



Practicing Happiness

Positive Psychology Applications for Work & Home

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LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE





- Roots and Wings:

Honoring our past, Engaging the present, Preparing for our future.



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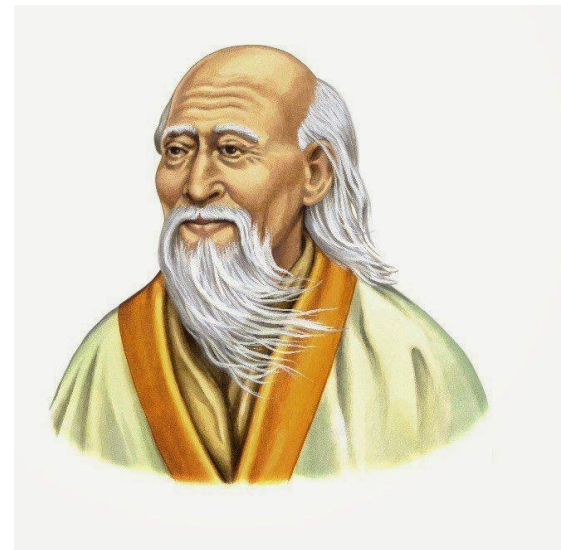
- Describe the history of positive psychology and its holistic outlook on human well-being.
- List three neuroscience-based practices from positive psychology.
- Explain how these practices could be applied to enhance the well-being of yourselves and your clients—by engaging in the present in order to honor the past and prepare for the future.

What is Happiness?

- Visualization
- Note to Self
 - What's one way you could build more of this into your life?



Born ~601 BC



What is Happiness? Historical Perspectives

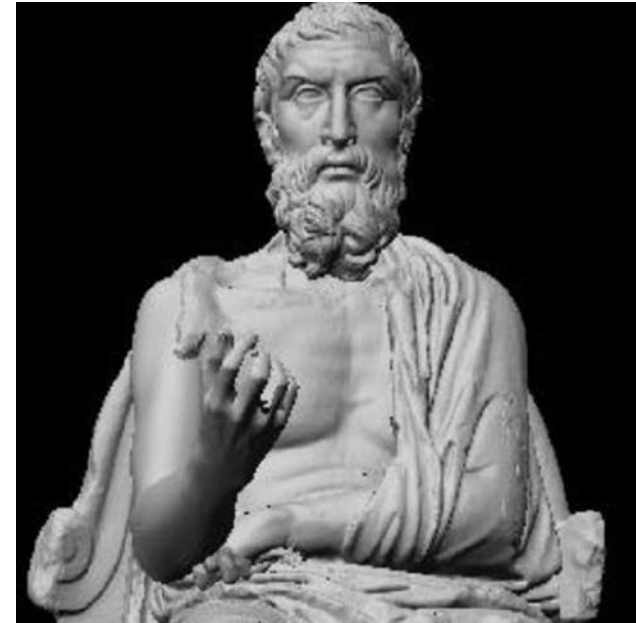
- Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage. –Lao Tzu
- Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life. –Confucius

Born ~551 BC



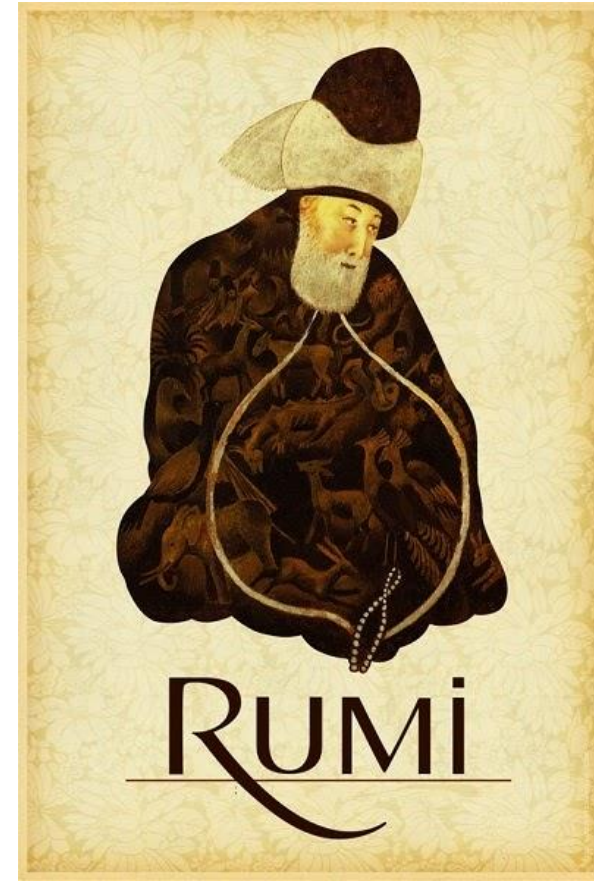
What is Happiness? Historical Perspectives

- Epicurus: ancient Greek philosopher, 4th century BCE
 - Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship.
 - You do not develop courage by being happy...everyday. You develop it by surviving difficult times and challenging adversity.



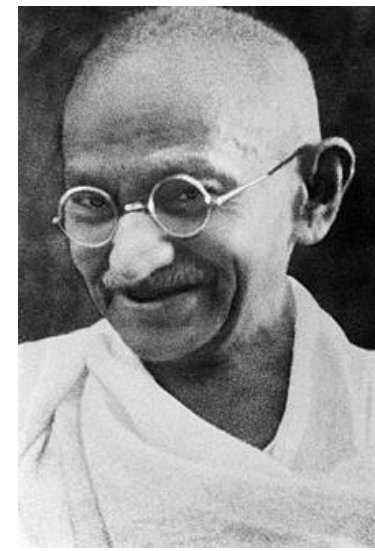
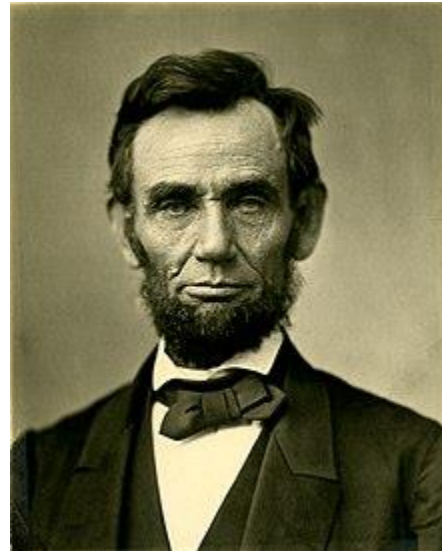
What is Happiness? Historical Perspectives

- Rumi: 13th century Sunni Muslim poet, mystic, and scholar
 - Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love.
 - The wound is the place where the Light enters you.



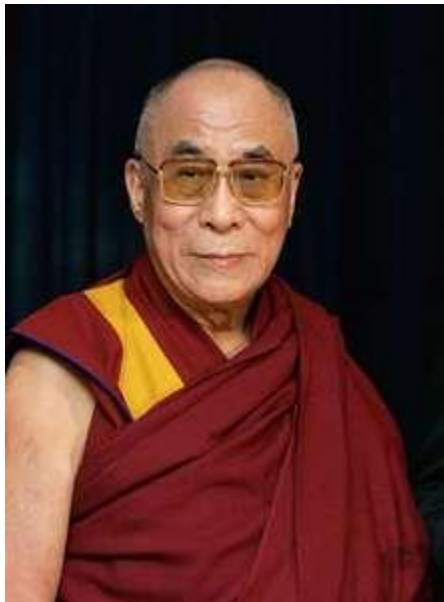
What is Happiness? Modern Perspectives

- Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be.
--attributed to Abraham Lincoln
- Happiness is not a goal ... it's a by-product of a life well lived.
--Eleanor Roosevelt
- Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.
--Mahatma Gandhi



What is Happiness? Modern Perspectives

- If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.
--the Dalai Lama
- Before you marry a person, you should first make them use a computer with slow internet to see who they really are.
--Will Ferrell



What is the **science** of happiness?

