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## Introduction to the Growth Resources Model

### Abstract

This paper presents an outline of a new theoretical concept. The *Growth Resources Model* was designed to grasp the key psychosocial resources that help us develop and flourish. The model consists of three major components: *positive autonomy*, *positive belonging*, and *positive emotionality*. Positive autonomy is defined as a set of an individual's key psychosocial resources allowing them to cope with reality in a constructive way and to achieve important goals. Positive belonging is defined as a set of key psychosocial resources allowing an individual to build and sustain constructive and satisfactory relations with other people. Finally, positive emotionality is indicated by a dominance of positive (pleasant) emotions over negative (unpleasant) emotions in our personal, subjective experience. The theoretical and empirical background of the model, and its major theoretical assumptions are discussed.

**Key words:** resources, autonomy, belonging, emotions, well-being

### Wprowadzenie do Modelu Zasobów Rozwoju

#### Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowany jest zarys nowej koncepcji teoretycznej. Model Zasobów Rozwoju powstał w celu uchwycenia kluczowych psychospołecznych zasobów wspierających nasz pomyślny rozwój oraz rozkwit. Model składa się z trzech głównych komponentów: pozytywnej autonomii, pozytywnej przynależności oraz pozytywnej emocjonalności. Pozytywna autonomia zdefiniowana jest jako kluczowe psychospołeczne zasoby jednostki pozwalające jej radzić sobie z rzeczywistością w konstruktywny sposób oraz osiągać ważne cele. Pozytywna przynależność zdefiniowana jest jako kluczowe psychospołeczne zasoby jednostki pozwalające jej budować oraz utrzymywać konstruktywne i satysfakcjonujące relacje z innymi. Wreszcie, pozytywna emocjonalność sygnalizowana jest przez przewagę emocji pozytywnych (przyjemnych) nad negatywnymi (nieprzyjemnymi) w subiektywnym doświadczeniu jednostki. Zaprezentowane są teoretyczne i empiryczne fundamenty modelu oraz jego najważniejsze teoretyczne założenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zasoby, autonomia, przynależność, emocje, dobrostan.

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## Introduction

### The unobvious search for well-being factors

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argue that since the end of World War II, psychology has mostly focused on dealing with human suffering and healing psychological disorders. As a result, the view of the human psyche developed by academic psychology is often centred around the deficits and the negative aspects of psychological and social functioning, and if there are any symptoms of positive, or constructive, functioning, they are usually understood as “transformations of more authentic negative impulses” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5). Up until recently psychologists knew little about how and why people flourish in various external circumstances (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Fortunately, in recent years we have been observing a growing interest in the bright side of human development, and even a separate domain of psychology – positive psychology – was developed in order to study creativity, wisdom, happiness, and many more positive emotions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Today, if anyone asks us which psychological and social factors help people develop well, overcome life crises, flourish, and report happiness and life-satisfaction, as psychologists we can point to a few theories and concepts that give us some important answers.

One such important concept is *resilience*. It was introduced into scientific literature by Werner (Werner, Bierman & French, 1971) and Block & Block (1980), and it is usually understood in two different ways: as *resiliency/ego-resiliency*, or as *resilience*.

*Resiliency/ego-resiliency* is an individual’s ability to adapt in a flexible manner to the demands of the environment (Fredrickson, 2001; Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008). Semmer (2006) performed a meta-analysis of research concerning resiliency and describes the most important characteristics of a resilient person as follows:

- Interprets his/her environment as generally helping and propitious
- Is rather conciliatory and does not have a tendency to harm others
- Perceives stressful events as challenges
- Accepts difficult situations and treats them as a normal element of life
- Believes that he/she has an impact on their life
- Has a stable and rather positive emotionality
- Treats obstacles as opportunities to gain new experiences and to develop.

