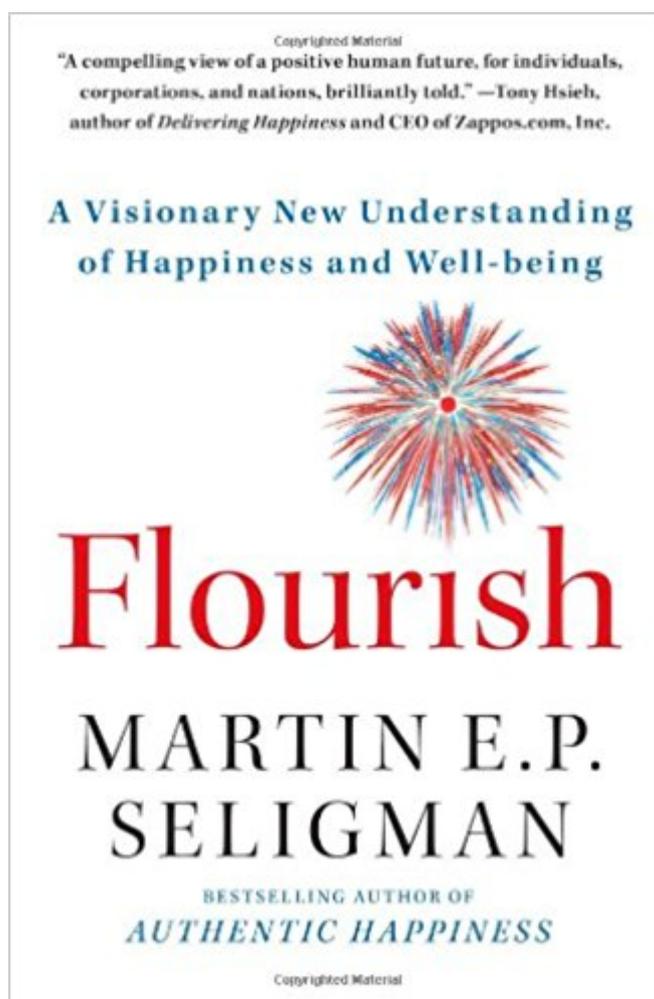


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# Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding Of Happiness And Well-being



## Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness* comes *Flourish*—“a relentlessly optimistic guidebook on finding and securing individual happiness” (Kirkus Reviews). “This book will help you flourish.” With this unprecedented promise, internationally esteemed psychologist Martin Seligman begins *Flourish*, his first book in ten years and the first to present his dynamic new concept of what well-being really is. Traditionally, the goal of psychology has been to relieve human suffering, but the goal of the Positive Psychology movement, which Dr. Seligman has led for fifteen years, is different—it’s about actually raising the bar for the human condition. *Flourish* builds on Dr. Seligman’s game-changing work on optimism, motivation, and character to show how to get the most out of life, unveiling an electrifying new theory of what makes a good life—for individuals, for communities, and for nations. In a fascinating evolution of thought and practice, *Flourish* refines what Positive Psychology is all about. While certainly a part of well-being, happiness alone doesn’t give life meaning. Seligman now asks, What is it that enables you to cultivate your talents, to build deep, lasting relationships with others, to feel pleasure, and to contribute meaningfully to the world? In a word, what is it that allows you to flourish? “Well-being takes the stage front and center, and Happiness (or Positive Emotion) becomes one of the five pillars of Positive Psychology, along with Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—or PERMA, the permanent building blocks for a life of profound fulfillment. Thought-provoking in its implications for education, economics, therapy, medicine, and public policy—the very fabric of society—*Flourish* tells inspiring stories of Positive Psychology in action, including how the entire U.S. Army is now trained in emotional resilience; how innovative schools can educate for fulfillment in life and not just for workplace success; and how corporations can improve performance at the same time as they raise employee well-being. With interactive exercises to help readers explore their own attitudes and aims, *Flourish* is a watershed in the understanding of happiness as well as a tool for getting the most out of life. On the cutting edge of a science that has changed millions of lives, Dr. Seligman now creates the ultimate extension and capstone of his bestselling classics, *Authentic Happiness* and *Learned Optimism*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Seligman, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania and the guru of the "positive psychology" movement, abandons his previous emphasis on happiness, which he now views as simplistic, to examine how individuals might achieve a richer, multilayered goal: a life of well-being. He identifies four factors that can help individuals thrive: positive emotion, engagement with what one is doing, a sense of accomplishment, and good relationships. Those expecting a guide on how to achieve these goals will be disappointed; Seligman's approach is largely conceptual and empirical, although he has some useful things to say, such as how even soldiers with PTSD can be taught resilience to recover and even grow from their traumas, and how students of all ages can be taught focus, delayed gratification, and GRIT, a combination of drive and perseverance. But Seligman includes too much on the mechanics of conducting his studies. Also, he can be self-congratulatory regarding his own theory, and harsh and reductionist on traditional treatments ("psychology-as-usual" -- the psychology of victims and negative emotions and alienation and pathology and tragedy"). This is a potentially important book whose impact may be limited by its flaws. (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"Repaves the path to true happiness. A relentlessly optimistic guidebook on finding and securing individual happiness." --Kirkus "Important" --Publishers Weekly "I was immediately charmed... Seligman's intentions are admirable and exciting. He is consumed by his mission, which is to take psychology on from its traditional role in alleviating misery, and broaden it into positive psychology -- the entirely different art of teaching us how to be wiser, stronger, more generous to others, more self-disciplined, and more capable of dealing with difficulty and rejection... The book is