Where Happiness Comes From

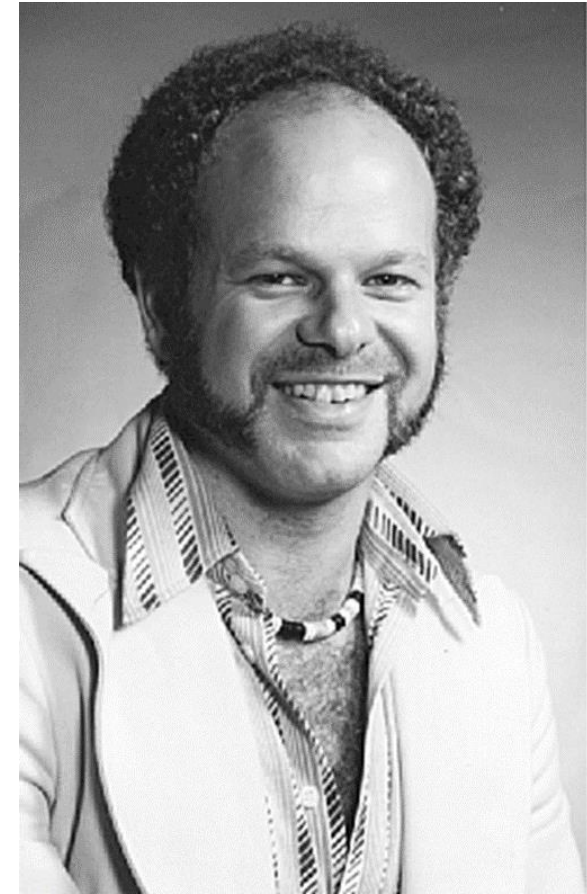
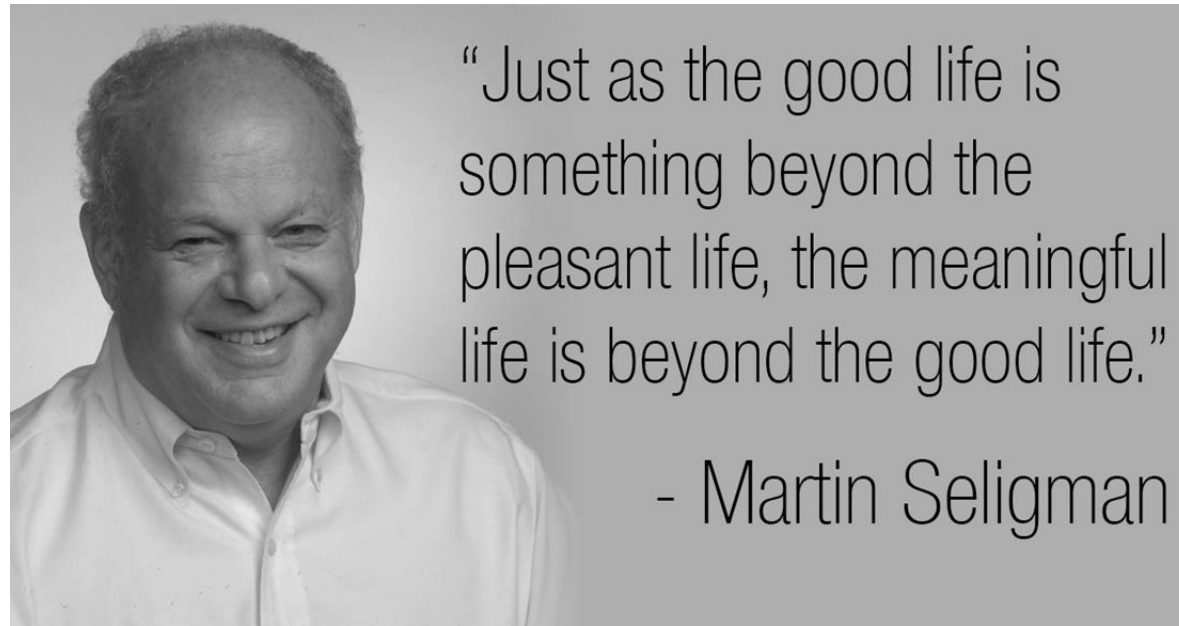




Total pleasure, 24/7/365?

What is positive psychology?

- Codified by Seligman around 1998 in recognition that psychology had lost 2 of its 3 original pillars:
 - Curing mental illness
 - Making the lives of all people productive & fulfilling
 - Identifying and nurturing talent



Mental Health/illness axis

- In healthy participants, while 93% report no clinically significant depression or anxiety, only 23% report flourishing well-being
 - Moderate well-being: 67%
 - Languishing: 10%
- Take-home: An absence of depression is not the same as happiness!



Try a “Happiness” Test: The Flourishing Scale

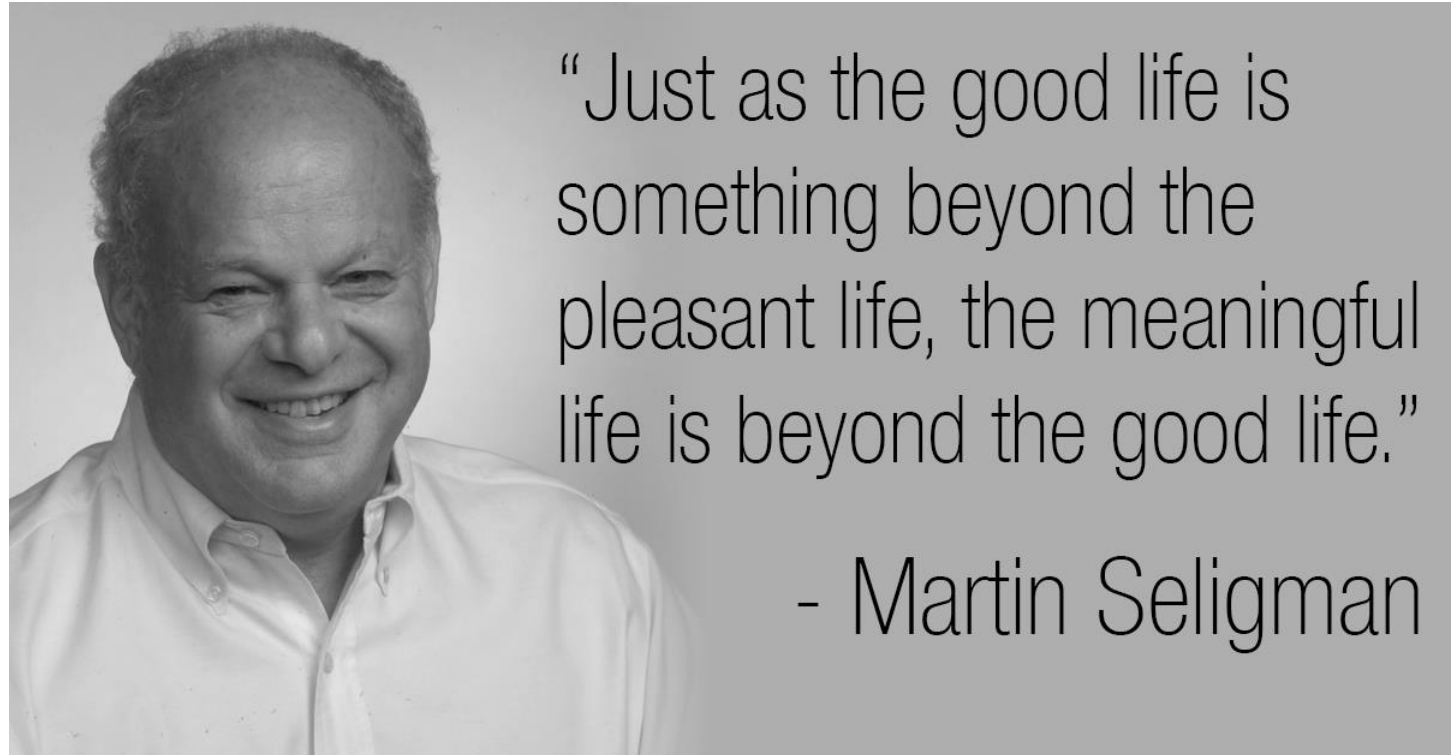
- _____ I lead a purposeful and meaningful life
- _____ My social relationships are supportive and rewarding
- _____ I am engaged and interested in my daily activities
- _____ I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others
- _____ I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me
- _____ I am a good person and live a good life
- _____ I am optimistic about my future
- _____ People respect me

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree



The secret to happiness?....PERMA

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- (Positive) Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment



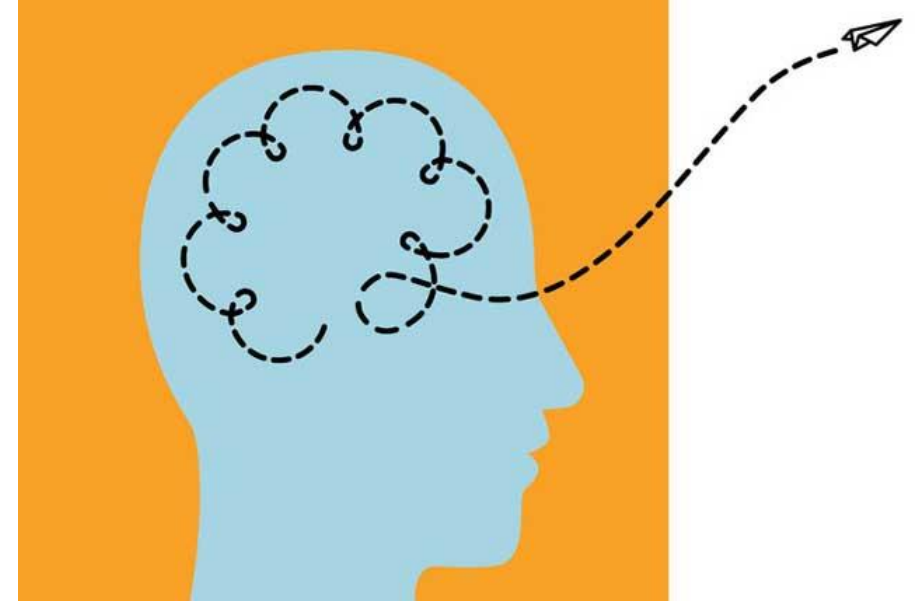
THE LIMITS OF HAPPINESS?

