1. Read the Motivation, Emotion and Stress readings and complete the packet below.
2. You must print this and hand in a hard copy. Please hand-write your answers directly on this packet. Please write legibly. Do not complete on a separate piece of paper.
3. Completion of this packet is worth one major assessment grade.
4. Failure to hand this assignment in on the second day of class will result in a zero.
5. You will be tested on this content on the second day of class for another major assessment grade.
6. I recommend you thoroughly study and take notes on these readings to prepare for the test.
7. The test questions go beyond memorization. You need to be able to apply the knowledge. It is important that you fully understand the information presented.

**Motivation** – a need or desire that energizes and directs a behavior

- **Intrinsic motivation** –

  Example –

- **Extrinsic motivation** –

  Example –

- **Industrial/Organizational Psychology** –

**Theories of Motivation:**

1. **Ethology/instinct theory** –

   **Instinct** (fixed action patterns)

   Why has this theory lost support?

2. **Sociobiology** –
3. **Evolutionary psychology** –

Why do you think this theory is controversial?

4. **Drive –reduction theory** –

**Homeostasis** –

Criticism of this theory:

5. **Arousal Theory** –

**Yerkes-Dodson Law** –

6. **Incentive Theory** –

7. **Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Leon Festinger)** –

Example:

8. **Hierarchy of Needs (Abraham Maslow)** – (explain in detail, including each level of the pyramid):
Self-actualization –

9. Self-determination theory –

Positive Psychology (Martin Seligman) –

-Hunger/Eating

   Biological Influences:

   Role of glucose:

   Role of hypothalamus:

       Lateral hypothalamus –

       Ventromedial hypothalamus –

   Hormones also play a role:

       Insulin –

       Ghrelin –

       Leptin –

   Set-point (explain in detail) –

Other influences on eating/hunger:
Cultural:

Society:

External cues:

Anorexia Nervosa –

Bulimia Nervosa -

Social Motivation:

Achievement motivation –

Explain David McClelland's theory on the desire to achieve and a fear of failure:

Affiliation motive –

Aggression:

Hostile aggression –

Instrumental aggression –

Frustration-aggression principle –

Catharsis – the idea that “releasing” aggressive energy relieves aggressive urges

Why is the idea of catharsis controversial?
**Emotion** – a response of the whole organism, involving physiological arousal, expressive behaviors and conscious experience

- **Theories of emotion**: (explain each one in detail, include an example for each)

  1. James-Lange Theory –

  2. Cannon-Bard Theory –

  3. Schachter-Singer Theory (Two-Factor Theory) –

- **Emotional Expression** (Paul Ekman)

  microexpressions –

  Display rules –

  Facial feedback hypothesis –

- Are humans good or bad at recognizing emotions in other people? Explain

- Are men and women better at analyzing people’s nonverbal expressions? Explain

- Do facial expressions have different meanings in different cultures? Explain

- According to Darwin, why would it have been important evolutionarily for facial muscles to be universal to every culture?
**Stress** – the process by which we perceive and respond to certain events, called stressors, that we appraise as threatening or challenging

Type A –

Type B –

**General adaptation syndrome (GAS)** – Hans Selye’s concept of the body’s adaptive response to stress in three phases:

Alarm –

Resistance –

Exhaustion –

**Richard Lazarus** –

Primary appraisal –

Secondary appraisal –

**Conflicts: (Kurt Lewin)**

approach-approach –

example -

avoidance-avoidance –

example –

approach-avoidance –
example -

multiple approach-avoidance -

example -
Motivation and Emotion and Stress

Introduction

In 1984, Arvind Pandya ran backwards from Los Angeles to New York City, a distance of over 3,100 miles, in 107 days – he covered an average of nearly 30 miles per day. In 1986, Pat Bower lived in a barrel on top of an 18-foot flagpole for 40 days and one hour. In 1997, Elaine Davidson established the record for total number of body piercings – four hundred sixty two. One hundred and ninety two of those were on her head. In 1998, Shridar Chillal had the fingernails on his left hand measured at 20 feet, 2 1/4 inches. And in 1998, Mike Howard walked on an aluminum bar between two hot air balloons at a height of over three miles, using no safety ropes.

The Guinness Book of World Records, from which each of these facts was drawn, presents a smorgasbord of oddities, most of which invite the question, "Why do people do what they do?" That question is at the core of this unit.
Material from this unit will account for six to eight multiple-choice questions on the AP Exam. In the official AP Psychology curriculum progression, this unit comes before the unit on Development, but the order used in this book is easily defensible as well. Many textbooks also break this topic into two separate chapters, one specifically on motivation and the other focusing on emotion. In a sense, then, this is another “two in one” chapter, but you probably won’t find it overwhelming in terms of total volume of material.

**Motivation**

As with most elements of human behavior described in this book, motivation is influenced by biological, psychological and social factors. As you will see, many of our behaviors are **intrinsically** motivated, meaning we do them for their own sake — for the simple pleasure of doing them. Other motives are **extrinsic** — we do some things in order to receive some external reward. Some high school students take AP Psychology because they want to challenge themselves academically (**intrinsic motivation**) while others may be mostly motivated by the possibility of gaining college credit (**extrinsic motivation**).

Many of the findings in the field of motivation serve as the foundation of **industrial and organizational** **(I-O)** psychology. This branch of psychology applies motivational principles to boost the efficiency, productivity, and well being of workers and the companies that employ them. An I-O psychologist may look at modes of communication within a company, assess the effectiveness of the leadership within a certain institution, or develop ways to screen applicants to find the best people for a particular kind of work. They may also work on ways to keep employees satisfied and engaged with their jobs.

Let us delve deeper into the study of motivation by looking at a summary of some major perspectives that attempt to explain why we do what we do.

**Ethologists** study animal behavior in the natural setting. They have proposed various **instinct theories** to explain such behaviors. To an ethologist, an **instinct** is an innate, preprogrammed behavior that is released in response to some stimulus. A true instinct is unlearned and is present in most all healthy members of the species. These instincts (also called **fixed action patterns**) manifest themselves in response to some particular environmental event (**a trigger feature or sign stimulus**). For example, some types of small birds instinctively hide from hawks; they appear to recognize the hawk as a dangerous predator by the hawk’s eyes. The eyes are thus the trigger feature initiating the fixed action pattern of flight. Migration patterns and hibernation are fixed action patterns triggered by changes in the animals’ environment.

