

**The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing**  
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**Module No # 04**  
**Lecture No # 15**  
**Pro-Sociality and Happiness – Virtues and Strengths**

Good morning friends in the last session if you remember we talked about pro-sociality and then that particular context we talked about one significant pro-social feature character quality which was generosity. And we talked about the various reasons that people indulge in pro-sociality and how it is beneficial to us and what are the various levels at which we are pro-social. Maybe at a, very selfish level may be at a cultural level in order to be a part of this society and sometimes.

We give without any reference any reason within quotes any logical reason within quotes for giving accepting that it gives us happiness. And many studies have found that giving does give us happiness. You can always study the different aspects of pro-sociality we will be sharing relevant papers with you, that you can download and go through for looking at the other qualities of pro-sociality. But here we will try to kind of give you a more generic view of certain characters.

Let us say traits which significantly lead to positivity in that particular context we will be focusing first on Seligman and then on Peterson Seligman. For your information these are two of the leading figures especially Seligman in the, context of positive psychology and it is something which is tested the points that I am trying to make are well documented, well researched and tested.

And I had a feeling that we might concentrate a little on specific people in the western world who have also talked about positivity positive psychology positive emotions and ways of transforming our lives. We have talked a lot about various, traditions cultures as well as the Indic perspective to a certain extent. Here let us look at a more contemporary way of focusing on that.

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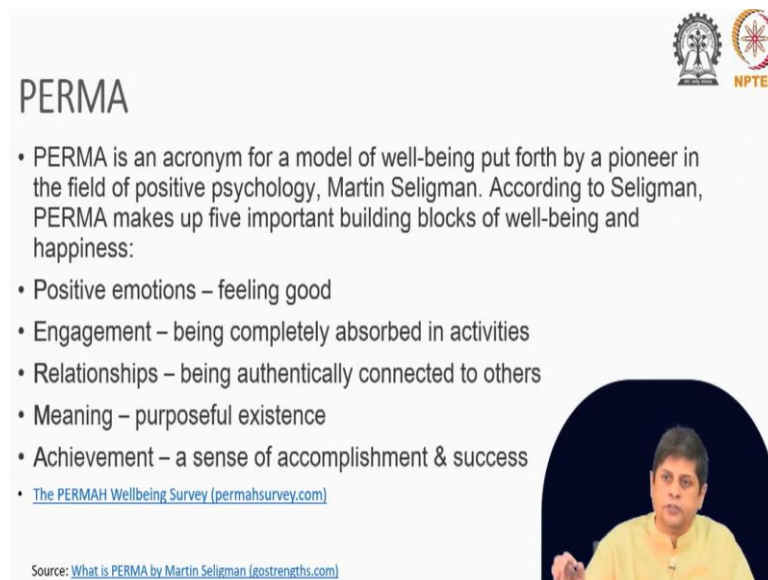
So the way we will go about this is to focus on a concept of PERMA and then we will be focusing on character strengths, virtues their relation to pro-sociality and their relation to self-growth. Interestingly these traits not only help for developing us at our own, personal level but these traits also help us in our social life and our professional lives. As we go ahead with the sessions in the last phase we will be talking about the workplace and leadership there also we will be getting back to some of the qualities that we are going to talk about today.

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So if you remember in the early part of the sessions we focused on this self. And as we moved ahead, we talked about others we will be talking more about others in the classes to follow and about the relevance and significance of relationship and networking. And today we are going to focus on virtues and strengths and I will just touch upon habits which not only will lead to self-growth. But also in the context of growth in relation to others which is leadership traits.

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**PERMA**

- PERMA is an acronym for a model of well-being put forth by a pioneer in the field of positive psychology, Martin Seligman. According to Seligman, PERMA makes up five important building blocks of well-being and happiness:
- Positive emotions – feeling good
- Engagement – being completely absorbed in activities
- Relationships – being authentically connected to others
- Meaning – purposeful existence
- Achievement – a sense of accomplishment & success
- [The PERMAH Wellbeing Survey \(permahsurvey.com\)](http://permahsurvey.com)

Source: [What is PERMA by Martin Seligman \(gostrengths.com\)](http://gostrengths.com)

The slide also features the logos of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and NPTEL in the top right corner, and a video inset in the bottom right corner showing a man in a yellow shirt speaking.

So if you look at, these the first one that I would like to introduce is a very interesting concept which is PERMA and this acronym the short form signifies 5 different traits positive emotions: sense of feeling good, engagement: being completely absorbed in activities, relationships: being authentically connected to others, meaning: purposeful existence, achievement: a sense of accomplishment and success let us go about them one by one.