*Resilience* is usually understood as a dynamic process in which many different factors interact with each other on many different levels, and as a result of which constructive adaptation is achieved in spite of adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Charney, 2004; Heszen & Sek, 2007). Two sets of factors interact with each other: *risk factors* and *buffer factors*. Examples of the process of resilience are well-presented in the classical research by Emmy Werner and her team (Werner et al., 1971), in which children living in Hawaii were able to develop well in spite of various unfavourable factors operating in their environment (like low economic and social status, divorced parents, addictions, or mental disorders in their families). Based on literature analysis, Borucka & Ostaszewski (2008) divide the most common buffer

factors in resilience research into three categories (individual characteristics, family factors, and external factors), and they are as follows:

- Individual characteristics: high self-esteem, a sense of self-efficacy, sociability, good intellectual functioning, calm and stable emotionality, faith, talents
- Family factors: family cohesion, harmony, warmth, close relations, high economic status
- External factors: good and safe neighbourhood, having a mentor, being a member of a prosocial organization, well-functioning school.

Resilience and personal resiliency are theoretical concepts that tell us what factors may balance negative influence of encountered adversity and help us function well in spite of a tough environment. If we want to dig deeper into what it *means* to function well, we need to turn to two researchers whose life-long work is most informative in this area.

Ryff and Keyes dedicated many years of research to answer the following question: what does it mean that somebody functions well from a psychological point of view? As a result, they developed a six-factor concept of *psychological well-being* (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Keyes, 2002). A person who functions well psychologically may be described as showing 6 following characteristics:

- Self-acceptance
- Positive relations with others
- Personal growth
- Purpose in life
- Environmental mastery
- Autonomy.

“That is, individuals are functioning well when they like most parts of themselves, have warm and trusting relationships, see themselves developing into better people, have direction in life, are able to shape their environments to satisfy their need, and have a degree of self-determination” (Keyes, 2002: 208–209).

In order to develop his concept of mental health continuum, Keyes (2002) argues that a person who functions well can be also described by yet another set of factors. These factors refer to positive *social* functioning, and they are as follows:

- Social coherence
- Social actualization
- Social integration
- Social acceptance
- Social contribution.

As Keyes explains, “Individuals are functioning well when they see society as meaningful and understandable, when they see society as possessing potential for growth, when they feel they belong to and are accepted by their communities, when they accept most parts of society, and when they see themselves contributing to society” (Keyes, 2002: 209).

Next to psychological well-being and social well-being, Keyes (2002) adds another important element that is typical of people who function well: *emotional well-being*. “Emotional well-being is a cluster of symptoms reflecting the presence or absence of positive feelings about life. Symptoms of emotional well-being are

ascertained from individuals' responses to structured scales measuring the presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect, and perceived satisfaction with life. Measures of the expression of emotional well-being in terms of positive affect and negative affect are related, but distinct dimensions" (Keyes, 2002: 208).

As a result, Keyes (2002) presents the concept of mental health as a continuum from mental disorders, through languishing, the norm, to flourishing. People who flourish in life are distinguished by positive functioning in the presented three dimensions: psychological well-being, social well-being, and emotional well-being. Contrary to people who are languishing, they also score low in scales measuring depressive symptoms (Keyes, 2002).

Deci & Ryan (2008) add another crucial element to the puzzle of factors that help people develop and flourish, and this element is connected primarily to motivation. In their well-established *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), they argue that there are three universal human needs: the need for *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness*. Satisfaction of these basic needs has a great impact on our functioning: "Causality orientations are general motivational orientations that refer to (a) the way people orient to the environment concerning information related to the initiation and regulation of behaviour, and thus (b) the extent to which they are self-determined in general, across situations and domains. There are three orientations: autonomous, controlled, and impersonal. The development of a strong autonomous orientation results from the ongoing satisfaction of all three basic needs. Consistently, the autonomy orientation has been positively related to psychological health and effective behavioural outcomes" (Deci & Ryan, 2008: 183). In other words, if our three basic needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – are satisfied, we do not only function better and are psychologically healthier, but we also develop an effective, intrinsic type of motivation.