Some people don’t like the term ‘instinct’ partly because in the past it has been used in a kind of circular argument describing behavior (“He did what he did out of instinct”...
Motivation and Emotion

"But why does he have this instinct?..." "Well, he was born with it"). Today, instinct theories have lost favor partly because they don't provide a clear explanation for why we behave as we do.

Sociobiology also focuses on the role of basic biological mechanisms in motivation. This controversial perspective is based on the contention that people behave in ways that are most likely to perpetuate their own genes. A once classic example of this referred to nomadic extended family groups of indigenous peoples. When such a group faced especially difficult environmental conditions and short supplies, older members of the band might voluntarily leave the group and die, apparently committing a kind of altruistic suicide in order to assure the survival of the others. A sociobiologist would argue that this was not so much a pro-social act as an attempt to keep one's own genes alive through the survival of one's offspring. Some have questioned just how often such events actually occur, and many wonder in any case just how well this theory explains more mundane human motivations.

Evolutionary psychology (EP) draws from both sociobiology and ethology, maintaining the basic premise that many human behaviors are genetically influenced. This perspective applies many of Charles Darwin's principles of evolution and natural selection to explain psychological phenomena. Broadly speaking, EP proposes that behaviors serve an adaptive purpose, helping us survive, reproduce and pass those behaviors on through our offspring. This may account for sex differences in mate selection. According to this view, men seek out females that are younger, as youth suggests health and fertility. When females look for mates, they are drawn to slightly older males (suggesting the ability to survive) with the resources necessary to help provide for the offspring that they produce. You can see why these are controversial arguments that are difficult to definitively verify.

Clark Hull proposed drive theory (you may also see this referred to as drive-reduction theory), which is based on the notion that we all have fundamental needs that must be fulfilled. If we are deprived of them we will be driven to act in ways to meet those needs and return to homeostasis, an ideal internal state of balance or equilibrium. If an individual is exceptionally cold, he will feel driven to seek warmth in order to become internally steady again. The same might be said about hunger. Your body has a need for nutrients - if you haven't consumed any for a while, you will experience tension, producing a drive to eat. Eating returns you to homeostasis, eliminating the discomfort you had been feeling. This theory is often criticized because it doesn't account for the wide spectrum of human behaviors. It "works" in explaining thirst or sex drive, but does it explain the motivation to run marathons or parachute out of airplanes? The theory implies that humans are always doing things to reduce tension, but it seems clear that sometimes people go out of their way to seek stimulation.

Arousal Theory helps to account for that tendency to engage in sensation seeking behaviors. The argument here is that we each have a preferred, optimal level of arousal
and we act in ways to remain at that level. For some people, a lazy Saturday on the couch in front of the television is perfectly stimulating, while others would find such a day intensely uncomfortable and would be motivated to do more. Some individuals are highly motivated to seek stimulation; others feel comfortably stimulated even when relatively inactive. Historically, some individuals have looked out at the ocean from a safe harbor and felt a great pull to explore what was out there, while someone else standing right by their side might have had no such feeling. Yerkes-Dodson Law provides a prediction about the relationship between arousal levels and performance. It suggests that there is an interaction between aroused states, the difficulty of the task to be carried out, and eventual performance on that task. For example, a moderate level of stimulation (in the form of nervousness, anxiety, etc.) is best for performance on a difficult task, such as taking the AP Psychology Exam, while one might be able to handle a much higher level of arousal in performing a well-learned or “easy” task.

The theories that we've discussed up to this point all focus on internal processes that influence motivation. Incentive Theory looks at how external factors drive us. This theory suggests that we are pulled toward behaviors by extrinsic rewards or incentives. In our society, we often entice people to perform certain behaviors by offering them some desired outcome in return, as in the payment of cash bonuses to employees who do exceptional work. Incentives could also be negative; an individual may be motivated to behave in a certain way to avoid an unpleasant outcome. You can see the obvious connection here between incentive theory and behavioral concepts of positive and negative reinforcement and punishment, which you studied in the unit on Learning Theory.

As proposed by Leon Festinger, cognitive dissonance theory states that we strive to bring our thoughts, attitudes and behaviors into agreement with each other. In a sense, we are thus seeking a kind of cognitive homeostasis, more commonly referred to as cognitive consistency. If you belong to a group in school that speaks out against drunk driving but then drink heavily at a party and attempt to drive home (please do not do such a dangerous thing), you will undoubtedly feel tension and anxiety. This dissonance between your previously stated attitude and your current behavior will motivate you to either modify your attitude or adjust your behavior in order to return to a comfortable internal state. For instance, you may decide to quit the club. Or, you might reduce the cognitive tension by rationalizing that you had no other ride home and thus “had to do it.” At times, we can perform rather elaborate cognitive contortions to reduce the disequilibrium we feel when confronted with a disparity between our thoughts and our behaviors.

Humanists like Abraham Maslow are very optimistic about human nature and motivation. Maslow proposed the existence of a hierarchy of needs. He theorized that we all have needs, which we are motivated to satisfy. Some are fundamental survival needs (we require food and water for example), while others are more ambitious, such as the desire to realize one's full potential as a human. Maslow called this the need for self-actualization; for
Motivation and Emotion

him it is the highest goal to which individuals aspire. It is characterized by self-acceptance, a willingness and desire to consider the needs and wants of others, creativity, spontaneity and non-conformity. In order to reach self-actualization one must first meet lower level needs in his hierarchy - in order, they are the physiological needs for food and water, the need for shelter and safety, the need for belonging and companionship and the need for self esteem. In Maslow’s paradigm, if you were starving, your focus would be on food, not on the search for meaningful companionship.

Maslow’s theory is very popular, although it’s worth discussing whether you think it is strictly hierarchical - that is, do all people follow this same flow in the same order? What about hunger strikers who deprive themselves of food, one of the most basic physiological needs, in order to meet other goals? What of individuals who seem to value social needs for belonging above a need for self-esteem? Also, Maslow himself acknowledged that many people do not even attempt to reach true self-actualization. Is the humanistic assumption that all people are striving to reach their fullest potential inherently flawed?