So you see that what Seligman found was that there are five building blocks which enhanced the potential of a person to be happy. Now this is only a model there can be 5 different models there can be ten different models we have looked at a number of spiritual models earlier. We have also looked at our own definitions created here and through experience of the way that, happiness is understood the antecedents and consequences for happiness this happens to be antecedent of happiness.

That which finally leads to happiness we have also talked a little about it before. Positive emotions. We are told and we will be going into that in a little greater detail as we move into networking. That if I am feeling happy then the person who interacts with me will also carry, back a sense of happiness not only that the person will be able to transmit that sense of happiness to the third person as well.

So you see that this effect of my being feeling positive is something which can through a process of networking travel to more and more people. So I am very happy and I meet five different people these 5 different people meet another 25 people at the end of the day this, effect has

radiated to 30 people. Positive emotions make us feel good and the greater the degree of positive emotions that we have in our lives are better for us this needs no argumentation.

But in a sociocultural context in a networked and test it has a great degree of relevance engagement is where you love what you are doing. So this again is something which we will talk about as we go ahead into, work life and there are other concepts like work life balance. But right now the focus is that enjoying the work we do very often in premier institutes like these we have people who come and generally do not do what exactly they would love doing.

That is because you see that they have to they go by the brand name IIT xyz or IIM xyz they may not get the subject of their choice they may not have a, passion for that thing but they end up doing that. And many of our students come back to us and we find surprisingly for the successful ones that after spending 10 years doing something which they had trained to do they switch areas and start doing things they enjoy doing.

It might pay less it might be less glamorous but they are happy with that. At the end of the day again, there is this a conflict between success and happiness. That which keeps you enjoyed might make you feel happy but that which might make you feel successful at the end of the day may not engage you and may not make you feel happy. This also gets linked to another concept which is known as flow and this concept of flow is where you totally lose yourself in an activity and when you do, that you will also feel happy.

Relationship is something which we have talked about earlier and we will be talking in further detail in the sessions to follow. And you see that when you are connected you have more resources you have more psychological socio-cultural resources anything goes wrong there is a support system around you, you help others others help you. And if not anything else you do not get, lonely.

Today in many of the European countries loneliness especially in the US the other day one of the faculty at one of the universities in the US was telling us that. Loneliness has become a major issue and it is generally not identified as an emotion until people really work to convince that yes it can be treated as a distinctive emotion. You see that relationship is a great safeguard against, loneliness lonely people become lonelier because the studies suggest that.

When somebody is lonely other people tend to avoid that person they can guess that this person is lonely and they tend to avoid it. So the lonely people radiate a sense of loneliness and in the process they are isolated to a further extent so it is a downhill process. And a major safeguard against loneliness is relationship. We, talked earlier about the concept of meaning that in the context of happiness one aspect of it is the laser aspect of it but the other one is meaningfulness aspect of it.

We must feel that we are doing something meaningful purposeful when we talked about the existential crisis and the philosophical discourse the philosophers approach to happiness in the other sessions we also talked about this. That, unless you have a purpose in life you are not able to identify a purpose in life it can be extremely terribly unhappy. Achievement a sense of doing sense of growing sense of flourishing; all these things are linked to the sense of achievement.


Flourishing is another very significant concept in the happiness literature. We will touch upon that at some point of time flourishing also plays a significant, role here. So achievement not once but over a period of time boosts of self-identity gives us a sense of purpose says that we are worthwhile we are meaningful our life has some value. And Seligman says that when all these things are at a fairly good level or at least some of them are well elevated then life feels happy.

And if you look at these components they are very much a part of the values that, society also gives importance to except in may be success, success is not there in the list. Because as; we have discussed earlier success can be incompatible with happiness. Because there in order to achieve success you have to give away lot of things, this could be meaning at a certain level and of course pleasure at another level.

So this is the first point I wanted to make that and of course you can take, the survey and the survey details are given and maybe we will connect you and try to find out how you fare here that would give us an pan Indian understanding of where we lie in terms of our levels of happiness in the context of PERMA. Now switching to the other components which Peterson and Seligman have talked about the interesting thing is that.


Here we are talking about positive emotions, meaningfulness achievement and all these things adding to certain traits which can help enhance these experiences that we are talking about. And in the sections to follow we are going to focus on that.

