

## Finding Your Bliss By Dr. Margaret Rea

We are heading into our third month of the year of Health and Wellness. December is the month of "Finding Your Bliss." This month's theme fits well with the area of Positive Psychology which focuses on the strengths of individuals and communities that allow them to grow, be healthy, and find happiness. This area of practice and research was spearheaded by the psychologist Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania where they now have the Positive Psychology Center. The center defines its rationale and mission as:

"Positive Psychology is founded on the belief that people want more than an end to suffering. People want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play. We have the opportunity to create a science and a profession that not only heals psychological damage but also builds strengths to enable people to achieve the best things in life."

One of the central tenants of positive psychology is addressing and embracing your strengths. Often students, who are facing the challenges of grueling academic demands, focus on their limitations. Research data indicates that if you pause to identify and honor your strengths you can be more resilient. So perhaps when you are having a particularly challenging day, you pause, be mindful, and intentionally use one of your strengths. When you think about actively using your strengths, it does not mean that you are ignoring that there is stress. Instead, you are addressing the challenges from a place of strength. The research data suggests that by intentionally using your strengths, you can start a positive spiral where you feel empowered to face your stress and additionally improve your mood.

Please take a moment to consider your strengths such as curiosity, compassion, bravery, authenticity, kindness, humility, gratitude and humor just to name a few. For example, taking a risk and being brave might help you conquer an obstacle. Practicing gratitude for things and people that fill your life can also promote well-being. Here is a link from the University of Pennsylvania group to a questionnaire that might help you remember your strengths: <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/brief-strengths-test>

Recently, researchers in Positive Psychology have added another factor that can help you stay resilient and happy as you face life's certain challenges and that is

Grit. Angela Duckworth defined the concept of grit as:

"Grit is passion and perseverance for long-term goals. One way to think about grit is to consider what grit isn't. Grit isn't talent. Grit isn't luck. Grit isn't how intensely, for the moment, you want something. Instead, grit is about having what some researchers call an "ultimate concern"—a goal you care about so much that it organizes and gives meaning to almost everything you do. And grit is holding steadfast to that goal. Even when you fall down. Even when you screw up. Even when progress toward that goal is halting or slow."



Incorporating Grit as a coping strategy means not losing sight of your goals – something can be very hard when obstacles like a poor score on a test or difficult feedback from a mentor come your way. These are the exact moments when you need to hold onto Grit- connect to the goal – the mission that drove you to start your professional journey.

Finally, add an optimistic attitude and you are sure to feel more resilient. Optimism has been repeatedly shown to positively effect physical and emotional health even prolongs life span. The helpful news is that research says you can foster optimism. By intentionally thinking about your future in a positive way you can increase your optimism. The exercise is called imagining your Best Possible Self and research participants who practiced the exercise became more optimistic and saw improvements in their mood. Please try out the exercise below. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2145026>

As you greet 2017, honor and employ your strengths, add your Grit, an optimistic attitude and you have three central elements of Positive Psychology in your coping tool kit that can help you stay resilient, find joy in the process and, dare I say, feel happy.

### Wellness Events

#### "Gratitude Works! How Bliss is Based on Blessing"

Ed Bldg 2222  
12/13 12:15 pm  
Dr. Robert Emmons

#### Mindful Yoga

ACC  
Wednesdays 5:15  
Maureen Craig, RN, MSN,  
CNN

#### Living Fit Forever Classes

[http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living\\_fit\\_forever.shtml](http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml)

#### Work Life and Wellness Events

[ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/brownbags.html](http://ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/brownbags.html)

#### UCDMC Yoga

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gz23GMJbZJDI-wzn9g8NxUnia4IFuVsHah4olav7Ow0/edit#>

# Best Possible Self

My wellness tip of the month is Best Possible Self.

## HOW TO DO IT

Take a moment to imagine your life in the future. What is the best possible life you can imagine? Consider all of the relevant areas of your life, such as your career, academic work, relationships, hobbies, and/or health. What would happen in these areas of your life in your best possible future?

For the next 15 minutes, write continuously about what you imagine this best possible future to be. Use the instructions below to help guide you through this process.

1. It may be easy for this exercise to lead you to examine how your current life may not match this best possible future. You may be tempted to think about ways in which accomplishing goals has been difficult for you in the past, or about financial/time/social barriers to being able to make these accomplishments happen. For the purpose of this exercise, however, we encourage you to focus on the future—imagine a brighter future in which you are your best self and your circumstances change just enough to make this best possible life happen.

2. This exercise is most useful when it is very specific—if you think about a new job, imagine exactly what you would do, who you would work with, and where it would be. The more specific you are, the more engaged you will be in the exercise and the more you'll get

3. Be as creative and imaginative as you want, and don't worry about grammar or spelling.

[http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best\\_possible\\_self#](http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best_possible_self#)



## Monthly Recipe: Cranberries

This month from Dr. Oliveira and the UC Davis Department of Integrative Medicine is a recipe using cranberries. I like the recipe as I am always over buying on cranberries. This recipe teaches you how to make a tangy cranberry salsa that can be served with dairy free ricotta as an appetizer. Serve this appetizer with Dr. Oliveria's nachos made from sliced sweet potatoes and you are ready for your holiday guests. <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/ricotta-crostini-cranberry-salsa/#gs.l4qxhMo> <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/ajs-sweet-potato-nachos/#gs.NUEhxk>

## Wellness App: Uplifter

Uplifter is the simplest way to improve your mood. Get access to quick and easy daily exercises that improve positivity, gratitude, and happiness through proven positive psychology exercises. The app was designed to increase happiness through increased life satisfaction and improve measures of gratitude. <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/pdfs/GratitudePDFs/2Wood-GratitudeWell-BeingReview.pdf>