The concept of resilience/resiliency provides us with information about buffer factors that can balance the destructive impact of risk factors present in our environment. As a result, people can function well in spite of difficult circumstances of their existence, like disability, poverty, or difficult social relations. Thanks to the work of Ryff & Keyes (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Keyes, 2002), we understand what it means to function well. Keyes's concept of mental health continuum (Keyes, 2002) tells us that people who flourish report high levels of satisfaction with their psychological, social, and emotional well-being. Deci & Ryan (2008) created the Self-Determination Theory, stating that people who flourish probably have a very efficient, internal type of motivation that grows upon the satisfaction of three, culturally universal, basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

### **Origins of the Growth Resources Model (GRM)**

The Growth Resources Model was not created in order to further develop any existing theory of well-being factors, but rather as an alternative and complementary concept that might provide new insight into this matter. What might be especially insightful about the GRM is that it tries to capture not only a set of important well-being factors, but also the complex and multidirectional relations between such factors. The main goal of this paper is to present an outline of the model.

The GRM was developed as a part of a research at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow dedicated to using life coaching as a method of psychological rehabilitation of young adults with physical disabilities<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the purpose of the research is to verify if life coaching can help people with physical disabilities “move” towards the positive end of the mental health continuum, as described by Keyes (2002).

## Theoretical and empirical background

### Non-specific development factors and the theory of psychosocial development

Brzezińska (2005) presented a set of non-specific factors that support human development over the course of life. According to Brzezińska (2005), irrespectively of the age of an individual, these factors have an impact on the pace, course, and level of developmental achievements, on how much internal resources one accumulates, and on the subjective sense of well-being and quality of life. These factors are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Non-specific development factors presented by Brzezińska (2005)

Left (belonging)	Right (autonomy)
A sense of security in relations with others	A sense of self-efficacy and personal control over what is happening around
A sense of good emotional contact with others, bond, and belonging to someone	A sense of autonomy in decision-making and in achieving goals

Although the intensity and form of these factors change throughout life, they are always present, and they greatly influence human behaviour. Depending on them, people are courageous, active, explorative, open-minded, and curious of the world around them, or very cautious, closed, passive, fearful of their surroundings, and awaiting direction (Brzezińska, 2005).

Brzezińska (2005) emphasises that apart from the level of these factors, what is also very important is the balance between the factors presented on the left side of the table and those on the right. The author would like to name the factors as *autonomy factors* (right side of the table) and *belonging factors* (left side of the table), because they refer to a sense of being self-reliant and independent of your surroundings, and to a sense of being well-ingrained within your social context respectively. A situation is optimal when a person has high levels of both sets of factors. Situations with a significant imbalance between them, Brzezińska describes as *risk configurations* (Brzezińska, 2005). Two risk configurations are possible. The first one is a very strong sense of security in relations with others and a very strong need for interpersonal bonds, but at the same time a weak sense of control over events and over oneself, combined with a weak sense of autonomy in decision-making and goal-achieving. The second is a weak sense of security in interpersonal relations and a deprived need for affiliation, but at the same time a strong sense

<sup>2</sup> At the moment of writing this article the research is still ongoing.

of control over events and of personal autonomy. Hence, a proper balance of the factors regulating human behaviour is a crucial element (Brzezińska, Kaczan, Piotrowski & Rycielski, 2008).

All of the non-specific development factors presented in Table 1, Brzezińska defines according to psychosocial qualities, or virtues, developed throughout life and described by Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2013) in his theory of psychosocial development<sup>3</sup>. In this well-known and well-established theory, Erikson claims that over the course of life, people face a series of developmental crises. If they overcome these challenges in a constructive way, they develop new psychosocial resources described by Erikson as virtues. These stages, crises, and virtues are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Stages of development, crises, and virtues described by Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2013)

Stage of development	Psychosocial crisis	Virtue
Infancy (0–18 months)	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope
Early childhood (2–4 years)	Autonomy vs. shame and self-doubt	Will
Preschool age (4–5 years)	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose
School age (5–12 years)	Industry vs. inferiority	Competence
Adolescence (13–19 years)	Identity vs. role confusion	Fidelity
Early adulthood (20–39 years)	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love
Adulthood (40–64 years)	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care
Maturity (65–death)	Ego integrity vs. despair	Wisdom

