

CENTER FOR WELL-BEING AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY



RIDA BIBI

Start Small, Dream Big: The Quiet Power of Little Steps

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Dear Readers,

It's natural to wish for big leaps, but life often surprises us, most real growth starts with just one small step. Most of the big achievements we admire began quietly: a tiny decision, a brave moment, a simple effort. Whether we're rebuilding our lives, chasing a dream, or learning something new, progress rarely arrives all at once. It comes gently, with patience and persistence.

Starting small isn't a limitation; it's a wise and grounded way to begin. Small steps keep us from feeling overwhelmed. They help us build confidence, discipline, and steady momentum. When we honor these humble beginnings, we give ourselves space to grow naturally.

But dreaming big is what gives our journey direction. Big dreams inspire us, challenge us, and push us to imagine a future beyond our comfort zone. Dreams are the vision; small steps are the path that brings that vision to life.

So, if you're standing in front of a dream that feels too big or too distant, pause and breathe. You don't need to know the whole plan. You don't need certainty. You just need one small step today. And from there, the journey unfolds.

Remember, every towering tree began as a tiny seed. Every success story started with one moment of courage. Your journey, too, will grow this way: quietly, steadily, beautifully, one small step at a time.

Warm regards,



PROF. DR. SHABBIR AHMAD RANA

Nostalgia & Your Well-Being

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The Year- 2025 is going to end and will be leaving behind several memories that will soon become a part of our "Nostalgia". In dictionary, it is defined as a sentimental longing or wishful affection for past memories that are gone. Happer et al. (2022) describes nostalgia as a complex emotion that involves past oriented cognition and a mixed affective signature. Generally, nostalgia is divided into three broad categories, personal, social and collective. This article relates to personal nostalgia, that is characterized by memories of specific people or event from one's own life.

Most of the time when someone talks about nostalgia, they're referring to personal nostalgia, or longing for moments they've experienced in their own life. Empirical data shows that thinking back on your memories is primarily a positive experience, that supports people's ability to find pleasure and consolation, maintain balance, and restore meaning in life. The feeling can be triggered by a sound, sight, smell, picture, a song that combines pleasure from remembering with a sense of sadness or wishfulness that you could experience it again and realizing at the same time that the time cannot be relived.

As mentioned above, this experience is generally positive, but it can bring on sadness, too. Dr. Newman calls it a mixed emotion encompassing joy and sadness. When some negative memories are recalled, it is negative nostalgia and its potential downside is that when this happens, it results in sadness and depression that is detrimental to mental health. It is about this negative nostalgia, that Mirza Ghalib, once wrote:

Yaad-e-Maazi Aazab Hai Ya Rab; Cheen Lay Mujh Say Hafiza Mera!

Thus, the social scientists strongly emphasizes that you should develop habit of positive nostalgia, recalling past memories only those that are good and positive in nature. Here are six main benefits linked to positive nostalgia, that significantly contributes to your joy, pleasure and enhances level of your subjective well-being:

1. It May Promote Sense of Self: Reminiscing about the past can help you feel connected to who you were in the past, who you are in the present, and who you will be in the future. "If you are fondly recalling memories that align with your values and morals, this can affirm movement toward those ideas," Woodhouse says. "This would definitely increase the sense of self and motivate confidence." Furthermore, that oftentimes thinking back on your former self reunites you with your values and what truly matters to you.

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Employee Development Workshop Series: Zaitoon Group (10-12 Sep 2025)

The Institute for Art and Culture (IAC) successfully organized a three-day professional development workshop for the employees of Zaitoon Group, aimed at enhancing workplace performance and strengthening organizational culture. The training emphasized emotional intelligence, teamwork, and leadership—core competencies essential for professional excellence in today's corporate environment. Employees from various departments participated with enthusiasm, making the sessions interactive, reflective, and impactful.

