

The Emerging Paradigm of Positive Psychology in The Midst of Existential Crises

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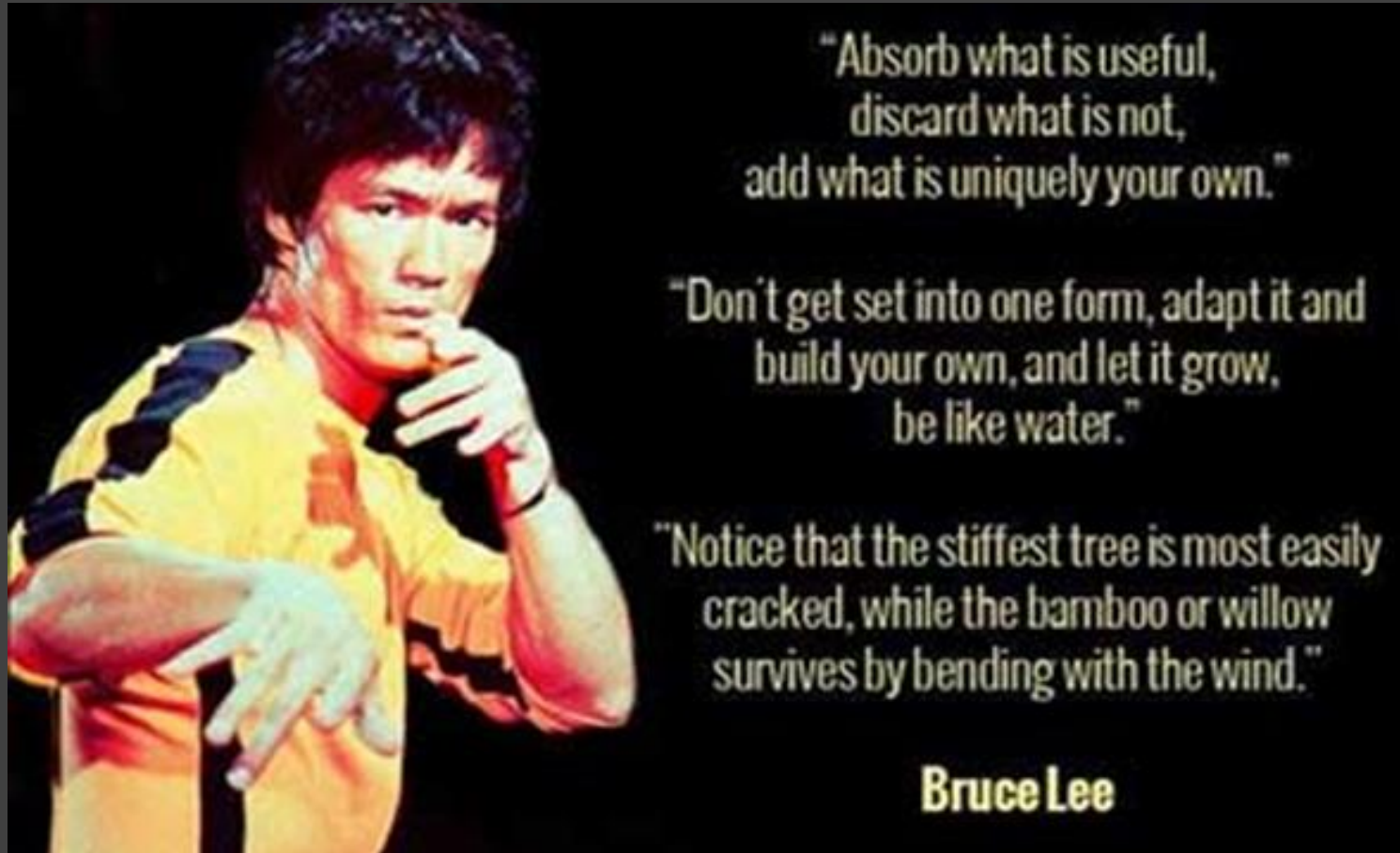
Overview

1. What is existential positive psychology (EPP or PP2.0)?
2. Why do we need a paradigm shift?
3. What are the basic tenets of EPP?
4. What are the fundamental re-orientations?
5. Conclusion: The need for existential wellbeing

Self Introduction as a Pioneer in EPP

- A war baby growing up under Japanese occupation
- As a child, aspired to reduce suffering like Buddha and Confucius
- As an adult, aspires to bring meaning and happiness to the suffering masses
- Pioneer in research on the positive psychology (PP) of suffering, also known as Existential PP or PP2.0

My Integrative Approach as the Bruce Lee of Psychology



"Absorb what is useful,
discard what is not,
add what is uniquely your own."