A more recent perspective on motivation, self-determination theory, has many parallels with Maslow’s positive view on human motivation. This theory postulates that humans have “inherent growth tendencies” and do most things out of intrinsic motivation. They argue that humans intuitively seek autonomy, competence and relatedness. Self-determination theory is typically seen as a part of positive psychology, which focuses on how positive emotions and attributes such as happiness, optimism and resilience contribute to our overall health and well being. Led by Martin Seligman, among many others, positive psychology focuses on understanding human strengths, well-being and contentment. Positive psychologists note, for example, that when people are happy, they are much more likely to help others. This is sometimes called the feel-good, do-good phenomenon.
So what is it that contributes to happiness? Research in this area indicates that some of the strongest predictors of happiness are being in a loving relationship, having work that you enjoy, and having an extroverted (outgoing, upbeat, sociable) personality. Moderate predictors of happiness include good health, religious affiliation and a solid social support network. The variables that are statistically unrelated to happiness may surprise you. Age doesn’t seem to matter much, and neither does one’s intelligence level. Having children doesn’t by itself make people happier, nor does having money. Once people have enough money to meet their basic needs, getting more of it does not appear to make people happier.

Some Specific Motivations

There are many different types of specific motivations that psychologists examine, and it is difficult to predict which are most likely to show up on the Advanced Placement Examination. It is safe to say, however, that you should know a bit about the motivations behind eating, aggression and achievement.

Hunger/Eating

There are many factors that contribute to our drive to eat – the topic deserves a book all its own. For the purposes of the AP Exam, you should know that the hypothalamus, in the limbic system of the brain, plays a central role in the regulation of appetite and satisfaction. The lateral hypothalamus (the LH) is most involved in “hunger” messages, while the ventromedial hypothalamus (the VMH) sends “stop, I think you’ve had just about enough!” messages. Thus, some think of the LH as the hunger center of the brain, and the VMH as the satiety center. However, those are not the only physiological mechanisms involved in hunger. Several hormones in the endocrine system play a role in eating and satiation. Insulin, which is secreted by the pancreas, controls blood glucose levels. Increases in insulin diminish blood glucose causing you to experience hunger. The sight or smell of food can actually stimulate insulin production, thereby increasing your appetite. Ghrelin is secreted by an empty stomach and cues your brain that food is needed. Leptin is secreted by fat cells and acts to reduce appetite.

A related theory is based on the concept of a set point. This states that our brain and endocrine system essentially act just as a thermostat does in a home. If the thermostat is set at 68 degrees, the furnace turns itself on when the temperature drops below that level and turns itself off when the temperature climbs above 68 degrees. In the same way, our body has an individual set point for body weight and adjusts metabolically to keep you at that level. This may help to explain why dieting by itself is often frustratingly unsuccessful in keeping you at some goal weight - your body is apparently battling to get you back to your
set point. Some psychologists, however, no longer accept the deterministic set point theory and instead prefer a settling point theory. Their contention is that slow and gradual shifts in eating habits can alter the body fat percentage at which your body feels most comfortable.

You can see that there is a mix of physiological factors telling us when to eat and to stop eating. But there are also a number of other influences on appetite. Culture influences the foods to which one is exposed and therefore likely to prefer. Advertising, television and the film industry do much to instill in us certain “ideals” of beauty, and those heavily influence our individual self-image. Self-image in turn affects our eating habits. There are a variety of other external cues that influence eating. Among them are:

- Time of day
- The availability and appearance of food
- The fact that those around you are eating
- Involvement in a social event that is built around a meal

On the AP Exam you may encounter specific references to eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa is a condition characterized by self-starvation. One commonly used threshold for diagnosing it is the failure to maintain at least 85% of what is considered the normal body weight for that individual’s height and age. Even at such low body weights, sufferers still believe themselves to be fat, and are often obsessed with the fear of gaining weight. Bulimia nervosa is more prevalent than anorexia. Bulimia is characterized by compulsive binge eating, followed by purging through either vomiting or taking laxatives. Bulimics may have weight fluctuations but are usually within or above the normal weight range. Bulimia and anorexia affect women at a much higher rate than men, and there are cross-cultural differences as well. Westernized countries tend to have higher rates of both. In these cultures, women may be more disposed to link their self-concept with body image, which in both disorders is often quite distorted.

Aggression

You could probably take an entire college course on aggression. It’s a big and highly relevant topic, but, in terms of the AP Exam, you only need to know a bit about it. You may recall one of the central functions of the amygdala from our study of The Biological Bases of Behavior. This limbic system structure sizes up emotional situations, especially in terms of “high arousal” emotions like anger and aggression. Of course, there are also other biological factors related to aggression. For example, males tend to be significantly more aggressive than females, perhaps because they produce more of the hormone testosterone. Many correlational studies indicate that in men, the higher their testosterone levels, the higher their aggression level.
On the exam, you may also encounter a distinction between hostile and instrumental aggression. Hostile aggression is carried out for its own sake, while instrumental aggression at least theoretically is aggression that is working toward some other goal besides the aggression itself. Bumping someone out of the way to get possession of the ball in soccer would be deemed instrumental aggression, while bumping someone into the wall in the school corridor would likely be viewed as hostile aggression. You could likely have a stimulating discussion in class about other examples: Is stepping on an ant hostile or instrumental aggression? Punching an opponent in a boxing match? Yelling out the window at a driver who has just cut you off in traffic?

The frustration-aggression principle, proposes that when we are unable to reach an objective we become frustrated, which may lead us to act out in an aggressive manner. Further, for people who are already prone to aggression, heat, overcrowding, a painful experience, or being under the influence of alcohol all serve to amplify aggressive tendencies.

Some theorists argue that aggression can be cathartic. They contend that the American fondness for football or professional wrestling or violent movies serves as a safety valve for aggression - if people can “get their aggressions out” in such settings, they won’t actually act them out in more dangerous ways. Freudian psychoanalytic theory is often associated with this view, which is not surprising when you know that it is based on the importance of the unconscious mind and its influence on behavior. The concept of catharsis is controversial. Many argue that while it may provide temporary relief, it actually magnifies aggressive tendencies over time. This may be a rich topic for classroom discussion and analysis.

