

# Positive Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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## Empowering Attitudes towards Positive Psychology in the UAE

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By placing an emphasis on the incorporation of Happiness and Psychology into its governmental strategies and policies, the United Arab Emirates has altered its outlook towards mental health and psychology, by adopting several methodologies to that effect. For instance, the adoption of the Self-Belief model, which uses instruments of positive psychology, such as gratitude and altruism, allows for self-empowerment and the development of wellbeing. In addition to this, by employing the higher rungs of self-actualization on Maslow's hierarchy, the Emirate has managed to elevate the 'happiness' factor in each city through the establishment of the Ministry of Happiness, mandating government policies in the pursuit of positive well-being, and branding 2016 as the 'Year of Happiness'. This move aims to generate a shift from the 'rat race' quadrant towards the 'happiness' quadrant (Ben Shahar, T. 2007, Hamburger Model). With conventional models being moot in a largely untapped region, modified versions of the Functional Happiness Model, the Biopsychosocial Model and the Seligman model have been applied to two focus groups, students and teaching faculty, at Amity University Dubai, with an emphasis on perceptive awareness and self-generated inspiration. The 'BIG Happiness Project', with its focus on tools for Authentic Happiness has been instrumental in driving positive growth not just members within the university, but also the wider community by way of organic reach. Looking ahead to Expo 2020 and beyond, this project has allowed us, and by extension the Emirate of Dubai, to bury negative attitudes towards mental health, and reinforce the models of positive psychology.

## Biography

Hajra Hussain is a Positive Psychology specialist, with ten years' experience in Psychology and Health Behaviour change. Her expertise focuses on the use of Positive Psychology as a catalyst to self-empowerment. Upon establishing well-being services (public and private sectors) and honing her skills across five continents in the education, health and retail sectors, Hajra has worked at the heart of diverse cultures and communities.

Presently the Director of Counselling at Amity University, Dubai, she pioneered "The Big Happiness Project" initiative, which focused on individual happiness through engagement of the government and corporate sector, and the wider community as a whole. Hajra is an accredited Positive Psychology Coach and holds an MSc in Health Psychology.

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