

# The Role of Positive Psychology and Meaning in PD

Bradley McDaniels, Ph.D., CRC

Assistant Professor

Department of Rehabilitation and Health Services

University of North Texas

# Definitions

- *Positive Psychology*
  - The scientific study of optimal human functioning
  - What makes life worth living – those conditions that lead to happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing
  - Wright's (1983) positive value change (e.g., enlarging one's scope of values to values other than those presumed lost); positive coping vs. succumbing following dx with chronic illness.
- *Quality of Life*
  - Subjective sense of overall well-being resulting from one's evaluation of satisfaction with personally important domains of life
  - Multidimensional; both subjective and objective; and is enhanced by personal resources, purpose, and sense of belonging.

# Definitions (cont)

- *Apathy*

- Common neuropsychiatric syndrome in people with PD
- Loss of both goal-directed behavior and motivation
- Challenging to diagnose due to overlapping symptoms (depression, dementia)
- Prevalence in PD of 39.5% (mean of studies), but estimates vary considerably (den Brok et al., 2015)
- No consistent treatment available
- Among the top five factors negatively affecting Health-related QoL in people with PD (van Uem, 2016).
- Predicts cognitive decline in people with PD (Martin et al., 2020).

# Definitions (cont)

- *Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap)*
  - Framework for understanding the psychological resources that individuals use to deal with hardships in their lives and to even thrive despite them
  - Higher-order construct made up of hope, (self-) efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO)
  - As a psychological resource, PsyCap is synergistically greater than any of the individual components alone
  - Is largely based on one's positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success
  - State-like and malleable (can be improved through interventions)
  - Fits well within a strengths-based approach
  - New stance includes the positive potential of the negatives (PP 2.0)

# Meaning (Steger Resources)

- Meaning **of** Life
- Meaning **in** Life
- Domain-level meaning – work, relationships, family, leisure, etc.
- Fluid Meaning – post-traumatic growth and meaning making
  
- Research indicates that traumatic life events may result in changes to one's meaning in life (de Jong et al., 2020; King & Hicks, 2021)
- A clear sense of meaning and purpose can add something positive and significant to one's life regardless of circumstances and health conditions

# Meaning in Life (Martela & Steger, 2016)

- Significance
  - Extent of experiencing one's life as mattering, important, and of value in the world
    - I have inherent value; my life is worth it – I matter
- Coherence
  - The degree to which people perceive that their life makes sense; things fit together well.
    - I understand myself within the context of life; my life makes sense; my place in the world
- Purpose
  - The extent to which people experience life as being directed and motivated by valued life goals
    - My life has highly valued goals

# Meaning in life...

- Higher meaning in life is associated with more...
  - Positive emotions
  - Positive personality traits
  - Life satisfaction
  - Self-esteem/self-worth
  - Positive coping
  - Hope
  - Optimism
  - Resilience
  - Better HrQoL
  - Well-being
  - Successful aging

# Meaning in life...

- Higher meaning in life is associated with less...
  - Physical decline and slower cognitive decline in older adults
  - Decreased PTSD
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Negative affect
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Suicidal ideation
  - Substance abuse
  - Need for therapy



# Does Meaning in Life matter?

Data from thousands of studies indicate that a higher meaningful life positively correlates with people being...

- Happier
- More fulfilled
- More fun
- Better for other people
- Healthier
- Living Longer

# Sources of Meaning

- *Work/Occupation*
- *Relationships*
- Health
- Nature
- Education
- Community
- Values
- Religion/Spirituality
- Organizations/Activities
- Hobbies

# Developing Meaning

- How are things going in the sources of meaning in your life?
  - Time x Value Exercise
- Allocate more time to the chosen sources
- Collaborate – teamwork
- Share experiences
- Help others foster their meaning

# Meaning in Life and Apathy

- Study evaluating the relationship between Meaning in Life and...
  - **Negative Correlations**
    - Apathy
    - Loneliness
    - Depression
    - Anxiety
  - Positively Correlated with HrQoL