"Don't get set into one form, adapt it and
build your own, and let it grow,
be like water."

"Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily
cracked, while the bamboo or willow
survives by bending with the wind."

Bruce Lee

What is EPP or PP2.0?

- True positivity is seeing and being the light in darkness.
- True meaning in life is serving something bigger than oneself.
- True happiness comes from embracing and transforming the dark side of life.
- Sustainable growth results from transcending obstacles and suffering.

Existential Positive Psychology

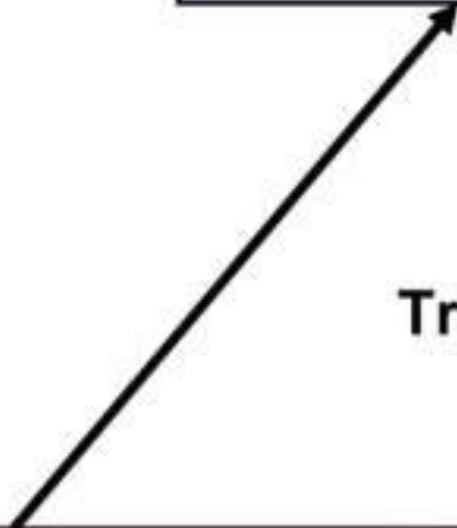
- (EPP or PP2.0) is the applied science of how to survive and thrive in spite of human limitations and inescapable suffering. It is also the science of global wellbeing through the study of human existence in all its depths, heights, and breadths:
- The depths of human suffering and spiritual yearning for meaning and truth.
- The heights of the transcendental values of faith, hope, and love.
- The breadths of relating to others in different cultures.

Existential positive psychology
[Synthesis]

Transcendence

Negative psychology
[Thesis]

Positive psychology
[Antithesis]



	Seligman's (2011) Model of Flourishing	Wong's (2021) Self-transcendence Model of Flourishing Through Suffering
P	Positive Emotions	Positivity through embracing the dark side of life.
E	Engagement	Engagement through painful discipline.
R	Positive Relationships	Strong relationships through forgiving and enduring the foibles of others.
M	Meaning	Meaning through transcending egotism and external obstacles.
A	Accomplishments	Achievement through transcending sacrifices and failures.

Yalom's four
existential anxieties in
Existential Therapy:

- Death (mortality)
- Freedom of choice
- Isolation
- Meaninglessness

Wong's four existential yearnings in
the Existential Positive Psychology of
personal growth:

- Religious or transcendental faith
- Courage to make the right decision
- Love or connections
- A life of meaning and purpose

Why do we need a paradigm shift in the science of wellbeing?

- Scientific progress is marked by paradigm-shifts according to Kuhn (1962)

THOMAS S. KUHN

THE
STRUCTURE OF
SCIENTIFIC
REVOLUTIONS

A BRILLIANT, ORIGINAL ANALYSIS OF THE
NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES
OF REVOLUTIONS IN BASIC SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS

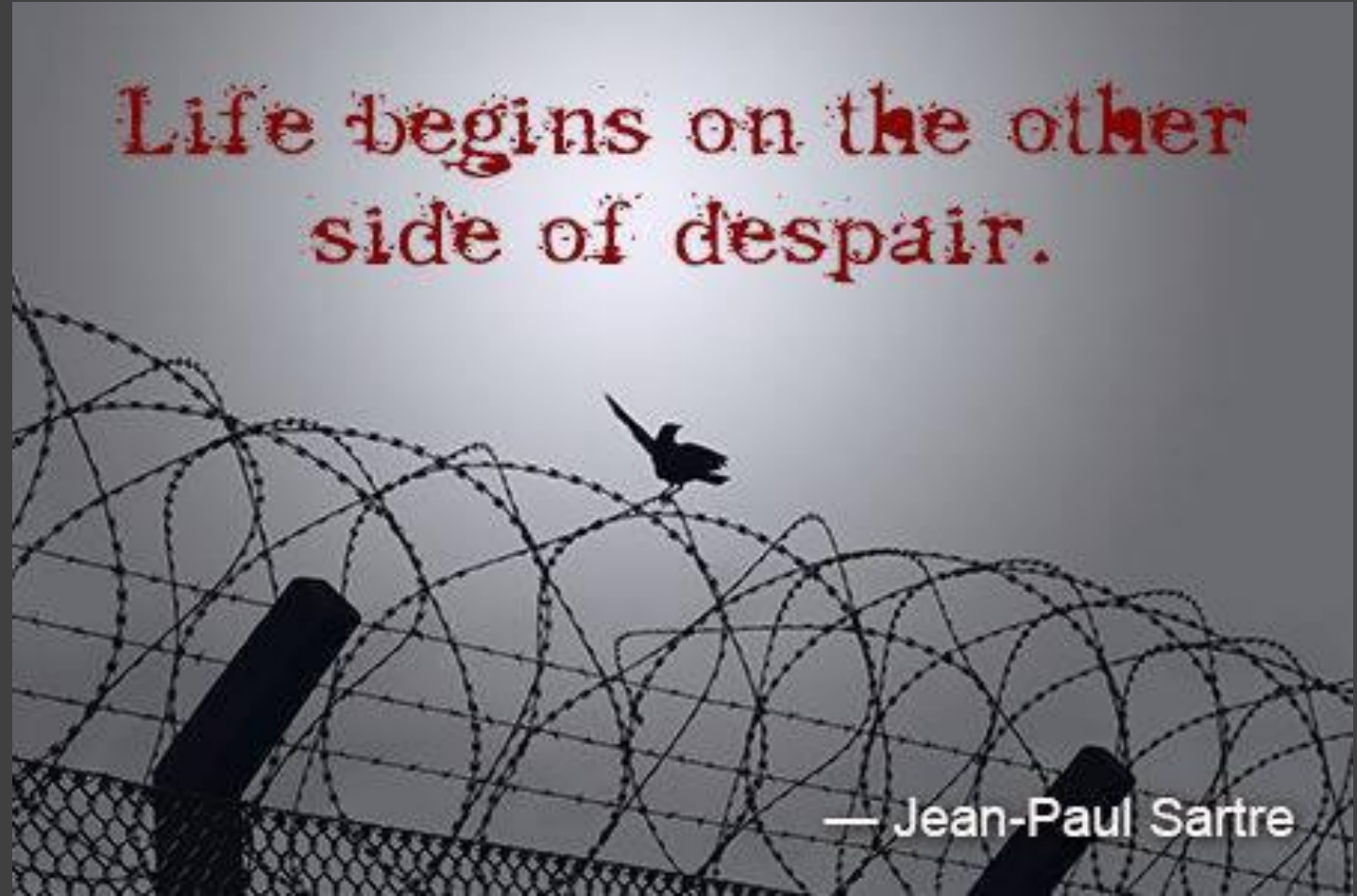
P119 \$1.50 (10c 44 net)



A tiny shift in
perception is
often all it takes
to start seeing
MIRACLES

Need to Consider the Dark Side of Life

- All the good things in life begin on the other side of sadness and despair



Need to Consider Inherent Human Limitations

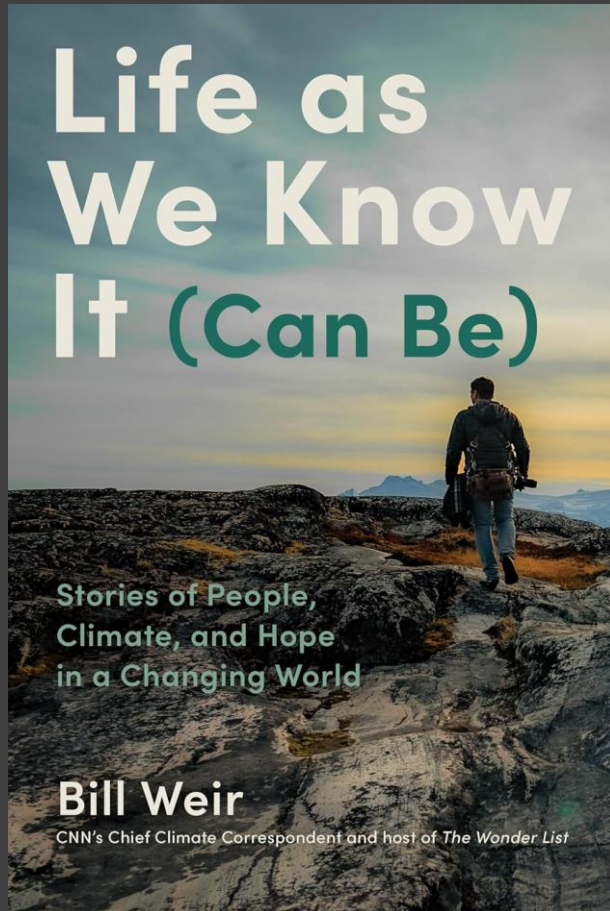
FRAILTY, SUFFERING, AND VICE

FLOURISHING IN THE
FACE OF HUMAN LIMITATIONS



BLAINE J. FOWERS, FRANK C. RICHARDSON, AND BRENT D. SLIFE

Ecological concerns call for sustainable flourishing



A NOTE TO READERS FROM BILL WEIR

Life as We Know It (Can Be) began with the letters I write to my son every Earth Day—a record of hopes and fears in turbulent times and a guide to life on a planet transformed.