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## Knowing vs. habitual doing

- Knowing self (knowing what we can or cannot do, what we do, how we behave, our strengths and weaknesses)
- Knowing others (about others, caring about others)
- Mandatory *conditions* of leadership
- Traits – the next step
- Actions that are habits
- The notion of *traits* and their impact on *states*




Now you see that before we do that we have talked about the self-earlier knowing the self is very very relevant knowing others is very very relevant. These are very very important conditions for taking any step in, the direction of our socialization or in the process of leading in the direction of leadership. Now traits actions and habits we will talk about actions and habits a little later towards the last part of the session are also other components that enhance our quality of life or our sense of happiness.

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## Virtues

- A virtue is a trait or quality that is deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of principle and good moral being.
- Moral implications
- Positive implications
- Trait
- Socially endorsed
- *But why should one nurture them?*



Now you see that let me give you a quick introduction to what we are talking about here. Peterson, Seligman and a whole lot of scholars ask this question that we talk about virtues. And a virtue is a trait or a quality that is deemed to be morally good and this is valued as a

fundamental or a foundational principle of a good human being. So we talk about virtuous people and all consists of have this term or an equivalent term known as virtue.

So what these scientists' researchers social, scientists did was to go for a fairly large elaborate global level exploration into what makes people virtuous. They looked into different traditions all the spiritual traditions all the significant spiritual traditions from the different parts of the country, parts of the world Europe, Christianity, Chinese Confucianism, Daoism in India they looked into Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam in, other parts of the world Judaism looked into a whole range of traditions.

And then they started putting the very very important attributes virtues that were identified in all of them together which had moral implications which had positive implications could be considered as traits which are demonstratable traits and which are socially accepted. We will talk about why once we nurture that at a later point, of time. But it was identified that well there existed certain virtues which were globally accepted will not or generalizable.

We will not say call them universal because the moment we say that something is universal that means that it is somehow embedded a demo in the various sense of being human. But that is a very large step we can say that there are may be cultural factors which may go against, that there might be exceptions. But these are generalizable found across different traditions.

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Class task: Examples and how they are relevant?



					
wisdom	courage	humanity	transcendence	justice	moderation

Image source: <https://positivepsychology.com/classification-character-strengths-virtues/>  
<https://www.sheringtonprimary.co.uk/curriculum/positive-education/character-strengths-and-virtues-classification/>

So you see that what they found were these 5 traits they were wisdom, courage, humanity, transcendence, justice and moderation. They identified these they went through an elaborate process and the book which is referred to at the end of the section would give you insights. And

if you are interested it is a, fairly large volume but you can go through that. But what was identified was that these were elements which generally were considered virtues.

And almost all the tradition agreed that these were virtues but what exactly is each one of them? As they went ahead and they continued with this what they realized was that these virtues and wisdoms were fairly vague they could not be measured they could, not be clearly articulated. However there were certain strengths or you might say personality traits that could be identified under each category.

And if you looked at these traits this could be measurable scientifically they could be measured validated and hence what they did was they identified 24 such strengths and clubbed them under different categories. Now Seligman has a character strength survey where you can identify your own character strengths what is the relevance of doing that let us talk a little about that.

There are many other surveys like this but this is a relevant one gallop has one which is a paid survey this is this is a free one. At least a part of it is free why should we do it why are we looking at an applied aspect of happiness? Friends this again relates not only, to understanding but also to enhancing certain qualities which are relevant for us. It is found that if we are able to identify the strengths that are with me intrinsically.

And if I enhance them then I can take my life journey in a compatible mode in other words you see that this 24 strengths not necessarily everybody would have every strength. My strengths will be maybe my top 5 strengths would be, in 3 areas like wisdom courage and humanity or somebody has might have top 5 strengths from just 2 areas like justice and moderation. But once you connect it with self discovery.

If you remember earlier we talked about focusing on the self then you find that this leads this is a process of self discovery doing PERMA is a process of self-discovery. If I identify the disease or if I identify the cause or if you identify the situation we can always improve it. It need not go from a disease to lack of disease it can be from a good state to a better state as well but all these things will be possible when we identify.

And these tools can definitely help us identify know ourselves better no our qualities better am I doing a job which is compatible with these qualities? Can I think of, switching gradually over a period of time to a better opportunity? If I am a young person right now can I think of



characters change options can I within that framework of the existing carrier or potential areas where I am exploring my career?

Take a decision to move in a specific area where my strengths lie all these things are possible when you look at it. That is the reason that is the very, reason that I am exposing you to this particular context. So let us say that if you are looking at the different strength okay if let us quickly touch upon the strengths and then the reference material is there you can have a look at it I will tell you wisdom and knowledge.

The more curious and creative we allow ourselves to become the more we gain perspective and wisdom and this relates to the love, of learning love of knowledge. You see that in another mode we talk about moving from information to knowledge to wisdom. Information is where the material is available knowledge is where the material is assimilated and wisdom is where the material is experienced understood and digested.

