

## Positive Mental Health for Well-being to Attain Happiness

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### **Abstract**

*In the last two decades the concept of positive psychology has been elaborated. Positive outlook is the most effective criterion of good physical and mental health and the feelings of wellness. The focus of positive psychology is to develop positive emotions, strengths and good mental health so as to develop the ability to enjoy life and to maintain balance in life. Positive mental health means that the individual may develop ability to enjoy and produce a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Balance, freedom and resilience are the three characteristics of mental health. Hedonism defines well-being as the presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect. Eudemonia suggests that well-being does not consist in maximising positive experience and minimising negative ones but refers to living fully or to allow for the maximum human potential possible.*

*Mental health of the taught is very important for efficient learning and proper development of personality. Proper and conducive environment, affection, pleasant and satisfaction giving experiences, guidance etc. can help to build self confidence and harmonious development of the personality of the taught. For centuries Indian sages and thinkers have laid stress on the development of mental and physical health through yogic practices, asanas and meditation for well-being to attain happiness.*

**Keywords** -Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, Physical Health, Intellectual Health, Social Health, Emotional Health, Well-being, Positive Emotions for Well-being, Educational Institutions, Teacher, Taught and Meditation.

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According to W.H.O, 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Health is the condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit specially freedom from physical disease or pain. Recently researchers have defined health as the ability of a body to adapt to new threats and infirmities.

The *Lalonde Marc* Report suggests that there are four general determinants of health including human biology, environment, lifestyle and health care services. Thus health is maintained and improved not only through the advancement and application of health science but also through the efforts and intelligent lifestyle choices of the individual and society. People can improve their health by adopting a healthy lifestyle which includes exercise, enough sleep, maintain a healthy weight etc.

Mental health may be better understood by its comparison with physical health. A person is said to be physically healthy when his body is functioning well and is free from pains and troubles. Similarly a person is in good mental health when his mind or personality is functioning effectively and is free from emotional disturbances. Mental health is a term used to describe how well the individual is adjusted to the demands and opportunities of life. A mentally healthy person is one who is in harmony with his own self and consequently with those around him. The conscious and unconscious aspects of his mind are in tune with each other. According to modern concept, mental health is the capacity to keep oneself integrated in the face of stress and strain through integrative adjustment.

According to *Ladell*, mental health is the ability to make adequate adjustment to the environment on the plane of reality whereas K. A. Menninger defines mental health as the adjustment of human beings to the world and each other with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. It is the ability to maintain even temper, an alert intelligence, socially considerate behaviour and a happy disposition.

A mentally healthy person has tolerance power, self-confidence, emotional stability, knowledge of environment, ability to decide, practical philosophy of life, lives in real world, gives attention to physical health, has a sense of self-respect, personal safety, strong will-power, high aspiration, enthusiasm and capacity of self evaluation.

Positive mental health may be defined as an individual's ability to enjoy life and procure a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Mental health is an expression of our emotions and signifies a successful adaptation to arrange of demands.

Most recently the field of global mental health has emerged, which has been defined as “the area of study, research and practice that places a priority on improving mental health and achieving equity in mental health for all people worldwide”. In 1958 *M. Jahoda* produced a monograph entitled ‘Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health’ reviewing the then existing literature and research on the subject’. This included contributions to the literature looking at the concept of mental health, normality, happiness and self-actualisation. According to *Jahoda* the following six criteria are empirical indicators for positive mental health :

- v Positive attitudes towards the self.
- v Growth, development and self-actualisation including utilisation of abilities, future orientation, concern with work etc.
- v Integration, as in balance of psychic forces, the unifying of one’s outlook and resistance to stress and frustration.
- v Autonomy, as in self-determination, independent behaviour, and, when appropriate, non-conformity.
- v A true perception of reality.
- v Environmental mastery, meaning adequacy in love, work and play, adaptation and adjustment and the capacity to solve problems.

*Friedman* in 1980 surveyed a large number of Americans on happiness. He reported that the single most important predictor of happiness was the presence of a loving relationship with someone followed by satisfaction at work. *Friedman* also found that the objective level of success, wealth, independence and freedom had little predictive value of happiness of the individual while more subjective elements such as a sense of confidence in life values, sense of purposefulness and meaning in life, sense of mastery of fate etc. were more important determinants of one’s happiness.

On the basis of the above viewpoints, clinical experience, critical observation and research studies the criteria of positive mental health includes adequate feeling of personal worth, feeling of security, feeling of self-confidence, understanding of self, understanding of others, emotional maturity, integration of personality, vocational relationships and adequate basic harmony.

Positive mental health helps one in developing desirable personality, proper emotional development, proper social development, proper aesthetic development, actualising one’s potentialities, seeking proper adjustment, seeking goals of life, progress of the society and in preventing mental illness. Thus there is nothing to be called as

a perfect mental health. It is a fiction not reality. It is a dynamic concept, it can't be achieved without good physical health. It is a health of one's mind which can prove a potent determinant of one's integrated personality and balanced behaviour identified on the basis of the level of its adjustment to his self, others and environment.

According to *Hawks*, "The correlation between *Maslow's* hierarchy of needs and the dimensions of health provides a theoretical framework that supports the definition of spiritual health and that describes how spiritual health relates to and interacts with the other dimensions of health". There is a relationship between spiritual health and Maslow's concept of self-esteem. Spiritual health is based on faith in a world view that advocates path to fulfilment. This path embodies the values, beliefs and behaviours necessary to achieve meaning within the world view. Self-esteem occurs when the individual lives with the value system that results in faith and spirituality. There is a positive correlation between spiritual wellbeing and self-esteem.