- Hedonic treadmill:
 - We each have a happiness set-point, that is about 50% genetically determined (see Lykken & Tellegen, 1996)
 - After most events of whatever magnitude, our levels of happiness return to baseline (e.g., Brickman & Campbell 1971)

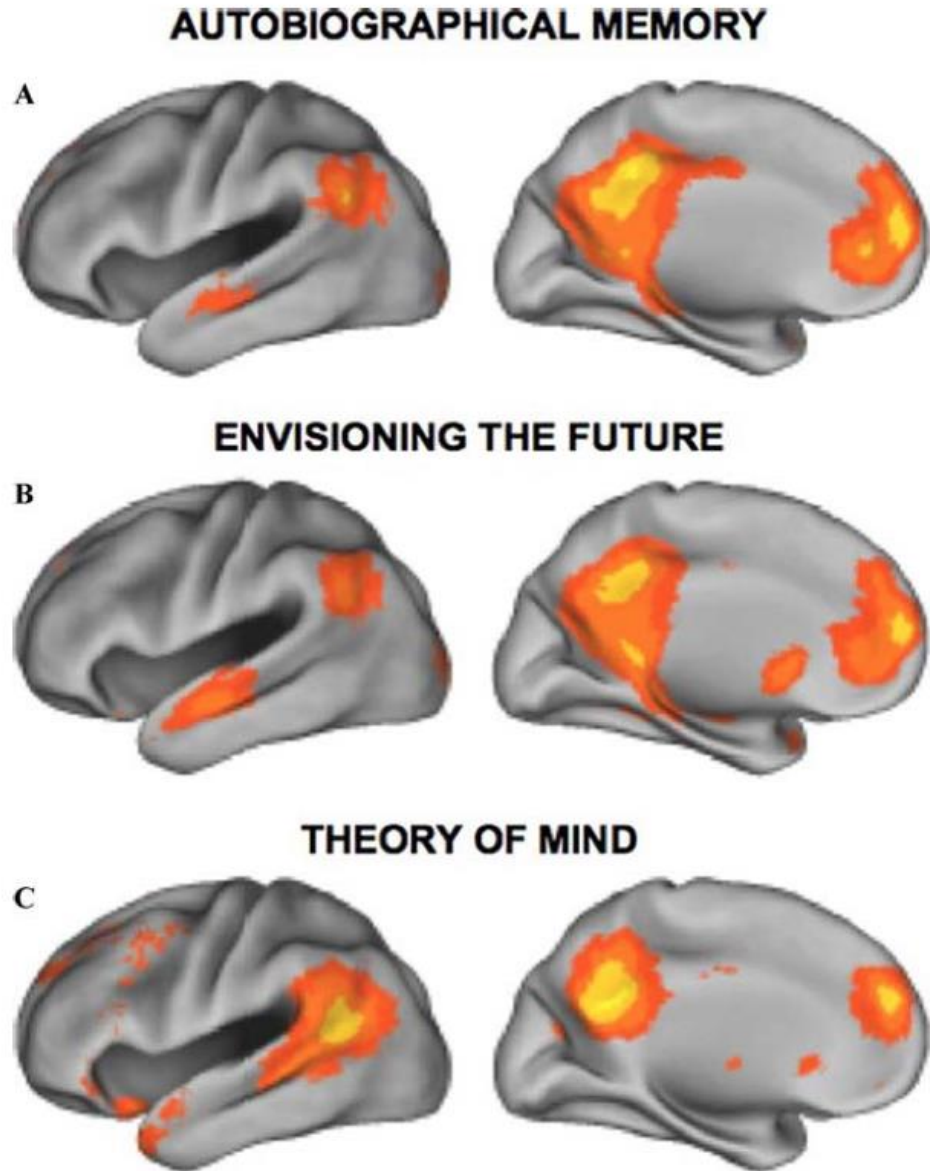


Mind-wandering

- Walking on the hedonic treadmill
 - Killington & Gilbert: a mind at rest is a mind at wander, and a mind unhappy
 - People spend almost 50% of the time mind-wandering
 - Mind-wandering loses out to being present with your current activity, even if it's not your favorite activity
 - It's about PRESENT, not PLEASANT



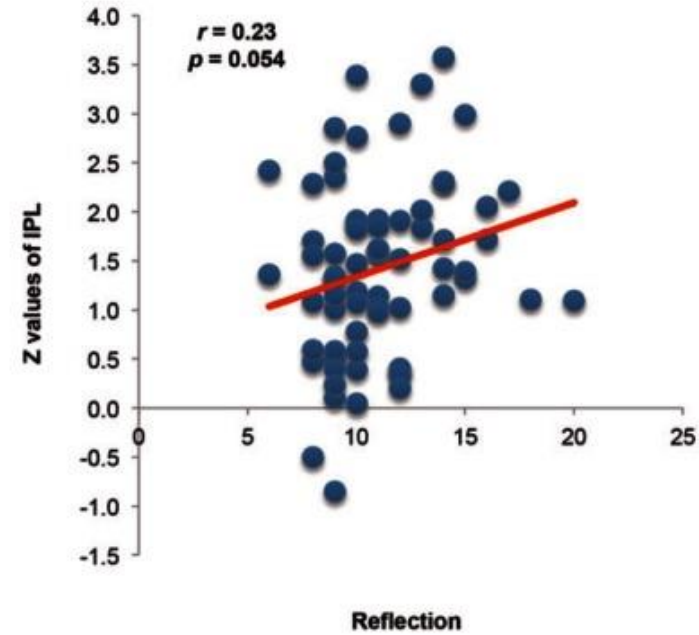
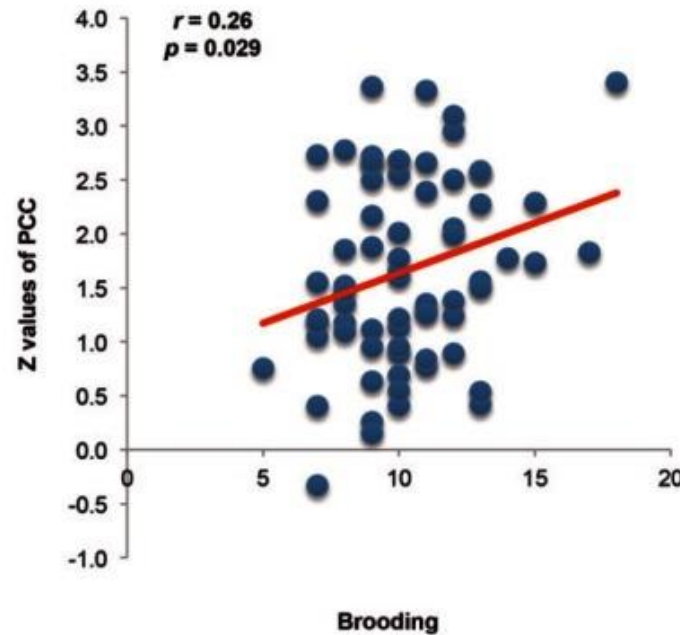
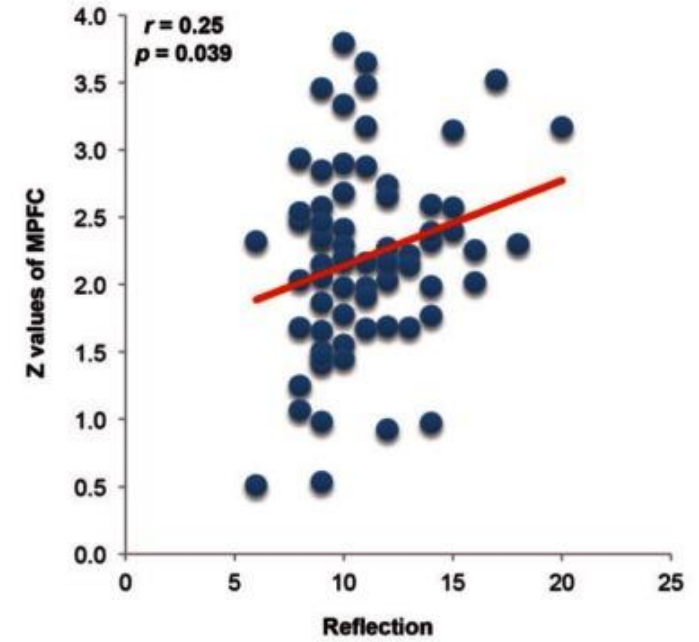
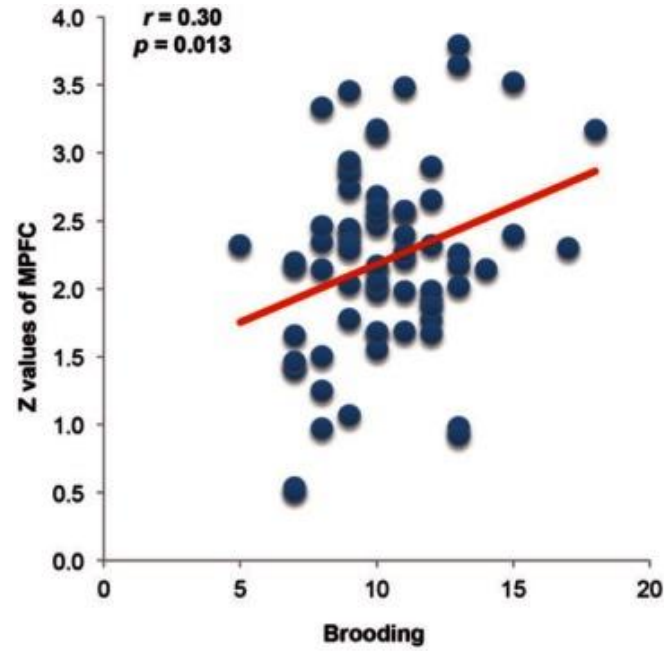
Default Mode Network Hubs