Emotional Intelligence & Self-Awareness Resource Person: Professor Dr. Najma Najam, Pro-Vice Chancellor, IAC

This session focused on understanding emotional intelligence through the Johari Window framework. Participants explored how self-awareness and constructive feedback can improve communication and professional relationships. Through discussions and reflective exercises, employees learned how emotions influence decision making, teamwork, and conflict resolution. A self-assessment activity helped individuals identify personal growth areas and develop emotional maturity for workplace success.



Leadership Motivation & Stress Management

Resource Person: Professor Dr. Najma Najam, Pro-Vice Chancellor, IAC

This session connected emotional intelligence with leadership motivation and stress management. Participants explored how motivation, optimism, and emotional balance are essential for effective leadership. Practical strategies for managing stress in high-pressure situations were discussed, along with ways to convert challenges into opportunities for personal and professional growth. The trainer emphasized leading with empathy, resilience, and vision to inspire teams and maintain positive workplace energy.

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Team Building & Synergy

Resource Person: Professor Dr. Shabbir Ahmad Rana (HOD Center for Well-Being and Positive Psychology)

This session highlighted the power of collaboration and team unity. The trainer explained the concept of achieving greater results together than individually. Participants engaged in group problem-solving tasks that demonstrated the importance of cooperation, leadership, and shared responsibility. The session reinforced the idea that trust, respect, and open communication are the foundations of strong teams and a productive organizational environment.



2. It May Boost Mood: Nostalgia can lead to a positive effect, according to research. If you're feeling bogged down by negativity, dipping into nostalgic feelings could help alleviate those emotions temporarily. "This can allow someone who is highly dysregulated to calm themselves down and utilize healthy coping mechanisms." Recalling positive memories can transition emotions from negative to neutral – or even positive. It also helps put our emotions into perspective by reminding us that good and bad times are temporary. We can lean into the good while knowing that the bad also does not last forever.

3. It May Help Strengthen Social Bonds: Nostalgia is a highly social emotion that connects us to others. And it works even if you're complete strangers and connecting over shared experiences from the past, such as recalling cartoons, songs and dial-up connection of a decade ago. "Nostalgia can unify our experiences."

4. It May Make You More Optimistic: Nostalgia can increase optimism. This is rooted in the fact that, oftentimes, reminiscing about fond memories brings us back to happy times. "When we remember good times or reexperience love, it can remind us of feeling successful and accomplished". Optimism is having the ability to think positively of the future, and recalling moments that made you feel courageous, happy, successful, or any other positive emotion gives you an optimistic lens to see the future through, Woodhouse says. "This can help us live each day to the fullest or even help us see the beauty that is in everyday life," she says.

5. It May Serve as Barometer for Personal Growth: Nostalgia can also show you how far you've come. "Change doesn't happen overnight," "When we can draw upon those positive experiences and reflect upon our own growth, nostalgia can be a good barometer to gauge how we have stayed aligned with our own values (which may change over time, and that's okay) and our authentic selves." Looking back at the past can help you see where you have evolved and how you've grown into who you are in the present.

6. It May Put Us in Touch with Our Authentic Selves: When we think nostalgically about our past, we are the prime protagonist in our own life stories. Perhaps because of this, it helps us to see our lives as continuous and coherent, providing us with sense of authenticity. This, in turn, reduced our focus on meeting the expectations of others vs following our intrinsic expectations of ourselves. In other words, it helped them to be their authentic selves. This makes people feel more positive about themselves, which in turn, make them more open to experiencing new things, expanding their horizons as being curious, all signs of psychological growth.

To sum up, perhaps, because of the above mentioned several benefits, people usually tend to engage in nostalgia when they are feeling down, lonely or disillusioned. Many studies suggest that nostalgia seems to protect people from negative mindset, bringing about a kind of emotional homeostasis. Of course, that doesn't mean that nostalgia is always good or don't have downside. If we will spend too much time in thinking about living in our past, it may become an avoidance strategy that keep us away from dealing with present problems in a more effective way. Furthermore, it may also prevent us realizing reality, living in the present moment and recognizing joy in our lives right here and now.