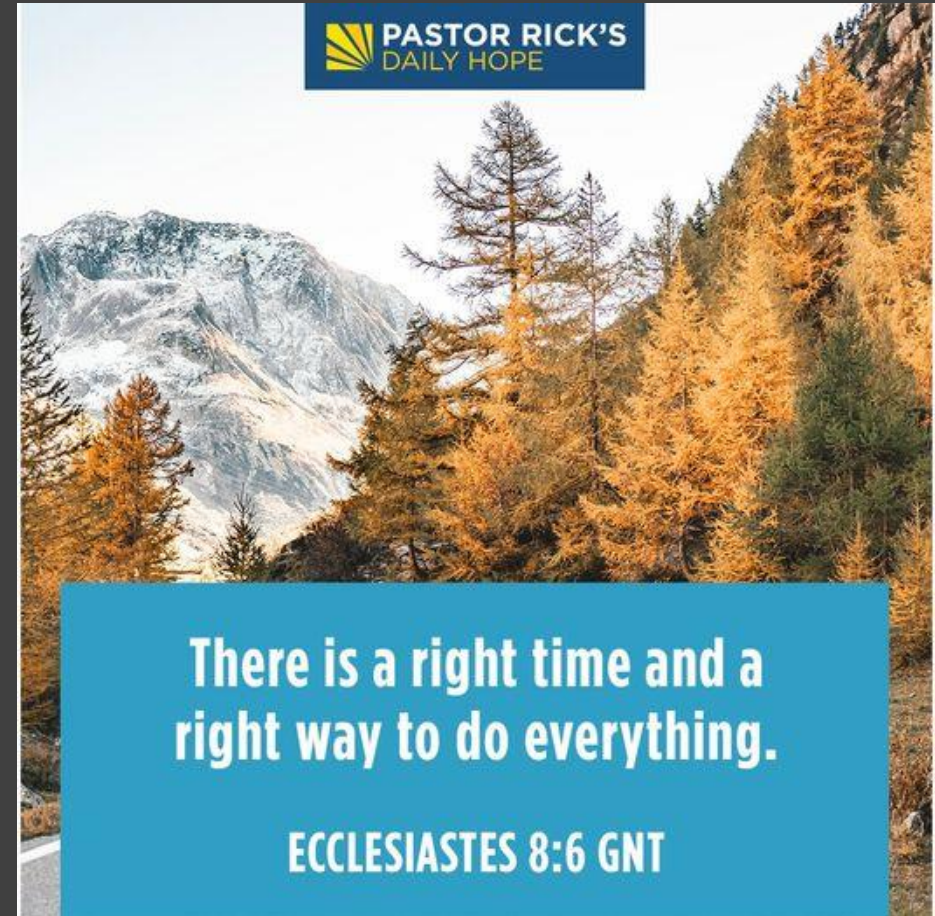
Pulling from my decades of experience as a journalist and CNN's chief climate correspondent, I've chosen stories that weave together the worry and wonder with dozens of practical and inspiring reminders that a better future can still be written for us all.

Ultimately, this book is a celebration of our planet and human brilliance with a hopeful plea for communities to rally around nature, new ideas and each other to create the kind of resilience that lasts generations.

-Bill

Different Seasons of Life Calls for Different Kinds of Happiness

- According to both scientific research ([McNulty & Fincham, 2012](#)) and ancient wisdom (Ecclesiastes 7:14), it is more helpful to ask specific questions, such as: “What is right and good for people when times are good and when times are bad?”



Wong has Identified Different Types of Happiness

Hedonic Happiness

Pleasant feelings based on good happenings.

Eudainomic Happiness

Life satisfaction/contentment based on purposeful virtuous action.