In every developmental crisis, two opposite psychosocial phenomena “compete” with each other, and if the crisis is overcome successfully, the person develops a virtue. To give an example, in infancy our parents, especially our mothers, take care of our basic physiological needs. If these needs are well-met, basic trust that the reality is a friendly and predictable place that can fulfil our needs overcomes basic mistrust that our environment is a dangerous, unpredictable, and unreliable place. As a result, hope develops in the human psyche – a virtue that will be an important psychosocial resource in all of the developmental stages ahead of us (Erikson & Erikson, 2013). What is important, people can make up gaps in their development, so if they miss a certain virtue, the unresolved crisis will be still present in their psychological experience, giving them a chance to develop the virtue they skipped (Erikson & Erikson, 2013).

The concept of non-specific development factors and the theory of psychosocial development form the basis of the Growth Resources Model and its two major dimensions. The way they translate into the GRM will be discussed later in this paper when the structure of the model is presented in detail.

### The role of positive emotions

The autonomy and belonging factors proposed by Brzezińska (2005) form the core of the Growth Resources Model, but in order for the model to be complete,

<sup>3</sup> Private correspondence with professor Anna Izabela Brzezińska.

there is a need to add yet another, very important element – positive emotions. For quite some time in psychology, positive emotions had been treated as a signalling of positive relations with someone's environment (Fredrickson, 1998), but fortunately recent studies proved their profound and complex role in human adaptation (Kaczmarek, 2006).

Positive emotions have an impact on human cognitive processes. It seems that thanks to them, our thinking is more creative, flexible, and original. They help us integrate large amounts of information, stay open to new information, and be more effective in problem-solving. Positive emotions facilitate changes in the way people think and behave, thus widening their repertoire of possible thoughts and behaviours. To give some examples: when we experience curiosity, we are eager to explore our environment, get new information, and learn new skills; when we feel relaxed and joyful, our thinking is more flexible and we have a wider attention-span at our disposal (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Ashby, Isen & Turken, 1999; Isen, 2001; Czapiński, 2004; Seligman, 2004; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Kaczmarek & Krawulska-Ptaszyńska, 2005; Kaczmarek, 2006).

Positive emotions seem to reverse the results of negative-affect domination (*the undoing hypothesis*) – they reverse the narrowing of our attention, and they make our mind more open to new, coming information. They also broaden our perspective on a difficult situation, thanks to which our thoughts stop repeating known schemata, and we can experiment with new ideas and behaviours that may form a solution to a troubling situation (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan & Tugade, 2000).

Of great importance in the context of the Growth Resources Model is that positive emotions help people rebuild and further develop their resources: physiological, psychological, and social. To give an example of developing social resources: the emotions of joy, trust, and acceptance help us establish new relations with others, and this in turn helps us develop our social-support network. Thanks to positive emotions a person can cope better with difficult situations and solve problems more effectively, which results in experiencing more positive emotions and better problem-solving skills, etc. – a positive reinforcement loop is formed (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson, 2003; Kaczmarek, 2006).

Last but not least, experiencing positive emotions is linked with feeling more enthusiastic, lively, and awake. A high intensity of positive affect makes us more energetic, focused, and engaged. This is important, because it means that positive emotions support our motivation, and help us find energy to fulfil tasks, which is necessary in order to adapt well to the environment (Watson & Tellegen, 1985).

Obviously, negative emotions also play an important role in adaptation. It may be necessary to mention that they help our body prepare to act when faced with a threatening situation. Also, negative emotions facilitate the triggering of evolutionary coping mechanisms like fighting, fleeing, or freezing, and they narrow down our cognitive processes to the negative stimuli we are facing, thus increasing our chances of survival and successful coping. In a way, they force us to engage with a negative situation, and this way they prevent us from overlooking potential harm. What is also important is that negative emotions facilitate the use of the

resources we have, but at the same time help us eliminate maladaptive behaviours (Kaczmarek, 2006).