In short, nostalgia is our longing sentiment we experience when reflecting upon a past memory or event, but we should try our best to avoid negative nostalgia, and try to enrich ourselves with the several benefits of positive nostalgia. For example, nostalgia benefits our well-being by reminding us how far we've come as individuals and has been found to have many important psychological benefits, such as; reduce anxiety and stress, combat loneliness, boost mood, improve social connections, making us more resilient and optimistic about future, strengthening self-esteem, enhancing positive self-regard, and provide existential meaning to our life.



MHWISH IQBAL

Breaking Free from Toxic Environments: Choosing Growth Over Negativity

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Toxic environments, whether at work, in academia, or in personal relationships; slowly erode confidence, creativity, and well-being. They drain energy, instill self-doubt, and keep individuals locked in cycles of negativity. Staying in such spaces comes at a cost: the loss of potential, peace, and purpose. As **Dr. Susan Forward** aptly said, "**You don't have to stay in a place that diminishes you.**"

The first step toward freedom is awareness. Recognizing the subtle signs: constant criticism, lack of respect, manipulation, or the absence of psychological safety is crucial. Toxicity thrives on silence and resignation, but growth begins when one chooses to name the problem and take deliberate steps toward change.

Breaking free is not always about physically leaving immediately; it is often about creating inner distance. Setting boundaries, seeking supportive networks, and nurturing resilience through practices like gratitude and mindfulness help individuals regain clarity and strength. Positive psychology reminds us that we flourish not by avoiding challenges, but by aligning ourselves with environments that cultivate meaning, optimism, and growth.

Choosing growth over negativity is an act of courage. It is a statement that one's worth is non-negotiable. The path forward may demand difficult choices, but it also opens doors to healthier relationships, renewed creativity, and authentic happiness.



AYESHA HAIDER

Mind Over Grades: How to Prioritize Mental Health During Exams

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Exams are often seen as the ultimate test of a student's abilities. Late-night study sessions, piles of notes, and endless cups of coffee become the norm during exam season. While striving for academic success is important, it's equally vital to remember that mental health should not be sacrificed in the process. In fact, maintaining a healthy mind can actually improve academic performance.

Students today face immense academic pressure from parents, teachers, and sometimes from themselves. Many believe that grades define their worth, intelligence, or future success. This mindset can create high levels of stress and anxiety, leading to burnout, sleep deprivation, and even depression. The truth is, while grades are temporary, mental well-being has a lasting impact on life.

Mental health directly affects concentration, memory, and decision-making, all of which are crucial for studying and performing well in

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exams. When stress levels are high, the brain struggles to process and recall information effectively. Taking care of mental health allows students to stay calm, focused, and motivated, leading to better outcomes both academically and personally.

Tips to Prioritize Mental Health During Exams

- 1. Manage Time Wisely:** Create a realistic study schedule. Divide your syllabus into manageable portions and take short breaks between study sessions. Avoid last-minute cramming; instead, revise regularly. Balanced time management reduces panic and increases confidence.
- 2. Maintain a Healthy Routine:** Sleep, nutrition, and physical activity play a huge role in mental well-being. Try to get at least 7–8 hours of sleep, eat balanced meals, and stay hydrated. Even a short walk or stretch can refresh your mind.
- 3. Practice Mindfulness:** Take a few minutes daily to practice deep breathing, meditation, or relaxation exercises. These help calm the mind, improve focus, and reduce anxiety.
- 4. Stay Connected:** Don't isolate yourself completely. Talk to friends, family, or teachers if you feel overwhelmed. Sharing your feelings can ease emotional tension and remind you that you're not alone.
- 5. Avoid Comparisons:** Every student has a unique pace and learning style. Comparing yourself with others can create unnecessary stress. Focus on your own progress and celebrate small achievements along the way.
- 6. Keep Perspective:** Remember that exams are just one part of life. Failing or not scoring as expected does not define your potential or future success. What matters more is consistent effort, learning from mistakes, and maintaining a balanced mindset.