full of nuggets about why positive approaches work." The Sunday Times

I did not even know there was a field of study called "positive psychology" until I saw Dr. Seligman's Ted talk. What he said, how he said it, spoke to me. I decided to buy his happiness book, and on the way to do that discovered he had a newer book... this one. I bought it and could not put it down. The man has a rich vocabulary, and I'm sure that turns some people off... you will see words that rarely appear outside of a college entrance exam and none of that diminishes the value and impact of the insights he shares and the science he explains. I've seen the reviews, several, suggesting the book should be better organized. I completely disagree with those reviews. Having read through the book in just a few days I can say it was structured very cohesively for me; nothing was introduced before a foundation was in place to support a strong understanding. Why only 4 stars? Maybe I don't like having to dig back into the memories of long forgotten vocabulary tests to parse out the few sentences that challenged my powers of context deduction. No fluff, all deep stuff.

Published nine years after [book:Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment|28012], this book bills itself as a sequel to that book, saying that the Authentic Happiness model is incomplete. I liked reading Authentic Happiness better. Chapter 1 of this book makes a case for a more complete model, and describes that model. The rest of the book seemed like a travel log. The end of the book claims that this is good psychology despite the claims of critics. The model proposed in this book is: Positive emotion (of which happiness and life satisfaction are all aspects) Engagement Relationships Meaning Achievement (Page 24) I read a Kindle edition, and liked how references were done. There would be a phrase in colored text. Clicking on it took me to that endnote. Going back was just as easy. (Either the back arrow, or click on the colored text at the start of the endnote.) A Kindle disappointment: The Table of Contents on an iPad had ten chapters, but on the Mac Kindle reader, instead of 10 chapters it just list Part 1 & Part 2. In summary: Authentic Happiness is more engaging reading. This book gives some information on what has happened in the intervening nine years.

This book is packed with so much valuable information. I found it particularly helpful to know that the way we are born and raised does not have to be the way we are for our entire lives. It is within our control to be more positive and small daily habits can help reinforce what you are hoping to accomplish. The research studies that are included make the book even more interesting although

you may need to read a little more slowly to absorb all the content.

Seligman, as he describes himself in the book, stands at the intersection of applied and basic research. As he notes, it can be a lonely place, but it results in a brilliant and useful book. This is a book that takes the conventional wisdom, of what psychology is about, and turns it into a new and useful direction. Instead of (largely ineffective) psychotherapy to manage depression or other negative psychological states, this book is about the positive psychology of how to flourish. In what I think is a nice bit of intellectual honesty, he reflects on his theory in his earlier book, *Authentic Happiness*, and in this book notes his errors and improves and expands his theory. There is an important warning here about academia. Seligman warns that too much of academic psychology is useless puzzle solving. Seligman wants academic psychology to pay more attention to solving real world psychological problems. This is an issue for psychology students at research intensive universities. Seligman states: "I mentally scanned (serially) the tenured faculty in the ten leading psychology departments in the world. Not a single one focused on work or on love or on play. They all worked on 'basic' processes: cognition, emotion, decision theory, perception. Where were the scholars who would help guide us about what makes life worth living?" (page 59). Seligman is equally critical of closed-minded clinical psychologists, such as those who opposed his initiatives for "evidence-based psychotherapy". In sum, this book represents the best of academic work as a public intellectual to help make life better through deep and insightful evidence-based analysis, clearly and interestingly written. As an aside, the book implicitly raises the public policy issue of how do the people who pay for their lifestyle, the taxpayers and tuition payers, motivate academics to more useful problem solving and less useless puzzle solving. And how do we prevent universities from doing to another generation what Seligman describes happened to him, that he was "miseducated". He states "Originally, I went into psychology to relieve human suffering and to increase human well-being. I thought I was well prepared to do this; but I was actually miseducated to this task. It took me decades to recover and to work my way out of solving puzzles and into solving problems." (page 55).

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