The adaptive and constructive role of positive emotions is very important if we look for the key resources helping us cope with the reality and to develop well, and that is why an important component of the Growth Resources model is dedicated to the emotions we experience. Emotions found their way into the GRM also because they seem to moderate the relationships between some of the growth resources – self-efficacy, hope, optimism – and subjective well-being (Anila, Iqbal & Mohsin, 2014). They are linked with personal effectiveness in reaching important goals (Fredrickson, 2013), and also with the quality of social relations (Gross, 1999; Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum & Ehlert, 2003; Ochsner & Gross, 2010).

## Growth Resources Model

### Positive autonomy & positive belonging

Following the autonomy and belonging pattern of the non-specific development factors (Brzezińska, 2005), and the psychosocial abilities identified behind the virtues described by Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2013), the author tried to capture the key resources that help us develop well over the course of life towards the positive end of the mental health continuum (Keyes, 2002). These resources are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3. Key growth resources of the Growth Resources Model

Autonomy resources	Belonging resources
1. A sense of self-efficacy, competence, and ability	1. A sense of meaning (or purpose)
2. Hope	2. Fidelity
3. Initiative and perseverance	3. Positive attitude towards others
4. Independence and leadership	4. Positive relations with others
5. A sense of personal control	5. A sense of positive contribution to society
6. Self-esteem	6. Confidence and self-esteem in social context
7. Well-developed personal identity	7. A sense of individuation
	8. Assertiveness and personal borders
	9. Ability to cooperate with others

The presented two sets of resources form the two most important dimensions of the Growth Resources Model – *positive autonomy* and *positive belonging*. The word ‘positive’ is used to emphasise the constructive and adaptive nature of these resources. Both autonomy and belonging may be understood in many different ways. For example, we could understand autonomy as isolation from others, with a sense of detachment from our social context, while belonging could be understood as being entangled in a social group. In the case of the GRM, autonomy and belonging are understood as resources that are constructive and adaptive in nature.



*Positive autonomy* is defined as an individual's set of key psychosocial resources allowing them to cope with reality in a constructive way to achieve important goals. *Positive belonging* is defined as a set of key psychosocial resources allowing the individual to build and sustain constructive and satisfactory relations with other people.

The general hypothesis behind these two dimensions is that in order to develop well over the course of life, we need two general sets of psychosocial resources. In order to pursue and achieve important life goals and cope with the uncertainty and volatility of the reality around us, we need to believe in ourselves, believe in our competence and in our ability to influence our surroundings. We need a sense of control. A feeling that what we do or what we don't do matters. We need hope and perseverance that help us go on despite obstacles and setbacks. We cannot be passive observers of reality, we need initiative, independence, and leadership enabling us to designate new trails (Block & Block, 1980; Barrick & Mount, 1993; Keyes, 2002; Brzezińska, 2005; Brzezińska et al., 2008; Borucka & Ostaszewski, 2008; Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Avey, Reichard, Luthans & Mhatre, 2011; Erikson & Erikson, 2013). In a word, we need positive autonomy.

At the same time, as we are social and relational beings to the core, it is impossible for us to develop, pursue goals, and flourish in isolation. That is why we need a set of skills defined as positive belonging. We need to have a sense of purpose and positive contribution to the society we live in. We need to have a positive attitude towards others that nourishes our relations with them and gives us a network of social support. For our relations to flourish, we also need faithfulness, confidence in social contexts, and a sense of individuation. We need the ability to cooperate with others and draw personal borders in an assertive way, etc. (Werner et al., 1971; Keyes, 2002; Heinrichs et al., 2003; Kagitcibasi, 2005; Brzezińska, 2005; Brzezińska et al., 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Walton & Cohen, 2007; 2011; Ochsner & Gross, 2010; Erikson & Erikson, 2013).

It is very important to note that positive autonomy and positive belonging are not considered as opposite ends of a single autonomy-belonging dimension, but instead form two separate dimensions that support each other. The more positive autonomy we have, the more positive belonging we should have and vice versa. If a person has a well-developed sense of self-esteem, a sense of competence, and a well-formed personal identity, they should, for example, be able to form better relations with others and to cooperate better with them. It is hypothesized, that the same should happen the other way around.