Recognizing When to Seek Help: Sometimes, exam stress can become too heavy to handle alone. Signs like persistent sadness, panic attacks, loss of appetite, or lack of motivation may indicate deeper emotional strain. In such cases, it's important to reach out to a counselor, psychologist, or trusted mentor for support. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness it's a step toward strength and healing.

Final Thought: "Mind over grades" is not about ignoring academics but about understanding that mental well-being fuels success. A calm and positive mind can achieve much more than a stressed one. So, as exams approach, remind yourself: **Your mental health matters more than any number on a paper.** Take care of your mind, and your grades will follow naturally.



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

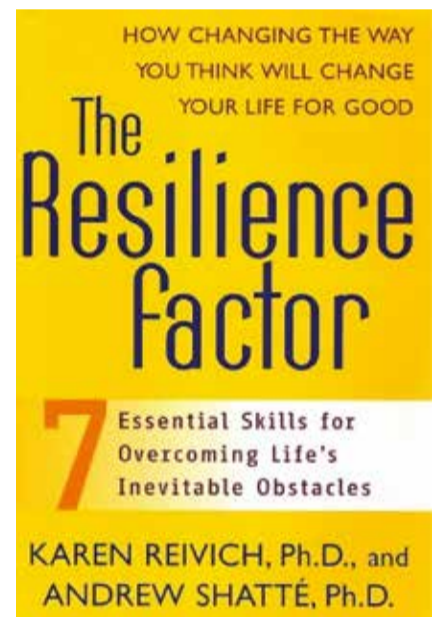
The Resilience Factor

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If there is one book that beautifully blends psychology, science, and practical wisdom, it is *The Resilience Factor* by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté. Grounded in the principles of positive psychology, this book explores the vital role of resilience, the ability to adapt, recover, and grow stronger in the face of adversity.

The authors introduce seven proven skills that help individuals build inner strength, from challenging negative thought patterns to cultivating realistic optimism and problem-solving. With real-life examples and easy-to-apply exercises, the book serves as both a guide and a toolkit for anyone seeking to overcome personal or professional hurdles.

What makes this work stand out is its balance of research-backed insights with relatable strategies. Rather than presenting resilience as an abstract ideal, Reivich and Shatté break it down into actionable steps, making it accessible to students, educators, and professionals alike.



A Token of Appreciation

We are delighted to recognize Mr. Usman for his outstanding work and dedication. As a talented photographer, he consistently captures moments with creativity, precision, and a keen eye for detail. Known for his efficiency and professionalism, Usman always goes above and beyond to ensure every project is executed flawlessly. His unique perspective brings life to every frame, turning simple moments into powerful stories. His work not only documents our events but also strengthens the way we present our identity.

Your commitment and artistry add immense value to our events and publications, thank you for always delivering excellence behind the lens!

Reader's Activity: Kindness Log

Goal: Notice and celebrate small acts of kindness to boost your mood and connections.

Time Required: 5–10 minutes daily

Instructions:

1. Each day, record one act of kindness you did, big or small.
2. Reflect briefly: How did it make you feel? How did it affect the other person?
3. Review your log at the end of the week to see the impact of these positive actions.

Reflection: How does practicing kindness daily change your mood or perspective?

Kashmir Solidarity Day (27th October, 2025)

Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed with deep spirit and reflection in an event organized by the Character-Building Society & Literary Society under the guidance of Ms. Amna Saleem and Ms. Aqsa Shabbir (Center for Well-Being & Positive Psychology) & Mr. Ziauddin Farooqui (Head of Library). The program featured a meaningful panel discussion among students, where they shared insights on the history, struggles, and human rights issues faced by the people of Kashmir. Their thoughtful conversation highlighted the importance of awareness and empathy in understanding this longstanding conflict. The event also included moving musical performances that added emotional depth and unity to the atmosphere. Overall, the commemoration served as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to stand with the people of Kashmir and to continue advocating for peace and justice.