**Achievement**

The drive to achieve has been a much-studied topic. Various methods have been used to attempt to measure achievement motivation. One is called the Thematic Apperception Test, or TAT. Used by researchers like David McClelland, this projective test (so called because of the expectation that one might “project” something about themselves onto an otherwise ambiguous stimulus) involves presenting a photograph or picture to a volunteer and asking them to tell a story about it. The stories are then rated for levels of achievement motivation. In general, McClelland and others have reported, after analysis of their TAT results, that there is a link between a desire to achieve and a fear of failure. Individuals with a high drive to succeed and a relatively low fear of failure are most likely to seek challenges that are worthy of their efforts but also reasonably attainable, whereas a person with a high fear of failure might choose to pursue very “safe” paths or nearly impossible ones. In the latter case, they are thus allowed to fail, since no one, including themselves, really expected success in the first place.
Motivation and Emotion

Another kind of projective test is a “Finish the Story” test used by Matina Horner in 1970. She supplied the first line of a possible story and asked volunteers to take it from there. One such first line was, “John has just finished his first year of medical school and is first in his class...” while another read “Alice has just finished her first year of medical school and is first in her class...” Like McClelland, Horner too rated the volunteer’s answers to determine their level of achievement motivation. One of her conclusions was that some women feared success - they had a “will to fail.” It may be interesting to discuss in class what the results would be if her work was replicated today.

Emotion

In the AP Psychology curriculum, the emotion section of this unit is relatively light on content, and much of it is linked with other units, especially The Biological Bases of Behavior. The one difficult area involves the basic theories of emotional response. Exactly how does an emotion unfold? There are a few major attempts to explain this, and it can be hard to sort them out, especially since they are usually referred to by names that do not cue you as to their meaning.

According to James-Lange Theory, in a potentially emotional situation, we first recognize physiological changes, such as an increased heart rate – only then do we identify the “emotion.” In this theory, autonomic nervous system activation is seen as the root of an emotional experience. As we veer off the highway in an attempt to avoid an accident, we first feel our hearts pounding and our palms sweating and then, when we finally come to a stop on the shoulder of the road, we say, “I was afraid.” The labeling of the emotion follows the bodily responses. It’s almost as if the physical creates the emotional.

In Cannon-Bard Theory (sometimes called Thalamic Theory, after the thalamus, the relay station in the brain), the recognition of physiological changes and the awareness of the emotion are processed simultaneously by the thalamus. When sensory information arrives at the thalamus that message activates the sympathetic nervous system and alerts the cerebral cortex at the same time. If you were hiking in the woods and saw a bear, that visual stimulus would trigger a “fight or flight” response and the “emotion of fear” simultaneously.

The Schachter-Singer Theory (also called Two-Factor Theory) adds a cognitive component to emotion. It proposes that one can interpret identical physical sensations differently according to the context in which they occur. The same feeling of butterflies in your stomach would tell you that you are nervous before a big game, but might tell you that you are happily excited as you open a huge birthday present. There are thus two factors at work – physiological arousal and cognitive interpretation of that arousal, which sounds suspiciously like James-Lange Theory except that specific situational cues are taken into account prior to experiencing the emotion. That is one way to help you to remember this theory: think ‘S’ for Schachter-Singer and ‘S’ for situations.
In the earlier unit on Sensation and Perception, you studied opponent process theory as it relates to color afterimages. Some experts contend that opponent processes help to explain emotions as well. You may recall that drive theory suggests we are driven to satisfy needs in order to return to homeostasis. **Opponent process theories** make a similar argument, which has been used to account for why some individuals enjoy bungee jumping or rock climbing or become addicted to certain drugs. When you do your first dangerous rock climb, your initial emotional response will likely be fear and anxiety. After completing the climb, you do not merely return to a homeostatic baseline but instead have an opposing feeling of happiness, even euphoria. The next time you go climbing, according to the theory, the primary emotion of fear is reduced, but the opposing process of elation can be just as great or greater than the first time around. You can see how such a process might also trap you in a pattern of drug abuse. If the primary “high” of taking a drug is less intense on repeated administration, and the opposing “crash” is just as unpleasant as it was originally, sometimes a user falls into taking more of the drug to escape the crash, thus beginning a perilous cycle.

**Emotional Expression**

In your review of the biological bases of emotional response, you might also consider how polygraphs (lie detectors) theoretically work. Basically, their job is to measure sympathetic nervous system responses, which might be indicative of lying (such as elevated heart rate, increased sweating and so on). You might have fun in class discussing the validity of this approach. Many people believe that lying is easily seen in the facial expressions that people make when answering questions, but although many claim to be excellent intuitive lie detectors, scientific studies indicate that few people do better than chance at identifying lies.

Psychologist Paul Ekman has proposed that when we lie, there are *microexpressions* on our face that indicate deceit. These are often so fleeting that the human eye might miss them, but new research indicates that computer software may be able to analyze those expressions, thereby identifying lies. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology also holds promise for lie detection. This brain scanning technique has revealed that when people lie, certain areas of their brain become active that are not active when that individual is telling the truth.

While Ekman has done significant work in the study of lying, he is even more well known for his **cross cultural research into the facial expression of emotions**. He found that individuals in all cultures tend to recognize and express basic emotions in the same way in terms of facial expression. It is now widely accepted that the facial expressions for the emotions fear, anger, happiness, surprise, disgust, sadness and contempt are truly universal. This suggests that some fundamental kinds of emotional responses are inborn in humans.
Motivation and Emotion

Although facial expressions for certain emotions may be biologically pre-wired, there are cultural influences determining the extent to which we display those emotions. Ekman and others argue that we learn cultural display rules early in life that govern how and when we display certain emotions. Other studies on facial expression indicate that we are quicker to recognize negative emotions on someone’s face than positive emotions. Perhaps this is an adaptive trait that allows us to respond quickly to possible threats.

We can also apparently induce some emotions through simple physical manipulations. The facial feedback hypothesis states that if one forces a smile, it really is more likely that individual will feel happier. Try it - make yourself look sad and then see how you feel! This finding lends support to the James-Lange Theory discussed earlier. Perhaps bodily responses do indeed alter your subjective experience of emotion.

Stress

The growing field of health psychology has garnered much interest in recent years, and one topic receiving much attention is that of stress. Hans Selye did the first extensive research on this topic. He argued that we all experience stress in much the same way. Selye proposed the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) in which people go through three basic stages: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. Alarm essentially involves a ‘fight or flight’ reaction in response to the threat. During resistance you attempt to fight off or cope with the stressor while your body maintains the physiological state it reached in the alarm stage. To Selye, if the stressor is not removed, this will eventually give way to exhaustion. You can remember this theory with the mnemonic G.A.S. is A.R.E.

