

Roadmap to Resiliency:

Medical perspectives and strategies for managing distress



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September 2020



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LEADING THE QUEST

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- What does it mean to be healthy?
- What does it mean to be whole?
- What does it mean to be resilient?



Themes for Today

- How meaning and purpose can contribute to resiliency
- Harnessing the “Science of Gratitude” and “Social Connectivity” to optimal well-being
- Mindfulness and Managing Perspective

Meaning & Purpose

Guinness (March 11, 2016): Holocaust survivor, 112, named world's oldest man



“I don’t know the secret for long life. I believe that everything is determined from above and we shall never know the reasons why. There have been smarter, stronger and better looking men than me who are no longer alive. All that is left for us to do is to keep on working as hard as we can and rebuild what is lost.”

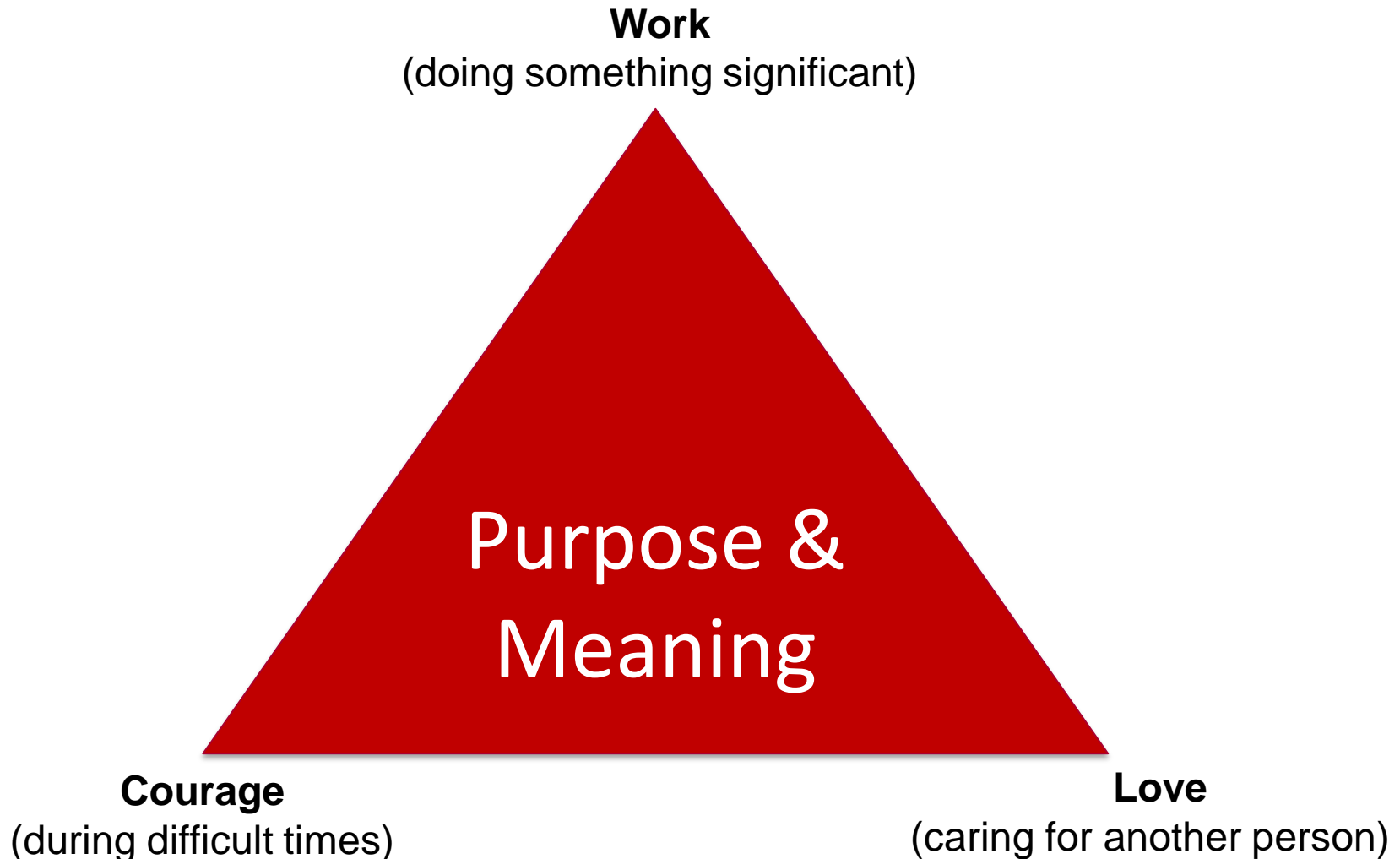
Mr Israel Kristal

Viktor E. Frankl

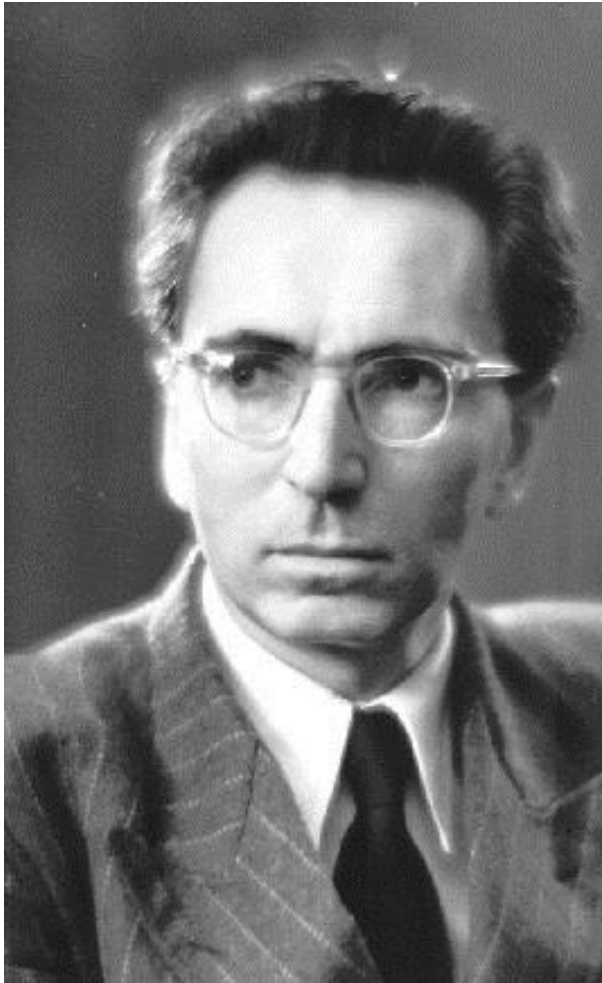
- 1905 – 1997
- Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust Survivor
- Between 1942 and 1945 Frankl imprisoned in 4 different camps, including Auschwitz
- His mother, father, brother, and pregnant wife were imprisoned and all but Frankl perished



Frankl's Sources for Finding Meaning and Purpose



Viktor Frankl



"When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves."

Viktor E. Frankl



Why Does Purpose in Life Matter?

- Ten studies with a total of 136,265 participants
- Significant association with a higher purpose in life and:
 1. Reduced all-cause mortality (relative risk 0.83)
 2. Reduced cardiovascular events (relative risk 0.83)

Mastering Perspective

What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is the process of developing **self-awareness**
- Helps put us in charge of our minds instead of letting our minds be in charge of us
- Learning to differentiate thoughts and feelings from reality
- Learning to center your attention on the present moment



Adapted from Emily Berg



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Managing Attitude

“We who lived, in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: **the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.**”