Iqbal Day Celebration (9th November, 2025)



Iqbal Day was commemorated with great enthusiasm in an event organized on 11.11.2025 by the Character-Building Society in collaboration with the Literacy Society under the guidance of Ms. Amna Saleem and Ms. Aqsa Shabbir (Center for Well-Being & Positive Psychology) and Mr. Ziauddin Farooqui (Head of Library). The program highlighted the timeless vision of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and its relevance for today's youth. Students presented inspiring speeches and debates reflecting Iqbal's philosophy of selfhood and empowerment, followed by soulful musical performances that added a creative touch to the celebration. The ceremony was further enriched by a few delightful and thoughtful words from our PVC, who emphasized the importance of Iqbal's message in shaping a purposeful and dynamic generation. The event served as a meaningful reminder of Iqbal's enduring legacy and the role of students in carrying it forward.

Constitution of Student Advisory Council (SAC): IAC, Lahore

Prof. Dr. Shabbir Ahmad Rana (HOD: Center for Well Being & Positive Psychology) is recently appointed as Chair of the "Student Advisory Council (SAC)". The council has been established to serve as representative body of students aimed at fostering effective communication between students community and administration of the university. The Council will advise, assist, and collaborate with the administration in enhancing the student experience, promoting co-curricular engagement, and ensuring the personality development and well-being of students.

The Chair along with Mr. Asim Ijaz (Co-Chair), Ms. Ayesha Abdullah and Ms. Sania Mubarak (Faculty Members) have conducted two meetings on 18.11.2025 & 21.11.2025 with Presidents & Patrons of 16 Societies of IAC, Lahore. The committee is nowadays working to improve the structure and functioning of these societies in addition to revision and finalization of the Codes of Conduct for Societies. A comprehensive plan for Extra/Co-curricular Activities for the Year-2026 is also under formulation.



Re-Constitution of Anti-Drug & Tobacco Committee (ADTC): IAC, Lahore

Prof. Dr. Shabbir Ahmad Rana (HOD: Center for Well Being & Positive Psychology) is recently re-appointed as Chairperson of the "Anti-Drug & Anti-Tobacco Committee (ADTC)". The committee will take measures to safeguard the interests of the students and to further strengthen campus-wide awareness regarding the harmful effects of drugs and smoking.

The Chairperson, along with Mr. Muhammad Kamran (Focal Person), Ms. Anum Azhar (faculty Member) and other members conducted an urgent meetings on 01.12.2025. The Committee has planned the installation of more anti-drug and anti-smoking awareness banners across the campus with new ant-smoking slogans, along with the organization of a formal awareness seminar. The Committee has also reaffirmed its commitment to strict monitoring and enforcement to ensure a safe, healthy, and drug-free and smoke free academic environment at IAC in accordance with policy of HEC.



ANUM AZHAR

Dear Counselor, how do I?

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Dear Counselor, how do I stop overthinking situations that are beyond my control and focus more on what truly matters in my life?

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your question. Overthinking often stems from our desire to control outcomes and prevent mistakes, but it usually drains more energy than it saves. A key principle from positive psychology reminds us: focus on what lies within your circle of control, your thoughts, choices, and actions, while letting go of what you cannot change.

One practical step is to pause and ask yourself, **"Is this in my control, my influence, or completely outside of it?"** Redirect your energy toward the first two categories, and consciously release the last. Mindfulness practices, journaling, or even setting a five-minute "worry time" each day can help contain rumination.

Remember, it's not about silencing your thoughts but guiding them toward what helps you grow. As Epictetus wisely said, **"Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens."**

With practice, you'll find that overthinking loses its grip, making space for clarity, peace, and purposeful action.

Warmly,
Your Counselor

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