

Positive Psychology and Successful Aging

Oslo Kongressenter, Norway, 28 & 29 October 2007
George E. Vaillant, PhD, Harvard Medical School

What can you do to increase the likelihood of living a happy, healthy, fulfilling life into your sixties, seventies, eighties and beyond? This two-day workshop is built on the premise that positive psychology and developmental psychology constitutes an empirical science. Dr. Vaillant offer a life-cycle perspective based heavily on contemporary research. For more than five decades Harvard Medical School has studied the basic elements of adult human development, analyzing the health and happiness of hundreds of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Dr. Vaillant will reveal several keys to why some people turn out to be more resilient than others. Psychological approaches to life feature strongly in outcomes. For example, developing coping and defense strategies that allow one to see life optimistically, despite the ordinary tragedies of life, is very important to a long, good life, as Dr. Vaillant outlines. Having a solid marriage, forming new friendships and keeping one's mind active is also important. Citing the importance of developing the "right attitude" about life, Dr. Vaillant suggests that people, "Worry less about cholesterol and more about gratitude and forgiveness." His surprising conclusion is that individual lifestyle choices play a greater role than genetics, wealth, race, or other factors in determining how happy people are in later life. Think diet and exercise are the keys to a long, healthy life? Think again.

Positive Psychology is a recent movement of researchers who concentrate on and empirically document what makes individuals, workplaces, schools, and so on, prosper and flourish, rather than diagnosing and fixing what is wrong with them. Positive Psychology is increasingly recognized as having potentially major, lasting benefits for individuals, organizations and even nations. Recognizing these advantages, principles from positive psychology are now increasingly being implemented into education, health care, management and public policy.

About the presenter: **George E. Vaillant, MD, Harvard Medical School**



Dr. Vaillant is a professor of psychiatry and co-director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, a 50-year-old longitudinal study of 824 individuals followed from their teens into old age. He has received numerous awards including the APA 2007 Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Vaillant has published extensively, including several books and 19 articles in *Archives of General Psychiatry* and 21 articles in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Currently Dr. Vaillant has 8 articles in press as well as a new book titled *Faith, Hope and Joy: The Neurobiology of Positive Emotions*.

More information » www.evidence.no

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Knowledge Exchange

Positive Psychology: The Characteristics of Highly Adaptive and Optimally Functioning People

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Day 1: Sunday, 28 October, 2007

- 09:00-09:15 **Welcome, registration, fruit and tea/coffee**
- 09:15-10:00 **Coping mechanisms and personality**
- A brief history of positive psychology
 - How to see life optimistically, despite the ordinary tragedies of life
- 10:00-10:15 **Break**
- 10:15-11:00 **Positive psychology and personality disorders**
- Adaption to life
- 11:00-11:15 **Break**
- 11:15-12:00 **Faith, hope and joy: The neurobiology of positive emotions**
- Spirituality and religion: Yes, there is a difference
- 12:15-13:00 **Lunch and discussion period**
- 13:15-14:00 **Positive emotions and therapeutic interventions**
- Positive experiences: Well-being and resilience
 - How to identify and nurture purpose, tolerance and flourishing
 - Putting the findings from positive psychology into use
- 14:00-15:00 **Alcoholism and positive psychology**
- The natural history of alcoholism
 - How AA works
 - Spirituality as a source of growth and recovery

Successful Aging: Findings from the Harvard Study of Adult Development

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Day 2: Monday, 29 October, 2007

- 09:00-09:15 **Welcome and registration**
- 09:15-09:30 **Introduction by Professor Ivar B. Bjørgen**
Department of Psychology, NTNU/Centre for Senior Policy
- 09:30-10:00 **Prediction of physical and mental health at 80**
- A life-cycle perspective
- 10:00-10:15 **Break**
- 10:15-10:45 **Social and emotional maturation in old age**
- Unlocking the doors to health and happiness in late life
 - Generativity: Forging new friendships and helping the next generation
 - Integrity: Finding inner peace with all the experiences of life and the world
- 10:45-11:15 **Lifelong learning and enjoyable retirement**
- The pursuit of lifelong learning, creativity, play and enrichment at work
 - Enjoyable retirement
- 11:15-12:15 **Lunch**
- 12:15-13:00 **Roundtable conference discussion:**
- Researchers from NOVA, NTNU and the Centre for Senior Policy will informally discuss the findings from the Harvard Study of Adult Development
 - The researchers are invited to expand with their own research and point to areas of education, leadership, health care and public policy that require attention.
- 13:00-13:15 **Break**
- 13:15-14:00 **Roundtable conference open discussion**
- Attendees are invited to a Q & A session and discussion period of positive psychology and successful aging
 - Workshop confirmations are handed-out
 - Wrap-up and closing remarks