So we have under that quite a few sub components we will talk about similarly if you are talking about the concept, of courage. Courage is about being brave persistent gets linked to a very important concept which is resilience. Because without courage you cannot; be resilient and with resilience you can fight back. And it is something which is again reflected through a series of qualities that we will talk about as we go ahead.

Virtues of humanity what exactly do you mean by that something that we talked about a, little earlier in the context of generosity, kindness, charity, love, affection pro-social behavior. If you are talking about justice remember when we talked about world happiness report we have and when we will be looking into how it happiness is measured? Sense of social justice or injustice is considered a very significant component in the world happiness report which is measured.


Whenever we feel a, sense of injustice we are unhappy it is one of the major causes of unhappiness inequality sense of injustice real or virtual real or imagined. So this gets strongly linked to the element of morality some people have a very strong sense of justice that can help in very positive ways. Temperance moderation is where you moderate everything you are forgiving you are humble you are prudent you control that, again is something which is very strongly related to the context of emotional intelligence and to self-restraint.

If you remember when we talked about philosophical traditions Buddhism talks distinctively about self-restraint, the middle path not taking anything to extremes as one of the key

components of being happy. So transcendence is the trait when we are talking about being able to, never lose hope being able to persist beyond the values beyond the things that operate at a normal level.


When the basic operating system the cause and effect relationship something which is not able to explain why we behave in particular ways we are talking about transcendence. So transcendence in many traditions especially the spiritual traditions operates in a way which is all about going beyond going beyond words going beyond conceptualization. But then you move certain we move through certain qualities in the direction of transcendence. Here transcendence of specific emotions that we are talking about relate to those aspects of things.

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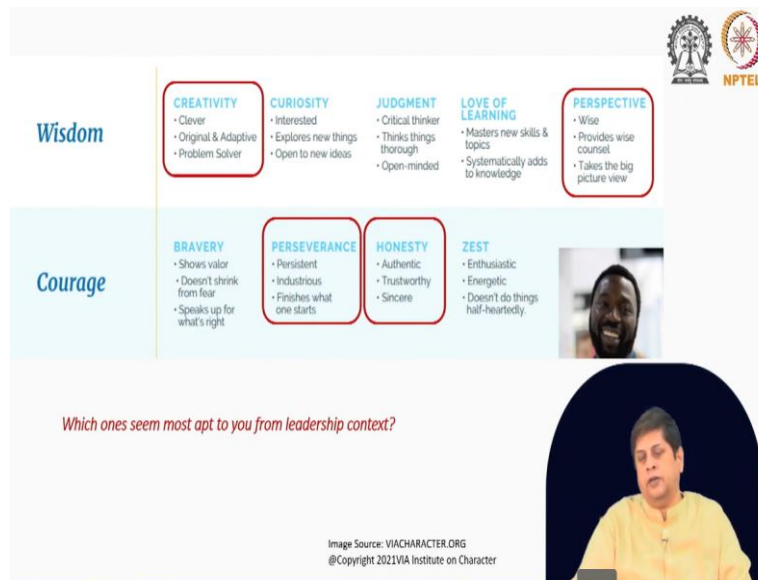
## Strengths

- **Good character** is something everyone looks for in other people, whether they are employees, students, friends, or potential dating partners. Sometimes called **character strengths**, these are the good **qualities** that people possess—a collection of **positive traits** that show people's strengths—rather than a compilation of their faults and issues.
- Character, qualities, traits
- Positive
- Strengths (why call them that?)
- To one's advantage (how?)



So let us quickly look at the traits and here are the strengths that we are talking about I will just show the slides to you can always have a quick, look at the slides.