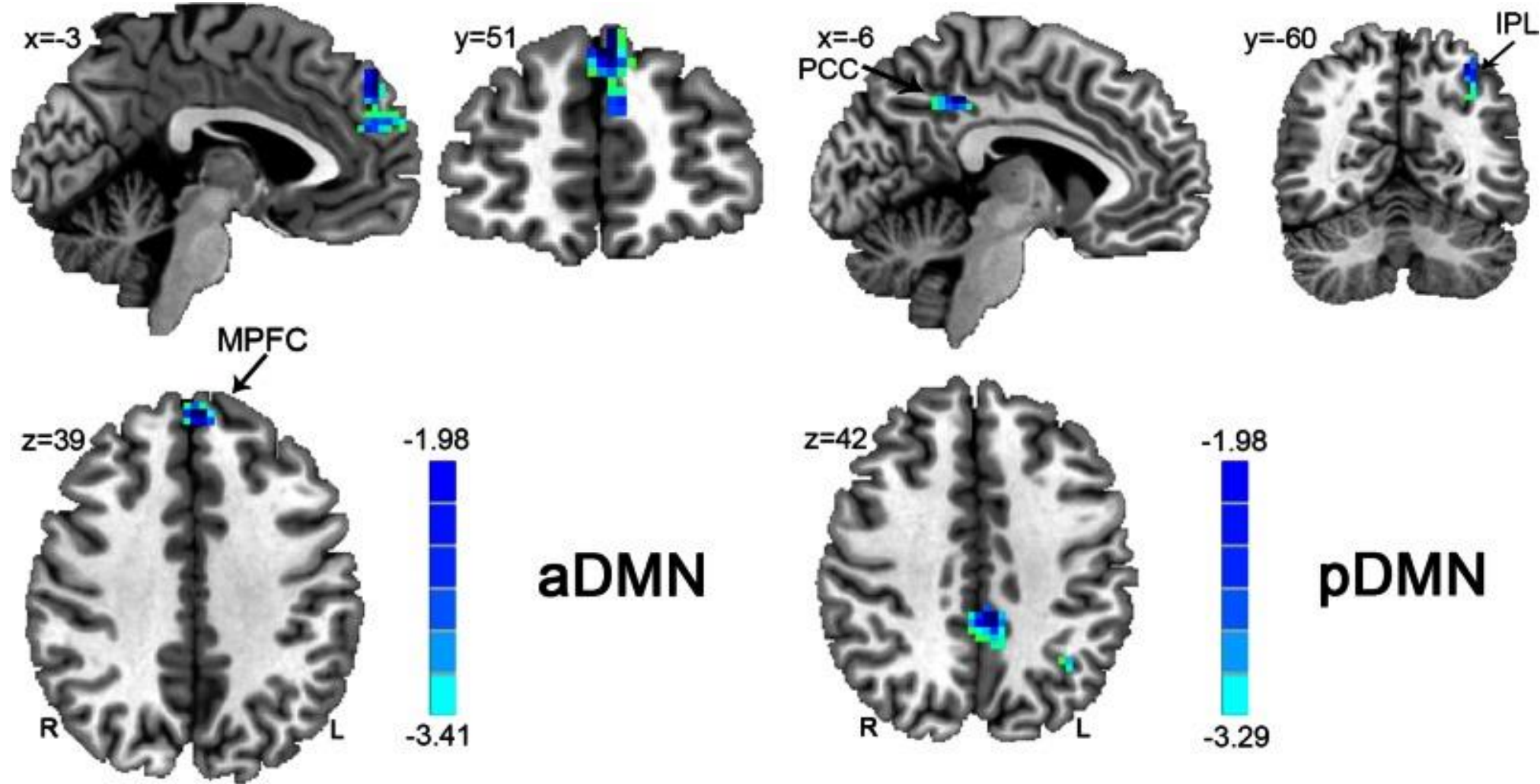
DMN primer

- DMN regions subserve certain functions, generally self-referential
 - Suppressed by active tasks
- When the DMN falls into the hands of evil
 - Rumination
 - Worry
 - Self-consciousness

- DMN rsFC correlates with rumination



Default happiness



Default happiness

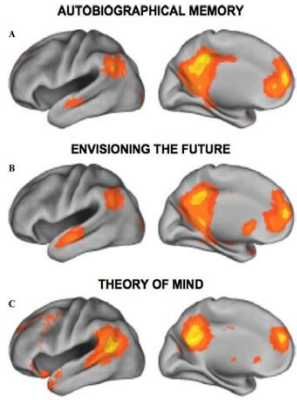
- DMN rsFC anticorrelates with happiness

- How do we jump off the hedonic treadmill?

Can we change happiness?

The secret to
having it all
is knowing you
already do

Default Mode Hubs



Take Home: Mind-Wandering

- When the DMN falls into the hands of evil:
 - Rumination
 - Worry
 - Self-consciousness
- Anti-correlates with happiness

- Antidote: Mindfulness
 - The practice of paying attention, non-judgmentally, to the present
 - In experienced meditators, DMN activity is reduced and DMN hubs show greater connectivity to task-positive brain areas (Brewer et al. 2011)
 - Even brief training can quiet DMN activity (Farb et al. 2010) and alter connectivity between DMN and sensory processing areas (Kilpatrick et al. 2011)

What can you do at home to practice?



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Tree of Contemplative Practices



Mind Full, or Mindful?



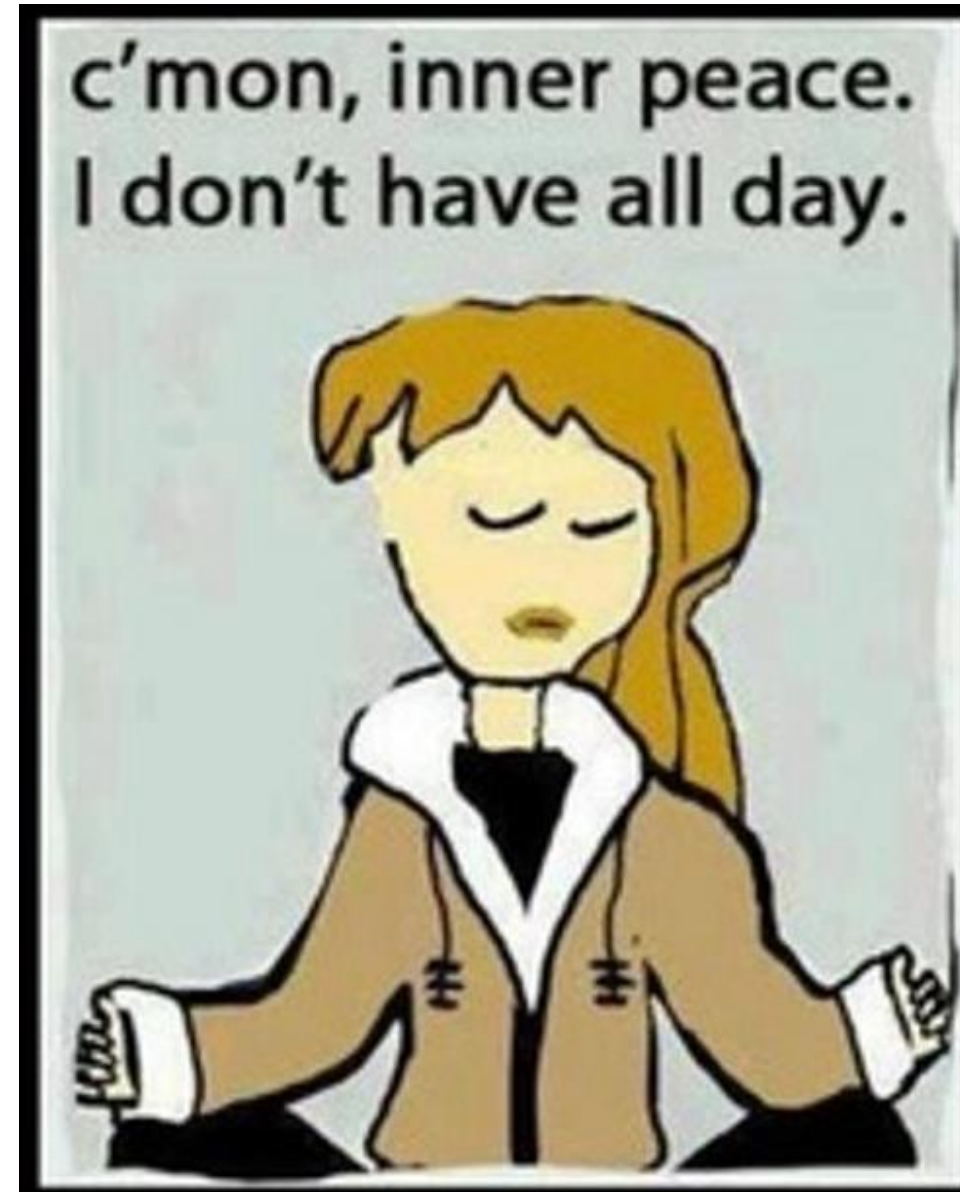
The Tree of Contemplative Practices

www.contemplativemind.org

- Practicing mindfulness can build our task-positive brain network and decrease mindlessness
- For further reading: [Dan Harris's 10% Happier](#)