Noetic (Mature) Happiness

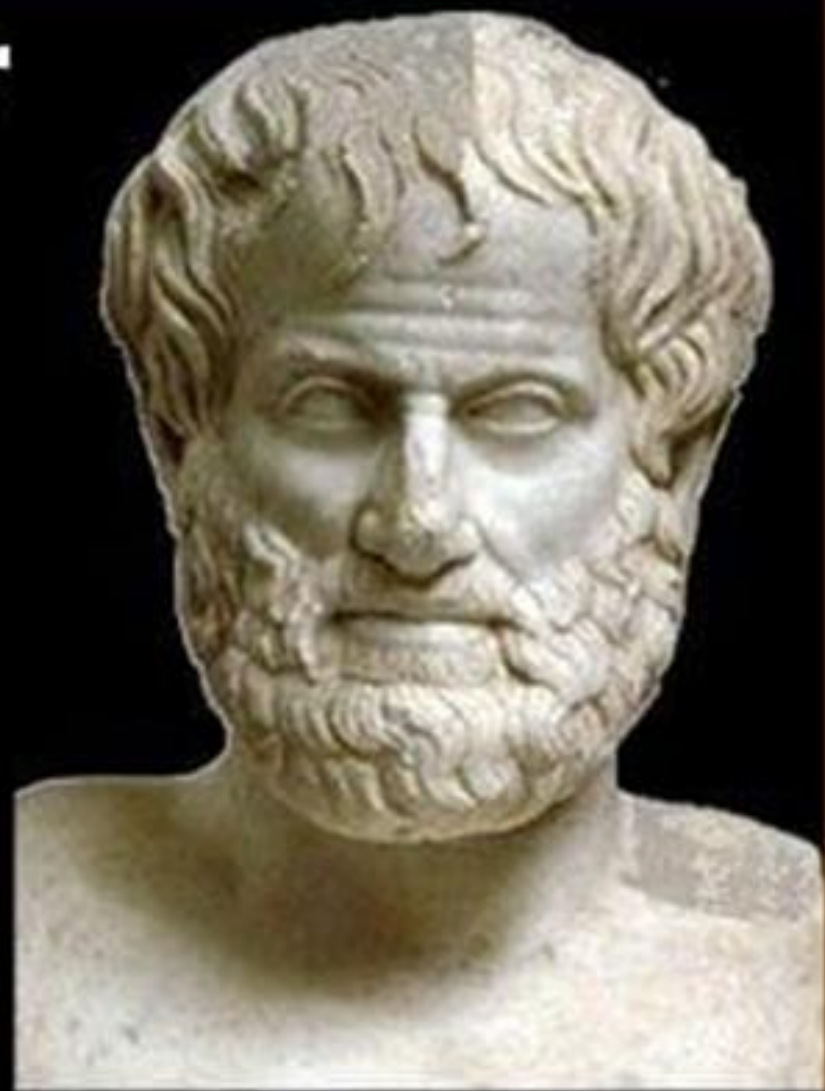
Postive mental state of equanimity based on mental discipline.

Chaironic Happiness

Spiritual bliss based on close relationship with God or nature.

**Different people look for
happiness in different
forms and in
different ways**

~ Aristotle ~




Wong has Identified Different Types of Happiness

- True or mature happiness requires cultivation of spiritual virtues

“True happiness comes from having a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved by cultivating altruism, love, and compassion, and by eliminating anger, selfishness, and greed.”

Dalai Lama

 TheMindFool



The 6 Basic Reorientations of EPP for Regeneration and Personal Transformation

1. From the happiness hypothesis to suffering hypothesis.
2. From binary thinking to dialectical yin-yang interactions.
3. From Eurocentrism to multiculturalism and East-West integration.
4. From self-absorption to self-transcendence.
5. From the old language of maximization to the new language of balance.
6. From outcome to process.