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

The Space Between

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

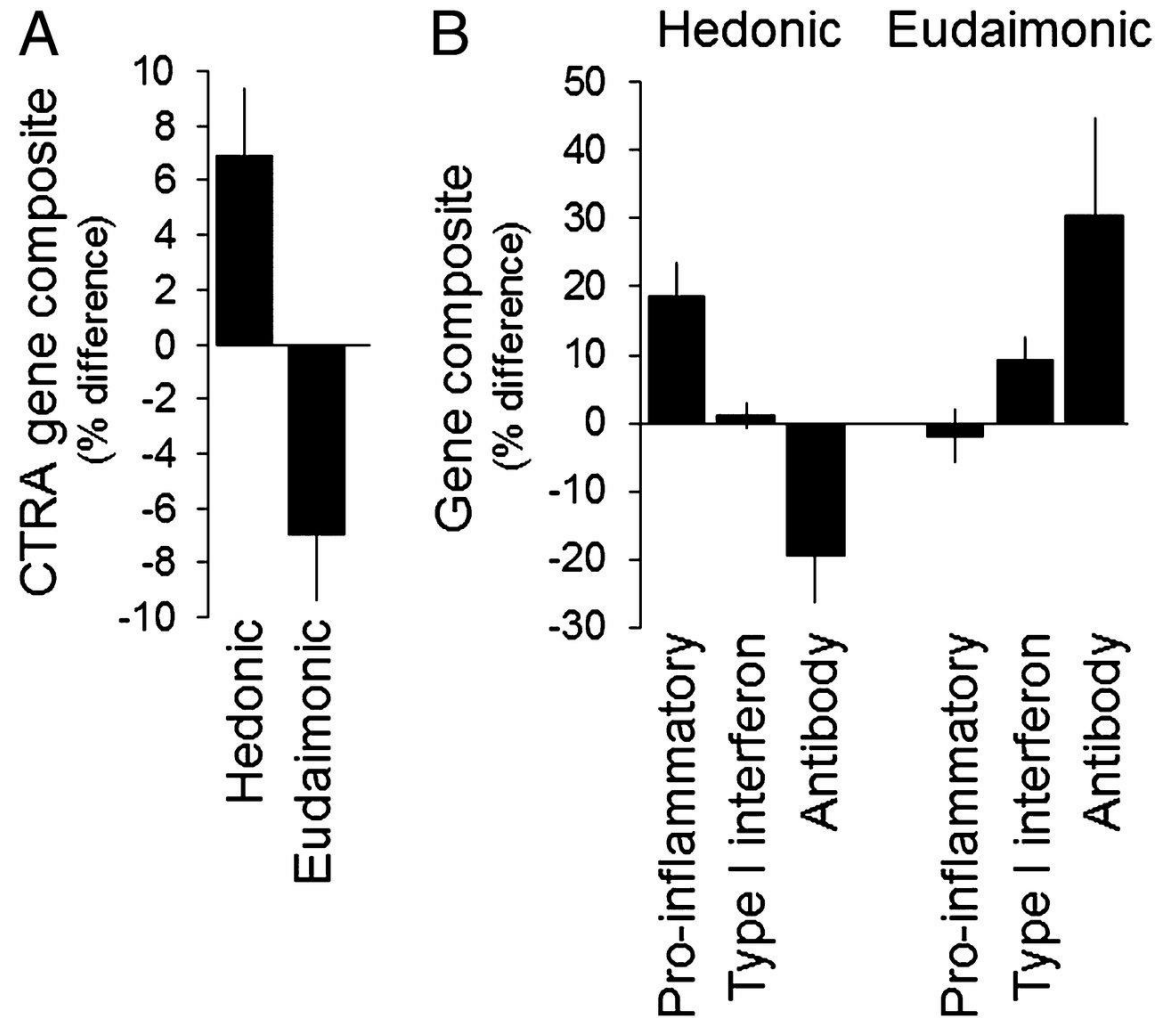
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Hedonic vs. Eudaimonic



Expression of the CTRA gene (Gene Involved with ADVERSITY): Both groups selected for HIGH Levels of WELL-BEING