Take-Home: Mindfulness



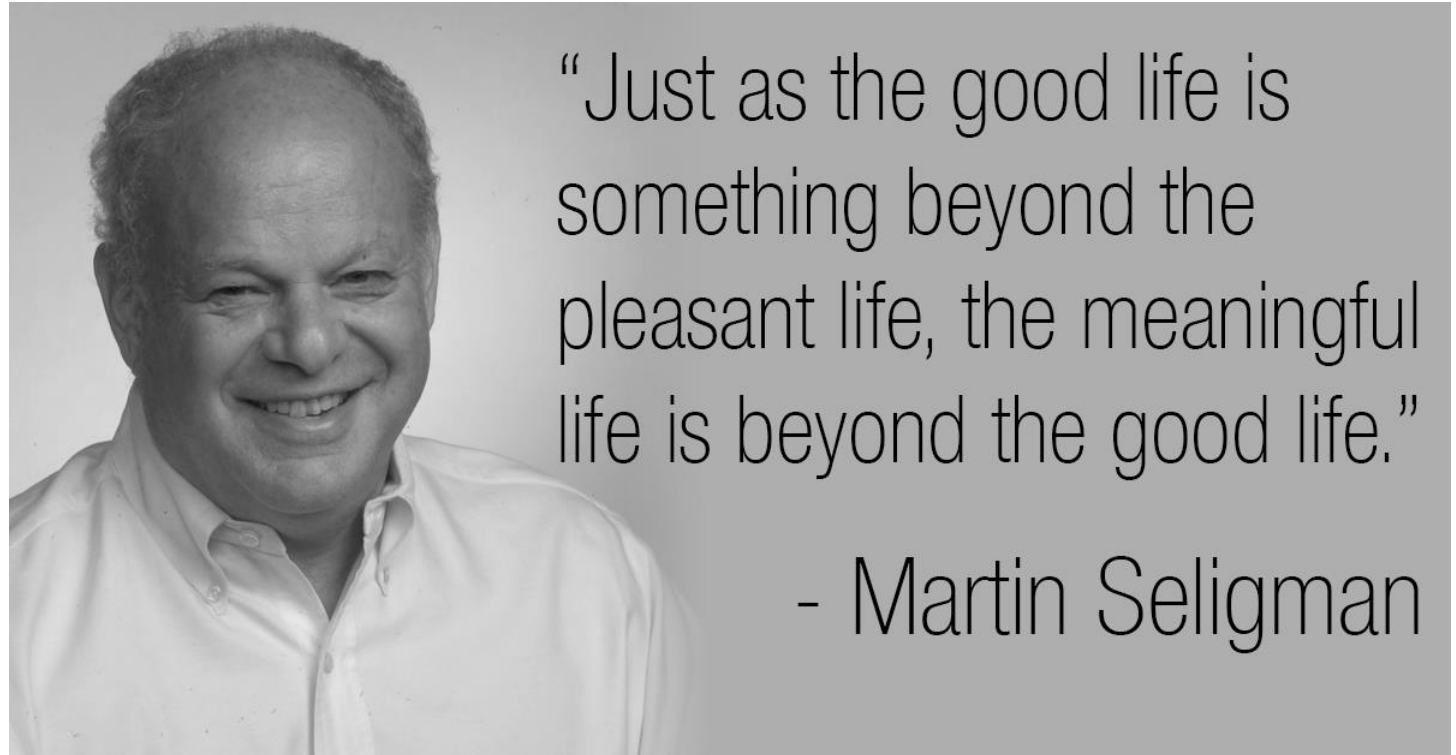


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- Engagement
- **Positive Relationships**
- Meaning
- Accomplishment



What's so good about relationships?



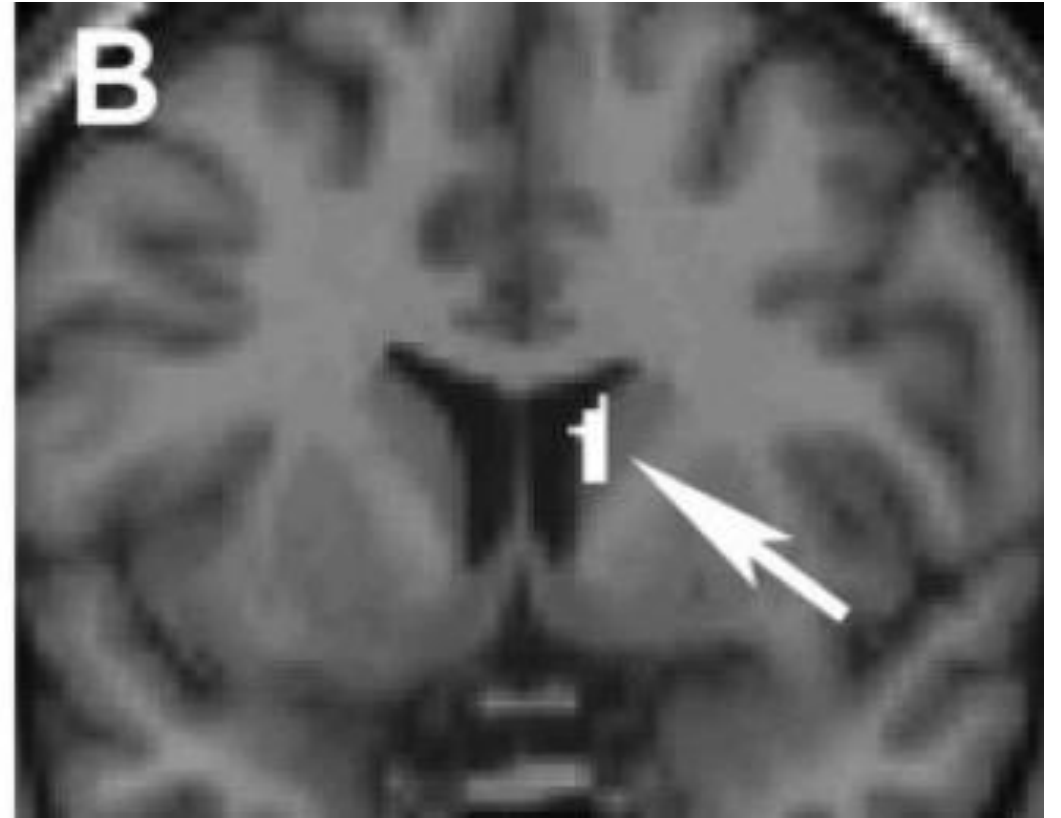
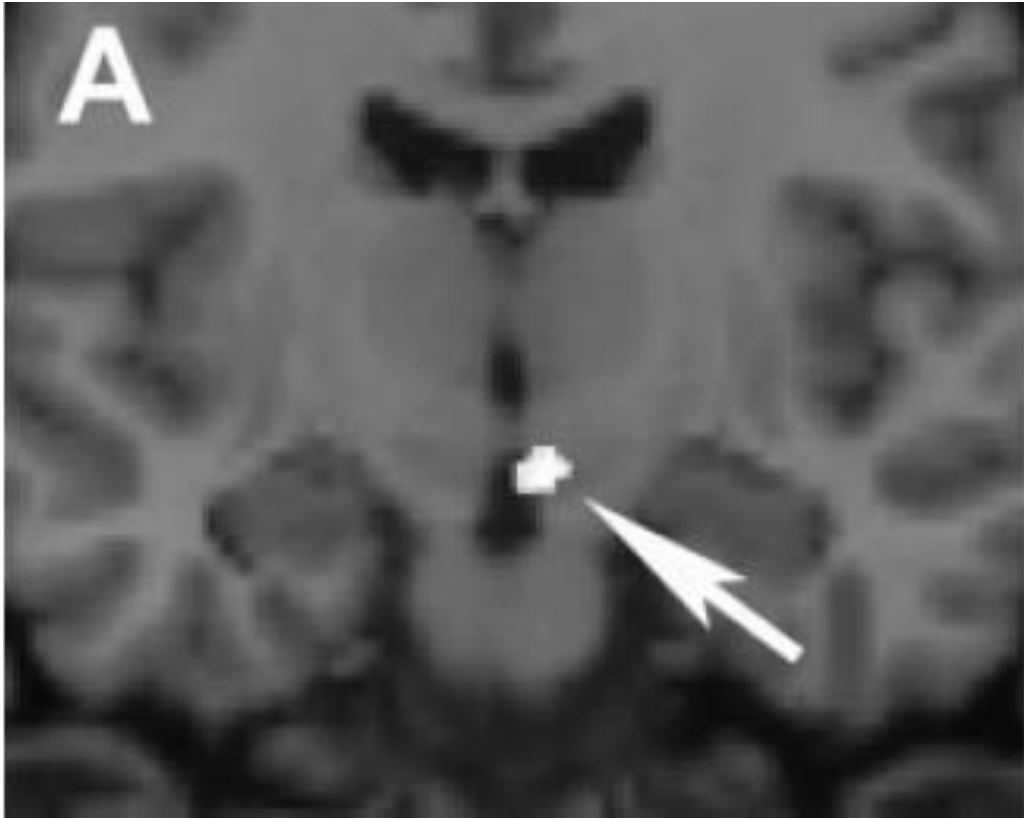
- In positive psychology research, positive relationships show the most consistent and strong correlations with well-being
 - Social networks correlate with decreased mortality (Berman & Syme 1975)
 - Lack of social ties is a mortality risk factor as great as smoking or high blood pressure (House, Landis, Umberson, 1988)
 - Social ties correlate with healthy immune, cardiovascular, and endocrine functioning across 81 studies (Uchino, Cacioppo, Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996)
 - Relationships correlate highly with happiness and life satisfaction (Diener & Seligman, 2002)

What do relationships do for our brains?