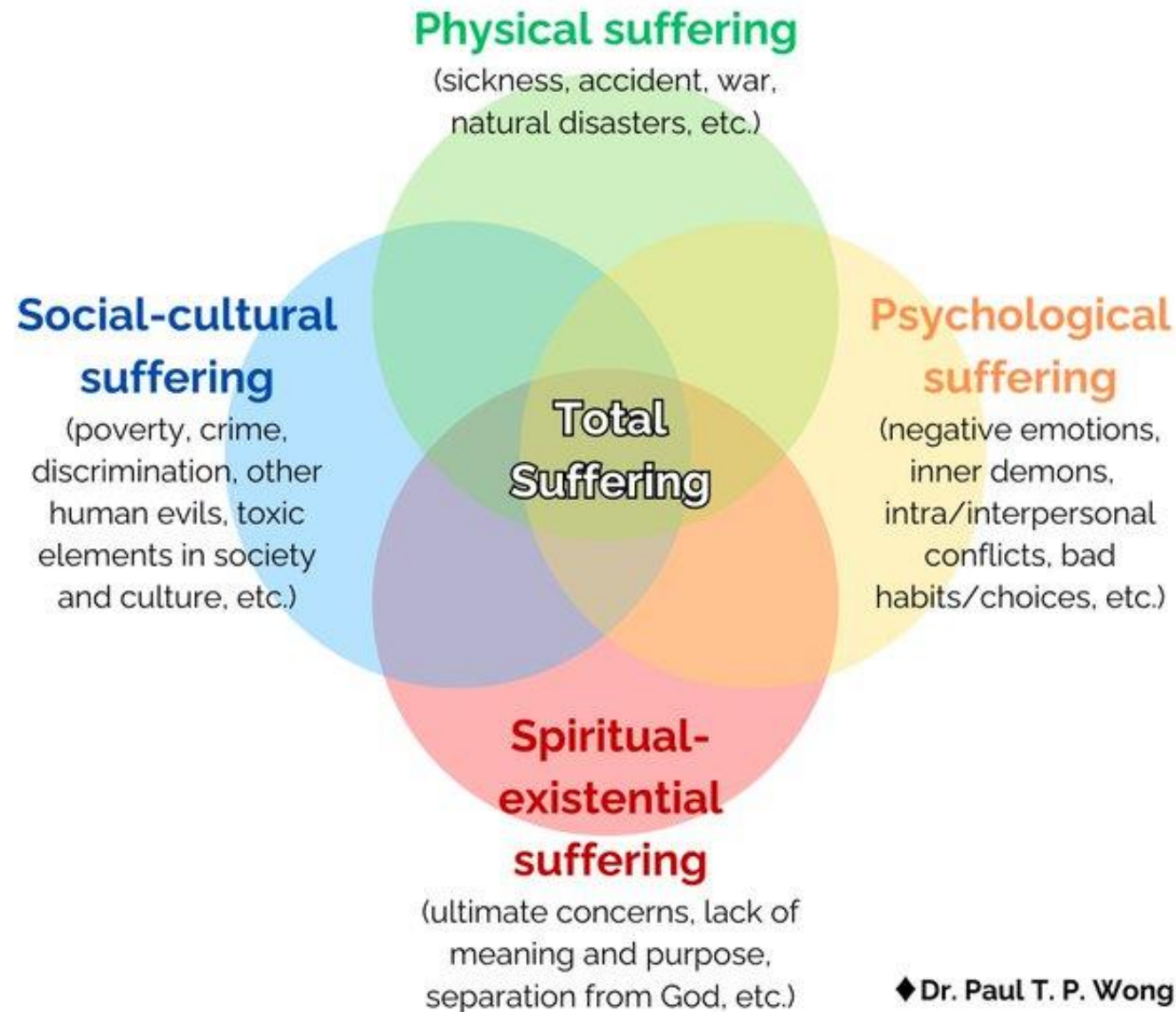
1. Reorientation From The Science Of Happiness To The Science Of Suffering



