POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS
Employee engagement: “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” (Schaufeli et al., 2002)

Engagement is characterized by (Maslach et al., 2001):
- Energy (opposite of exhaustion)
- Involvement (opposite of cynicism)
- Efficacy (opposite of inefficacy)

Engagement is the opposite of burnout (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006)
WHAT PROMOTES EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

- Positive Emotions
  - "Personal zest": “approaching life with anticipation, energy, and excitement” predicts work satisfaction and viewing one's work as a calling (Peterson et al., 2009).
  - More positive moods contribute to positive spontaneous behavior in the workplace (George & Brief, 1992).
  - Positive emotionality precedes and enhances workplace achievement (Boehm & Lyubormisky, 2008), by increasing approach-oriented behavior (Elliot & Thrash, 2002), increasing engagement in work (George, 1995), and increasing social support among colleagues and supervisors (Feingold, 1983; Iverson et al., 1998).
PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL (PSYCAP) (LUTHANS ET AL., 2007; LUTHANS & YUSSEF, 2009)

- A combination of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency.

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<td><strong>HOPE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>OPTIMISM</strong></td>
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<td>A sense of energy to persevere towards your goals through proactive planning</td>
<td>A belief in your own ability to produce positive results and achieve self-defined goals</td>
<td>A positive way of coping even when it seems there are no solutions to negative situations</td>
<td>Being and remaining positive about the likelihood of personal success, now and in the future</td>
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IS YOUR JOB A CALLING?
(WRZESNIEWSKI ET AL., 1997)

• People view their occupations in three basic ways:
  – ”Job” (financial gains from work and on the necessity of earning a living)
  – “Career” (a way to motivate achievement, stimulate their need for competition, or enhance prestige and satisfaction),
  – “Calling” (a source of personal fulfillment; believing that what you do serves a socially useful purpose)
IS YOUR JOB A CALLING?
(WRZESNIEWSKI ET AL., 1997)

Example of calling:

“Piano tuning is not really business. It’s a dedication…. I enjoy every second of it…. There seems something mystic about music, about piano tuning. There’s so much beauty [that] comes out of music [and] piano tuning” (Turkel, 1974).
IS YOUR JOB A CALLING? (WRZESNIEWSKI ET AL., 1997)

• A consensus among researchers is emerging that a calling comprises three vital features:
  – An action orientation, a course of action, an activity to be done
  – A sense of clarity of purpose, direction, meaning, and personal mission
  – A prosocial orientation, a desire to make the world a better place

• People who experience their work as a calling show more focused career decision making, higher motivation, increased job satisfaction, lower stress and frustration, stronger organizational commitment, and better citizenship behavior (Elangovan et al., 2009)
CAN THERE BE A DOWNSIDE TO A CALLING?

- “[It] can be all-consuming and never ending…. Such a state could also result in a permanent state of dissatisfaction, not with one’s activities, but with one’s performance.” (Elangovan et al., 2009)
IN FLOW AT WORK

• People who enjoy their jobs often report being in a state of flow at work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

• Five core elements of flow at work:
  – *Skill variety* (the degree to which a job requires different activities and skills),
  – *Task identity* (the extent to which a job requires completion of an identifiable work product),
  – *Task significance* (the degree to which a job exerts a meaningful impact on others),
  – *Autonomy* (the extent to which a worker has independence in deciding the schedule and process of work),
  – *Feedback* (the degree to which a worker is given information about his or her performance).
SELF-ACTUALIZATION AT WORK?

• The HSVSA (Hoffman Scale of Vocational Self-Actualization) is 25 items and consists of reports of safety, belongingness, self-esteem and respect, joyfulness, experiencing growth and creativity, peak experiences, feeling a sense of contributing to world betterment.
STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH (DONALD CLIFTON ET AL.)

- Recognize Your Strengths
  - All strengths share five characteristics:
    - They represent “yearnings” – strong psychological pulls we feel toward certain interests, goals, or directions.
    - When we fulfill a strength, we experience intrinsic satisfaction.
    - When we employ a strength in certain contexts, learning comes easier; it is more facile to absorb information and to integrate it in satisfying ways.
    - In moments when we activate a strength, we sometimes perform extraordinarily well and that leads to the flow state.
    - When we activate a strength, our performance takes less effort than it does with other activities.
STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH (DONALD CLIFTON ET AL.)

