

TRUE NORTH

In today's workplace climate, career advisory has gone beyond the simple act of placing clients into job roles. It has become an intricate art of helping clients navigate workplace complexities and interweaving that closely with an individual's beliefs, values and principles. As a career practitioner, you are tasked with the all-important role of helping one find meaning and fulfilment in their career. You are instrumental in their search for a purpose-driven life; for their **TRUE NORTH**.

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BOOK REVIEW

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'Flow' by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

Inspire and sustain your practice with Positive Psychology



In an era of rapid workplace change, how do career practitioners help clients and themselves in finding meaning and motivation in work? Career practitioners need to apply positive psychology principles to career guidance, incorporating evidence-based strategies that support both client effectiveness and practitioner wellbeing.

Self-determination empowers individuals to take control of their lives, placing them in the driving seat, and holding them accountable for their decisions and outcomes. It plays an essential role in both overall wellbeing and psychological health, as it enables people to direct their own path while taking ownership of the outcomes. In this issue, we explored the PERMA framework, which supports clients in becoming self-determined, and empowers them to make choices that positively impact their wellbeing. Self-Determination Theory and PERMA complement each other in understanding human flourishing.

Curious to learn more? Look out for our upcoming workshop for career practitioners in December, where we will explore what drives motivation. Discover what truly motivates you and your clients through Self-Determination Theory and learn how relationships fuel motivation and wellbeing. Discover through the PERMA model to uncover what makes work fulfilling and energising, and spot early signs of burnout before they derail your career passion!

Here are the upcoming Continuing Professional Development Programme (CPDP):

Upcoming CPDP	Date/Timing
"The Career Development Imperative: Practical Strategies to Deliver What Employees Want and Organisations Need" workshop by Ms Julie Winkle Giulioni	16 October 2025, from 1.30pm to 5pm (onsite)
Masterclass on Talent Revolution	12, 13 & 14 November 2025, from 8.30am to 11.30am (virtual)
Positive Psychology workshop	3 – 5 December 2025, from 2pm to 5pm (virtual)
Masterclass on Strength-based coaching	15 - 16 December 2025, from 9am to 5pm (onsite)

*Programme details are tentative and subject to changes



Scan on the QR code to indicate interest
in the upcoming CPDP.
go.gov.sg/cpdp-interestlist-4

IN THE PIPELINE

Career Advisory Programme (CAP)

Dec Intake: 12 Dec 2025
(Application closes: 23 Oct 2025)

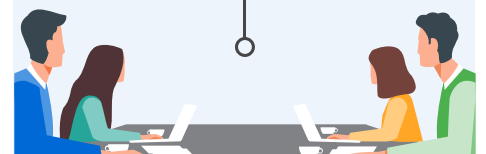
Career Facilitation Programme (CFP)

Dec Intake: 9 Dec 2025 - 15 Jan 2026
(Application closes: 23 Oct 2025)

Career Supervisory Programme (CSP)

Jan Intake: 19 - 21 Jan 2026
(Application closes: 9 Nov 2025)

For full details, please refer to
www.wsg.gov.sg/home/career-practitioners/foundational-programmes



LOVING OUR NEWSLETTER?

You can find all issues of *TRUE NORTH* and other career development resources on our Online Learning Resource (OLR) for Career Practitioners.
Check it out here: go.gov.sg/olr



FROM THE CASE CHEST

WHAT MAKES ONE THRIVE? RETHINKING CAREER TRANSITIONS



Carol is a PMET in her late 40s with over 20 years of experience in the finance sector. She left her role as Head of Marketing as she felt the work came into conflict with her personal values. During her garden leave, she approached Workforce Singapore (WSG) to find out more about her options for a career switch.

CONFIDENT AND SELF-ASSURED

Carol shared that she had been working as the Head of Marketing for a financial firm, handling affluent and high net-worth clients. She had two decades of experience in banking and finance but felt that this role contradicted her personal values. As she felt she was a “people person” with strong problem-solving abilities and leadership skills, she was also considering a new role as a trainer or coach but is unsure if her minimum salary of \$10,000 can be met.

