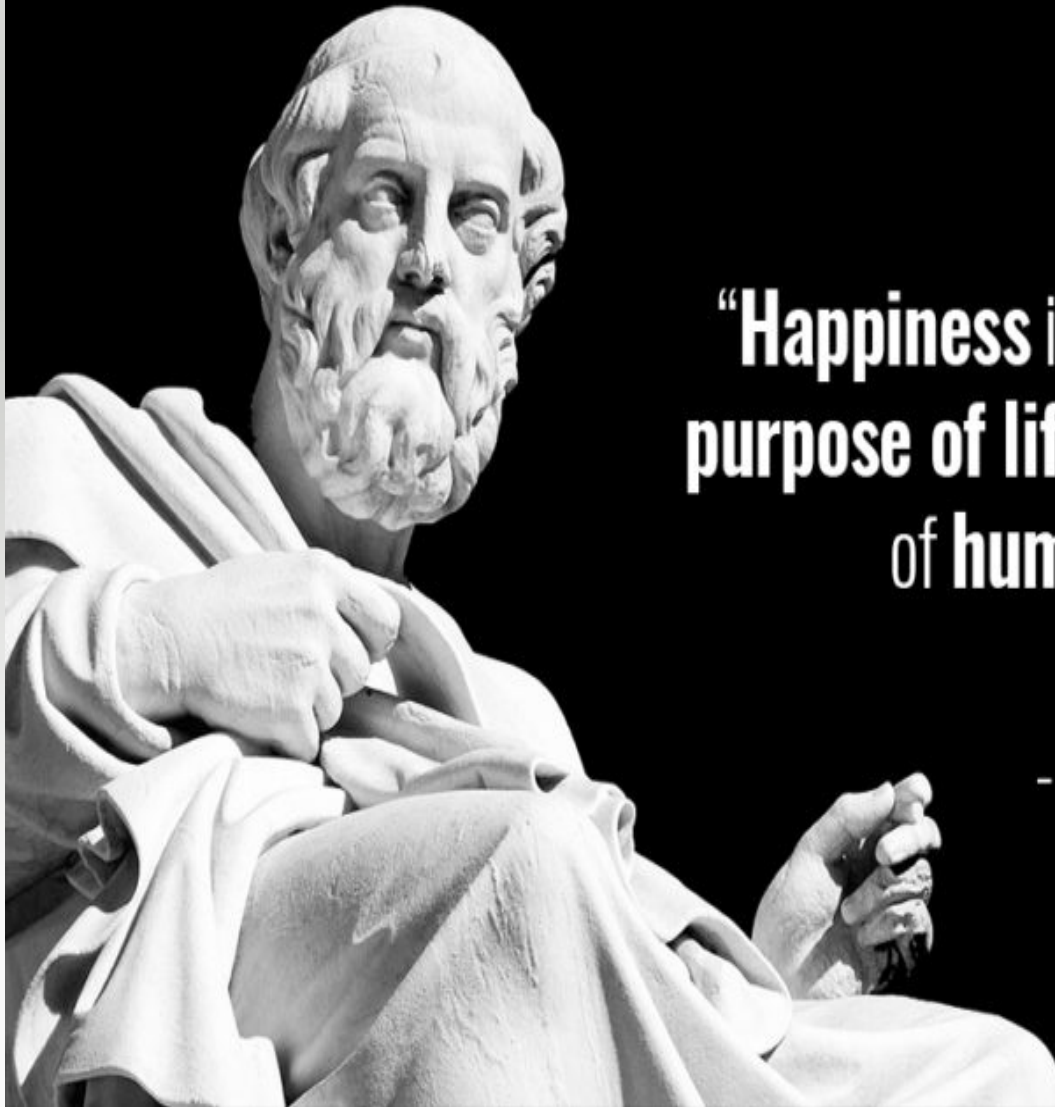
Humanism – Maslow and
Rogers

Martin Seligman – Positive
Psychology



Positive Psychology





“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

- Aristotle

Goalcast



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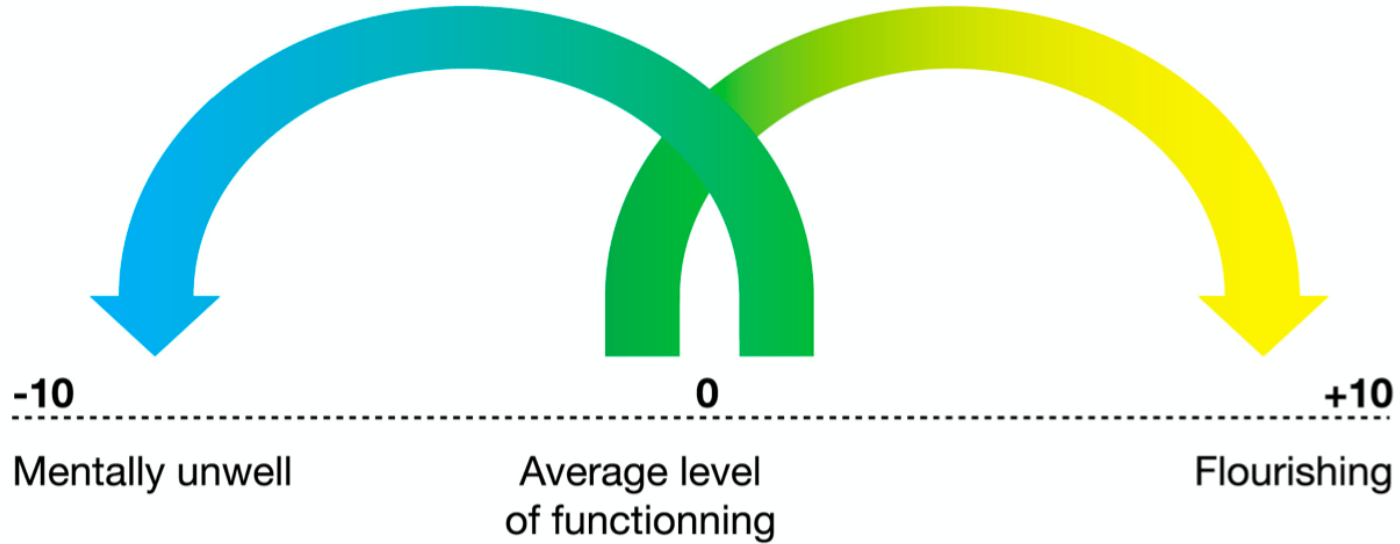
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Positive Psychology

- What is it?
 - **Positive Psychology** is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

**TRADITIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

**POSITIVE
PSYCHOLOGY**



Positive Psychology

Why has it become an important focus in the treatment of Addictions and Mental Health Problems?

- Helps people to foster conditions of happiness.
- It improves our relationship with our selves and others
- Increases the frequency of positive emotions
- Improves one's ability to be grateful and optimistic

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology involves...

Gratitude

Optimism

Happiness

Flow

Purpose

Gambling Disorder

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria: Gambling Disorder

- Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting **four (or more)** of the following in a **12-month period**:



Psychological Causal Factors

- Stressful life events are linked to addiction
- Diathesis-stress models propose that some people have vulnerability factors that may increase the risk for addiction and gambling
- Neuroticism or negative affectivity can predispose people to gambling addiction
- Early adversity, trauma or loss can be a diathesis as well

Treatment Approaches

- What are your beliefs about the curative factors that lead to change?
- What are your theoretical underpinnings related to the approaches you use?
- What type of approaches do you practice?

There are so many approaches to counseling/psychotherapy/treatment.

Eclectic

Do you practice life in the way you approach therapy?

Optimism

■ Defined...

A characteristic frame of mind that leads someone to expect positive outcomes and to view the world as a positive place.

Optimism – Helps us cope with challenges
Helps us achieve goals
Breeds positive emotions
Increase social support
Short-circuits rumination
Changes our brain
Buffers us from mental health and addiction problems.

Optimism

■ Ways to Boost Optimism

Don't try to be Pollyanna

Remember the past - obstacles overcome

Track positive experiences

Surround yourself with positivity

Be mindful of your language

Make it a habit

Optimism

■ Exercise #2

A Positive Future – Visualize

Close your eyes and imagine yourself 5 or 10 years from now, imagining the things in your life have gone as well as you could have hoped for. Dreams realized and the achievement of your deepest and most meaningful goals.

Consider different domains – Relationships, career, family, hobbies. – Bask in these images, savor the feelings that come up.