More recent work by theorists such as Richard Lazarus suggests that an individual’s cognitive appraisal of the situation is the key in responding to stress. According to Lazarus, we first evaluate whether or not this is a stressful event to us (our primary appraisal), and we then judge whether and how we can cope with the stressor (our secondary appraisal). Much of the effect that stress has on our body is influenced by our assessment of our ability to cope with the stressor. As you will see in the coming chapters, cognitive psychologists propose that restructuring the way we think about situations in our lives can greatly reduce stress and anxiety.

There are some types of stress inducing “conflicts”, identified by Kurt Lewin, which you must learn about to prepare for the AP Exam. One is called an approach-approach conflict. If you have ever had two equally attractive options on a Saturday night and couldn’t decide which one to choose, then you have experienced an approach-approach conflict. Both choices are desirable, but you can only opt for one of them. In an avoidance-avoidance conflict, you are compelled to choose between two equally unattractive options. A trip to the dentist is an oft-used example. Do you make an appointment even though you’d rather
not out of fear and anxiety, or do you allow your teeth to rot out of your head? Neither choice tops your list of priorities, but you must do one or the other. In an approach-avoidance conflict, a certain situation has both attractive and unattractive elements that make it difficult for you to decide what to do. For example, you very much like the programs at a certain college that has accepted you, but it is very expensive. Or, you are in love with a person but also fear losing your freedom if you commit to him or her. Or you're playing a sport that you love but the coach drives you crazy. Each of these examples could also become multiple approach-avoidance conflicts. You are in love with someone but fear commitment; so far, simple approach-avoidance. That someone also has a lot of money, which would be advantageous, but you know it would make you feel guilty. Further, your parents love your partner and have really "adopted" him or her, but your partner's parents don't like you, and so on.
Motivation, Emotion + Stress

Theories of Motivation

Instinct/Evolutionary Theory
Charles Darwin's theory of Natural Selection indicated that individuals best adapted to their environment will be more likely to survive and reproduce, passing their favorable characteristics on to the next generation. As a result, a beneficial trait (one with high adaptive value) tends to become more common in succeeding generations. Eventually almost all individuals in the population will have the beneficial characteristic. Darwin believed that many behaviors were characteristics that could be passed on. William James thought that motivation by instincts was important for human behavior. In the early 1900s, a small group of psychologists led by William McDougall believed all thought and action necessarily resulted from instincts such as curiosity, aggression, and sociability. Sigmund Freud's theory of personality is based on instincts that motivate sex and aggression. Instincts are complex, inherited behavior patterns characteristic of a species. To be considered a true instinct, the behavior must be stereotypical, performed automatically in the same way by all members of a species in response to a specific stimulus. Birds and butterflies flying south to mate, or salmon swimming upstream to mate, are examples of animals carrying out their instincts, also called fixed-action patterns. Ethologist (animal behaviorist) Konrad Lorenz, who worked with baby ducks and geese, investigated an example considered an instinct. Ducks and geese form a social attachment to the first moving object they see or hear at a critical period soon after birth by following that object, which is usually their mother. This behavior is known as imprinting. When Lorenz was the first moving object they saw, the baby birds followed him, and retained an attachment to humans throughout their lives.

Evolutionary psychologists may work in the field of sociobiology, which tries to relate social behaviors to evolutionary biology. For example, they look at evolutionary mating patterns that differ between the two sexes; a male may be motivated to mate with multiple partners to increase the chance of his genes getting into the next generation, while a female might be motivated to mate for life with the male who has the best resources to take care of her and her children.

Psychologists today debate if there are any human behaviors that can be considered true instincts. Is rooting/sucking behavior complex enough to be considered instinctive behavior, or is it merely reflexive? How much of human behavior is instinctive? Psychologists have found it necessary to devise other theories beyond instinct/evolutionary theory to account for human behavior.

Drive Reduction Theory
According to Clark Hull's drive reduction theory, behavior is motivated by the need to reduce drives such as hunger, thirst, or sex. The need is a motivated state caused by a physiological deficit, such as a lack of food or water. This need activates a drive, a state of psychological tension induced by a need, which motivates us to eat or drink, for example.
Generally, the greater the need, the stronger the drive. Eating food or drinking water reduces the need by satisfying our hunger or quenching our thirst, and our body returns to its state of homeostasis. **Homeostasis** is the body's tendency to maintain an internal steady state of metabolism, to stay in balance. **Metabolism** is the sum total of all chemical processes that occur in our bodies and are necessary to keep us alive. Scientists have identified many of the neural pathways and hormonal interactions associated with biological needs and drives. For example, receptor cells for thirst and hunger are in the hypothalamus. Drive reduction theory accounts well at least to some extent for primary motives such as hunger, thirst, pain, and sex. This biologically based theory does not account as well for secondary motives such as achievement, affiliation, autonomy, curiosity, power, and play that are social in nature.

**Incentive Theory**

Primary motives push us to satisfy our biologic needs. But we are also pulled by environmental factors, which have little to do with biology. An **incentive** is a positive or negative environmental stimulus that motivates behavior, pulling us toward a goal. Secondary motives, motives we learn to desire, are learned through society's pull. Getting a 5 on the AP Psychology examination is an incentive that motivates you to read this book.

**Arousal Theory**

What explains people's needs to climb mountains, bungee jump, or ride roller coasters? **Arousal** is the level of alertness, wakefulness, and activation caused by activity in the central nervous system. The optimal level of arousal varies with the person and the activity. The **Yerkes-Dodson law** states that we usually perform most activities best when moderately aroused, and efficiency of performance is usually lower when arousal is either low or high. We tend to perform difficult or newly learned tasks better at a lower level of arousal, but we tend to perform very easy or well-learned tasks at a higher level of arousal. When first learning to drive a car, we will drive best if we are not anxious about our performance. Years later, we may need the radio on while we are driving to keep us aroused for our best performance.