- Put lovers in an fMRI scanner
- Activation specific to lover-viewing included:
 - Right VTA (pleasure, motivation, focused attention)
 - Caudate nucleus (reward predictions, integration of sensory input to prepare for action, activated by predicted monetary reward too)
- R caudate activation correlated with questionnaire-rated intensity of romantic love



Helen Fisher: Relationship neuroscience



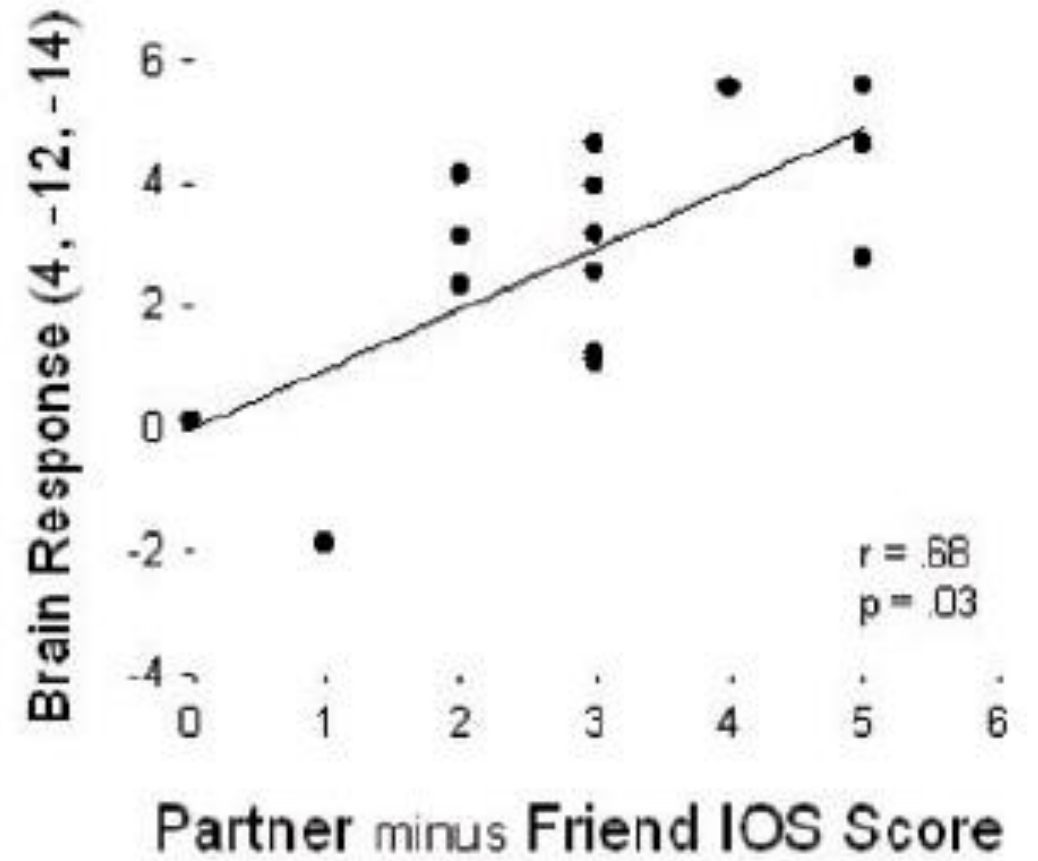
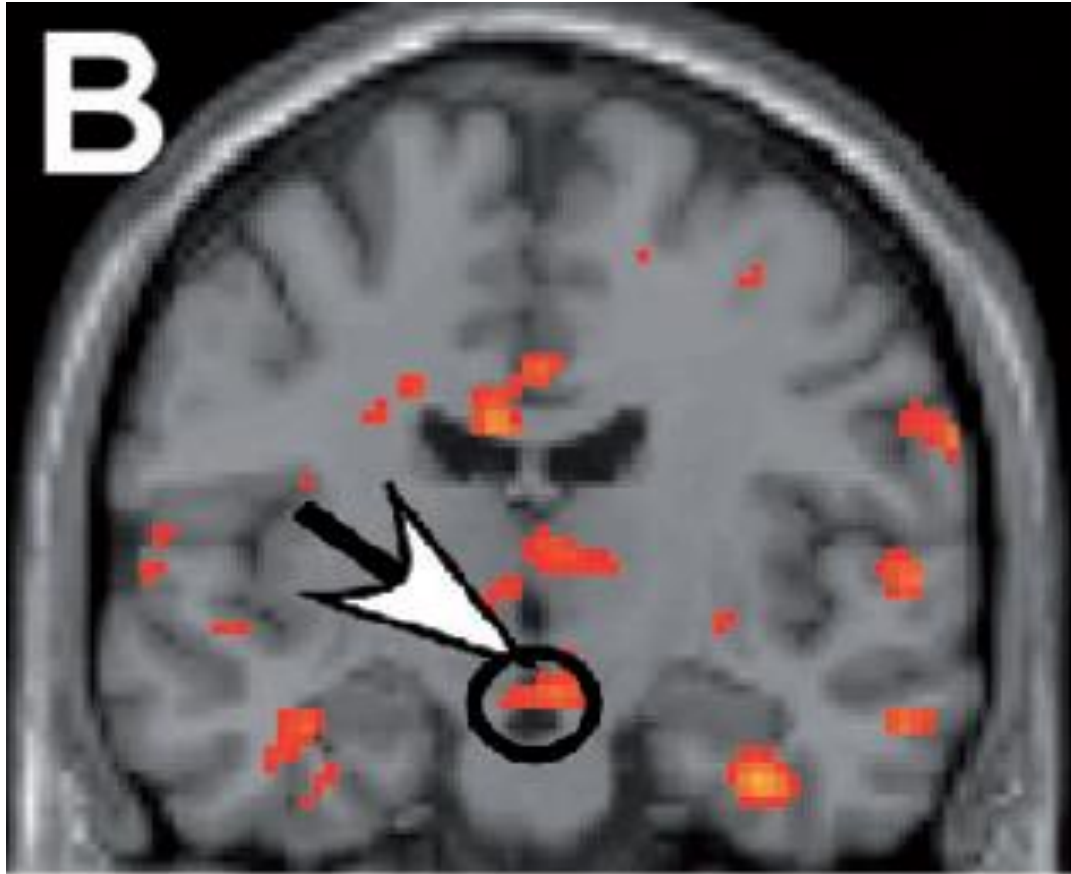
Helen Fisher: romantic love

What do long-term relationships do for our brains?

- Activation specific to lover-viewing included:
 - Similar VTA & Caudate activation to early-stage love
 - Regions correlated with love intensity as Study 1
 - Pallidus/putamen activity (among other areas) correlated with attachment aspects of long-term love



Helen Fisher: Relationship neuroscience



Helen Fisher: Long-term love

What can you do at home to practice?



