

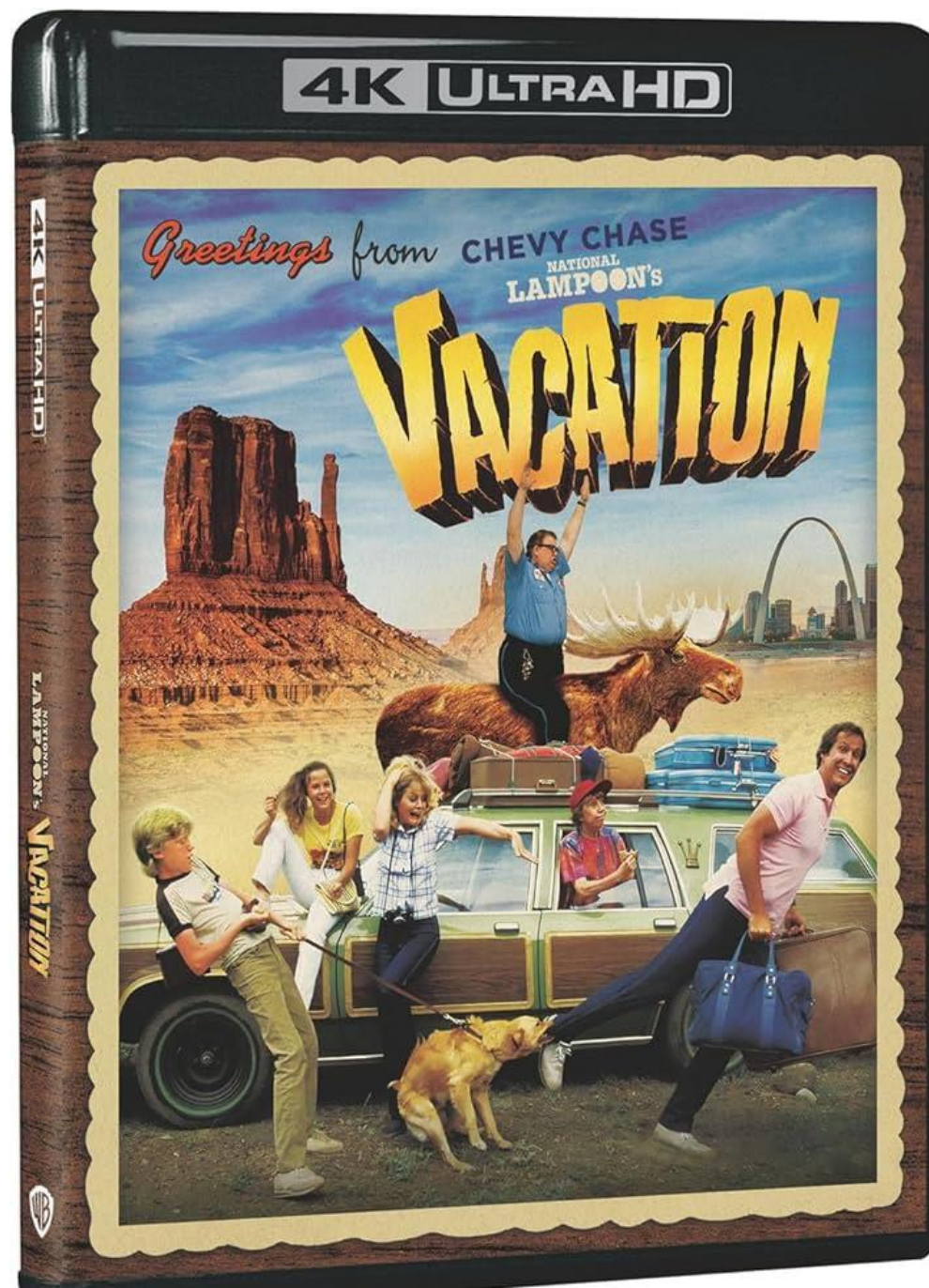
# Finding Your Purpose

Bill Lydiatt, MD

Retired Head and Neck Surgeon

CEO Clarkson Institute

# Family Vacation



# Two types of thinking

## Paradigmatic

- Finding the answer
- Data centric - **truth**
- Critical to understanding propositions and choices