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow categorized needs and then arranged them in order of priority, starting with powerful physiological needs, such as the needs for food and water. His hierarchy is often pictured as a pyramid (Figure 12.1). Maslow agreed with Hull that basic biological needs to satisfy hunger and thirst must be met first, followed by our safety needs to feel safe, secure, and stable in a world that is organized and predictable. When our stomachs are growling because we are hungry and homeless, it is unlikely that our greatest motivation will be to get a high grade on a test. When our needs for food, drink, shelter, and safety have been met, we are motivated to meet our belongingness and love needs, to love and be loved, to be accepted by others and considered part of a group, such as a family, and to avoid loneliness and alienation. This need is followed by esteem needs for self-esteem, achievement, competence, and independence; and the need for recognition and respect from others. According to Maslow, few people reach the highest levels of self-actualization, which is achievement of all of our potentials, and transcendence, which is spiritual fulfillment. Although this theory is attractive, we do not always place our highest priority on meeting lower-level needs. Political activists go on hunger strikes, soldiers sacrifice their lives, parents go without food in order to feed their children. Scientific evidence does not support this theory.
Physiological Motives

Hunger
Why do you eat? You eat when you feel hungry because your stomach is contracting or your blood sugar is low, but you also eat because you love the taste of a particular food, and because you are with friends or family who are eating. Our eating behavior is influenced by biological, social, and cultural factors.

Early research indicated that stomach contractions caused hunger. Yet even people and other animals who have had their stomachs removed still experience hunger. Recent research has revealed receptor cells in the stomach that detect food in the stomach and send neural impulses along the vagus nerve to our brain, reducing our level of hunger.

Hunger and Hormones
Secretion of the hormone cholecystokinin by the small intestine when food enters seems to stimulate the hypothalamus to reduce our level of hunger. When the small intestine releases sugars into the blood, blood sugar concentration increases. When blood sugar levels are high, the pancreas secretes the hormone insulin. For some people, the sight and smell of appealing food can stimulate the secretion of insulin. High levels of insulin generally stimulate hunger. Insulin lowers the blood glucose level by increasing the use of glucose in the tissues, by promoting storage of glucose as glycogen in the liver and muscles, and by promoting formation of fat from glucose. When blood sugar levels are low, insulin release is inhibited and the pancreas secretes the hormone glucagon. Glucagon increases the blood
glucose level by stimulating rapid conversion of glycogen into glucose, which is released by the liver and muscles into the bloodstream. Thus, insulin and glucagon work antagonistically through a negative feedback loop to help maintain homeostasis. Other secretions seem involved in hunger also, such as ghrelin secreted by an empty stomach that signals hunger and leptin secreted by fat cells that decreases hunger.

**Hunger and the Hypothalamus**

Neurons in the liver sensitive to glucose in the surrounding fluid send signals to the hypothalamus by way of the vagus nerve. Three parts of the hypothalamus in the brain seem to integrate information about hunger and satisfaction or satiety. The lateral hypothalamus (LH) was originally called the “on” button for hunger. When stimulated, this structure of the brain will start eating behavior, but if it is lesioned or removed, the individual will not eat at all, and will even starve to death. The ventromedial hypothalamus (VMH) was called the satiety center, or “off” button, for hunger. When stimulated, it turns off the urge to eat and when removed, the organism will continue to eat excessively and gain weight rapidly. Recent research indicates that a third region of the hypothalamus called the paraventricular nucleus (PVN) also helps regulate eating behavior as a result of stimulation or inhibition by neurotransmitters. Norepinephrine, GABA, and neuropeptide Y seem to increase the desire for carbohydrates, whereas serotonin seems to decrease the desire for carbohydrates. When the hormone leptin, produced by fat cells, is released into the bloodstream, it acts on receptors in the brain to inhibit release of neuropeptide Y into the PVN, thus inhibiting eating behavior.

**Eating and Environmental Factors**

Although eating behavior is partially regulated by biological factors, environmental factors such as learned preferences, food-related cues, and stress also influence our desire to eat. We all seem to have some inborn taste preferences for sweet foods, salty foods, and high-fat foods, but learning also influences what we eat. People from different cultures show different patterns of food consumption. Meat and potatoes are consumed in larger quantities in the United States, while rice and fish are the staple foods in Japan. Religious values also influence eating behavior by setting specific rules for the foods we may eat and those we are not permitted to eat. Finally, we tend to learn our food habits from our parents, partly by observational learning and partly by classical conditioning, for example, by pairing foods with pleasant social interactions. What, how often, and how much we should eat are expectations we have learned since we were babies.

**Obesity**

Obesity and the potential for health problems associated with diabetes and hypertension are growing concerns in our population. People of normal weight tend to respond to internal, long-term bodily cues, such as stomach contractions and glucose–insulin levels; while those who are obese tend to pay more attention to the short-term, external cues, such as smell, attractiveness of food, and whether it is mealtime. Stress-induced arousal also stimulates eating behavior in a large proportion of the population.

Aware that obesity often leads to health problems and that millions of people try to lose weight, scientists have studied obesity and weight loss. By studying identical twins who were raised apart, they have found that some people inherit a predisposition to be overweight, while others have a predisposition to be too thin. Most people who lose weight on diets tend to put it back on. Most people who try to gain weight have difficulty keeping their weight up. These observations led to the set-point theory, that we each have a set point, or a preset natural body weight, determined by the number of fat cells in our body. When we eat less, our weight goes down and our fat cells contract, which seems to
trigger processes that result in decreased metabolism and increased hunger. When we eat more, our weight goes up and our fat cells increase in size, which seems to result in increased metabolism and decreased hunger. If we continue to eat more, we can continue to gain weight, and our set point can go up. Some scientists theorize that many chronic dieters are restrained eaters who stringently control their eating impulses and feel guilty when they fail. They become disinhibited and eat excessively if their control is disrupted, which contributes to weight gain.

Eating Disorders
Slim models and actresses in the media are pictured as ideals in America and in some European countries. Some people are highly motivated to achieve this ideal weight, and develop eating disorders. Underweight people who weigh less than 85% of their normal body weight, but are still terrified of being fat, suffer from anorexia nervosa. People with this disorder are usually young women who follow starvation diets and have unrealistic body images. No matter how emaciated they become, people with anorexia still think they are fat and may continue to lose weight, which can result in death. Anorexia is associated with perfectionism, excessive exercising, and an excessive desire for self-control. Bulimia nervosa is a more common eating disorder characterized by eating binges involving the intake of thousands of calories, followed by purging either by vomiting or using laxatives. People with this disorder are also usually young women who think obsessively about food, but who are also terrified of being fat. Following the purge, people with bulimia typically feel guilty, self-critical, and depressed. Purging can cause sore throat, swollen glands, loss of tooth enamel, nutritional deficiencies, dehydration, and intestinal damage. Results of research suggest that some people suffering this disorder secrete less cholecystokinin than normal, have a low level of serotonin, have been teased for being overweight, participate in activities that require slim bodies, have been sexually abused, or are restrained eaters.