• Develop Your Strengths
  – Strengths develop best in relation to other people; strengths develop when we place positive expectations on others and on ourselves.
  – Strengths develop best within the framework of “a mission”– if we can develop a deep commitment to the future or even a life passion, then it becomes easier to discover our strengths in this context.
  – A mission is not the same thing as a goal: a mission can give us a direction in life even if we fail to reach some of its goals.
  – If we possess a mission then the failure of a single goal does not derail us.
QUALITIES OF POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS
(PETER WARR, 1999)

1. Opportunity for personal control
2. Opportunity for skill use
3. Reasonable, externally generated goals
4. Variety
5. Environmental clarity
6. Availability of money
7. Physical security
8. Supportive supervision
9. Opportunity for interpersonal contact
10. Work is valued by society
OTHER CAREERS THAT USE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
POSITIVE COMMUNITIES
Social capital: the web of connections among social networks, as well as the connections within social networks.

When a society has a high level of social capital, then there is a greater sense of trust in other people, more reciprocity and helpfulness, greater participation in social and civic activities, and stronger social ties.

Social capital has both a civic participation part and an attitudinal component (Yip et al., 2007)

Higher social capital results in higher levels of physical health for citizens (Poortinga, 2006; Yip et al., 2007).
“EUPSYCHIA”
(EU = GOOD, PSYCH = MIND)

• Maslow’s (1961) version of utopia, or the good society.
• “A psychological Utopia in which all people are psychologically healthy… the inhabitants of Eupsychia would tend to be more Taoistic, nonintrusive, and basic need-gratifying (whenever possible) (Maslow, 1954, p. 350).”
• A society of self-actualizing people would possess an excellent ability to see the truth in people and situations, functioning creatively and spontaneously, sustaining the greater courage of their convictions, and feeling a strong sense of responsibility to their fellow human beings.
• Community psychology focuses on the role of the environment and the social world in both the creation of problems and the solution to these problems.

• Community psychology is built on the following general foundations: (Rappaport, 1977).
  – Social rules, mores, and standards differ among cultural groups (cultural relativity),
  – The recognition of differences among community subgroups,
  – The recognition that people exist not in isolation but in a constant variety of intricate relationships with their environment,
  – Change happens by identifying the strengths, resources, and efficiencies of people and environments (Smith, 2001)
A key concept in community psychology is empowerment (Smith, 2001), the process of enabling people who are marginalized or underprivileged to increase their personal and political power by taking charge of their lives and enhance their efficacy, competence, and self-determination (Rappaport, 1990).

Community psychology interventions are designed to help people take control of their own environments and master their own problems (Orford, 1992).

Learned empowerment: the opposite of learned powerlessness.

Through community activity that produces tangible results, people can learn to assert a degree of control over their communities.

People feel better about themselves and their communities when they believe that have a voice, that they are able to make changes, and that they can participate meaningfully in the democratic process (Huang & Blumenthal, 2009).
EMPOWERMENT

• One form of learned empowerment is a sense of collective efficacy.
• When collective efficacy in a neighborhood is high, then criminal activity is reduced.
• Cohesion and social ties with one’s neighbors buffer community fear and mistrust (Ross & Jang, 2000).
• Trust can be partially built by a willingness to be involved in one’s community.
A unique aspect of community psychology is its emphasis on **community interventions**. People report feeling happier when they pursue goals that have personal meaning and involve engagement with their communities. One way to become more engaged with community is through volunteering. Mark Snyder and colleagues found that several reasons exist for volunteerism: altruism, seeking to gain knowledge and understanding, a desire to enhance self-esteem, and social pressure.
VOLUNTEERING

- People who volunteer over an extended period of time tend to be motivated by desire for greater understanding, to enhance their social identity, and for self-esteem. They view the efforts as contributing to their personal growth.
- The impact of volunteering is greater if a person holds prosocial values and the volunteer activity is compatible with one’s self-identity (Hitlin, 2007).
- Volunteering is associated with better health and longevity (Post, 2005)
WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

WHAT'S MY PURPOSE?
WHY AM I HERE?
“I do not accept any absolute formulas for living. No preconceived code can see ahead to everything that can happen in a [person's] life. As we live, we grow and our beliefs change. They must change. So I think we should live with this constant discovery. We should be open to this adventure in heightened awareness of living. We should stake our whole existence on our willingness to explore and experience.”
— Martin Buber
“The more one’s search for meaning is frustrated, the more intensively [one] devotes [oneself] to… the ‘pursuit of happiness.’ When this pursuit originates in a frustrated search for meaning…it is self-defeating, for happiness can arise only as a result of living out one’s self-transcendence, one’s devotion to a cause to be served, or a person to be loved (pp. 82–83).” — Viktor Frankl
“When people ask me if it has been a hard or easy road, I always answer with the same: the end is nothing, the road is all.” — Willa Cather
"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."

Ralph Waldo Emerson
If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!

(Søren Kierkegaard)
At the end of the day, the only questions I will ask myself are...
Did I love enough?
Did I laugh enough?
Did I make a difference?