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Building Relationships



- 36 questions
- Active-constructive responding
- Storycorps

Building Relationships

36 QUESTIONS *How to fall in love*



- 36 questions
- Storycorps

Constructive

Passive
Constructive

Active
Constructive

Passive

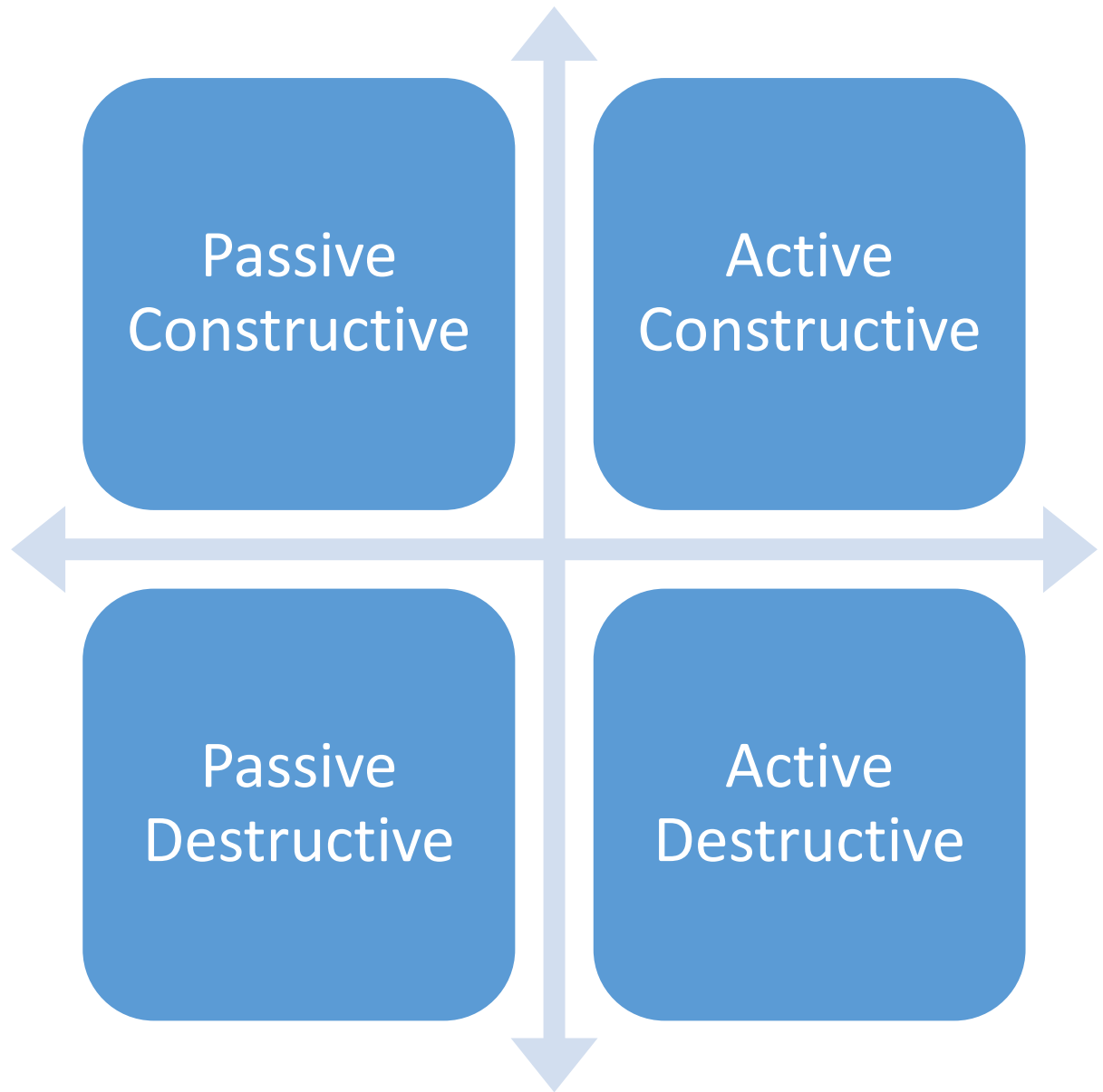
Passive
Destructive

Active
Destructive

Active

Destructive

Active-constructive
responding



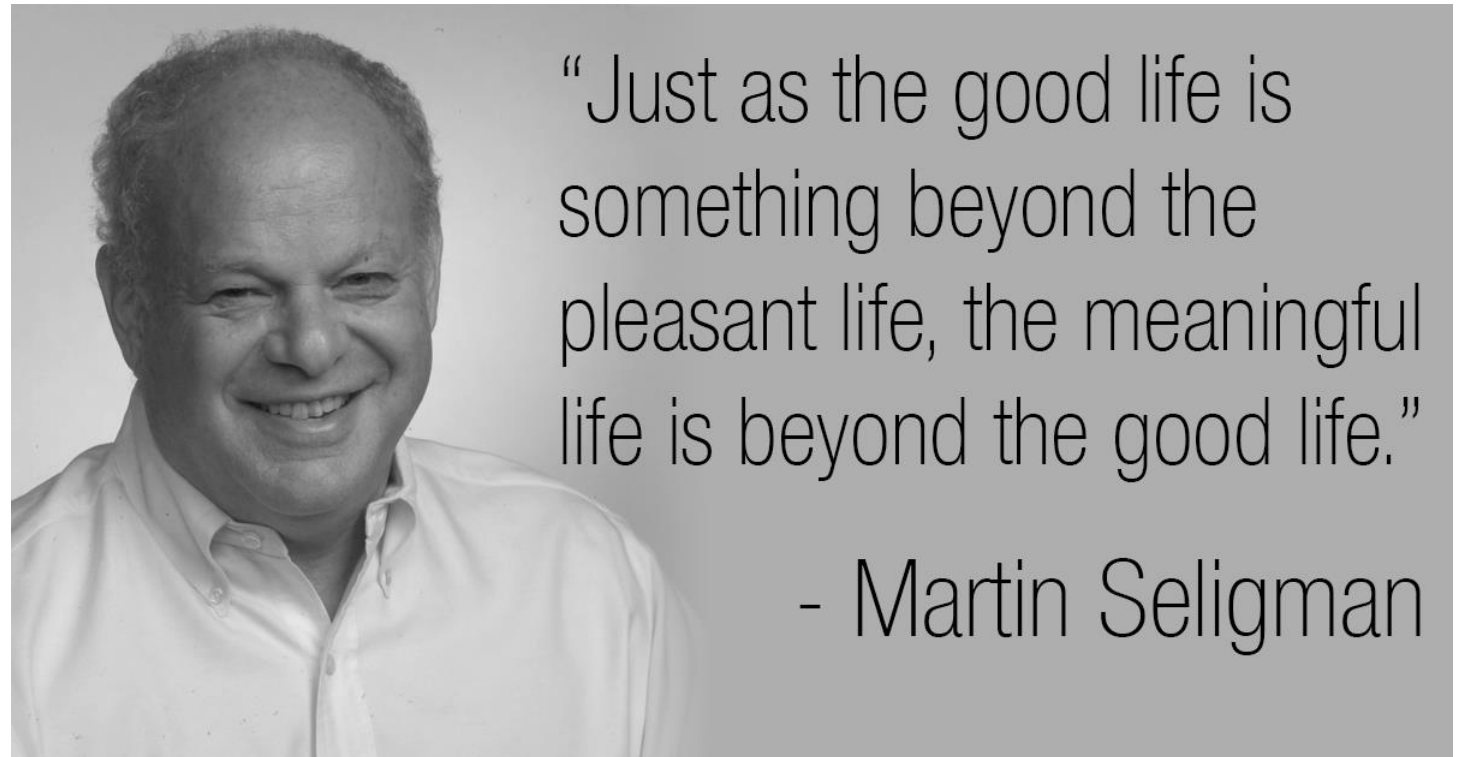


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- Positive Emotions
- **Engagement**
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- Flow is a psychological state that accompanies highly engaging activities

(Peterson 2006)

- Characterized by:
 - Complete absorption, unable to be distracted
 - Lack of concern for outcomes or rewards; intrinsic motivation
 - Time moves quickly
 - Instinctual feel, working with all your resources in harmony



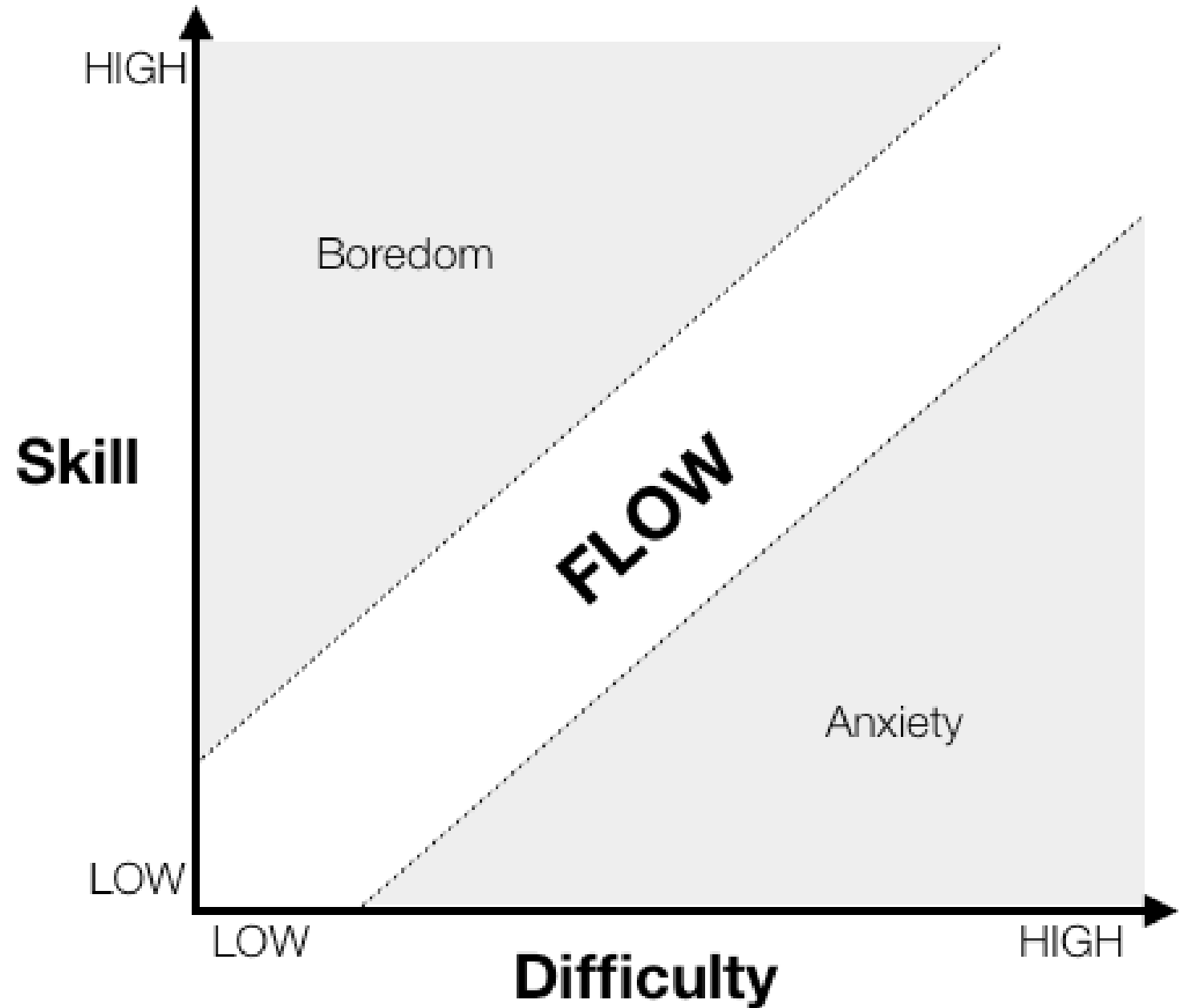
In the FLOW

- Flow is generated when there is an optimal mix between skill & challenge
 - Not too easy, not too hard
 - Does NOT require expertise, but requires some skill
 - Challenge should be pushing your skill level but within grasp
 - Usually occurs in voluntary activities
 - Correlated with later creative achievement