THE GAP BETWEEN DREAMS AND REALITY

Through the intake interview, it was apparent that she was confident and was able to express herself well. She also demonstrated high self-efficacy and openly stated that she was up for a challenge. Despite this confidence, Carol’s LinkedIn profile focused only on her experiences, and did not clearly articulate her unique selling points, core competencies or key achievements. She had not started her job search and appeared to lack information about the labour market outside of the finance industry.

THE 5-STEP CAREER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Given Carol’s lack of clarity about her future career plans, the five stages of Donald Super’s Career Development Theory was applied to help her better understand her interests and options.

The career development model involved the following steps:

1. **Assessment:** evaluating her current position and skills
2. **Exploration:** researching and reviewing the possible options
3. **Preparation:** constructing a strategic plan to move to the next step
4. **Implementation:** execution of the plan, this includes acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge and experience
5. **Review:** evaluating performance thus far and deciding if she is ready to transition to a new job or role

UNDERSTANDING HER STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

The assessment stage involved enrolling Carol for the VIP24 online assessment and for a career exploration workshop, to understand her values, interests and personality. Holland’s Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC), which posits that one will thrive best in a job that fits their personality, was used to analyse her VIP24 results. Carol also completed the Myers & Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality test. The RIASEC and MBTI results indicated that Carol’s strengths lay in helping others, and that she was most suitable for interpersonal roles.

After doing her research, Carol decided that she would do best to stay in the finance industry as she needed a salary of at least \$10,000 to support her ageing mother and two children. With this decision, Carol began her job search, something she had not had to do in the past, as she had always been head-hunted or referred from her ex-bosses. As she needed to rework her LinkedIn profile, she attended a series of WSG-organised workshops in professional networking and personal branding. She was also advised to work with executive search firms.

In the midst of her job search, the Coach explained Donald Super’s life span, life space concept to help Carol prepare mentally for the changes and understand how her self-concept would affect her career choices.

Carol began reaching out to her industry contacts for job referrals after her garden leave ended. She continued to speak with the Coach every two weeks and had subsequent meetings to discuss strategies to improve her job search progress. Within four months she accepted a Director-level role in a bank, where the salary was higher than her last-drawn pay.

LOOKING DEEP WITHIN

From this whole experience, Carol had an opportunity to take a pause to not only find out more about the available options externally but also, begun to look inwards and realign her personal priorities. Drawing on Positive Psychology principles, the Coach helped Carol identify her strengths, virtues and meaningful past experiences. This approach enabled her to gain clarity and cultivate deeper meaning and well-being, creating a foundation for achieving fulfilment, not just in her career but in life generally.

Almost a year later, Carol contacted the Coach for advice on how to go about obtaining a professional certificate in career coaching and training. In the earlier assessments and conversations with her Coach, these two roles – career coaching and training were already identified. Now, she felt she was finally ready to take the plunge as her financial and family commitments had lessened.

Contributed by:
Jenny J Chiang

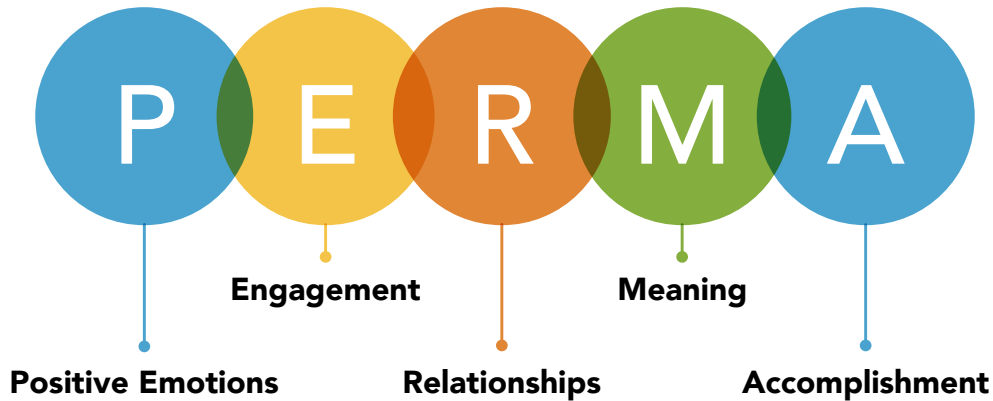
Career Coach
Careers Connect, Workforce Singapore