What is also important, is the balance between positive autonomy and positive belonging. As is the case with non-specific development factors (Brzezińska, 2005), in a perfect situation a person has a high level of both positive autonomy and positive belonging. An imbalance however suggests that some of the resources need enhancement.

The two most important dimensions of the Growth Resources Model are presented in Figure 1.

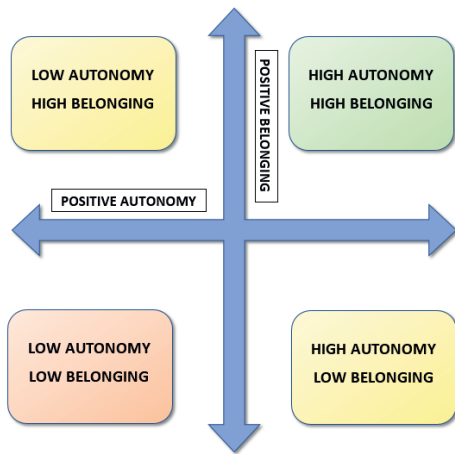


Figure 1. Positive autonomy and positive belonging as two related dimensions

As presented in the figure above, if we treat positive autonomy and positive belonging as two separate, though related, dimensions, 4 major configurations are possible: 1) in an optimal situation a person has high levels of both autonomy and belonging (top right); 2) there is an imbalance with low autonomy and high belonging (top left); 3) there is an imbalance with high autonomy and low belonging (bottom right); and 4) the worst case scenario with low levels of both autonomy and belonging (bottom left). It can be hypothesized that psychological and social consequences might be observed in people belonging to each of the 4 types. These characteristics are described in Table 4.

Table 4. Possible characteristics of different autonomy/belonging profiles

	HIGH AUTONOMY	LOW AUTONOMY
HIGH BELONGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>believing in his/her abilities; with high self-esteem; able to pursue goals and to master environment; with a clear sense of personal identity; proactive and flourishing</li> <li>open to new relations; trusting and with a positive attitude towards others; not losing his/her sense of self even in close relations; caring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with low self-esteem; not trusting in his/her abilities; rather passive and not pursuing many life-goals; waiting for life to unfold by itself</li> <li>having many close and warm relations; focused on positive relations and avoiding conflicts; agreeable; occupied by what other people think and feel; sometimes lacking personal barriers and a sense of individuation</li> </ul>
LOW BELONGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proactive and self-reliant; pursuing personal life-goals and focused on professional career; self-confident; burnt-out</li> <li>feeling alienated and left alone; with few close and warm relations; distrustful and with a negative attitude towards others; counting only on oneself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>passive and afraid of the reality; not believing in himself/herself and in the opportunities of pursuing goals; depressive and in stagnation; languishing</li> <li>distrustful and hostile to others; with very few close, warm relations; feeling alienated from the society and cynical</li> </ul>

One more issue needs to be discussed before proceeding to *positive emotionality*. If Erikson's theory (Erikson & Erikson, 2013) states that with time we overcome psychosocial crises and develop important psychosocial resources, the levels of both positive autonomy and positive belonging might be correlated with age, meaning that the older a person is, the more autonomy and belonging they should have. At the same time, Brzezińska (2005) states that the non-specific development factors are to some extent independent of age, because what changes with time and life experience is the form of these factors, not the mere level of them. Future research should show what is the relation between age and positive autonomy/belonging.

### **Positive emotionality**

As it was argued before in this paper, positive emotions play an important, constructive role in our adaptation to the environment. This is one of the reasons why *positive emotionality* was added to the Growth Resources Model as yet another important personal resource impacting our development and helping us flourish. *Positive emotionality* is indicated here simply as a dominance of positive emotions over negative emotions<sup>4</sup> in our personal experience.

What should be the extent of this dominance is an important question. According to Fredrickson (2013), most of the research suggests the ratio of approximately 3 to 1 if we look for the best balance supporting flourishing. At the same time, it is important to note that a very strong dominance of positive emotions could have negative results on functioning, and the relation between experiencing positive emotions and functioning has a reversed U character (Fredrickson, 2013). Increased positive affect could signify mania in bipolar disorder (Fredrickson, 2013) or possibly very strong, maladaptive defence mechanisms. As it was stated earlier, it is important to remember that negative emotions also have important adaptive functions.