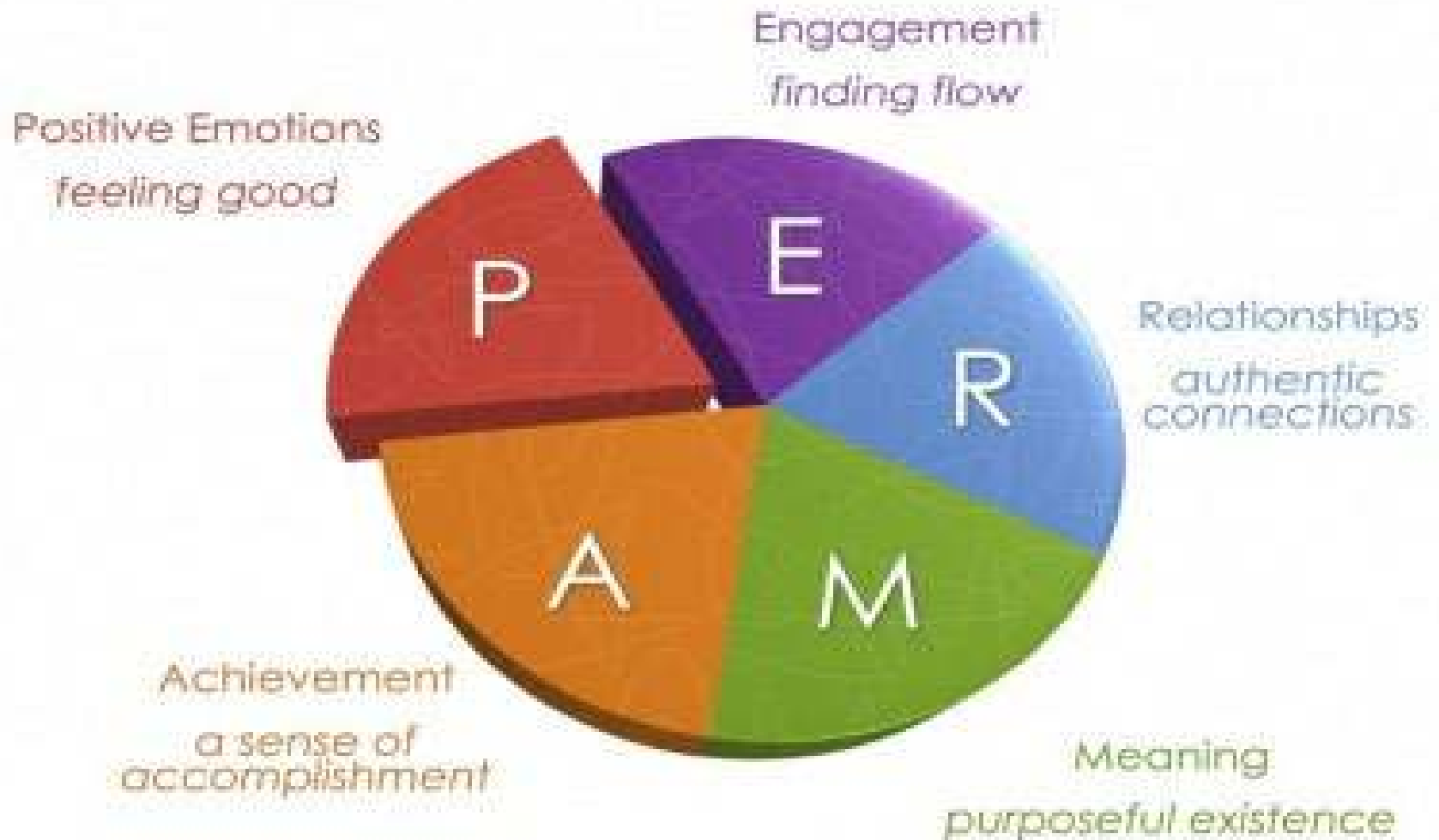
Write a paragraph about your positive future.

Optimism

Real optimism is aware of problems but recognizes the solutions, knows about difficulties but believes they can be overcome, see the negatives but accentuates the positives, is exposed to the worst but expects the best, has a reason to complain but chooses to smile.

- William Arthur Ward

Positive Psychology



The Brain on Positive Emotions

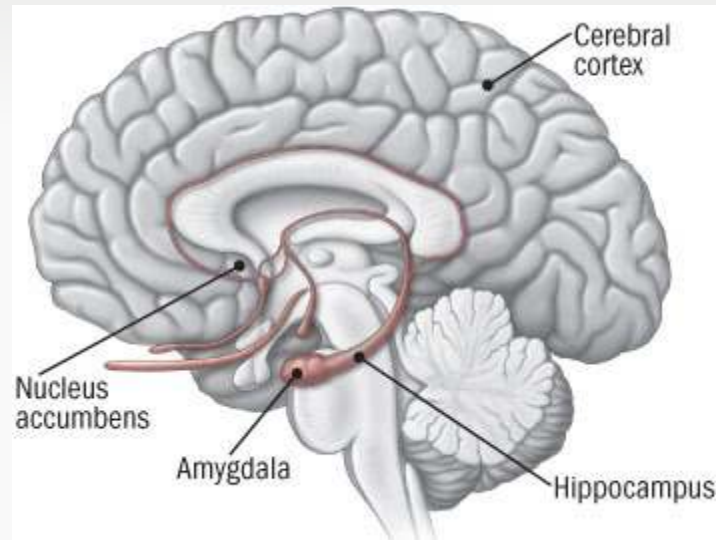
The Reward Circuits of the Brain

- Brain Pleasure Center – Nucleus accumbens

Dopamine Released into this area

Positive Emotion – Activates Happiness

Deactivates Sadness



Happiness

What does happiness mean to you?

Think about points in your life when you felt happy. The happiness felt due to an event or accomplishment usually fades.