Physical health relates to body composition, muscular strength and endurance, cardio-respiratory fitness and flexibility. Most of these are closely associated with Maslow's physical needs for proper nutrition, activity, shelter and protection from the environment. Physical health is a prerequisite for wellness in other dimensions of health, but high levels of physical wellness also significantly enhances the other dimensions of health.

Intellectual health signifies the ability to reason, analysis, evaluate, create and make rational decisions. "Once achieved intellectual health becomes the primary tool for developing social relationships, comprehending and choosing spiritual beliefs and achieving emotional health". One achieves social health when one feels genuine love, acceptance and a sense of belonging with the larger social unit. There is a direct correlation between the concept of spiritual health and Maslow's concept of love and acceptance needs. Positive social health is must for the development of spiritual health. Those with peak emotional health find beauty and connectedness in life, tolerance and acceptance of others and full acceptance of self. Similarly Maslow's self-actualisation occurs as individual achieve their full potential as human beings as manifested through fulfilling relationships, the full development and expression of talents and abilities, and a sense of fulfilment and purpose in life. The researchers have found significant positive correlation between spiritual wellbeing and hardiness.

Mental wellness is a positive attribute, such that a person can reach enhanced level of mental health, even if they do not have any diagnosable mental health condition. This definition of mental health highlights emotional wellbeing, the capacity to live a

full and creative life and the flexibility to deal with life's inevitable challenges. The wellness model has been developed by *Myers, Sweeney and Witmer*. It includes *five life tasks* – Essence of Spirituality, Work and Leisure, Friendship, Love and Self-direction. It also includes *twelve sob-tasks* – Sense of Worth, Sense of Control, Realistic Beliefs, Emotional Awareness, Coping, Problem solving and Creativity, Sense of Humour, Nutrition, Exercise, Self-care, Stress Management, Gender Identity and Culture Identity.

Both positive and negative psychological factors have a strong relationship with health. Negative factors lead to quicker progression of diseases like AIDS and Cancer towards death and also to a faster onset of symptoms in those patients who have previously been asymptomatic. Many new studies have revealed that ability to keep optimistic (i.e. a positive psychological factor) however unrealistic it may be and the ability to find meaning in face of adversity seem to be physical health protective behaviour. In the field of modern psychology hedonic psychologists consider mental health to be a subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing usually includes affective balance and perceived life satisfaction. The basic concepts of Hedonic wellbeing are Pleasure, Positive / Negative Affect, Affective Balance, Positive Emotions, Net Affect and Life Satisfaction.

The Eudemonic concept establishes that wellbeing lies in the performance of actions coherent with deep values that imply a full commitment with which people feel alive and real. The basic concepts of Eudemonic wellbeing are Virtues, Self-fulfilment, Psychological Growth, Aims and Needs, Psychological Strengths, Self-acceptance, Positive Relations with Others, Environmental Mastery, Autonomy, Purpose in Life and Personal Growth.

Mental health of the student is very important for his all-round development. Now a days the campus of most of the institutions is rampant with such incidences as smoking in the presence of authorities, bunking classes, criticizing authorities, destroying institutional properties, stealing and drinking in the hostel premises, teasing girl students, disturbing peace of the class, gangsterism, organising strikes, excessive cinema going, defying orders and traditions of the institution, using unfair means in the examination etc. which adversely affects the mental health of the students. The teacher of today has to acquire enough skill in the psychopathology of students' undesirable behaviour so that he is able to retaliate and proceed him on the path of progress, growth and development.

For centuries Indian sages and thinkers have laid stress on mental and physical health through Yogic practices and Asanas (breathing and physical exercises) and

Meditation. This fact was recognised in the sixties by many psychologists like *Allport (1961) and Maslow (1968)*. As a result of it there was introduced practice of meditation into western scientific study. According to *Shapiro (1980)* “Meditation refers to a family of techniques which have in common a conscious attempt to focus attention in a non-analytical way, and an attempt not to dwell on discursive, ruminating thoughts. This definition has three important components. First the word conscious is used explicitly to introduce the importance of the intention to focus attention. Second the definition is independent of religious framework or orientation. Finally the word attempt is used throughout, which places an emphasis on the process as opposed to the specific end goals or results”.

*Goleman (1972)* proposed two types of techniques for meditation – Concentrative Meditation and Mindfulness Meditation. In concentrative meditation technique there is an attempt to restrict awareness by focussing attention on a single object. Attention is focussed in a non-analytical, unemotional way in order to directly experience the object of meditation. In mindfulness meditation, an attempt is made to attend non-judgementally to all stimuli in the internal or external environment but not to get caught up in any particular stimuli. Mindfulness meditation is referred to as an opening up meditation practice. It is suggested that a third category of technique of contemplative meditation may also be introduced. Contemplative meditation involves opening and surrendering to a larger self (i.e. God).

Meditation appears to result in improvement in intelligence, school grades. Learning ability and short term or long term recall. Meditation is also found to be associated with positive personality characteristics. There has been found a significant increase in personality growth as a function of length of meditation. *Ven Den Berg and Mulder (1976)* in their two studies conducted to examine changes in personality brought about by the practice of Transcendental Meditation(TM) found significant reduction in physical and social inadequacy, neuroticism, depression and rigidity and also that long term meditators showed remarkable high level of self-esteem, satisfaction, ego strength, self-actualisation and trust in others as well as improved self image.

### **Conclusion**

A person with positive mental health has adequate feelings of personal worth, security, self-confidence, self-respect, maintains cordial relations with people without disturbance and is emotionally stable. Thus positive psychology and positive outlook develops good physical and mental health. Positive feelings improve mental health and minimize negative experiences which lead to mental hygiene. A positive minded

educand enjoys life activities to maximum that leads to harmonious development of personality due to transcendental meditation, yogic practices and asanas and is able to attain inner happiness for well-being.

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