Thirst
Regulation of thirst is similar to regulation of hunger. The lateral hypothalamus seems to be the "on" button for both hunger and thirst. When stimulated, this area of the hypothalamus will start drinking behavior, but if it is lesioned or removed, the individual refuses liquids, even to the point of dehydration. Different neurotransmitters are involved in hunger and thirst. Mouth dryness plays a minor role in stimulating us to drink. More important is the fluid content of cells and the volume of blood. Osmoreceptors are sensitive to dehydration of our cells. When osmoreceptors detect shrinking of our cells, we become thirsty. The hypothalamus stimulates the pituitary to release antidiuretic hormone (ADH), which promotes reabsorption of water in the kidneys, resulting in decreased urination. When we vomit, donate blood, or have diarrhea, the volume of our blood decreases, resulting in decreased blood pressure. This stimulates kidney cells to release an enzyme that causes synthesis of angiotensin, which stimulates thirst receptors in our hypothalamus and septum. Drinking behavior and reabsorption of water in the kidneys result. Not only is thirst affected by internal cues, but it is affected by external cues too. We often get thirsty when we see other people drinking in real life or advertisements. These external stimuli can act as an incentive that stimulates drinking behavior, even when we have had enough to drink. What we drink is affected by customs as well as the weather.

Pain Reduction
Whereas hunger and thirst drives promote eating and drinking behavior, pain promotes avoidance or escape behavior to eliminate causes of discomfort. (Additional information about pain is in Chapter 8.)
Social Motivation

Achievement

According to David McClelland, the **achievement motive** is a desire to meet some internalized standard of excellence. McClelland used responses to the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** to measure achievement motivation. He suggested that people with a high need for achievement choose moderately challenging tasks to satisfy their need. They avoid easy goals that offer no sense of satisfaction and avoid impossible goals that offer no hope of success. People low in need for achievement select very easy or impossible goals so that they do not have to take any responsibility for failure. College students high in this need attribute success to their own ability, and attribute failure to lack of effort. Some people fear success because success can invite envy or criticism that strains social relationships, or even rejection.

Affiliation

The **affiliation motive** is the need to be with others. In general, people isolated for a long time become anxious. The affiliation motive is aroused when people feel threatened, anxious, or celebratory. According to evolutionary psychologists, social bonds provided our ancestors with both survival and reproductive benefits offering group members opportunities for food, shelter, safety, reproduction, and care of the young. Affiliation behavior involves an interaction of biological and social factors.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

When you do something because you enjoy it or want to test your ability or gain skill, your motivation is usually intrinsic. Curiosity and a desire for knowledge stem from intrinsic needs. **Intrinsic motivation** is a desire to perform an activity for its own sake rather than an external reward. **Extrinsic motivation** is a desire to perform an activity to obtain a reward from outside the individual, such as money and other material goods we have learned to enjoy, such as applause or attention. Society is largely extrinsically motivated by rewards such as money. People who are intrinsically motivated by inner desires for creativity, fulfillment, and inner satisfaction tend to be psychologically healthier and happier. When people are given a reward for doing something for which they are intrinsically motivated, their intrinsic motivation often diminishes, resulting in the **overjustification effect** in which promising a reward for doing something they already like to do results in them seeing the reward as the motivation for performing the task.

Social Conflict Situations

**Conflict** involves being torn in different directions by opposing motives that block you from attaining a goal, leaving you feeling frustrated and stressed. The least stressful are **approach-approach conflicts**, which are situations involving two positive options, only one of which you can have. For example, you are accepted to both Harvard and Yale and must decide which to attend. **Avoidance-avoidance conflicts** are situations involving two negative options, one of which you must choose. Some expressions, such as, “Between a rock and a hard place,” or, “Damned if you do and damned if you don’t,” and, “Between the devil and the deep blue sea,” exemplify this conflict. **Approach-avoidance conflicts** are situations involving whether or not to choose an option that has both a positive and negative consequence or consequences. Ordering a rich dessert ruins your diet but satisfies your chocolate cravings. The most complex form of conflict is the **multiple approach-avoidance conflict**, which involves several alternative courses of action that have both positive and negative aspects. For example, if you take the bus to the movies, you’ll get there in time to get a good seat and see the coming attractions, but you won’t have enough money to buy popcorn. If your parents drive you, you’ll have to help make dinner and wash the dishes. If you walk there, you may be late and get a bad seat, but you’ll have enough money to buy popcorn and you won’t have to help with dinner and the dishes.
Theories of Emotion

An emotion is a conscious feeling of pleasantness or unpleasantness accompanied by biological activation and expressive behavior; emotion has cognitive, physiological, and behavioral components. Two dimensions of emotion are arousal or intensity and valence or positive/negative quality. The greater the arousal, the more intense the emotion. Fear, anger, happiness, sadness, surprise, and disgust are examples of emotions. Evolutionary psychologists suggest that emotions persist because of their adaptive value. Fear of people and animals displaying angry faces, for example, caused humans to focus attention and energize action to protect themselves in ways that enabled the species to survive. Facial expressions seem to be inborn and universal across all cultures. Many areas in the brain, many neurotransmitter systems, the autonomic nervous system, and the endocrine system are tied to emotions. The amygdala, which is part of the limbic system, influences aggression and fear, and interacts with the hypothalamus, which sets emotional states, such as rage. The limbic system has pathways to and from the cerebral cortex, especially the frontal lobes, which are involved in control and interpretation of emotions. The left hemisphere is more closely associated with positive emotions, and the right with negative emotions. Emotions are inferred from nonverbal expressive behaviors, including body language, vocal qualities, and, most importantly, facial expressions. Paul Ekman and others found at least six basic facial expressions are universally recognized by people in diverse cultures all over the world. Emotions cause expressions, and expressions can also cause emotions.

Cultures differ in norms for regulating emotional expression; they have different display rules. For example, the Japanese, who value interdependence, promote more restraint in expression of emotions than other more individualistic cultures.

Psychologists agree that emotions associated with feelings (e.g., love, hate, fear) have physiological, behavioral, and cognitive components, but disagree as to how the three components interact to produce feelings and actions. No one theory seems sufficient to explain emotion, but each appears to contribute to an explanation.