As it was the case with autonomy and belonging dimensions, positive and negative emotions can be presented as two related dimensions (see figure 2 below). The view that positive and negative emotions can be understood as two dimensions that are to a certain degree independent seems to have empirical support (Watson, Wiese, Vaidya & Tellegen 1999; Larsen, McGraw, & Cacioppo, 2001; Reich, Zautra & Davis, 2003).

Most adaptive situation take place when a person experiences 1) a high level of positive emotions mixed with a rather low level of negative emotions at the ratio of approximately 3:1 (top left). Different sets of results are possible and they are as follows: 2) high levels of both positive and negative emotions (top right); 3) a low level of positive and a high level of negative emotions (bottom right) – the most maladaptive combination; and finally 4) low levels of both positive and negative emotions (bottom left).

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<sup>4</sup> In the GRM positive emotions mean emotions that are pleasant, and negative emotions are those usually reported as unpleasant.

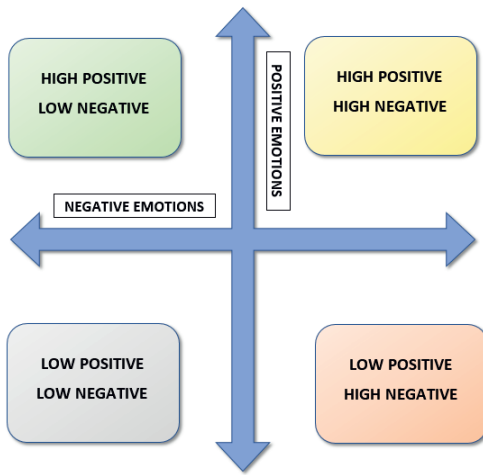


Figure 2. Positive and negative emotions as two dimensions

Finally, the entire model can be presented. It consists of three major elements: *positive autonomy*, *positive belonging*, and *positive emotionality*. *Positive autonomy* is defined as a set of key psychosocial resources allowing an individual to cope with reality in a constructive way and to achieve important goals. *Positive belonging* is defined as an individual's set of key psychosocial resources allowing them to build and sustain constructive and satisfactory relations with other people. *Positive emotionality* is indicated by a dominance of positive emotions over negative emotions in our personal experience, preferably at approximately 3:1 ratio.

The dimension of *positive autonomy* consists of 7 minor psychosocial qualities: 1) a sense of self-efficacy, competence, and ability; 2) hope; 3) initiative and perseverance; 4) independence and leadership; 5) a sense of personal control; 6) self-esteem; and 7) a well-developed personal identity. The dimension of *positive belonging* consists of 9 minor psychosocial qualities: 1) a sense of meaning (or purpose); 2) fidelity; 3) positive attitude towards others; 4) positive relations with others; 5) a sense of positive contribution to society; 6) confidence and self-esteem in social context; 7) a sense of individuation; 8) assertiveness and personal borders; and 9) ability to cooperate with others.

The GRM and the mechanisms of how it may impact personal flourishing are presented in Figure 3.

As signified in the diagram below by the vertical blue arrows pointing in both directions, all of the three major dimensions of the GRM support and influence one another. For example, if we have a good network of social support, we can cope with the reality and achieve goals more effectively, and thus experience more positive emotions. If we have a good network of social support, we can regulate our emotions better, and hence experience positive affect more, which in turn helps us achieve goals, etc. Thus, the model states that there are reciprocal feedback loops between all of the dimensions.