**"When it hurts
observe, life is
trying to teach
you
something."**

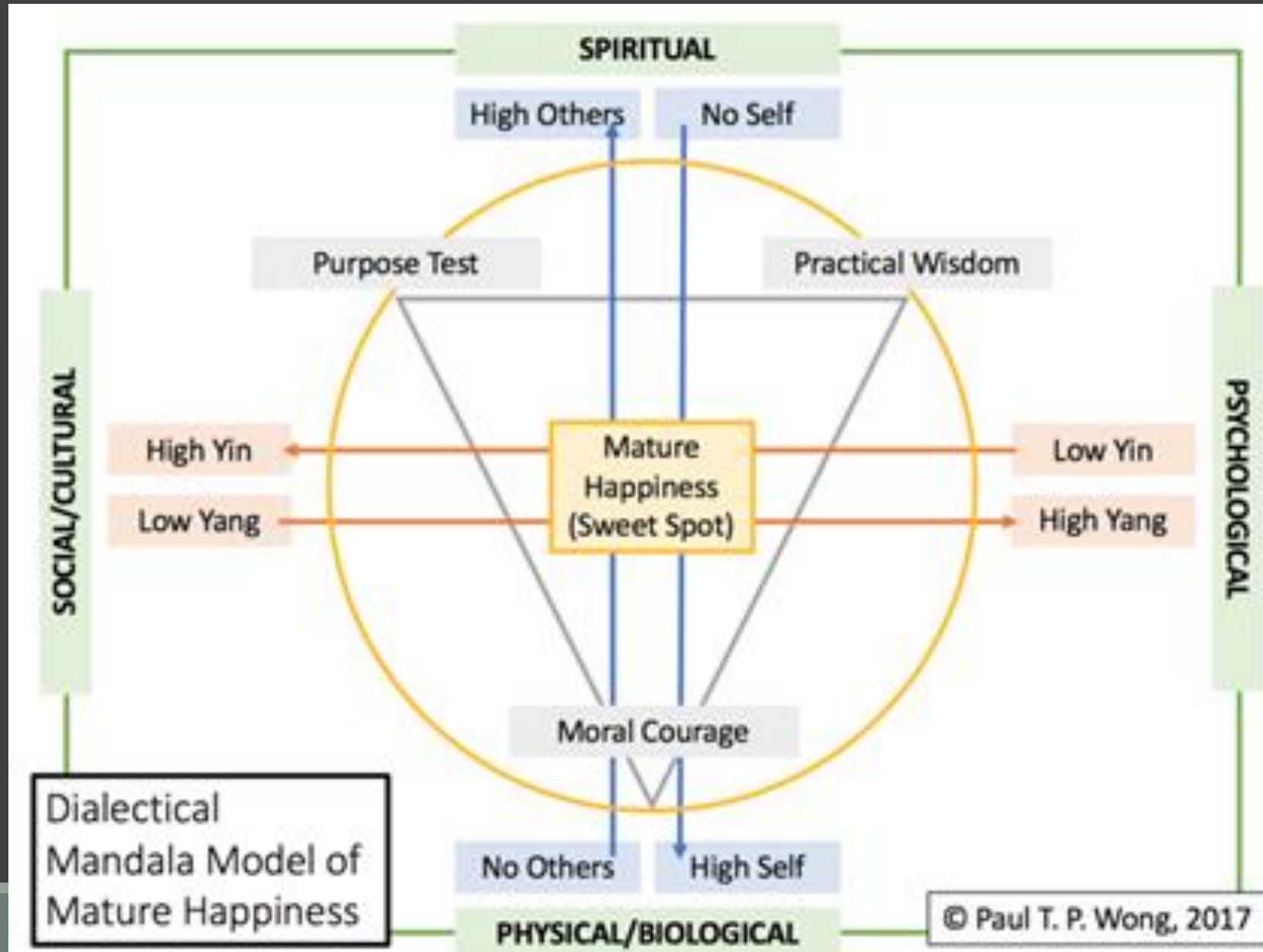
FOUR MAJOR SOURCES OF SUFFERING

which contribute to mental health problems



2. Reorientation From Binary Thinking To Dialectical Yin-yang Interactions

- We need a dialectical and paradoxical way to describe the world seen from the perspective of EPP



3. Reorientation from Eurocentrism to Multiculturalism and East-West integration

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Soulwinda.com



“

Be the change you want to see in the world.

- Mahatma Gandhi



4. Reorientation From Egocentric Ambitions to Egoless Self-transcendence

“When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds. Your mind transcends limitations; your consciousness expands in every direction; and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be.”

– *Patanjali*

4. Reorientation From Ego-centric Ambitions to Egoless Self-transcendence



Taking Responsibility

The best thing one can do for one's life is to take full responsibility for one's wellbeing and future; it necessarily involves the following difficult elements:

1. Facing the anxiety of exercising the freedom of choice.
2. Agonizing over making the right choice based on one's conscience, moral values, and core beliefs.
3. Taking responsible action by faith because one can never have full knowledge of the situation or the future.
4. Making a commitment to persevere until the completion of one's chosen task or achieving one's life goal.

*We have a tremendous responsibility.
So much depends on us.
If not me, who? If not now, when?
It is our job here and now
to do our best to make a difference.*

Gordon B. Hinckley

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

5. Reorientation From The Old Language Of Maximizing Positive Traits And Emotions To The New Language Of Optimal Balance, Harmony, And Fitness

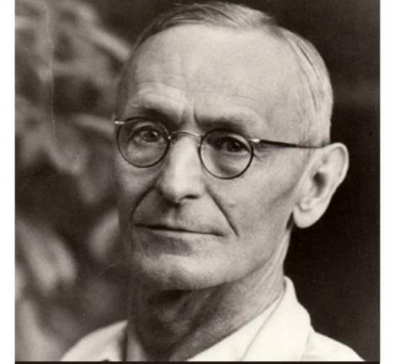
The True Self

When we actively seek inner peace by retreating to our innermost sanctuary away from worldly strife, we will find peace and harmony.