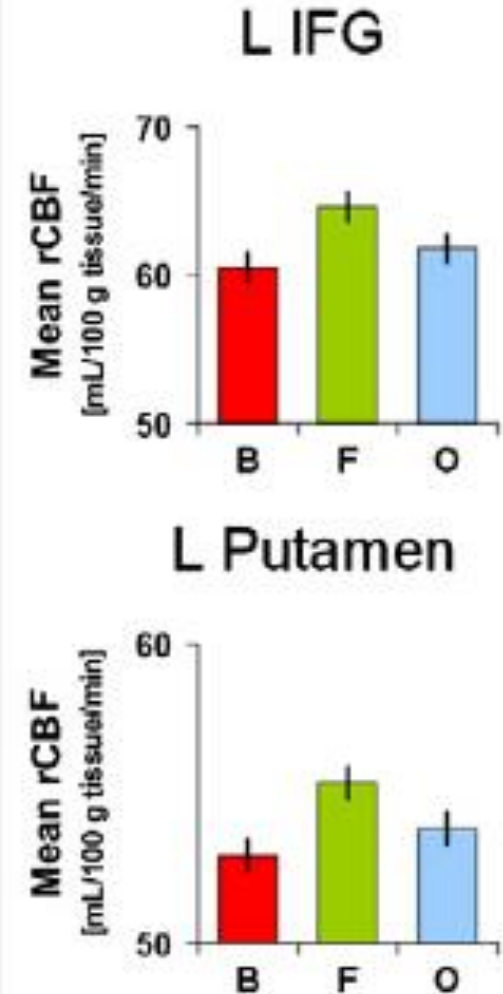
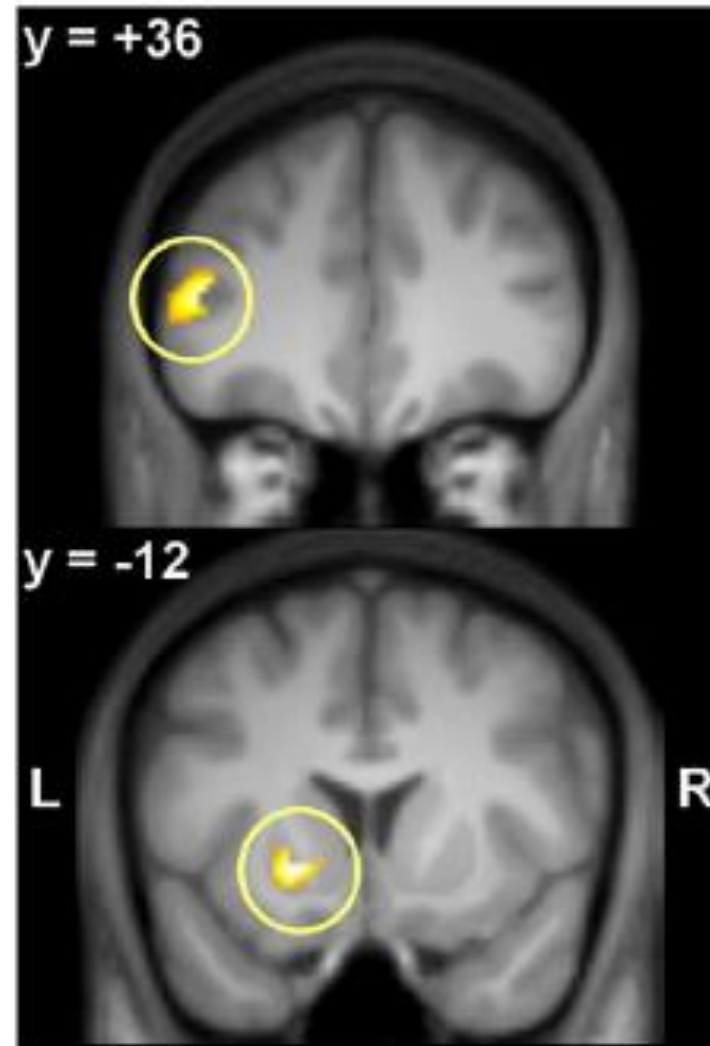
In the FLOW



In the Flow



- Imaging a flow state (math that makes you think)
 - Activity decreases in Default Mode Network (PCC, mPFC) and amygdala (negative arousal)
 - And increases in inferior frontal gyri (arithmetic, cognitive control), basal ganglia (reward/planning)



Flow in the Brain

What can you do at home to practice?



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Building Flow into your Week

- Engagement is cultivated by practicing our signature character strengths in novel ways (Seligman 2011):
 1. Go to <https://strengthsbasedresilience.com/assessments/ssq72> and take the Strengths Survey to identify your signature strengths*
 2. Choose the strength you identify with the most (“I really feel in my element when demonstrating this strength—like it’s part of who I am”)
 3. Google “Tayyab Rashid 340 Ways” and find new ways to practice your signature strengths every day

*For a more comprehensive (and still free) assessment, go to AuthenticHappiness.org and take the VIA Strengths Survey



Practicing Signature Strengths

IV. Love of learning: *Love of learning involves enthusiastically studying new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge. People with this strength enjoy the cognitive engagement of acquiring new skills or satisfying their curiosity, even when the material benefits of learning may not be immediately available. Love of learning allows people to persist in the face of frustrations and obstacles that arise during the course of education, both formal and informal.*

Movies: *Billy Elliot (2000), A Beautiful Mind (2001)*

Songs: *On the Road to Find Out (Cat Stevens)*

1. Deliberately learn five new words, including their meaning and usage, at least twice a week.
2. Visit a new museum every month and write about new things learned.
3. Read a non-fiction book monthly on a topic you find absorbing and engaging.
4. Read and research about a topic by visiting the library at least once a week. Write one page of pragmatic ideas which can advance that field and discuss them with someone.
5. Converse with someone on a topic of mutual interest.
6. Follow an ongoing global event through newspapers, TV or internet.
7. Join a local book club.
8. Attend new gallery/exhibition openings in your area.
9. Read aloud with your loved ones.
10. Arrange a teach-learn date with a friend, learn a skill, and teach what you are best at.

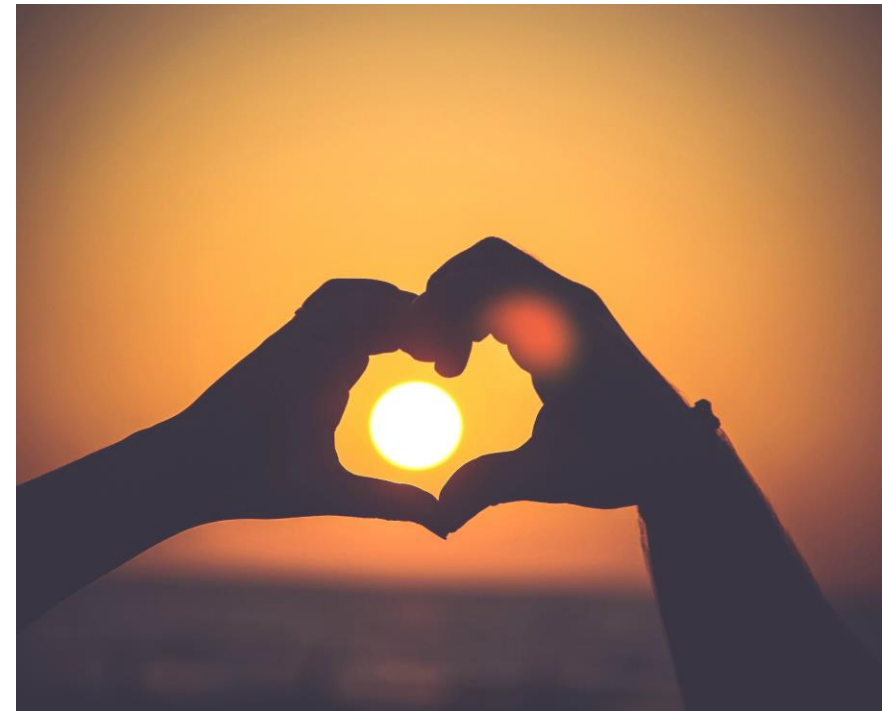
Flow take-home

- Flow is a harmonious state of engaged activity that can be achieved with a balance between your skills and your goals
- Further information:
 - *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi)
 - Ted Talks by Csikszentmihalyi



Overall take-home:

- Brain networks: What you **practice**, grows stronger.
- Habits of **mindfulness**, practicing your **strengths**, and building **relationships** may boost your well-being and reduce depression/burnout while enhancing your performance.
- These same practices may help enhance the well-being of the families with whom we work.



Practice Effects

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters by Portia Nelson

- **Chapter One:** I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost . . . I am helpless. It isn't my fault . . . It takes forever to find a way out.
- **Chapter Two:** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in this same place. But it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.
- **Chapter Three:** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall . . . it's a habit . . . but, my eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.
- **Chapter Four:** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.
- **Chapter Five:** I walk down another street.





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Questions and Reflections?



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