James-Lange Theory

American psychologist William James, a founder of the school of functionalism, and Danish physiologist Karl Lange proposed that our awareness of our physiological arousal leads to our conscious experience of emotion. According to this theory, external stimuli activate our autonomic nervous systems, producing specific patterns of physiological changes for different emotions that evoke specific emotional experiences. When we see a vicious-looking dog growl at us, our sympathetic nervous system kicks in, we begin to run immediately, and then we become aware that we are afraid. This theory suggests that we can change our feelings by changing our behavior.

The James-Lange theory is consistent with the current facial-feedback hypothesis that suggests that our facial expressions affect our emotional experiences. Smiling seems to induce positive moods, and frowning seems to induce negative moods.

Cannon-Bard Theory

Walter Cannon and Philip Bard disagreed with the James-Lange theory. According to the Cannon-Bard theory, conscious experience of emotion accompanies physiological responses. Cannon and Bard theorized that the thalamus (the processor of all sensory information but smell in the brain) simultaneously sends information to both the limbic system (emotional center) and the frontal lobes (cognitive center) about an event. When we see the vicious growling dog, our bodily arousal and our recognition of the fear we feel occur at the same time.
We now know that although the thalamus does not directly cause emotional responses, it relays sensory information to the amygdala and hypothalamus, which process the information.

**Opponent-Process Theory**

According to opponent-process theory, when we experience an emotion, an opposing emotion will counter the first emotion, lessening the experience of that emotion. When we experience the first emotion on repeated occasions, the opposing emotion becomes stronger and the first emotion becomes weaker, leading to an even weaker experience of the first emotion. If we are about to jump out of an airplane for the first time, we tend to feel extreme fear along with low levels of elation. On subsequent jumps, we experience less fear and more elation.

**Schachter-Singer Two-Factor Theory**

Cognitive theories argue that our emotional experiences depend on our interpretation of situations. Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer’s studies suggested that we infer emotion from arousal and then label it according to our cognitive explanation for the arousal. For example, if we feel aroused and someone is yelling at us, we must be angry.

**Cognitive-Appraisal Theory**

Different people on an amusement park ride experience different emotions. According to Richard Lazarus’s cognitive-appraisal theory, our emotional experience depends on our interpretation of the situation we are in. In primary appraisal, we assess potential consequences of the situation, and in secondary appraisal, we decide what to do. This suggests that we can change our emotions if we learn to interpret the situation differently.

Evolutionary psychologists disagree that emotions depend on our evaluation of a given situation. They note that emotional responses developed before complex thinking in animal evolution. Lower animals fear predators without thinking. Robert Zajonc thinks that we often know how we feel long before we know what we think in a given situation.

**Stress and Coping**

**Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome**

*Stress* is the process by which we appraise and respond to environmental threats. According to Hans Selye, we react similarly to both physical and psychological stressors. *Stressors* are stimuli such as heat, cold, pain, mild shock, restraint, etc., that we perceive as endangering our well-being. Selye’s **General Adaptation Syndrome** (GAS) three-stage theory of alarm, resistance, and exhaustion describes our body’s reaction to stress. During the *alarm* reaction, our body increases sympathetic nervous system activity and activates the adrenal glands to prepare us for “fight or flight,” which by increasing our heart and breathing rates, as well as the availability of glucose for energy, increases our strength for fighting an enemy or our ability to run away. During the second stage of *resistance*, our temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration remain high while the level of hormones, such as adrenalin and corticosteroids, continues to rise. If crises are not resolved in this stage, continued stress results in the depletion of our resources and decreased immunity to diseases characteristic of the third stage of *exhaustion*, which may result in illnesses like ulcers or depression, or even death.
Stressful Life Events

We can classify stressors on the basis of intensity from the most intense catastrophes, to significant life changes, to daily hassles.

Catastrophes are stressors that are unpredictable, large-scale disasters that threaten us. When catastrophes cause prolonged stress, health problems often result.

Significant life events include death of a loved one, marriage, divorce, changing jobs, moving to a new home, having a baby, and starting college. Holmes and Rahe created a “Social Readjustment Rating Scale” that rates stressful events in our lives. For example, death of a spouse receives the highest number of points at 100 and getting married receives 50. According to Holmes and Rahe, the higher our score on the scale, the greater the probability we will face a major health event within the next year.

Daily hassles are everyday annoyances, such as having to wait in lines, arguing with a friend, or getting a low grade on a quiz. Over time, these stressors can add up, raising our blood pressure, causing headaches, and lowering our immunity.

Stress and Health

High levels of stress are associated with decreased immunity, high blood pressure, headaches, heart disease, and quicker progression of cancer and AIDS.

According to Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman, people who have different characteristic patterns of reacting to stress have different probabilities of suffering heart attacks. Type A personalities are high achievers, competitive, impatient, multi-taskers, who walk, talk, and eat quickly. Type B personalities, in contrast, are those who are more relaxed and calm in their approach to life. Friedman and Rosenman found that Type A personalities were more likely to experience a heart attack in their 30s and 40s than Type B personalities. Current research suggests that the Type A traits of anger, hostility, and cynicism are most highly correlated with potential risks for cardiac problems. After a heart attack, however, Type As are more likely to make healthy changes in their lifestyles than Type Bs.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can be adaptive or maladaptive. Maladaptive strategies ordinarily fail to remove the stressors or wind up substituting one stressor for another. Adaptive strategies remove stressors or enable us to better tolerate them.

Maladaptive coping strategies include aggression; indulging ourselves by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs, spending money, or sleeping too much; or using defense mechanisms.

Adaptive coping strategies vary from taking direct action through problem solving; to lessening stress through physically exercising, seeking the social support of friends, or finding help through religious organizations and prayer; to accepting the problem. For example, you can adopt the optimistic attitudes of hardy people by committing to a particular project or goal, seeing yourself as being in control rather than a victim of circumstance, and looking at finishing the project or realizing your goal as a challenge or opportunity. Health psychologists often suggest using relaxation, visualization, meditation, and biofeedback to help lessen the effects of stress in our lives, and boost our immune systems.

Positive Psychology

Subjective well-being, your assessment of how happy or satisfied you feel, has become a focus of positive psychology. Positive psychology, founded by Martin Seligman, is the scientific study of optimal human functioning. The three pillars of positive psychology are positive emotions, positive character, and positive groups, communities, and cultures.