MAIN ARTICLE

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: THE PERMA STORY



Introduction

Dr. Martin Seligman observed that psychology had long focused on the challenges of human mental state. Having dedicated much of his career studying human misery, helplessness, trauma, depression, and suicide, he pioneered the movement to study the positivity of the human mind that forms the premise of Positive Psychology which is about wellbeing, hope, optimism, flow and happiness.

While wealth is measured in dollars, thirty years ago people doubted whether mental wellbeing could be measured. In his book "Flourish", Seligman introduces the five pillars of mental wellbeing, known as PERMA, which can be measured and are backed by solid scientific research.

This article gives you a quick guide to these five pillars, with key insights and practical tips you can use in your career practice. We have included some references if you would like to dive deeper into any topic that catches your eye!



1. Positive Emotions

There are 10 positive emotions that help to build up our mental strength and resilience: Amusement, Awe, Contentment, Gratitude, Hope, Interest, Inspiration, Joy, Love, and Pride.

Each emotion has its own way of viewing situations, prompting actions and building strengths. Hope, for example, emerges in difficult times. Hope helps us to continue to aim for better outcomes even while we fear the worst, motivates us to take action to change the situation and helps us build optimism and resilience.

Hope is one of the strongest and most important motives. It begins at the first psychosocial developmental stage when infants build trust resulting in strength of Hope. But what is Hope? Hope is felt when motivation to achieve a goal is clear. Here are some ways to help nurture hope in the clients, especially when they are distraught due to job loss:

- Who am I? What excites me? – help clients discover their strengths, personality, interests and values.
- Where do I want to go in my career life? - Help clients identify career goals, their agency (which strengths are instrumental to success) and explore various pathways.
- Goal Setting – (covered in point 5).



2. Engagement

This second pillar involves the concept of Flow, a mental state that leads to high work performance. Flow happens when we are completely engaged and "being in the zone" in an activity, with our skills matching the challenge level. Here are signs your clients might be experiencing Flow:

- Intense concentration on the task at hand.
- Altered sense of time.
- Finding it rewarding and enjoyable.

As career practitioners, understand your clients' competencies, to ascertain if skills gaps are preventing engagement, or if they need more challenging roles. Flow at work leads to higher motivation and engagement.



3. Relationships

Positive relationships are widely considered a pillar of wellbeing in terms of emotional and physical health, supported by extensive research. Harvard Study of Adult Development has found that good relationships keep us healthier and happier.

Since positive relationships are key to psychological wellbeing and happiness, here are some important pointers about having good relationships with people around us to keep in mind as a career practitioner when working with your client on relationships:

- Observing proper grooming and dress code: people tend to react positively if a person observes personal hygiene and grooming.
- Understanding one's personality traits and why we behave the way we do with others helps in bridging any misunderstandings. Assessment such as the Big-5 (OCEAN) can be used.
- Attributing positive reasons for someone's seemingly negative behaviour enhances the relationship and builds bridges of understanding.
- Effective communication is another key factor in building good relationships.
- Being sensitive and mindful of others' social, economic and cultural background also helps to improve relationships.



4. Meaning

This fourth pillar is about dedicating ourselves to something meaningful or purposeful that is bigger than our own needs. Abraham Maslow calls this Transcendence Need in his revised hierarchy of needs. People want to help others while being motivated by a value beyond personal self.

Meaning in life is considered a fundamental topic in existential psychology, and a key component in positive psychology wellbeing models. It is therefore useful for career practitioners to know the following sources of meaning:

- Achievement or fulfilment
- Self-acceptance
- Fairness or respect.
- Relationship & Intimacy
- Transcendence or altruism
- Religion or spirituality

These motivational forces show us what matters most in life and they are closely connected to what people truly value. Research reveals that people who find meaning in life often have better socioeconomic status and access to educational and financial resources. Studies show a positive relationship between meaning in life and variables like socioeconomic status, educational and financial resources.