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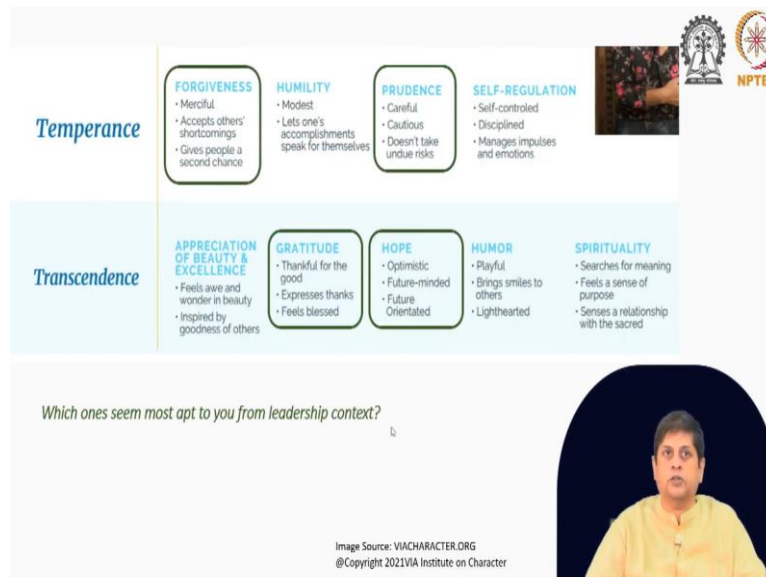
So when we are looking at the traits under wisdom we have creativity, curiosity, judgment love of learning perspective these were again identified from the various traditions. But this could be measured under courage we have bravery we have perseverance we have honesty, jest which is enthusiasm energy without which you cannot take certain things forward. Each of them has that its, specific distinctive qualities.

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We have under temperance forgiveness humility prudence self-regulation we talked about that transcendence appreciation of something which is beautiful and excellent gratitude hope humor especially in the free phase of difficulties and challenges. And of course spirituality though very often in the context of transcendence the other 4 traits that we; are talking, about especially appreciation of beauty gratitude and hope also get linked to spirituality.

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So how did these people arrive at these qualities that we are talking about and which I feel that we need to check once for ourselves in the context of where we stand. Spiritual traditions scientific literature and they have created a set of 10 qualifying criteria in order to standardize the entire thing. If, you wish to you can go through the book and find those details but probably what is more relevant is? Not to bother about that but to discover our own strengths.

And once you do that the survey is available as I told you and we will be also sharing the link with you identify in which areas your 5 top 5 strengths are clustered together. That is going to give you an insight into where you will, flourish so that will kind of get linked to PERMA. Because once you know those traits you channelize them in a direction which will finally lead to PERMA the points that we talked about the positive emotion and other aspects that we talked about.

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**6. Transcendence**—strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

*Appreciation of beauty and excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]:* Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience

*Gratitude:* Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

*Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]:* Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about

*Humor [playfulness]:* Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes

*Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]:* Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

So the classification of the various strengths is provided here you can go through that. As I shared a little earlier so the details are provided here for your, reference.

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But let us kind of sum up by looking at this discussion and the discussion in the earlier session that what is the interesting relationship between these traits and pro-sociality? We find that pro-sociality is directly distinctively linked to the 5 traits that indicate that are indicated by arrow marks. In the case of the orange arrow marks the relationship is direct and in case of the blue, marks the relationship is indirect.

So love kindness reciprocity especially social intelligence in the context of, of course part of emotional intelligence or talking about gratitude hope and spirituality very directly related to pro-social behavior. We are talking about bravery persistence honesty and zest so bravery probably gets linked. Because; the courage to do something for others indirectly gets linked if; you are talking about teamwork again fairly closely linked to this.

And if you are leading often you make sacrifices again linked to pro-sociality or the ability to forgive I guess this pro-social behavior. And you find that many of these traits get strongly linked to pro-sociality and that is another reason that we have put it under the category of discussion end of pro-sociality. When we, are looking at wisdom, wisdom is something which takes probably from many of these although it does not directly relate to it. And as I told you transcendence and wisdom are traits that probably benefit from pro-sociality in a significant way.

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## CONCLUSION

- PERMA
- Virtues are generalizable across traditions
- So are character strengths
- Nurturing them can lead to self-growth
- It can take one on the journey to happiness (through pro-sociality)

So if we want to sum up we might say that we started this journeys or journey with PERMA in order to realize that these are the 5 qualities which when they are high, make us happy and make us feel meaningful and at another level their influence on our well-being is also significant. Then we moved into focusing on what are virtues and character strengths the ones which are common across cultures and traditions and countries.

We talked about the fact that if you nurture them then they lead to self-growth and to PERMA in that sense. And before we came to the final, point we realized that they are very strongly linked to certain elements of pro-sociality. In fact quite a few of them are directly linked to pro sociality and pro-sociality gives us happiness probably that is how they are connected. And hence if we take a journey through them probably we at the end of the day would be more happy and feel more meaningful.

So friends throughout these discussions professor Mandal and I have been trying to look at different ways that happiness can be understood approached. And in this particular context the summary kind of something which gives us a kind of a map through which we can assess ourselves evaluate ourselves. Now how much we learn from that as I have shared with you earlier depends on that 25% personal motivation and drive.

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And I hope that we all benefit, from this thank you very much the references have been given here and you can check those references if you like thank you.