Barbara L. Fredrickson et al. PNAS 2013;110:13684-13689

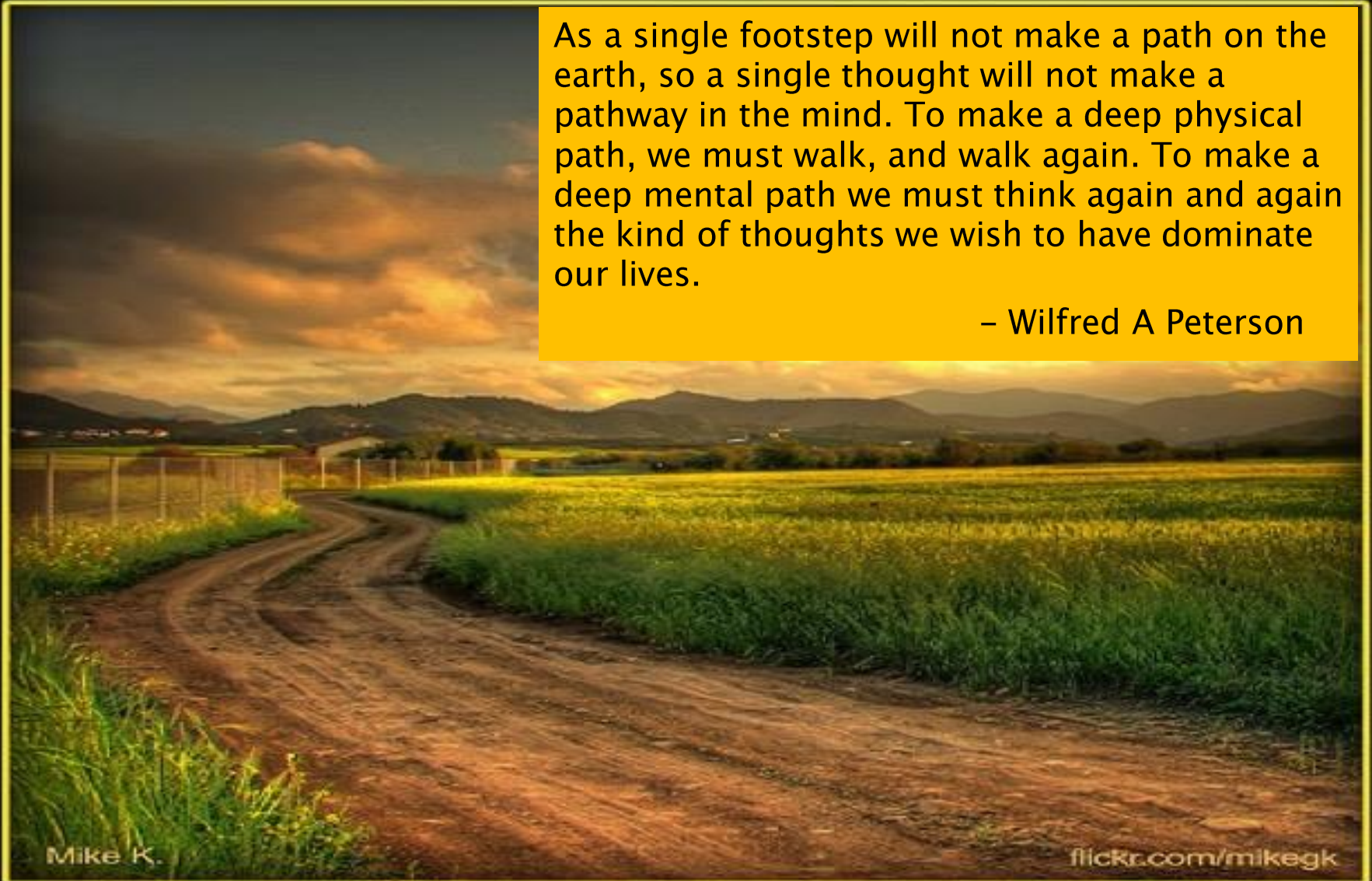
What does life expect from me?

(Rather than what do I expect from life?)

Pathways of Thought

As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we must walk, and walk again. To make a deep mental path we must think again and again the kind of thoughts we wish to have dominate our lives.

– Wilfred A Peterson



Mike K.

[flickr.com/mikegk](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mikegk/)

Cultivating Gratitude

What Good is Gratitude?

- Gratitude allows celebration of the present
- Gratitude blocks help negative emotions:
 - Anger
 - Resentment
 - Envy
- Gratitude helps the quantity and quality of sleep
- Stronger immune systems
- Grateful people are more likely to empathize and help others
- Gratitude helps strengthen social ties
- Grateful people are more **resilient** to stress

Emmons RA, McCullough MC, *Journal of Personality and Psychology*, 2003

Digdon N, Koble A, *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 2011

Kashdan TB et al, *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 2006

Not about thinking that life is perfect



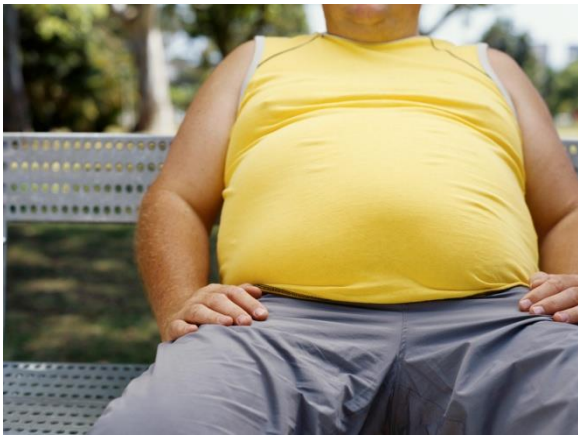
Gratitude Journal



- Brief sentences are all you need
- Mundane or sublime or timeless
- Focusing on *people* to whom you are grateful has more impact than focusing on *things* for which you are grateful
- Don't just go through the motions
- Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising (may elicit stronger levels of gratitude)
- Reflect on what your life would be like *without* certain blessings, rather than just thinking up the good things
- Think about your language:
 - Blessings
 - Abundance
 - Fortunate
 - Gifts

Connectivity and Humor

What human condition increases the risk of death as much as smoking cigarettes and more than physical inactivity or obesity?