5. Accomplishments

This fifth pillar is the drive to achieve goals, an important component of authentic wellbeing. Career practitioners should keep in mind when supporting clients in setting meaningful goals.

- **Abstract vs. Concrete:** Abstract goals are broad and general (e.g., to be more assertive). Concrete goals are specific and measurable (e.g., to lose 5 Kg in six months). A good tool to apply is the SMART model.
- **Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic:** Extrinsic goals focus on external rewards like fame, money, or power, while intrinsic goals centre on meaningful pursuits like personal growth, relationships, or helping others. Research consistently shows intrinsic goals better satisfy psychological needs and increase wellbeing and happiness.

For the drive aspect, there is Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for longterm goals. Grit drives people working persistently towards long long-term goals despite obstacles and even failures. Research shows Grit is positively associated with lifelong educational attainment, and long term career success connecting to the Signature Strength of Perseverance-persistence.

Conclusion

PERMA provides a framework for supporting clients by encouraging them to choose thoughts and actions that enhance their wellbeing. Small changes can make the difference, but interventions should not be forced but must fit but be carefully considered in terms of the clients' personality and lifestyle preferences.

This article presents information gathered from various sources and should not be attributed as the original ideas or research of the writer.

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Area of Expertise

Self-awareness, Motivation &
Positive Change

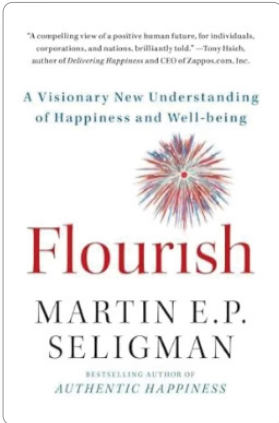


- Derrick has worked for many years in various industries, assuming roles in management, consulting and lecturing. He also volunteered at Teen Challenge Rehabilitation Centre and thereafter at Focus On The Family. He currently provides career and personal counselling to clients and supervision to student counsellors.
- Derrick is a registered member of the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC). His passion is in helping people develop their minds and address their life issues in self-esteem, communication, relationships, career choices and development.



BOOK REVIEW

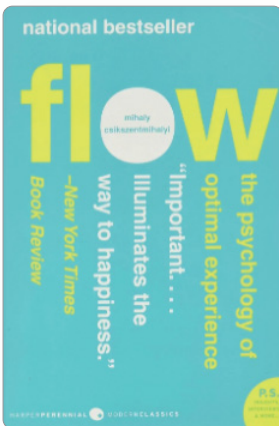
CHAPTERS AND CHOICES: NAVIGATE YOUR NEXT READ



Flourish

Martin Seligman

Seligman brilliantly advances positive psychology beyond simple happiness to comprehensive wellbeing through his groundbreaking PERMA model: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. The book masterfully combines rigorous science with inspiring practical applications, showcasing remarkable successes in education and military resilience programmes. Seligman’s accessible writing makes complex research engaging for all readers. The PERMA framework has transformed how institutions worldwide approach human flourishing, influencing schools, businesses, and governments. This influential work represents a significant leap forward in understanding wellbeing, offering readers both scientific credibility and genuine hope for creating more fulfilling lives through evidence-based strategies.



Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Csikszentmihalyi’s groundbreaking “Flow” brilliantly captures the essence of optimal human experience—those magical moments when we become completely absorbed in activities. His research-backed insights into achieving peak performance and deep satisfaction are both profound and transformative. The book masterfully explores how flow states enhance creativity, work, and leisure, offering practical wisdom for cultivating these experiences daily. Whilst occasionally academic, Csikszentmihalyi’s writing is engaging and thought-provoking. This influential classic has revolutionised fields from education to workplace design, providing readers with powerful tools for discovering greater fulfilment and meaning in their pursuits.

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TELL US YOUR STORY



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