Positive Psychologists use the term happiness to refer to the subjective sense of well-being, as well as the sense that your life is worthwhile.



Happiness

Seligman's 3 Pathways to Promote Happiness

- Feeling Good – Seek pleasurable emotions
- Engage Fully – Goals and activities
- Doing Good – Search for meaning outside self

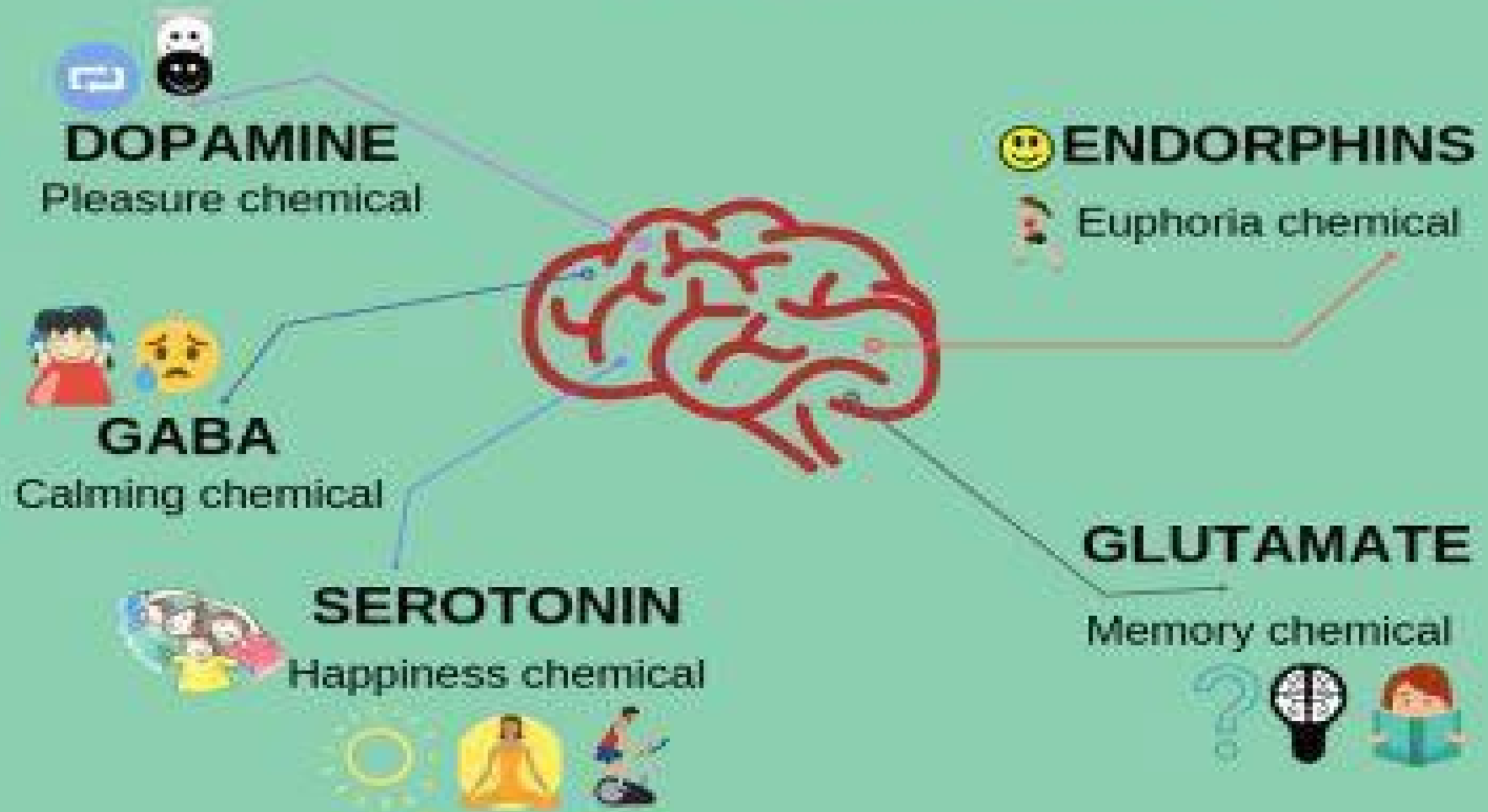
3 Pathways >>> Life Satisfaction

How do you seek happiness?

What doesn't make us happy... Money and material things, youth, children.

HAPPINESS CONCEPT

with Neurotransmitters



Happiness

Happiness is...

Good for Our Minds

Good for Our Health – Mental and
Physical

Good for Our Lives

Promote our Happiness

Gratitude

Optimism

Compassion and Self-

Compassion

Strengthening Relationships
and Connections

Flow

Purpose



■ Exercise #3

Savoring the Moments – A Mindfulness Practice

Cultivating Joy – A component of psychological well-being.



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PEACE

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