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Social isolation and mortality

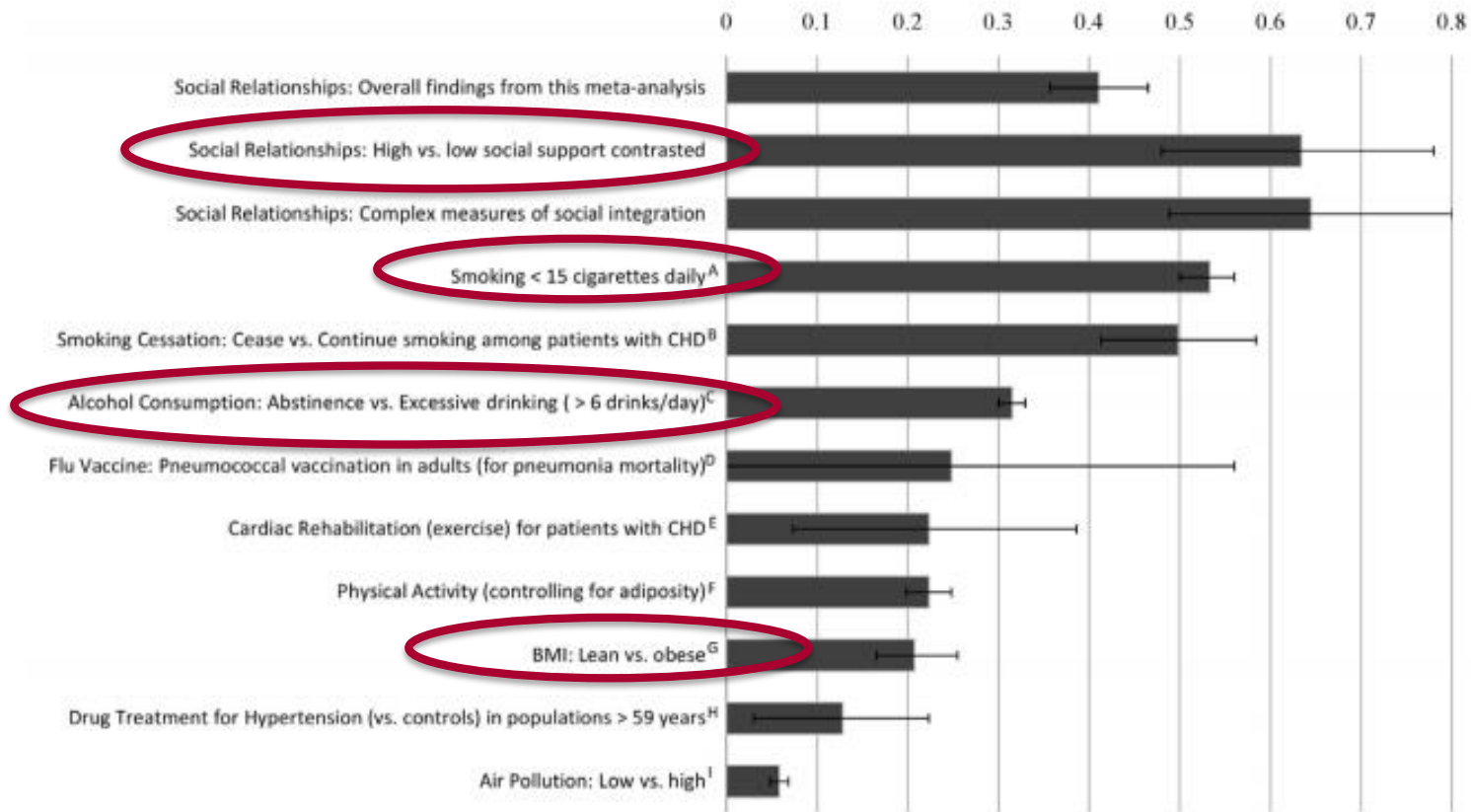


Figure 6. Comparison of odds (lnOR) of decreased mortality across several conditions associated with mortality. Note: Effect size of zero indicates no effect. The effect sizes were estimated from meta analyses: ; A = Shavelle, Paculdo, Strauss, and Kush, 2008 [205]; B = Critchley and Capewell, 2003 [206]; C = Holman, English, Milne, and Winter, 1996 [207]; D = Fine, Smith, Carson, Meffe, Sankey, Weissfeld, Detsky, and Kapoor, 1994 [208]; E = Taylor, Brown, Ebrahim, Jolliffe, Noorani, Rees et al., 2004 [209]; F, G = Katzmarzyk, Janssen, and Ardern, 2003 [210]; H = Insua, Sacks, Lau, Lau, Reitman, Pagano, and Chalmers, 1994 [211]; I = Schwartz, 1994 [212].
doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316.g006