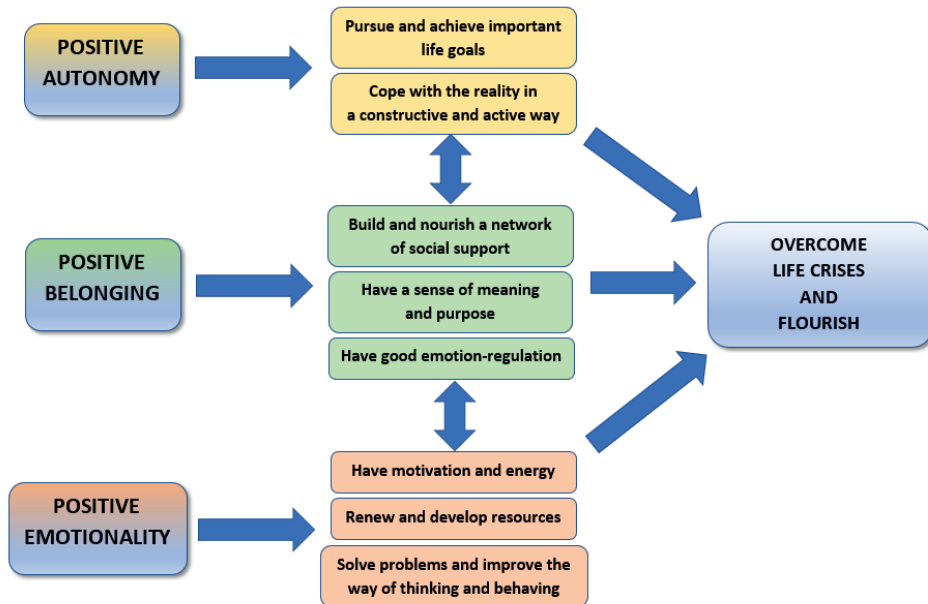


Figure 3. The Growth Resources Model and its impact on personal flourishing

## Conclusions

The Growth Resources Model is a new theoretical concept that draws from the non-specific development factors (Brzezińska, 2005), the theory of psychosocial development (Erikson & Erikson, 2013), and research on the adaptive role of positive emotions. The model may become an important frame helping us understand why a person develops and flourishes well over the course of life. What may be especially of value in the model is that it is not merely a set of growth factors, but it also tries to capture the complex relations between them.

It is the intention of the author to further develop the Growth Resources Model and to test it empirically. A questionnaire based on the model would make it possible to verify the most important assumptions of the model and its structure. Several questions need to be answered. For instance, what is the relation of positive autonomy and positive belonging to flourishing? Will this theoretical structure find empirical support? What is the relation of the GRM to the concept of resilience and to the Self-Determination Theory? Are all of the psychosocial abilities and resources included in the model relevant? What are the exact relations between emotions experienced by a person and their autonomy and belonging resources or vice versa? How do the described resources develop over the course of life and what are the mechanisms of such development?

If it is further developed, the model may provide us with a new perspective on functioning well and flourishing. It may also become an important framework for practitioners who want to support their clients in their personal and interpersonal development. A questionnaire built on the model might become an important

tool that provides insight into the psychosocial resources key to flourishing. The model itself and a diagnostic tool based on it may be used in many different areas of psychology and social science.

## Summary

This paper presents an outline of a new theoretical concept that was developed as a part of a research focused around using life coaching as a method of supporting the mental health of young adults with physical disabilities. The Growth Resources Model is designed to grasp the key psychosocial resources responsible for personal growth towards the positive end of mental health continuum over the course of life.

The theoretical and empirical background of the model is presented. Non-specific development factors proposed by Anna Izabela Brzezińska, Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, and research showing the importance of positive emotions are the key theoretical and empirical foundations of the Growth Resources Model. The paper also presents the structure of the GRM, and its most important theoretical assumptions.

The model consists of three major components: *positive autonomy*, *positive belonging*, and *positive emotionality*. Positive autonomy is defined as an individual's set of key psychosocial resources allowing them to cope the reality in a constructive way and to achieve important goals. Positive belonging is defined as a set of key psychosocial resources allowing an individual to build and sustain constructive and satisfactory relations with other people. Positive emotionality is indicated by a dominance of positive emotions over negative emotions in our personal experience.

The paper is a first step in developing the concept presented. Further research is needed to verify its structure and basic assumptions. A diagnostic questionnaire based on the model is to be constructed and tested.

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