Paradoxically, when we let our minds idle, or by not being actively engaged with learning or any worthwhile task, we will invite all kinds of negative voices or dirty thoughts.

If we are what we think, which is our true self: the spiritual peaceful self or the polluted chaotic self?

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong



“Within you, there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself.”

Hermann Hesse

6. Reorientation From Immediate Outcome To Processes And Long-terms Consequences

- “Man has to cope with the problem of suffering. The Oriental wants to get rid of suffering by casting it off. Western man tries to suppress suffering with drugs. But suffering has to be overcome, and the only way to overcome it is to endure it.”
– (C. G. Jung, Letters, Vol 1)



6. Reorientation From Immediate Outcome To Processes And Long- terms Consequences

Meaning in Life and The True Self

Brown and Wong (2015) point out that meaning in life cannot be widely experienced simply because of the cognitive awareness of patterns of regularity.

The following quote indicates that one cannot achieve inner peace and meaning without an ontological and existential understanding of one's true self, which is far more difficult than pattern recognition.

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

References

- Brown, N. J. L., & Wong, P. T. P. (2015). Questionable measures are pretty meaningless: Comment on Heintzelman and King (2014). *American Psychologist*, 70(6), 571-573.



“One must learn first to know himself before knowing anything else (gnothi seauton). Not until a man has inwardly understood himself and then sees the course he is to take does his life gain peace and meaning.”

Søren Kierkegaard

6. Reorientation From Immediate Outcome To Processes And Long-terms Consequences

- The process and power of faith for wellbeing.
- The world is scarier than you think.
- Evil forces are more dangerous than you think because they are invisible and everywhere, capable of destroying innocent lives.
- The only force more powerful than all the dark forces of the Devil and all his strongholds in higher places is almighty God and faith in Him.

**FAITH IS THE MOST
POWERFUL OF ALL FORCES
OPERATING IN HUMANITY
AND WHEN YOU HAVE IT IN
DEPTH NOTHING CAN GET
YOU DOWN.**

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

New Research Findings

- True freedom is spiritual freedom – the responsible use of your freedom ([Arslan & Wong, 2022](#)).
- It is the freedom to take a courageous stand towards your fate, your circumstances, and do the right thing.
- It is the self-determination to have the right attitude towards life, others, and God.

New Research Findings: Tragic Optimism

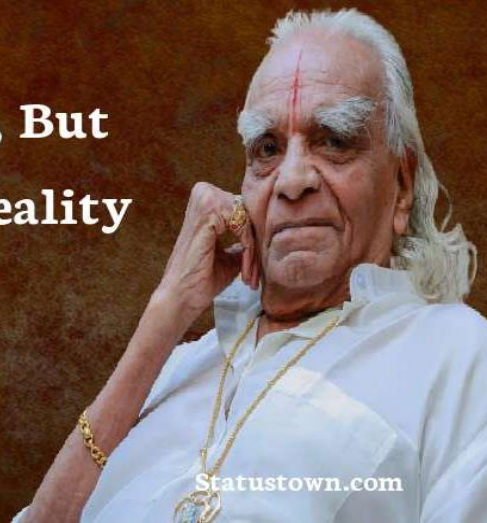
As we said before, any attempt to restore a man's inner strength in the camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal.

Viktor E. Frankl

Conclusion: The New Mindset For Regeneration, Transformation, and Existential Wellbeing

**There Is Only One Reality, But
There Are Many Ways A Reality
Can Be Interpreted.**

~ BKS LYENGAR ~



The Joy of Being

From the perspective of existential positive psychology, the joy of being is just another term of describing existential wellbeing, which comes from the higher consciousness of your life as a self-transcendental whole as well as from embracing who you really are with its undesirable parts integrated with the most noble parts.



The joy of Being, which is the only true happiness, cannot come to you through any form, possession, achievement, person, or event - through anything that happens. That joy cannot come to you - ever. It emanates from the formless dimension within you, from consciousness itself and thus is one with who you are.

— Eckhart Tolle —

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

Thank you for your interest!

- To learn more about the basic principles of EPP and Meaning Therapy, please visit my website (www.drpaulwong.com) or enroll in my latest course, “[Unlock the Transforming Power of Suffering: The How of Integrative Meaning Therapy.](#)”
- For more details, please see: <http://www.drpaulwong.com/courses/aepp02-integrative-meaning-therapy/>