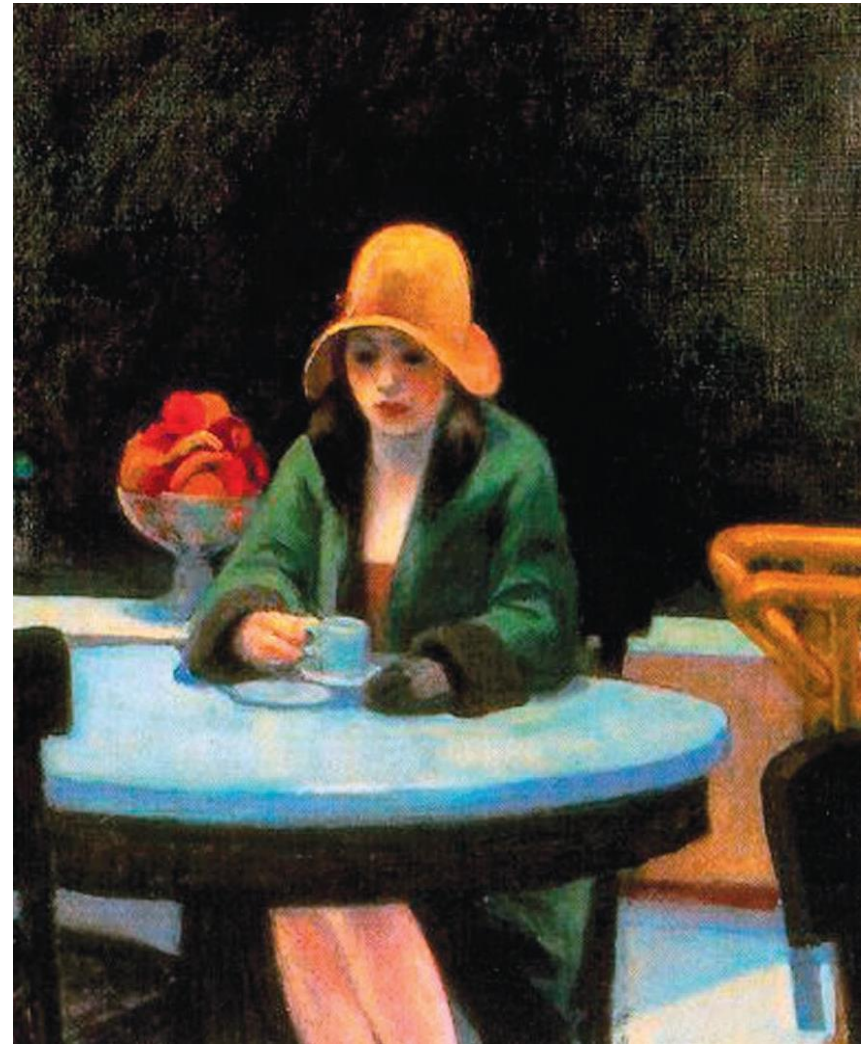
Holt-Lunstad, 2010

Social Isolation Impact

Social Isolation = Smoking 15
Cigarettes a Day



- Chronic loneliness can cause changes in the cardiovascular, immune, and nervous system
- Associated with **26% higher** mortality rates in general population
- Associated with a **hazard ratio of 1.7** for breast-cancer related mortality



Loneliness is a *subjective* experience

- Some people are socially isolated but they are not lonely
- Some people are lonely even if they have a lot of social contacts

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background, with a registered trademark symbol (®) at the end.

Loneliness Can Be Overcome

- **Stay connected**
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Shift people's attention and interpretation of social situations in a more positive direction
- Know where your own thermostat is set and try to stay in your comfort zone
 - "The degree of social connection that can improve our health and happiness....is both as simple and as difficult as *being open and available to others.*" (Cacioppo, 2011)



Pearls for Enhancing Resiliency

- Meaning-centered living
- Mastering perspective
- Living with an attitude of gratitude (try a journal)
- Stay connected to the important people in your life
- Being mindful or meditating (however that makes sense to you)
- Try to maintain a sense of humor



Thank you



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