## Narrative

- Telling a story
- Creating a narrative – **experience**
- Critical for creation of meaning

Jerome Bruner as quoted in David Brooks:  
How to Know a person page 2

Auguste Rodin, The Thinker





Lisa



Judy



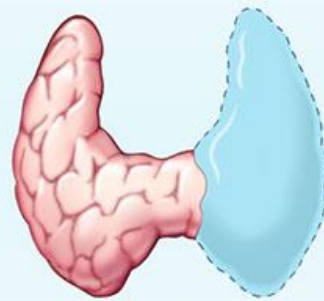
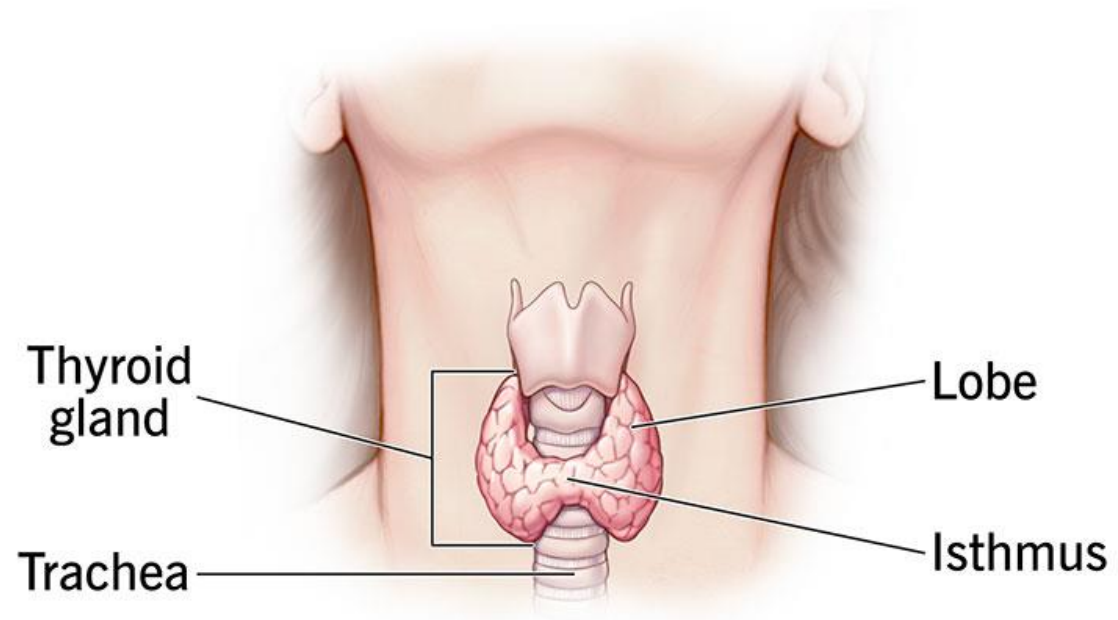
Jim

Portraits of Care  
Mark Gilbert

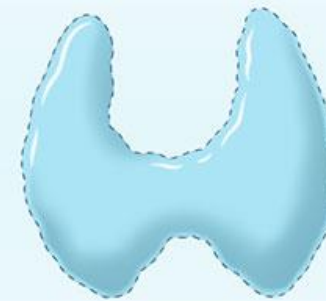
# Thyroid

## Thyroidectomy

*Removal of all or part of thyroid*



**Hemi-thyroidectomy**



**Total  
thyroidectomy**

# Trust in Healthcare



Lack of trust in  
providers and  
healthcare workers

Mark Gilbert: COVID  
Portraits,  
AMA Building  
Chicago, IL



# The Individual versus the Community

- 4 broad dimensions
- **Politics**-cross party collaboration in congress, split ticket voting
- **Society**- club memberships, church membership, marriage rates
- **Economics**- deaths of despair,
- **Culture**-e.g., Language Usage of responsibility and rights
- The “I –we- I“ curve= a *heightened focus on the self*

FIGURE 1.1: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL TRENDS, 1895–2015

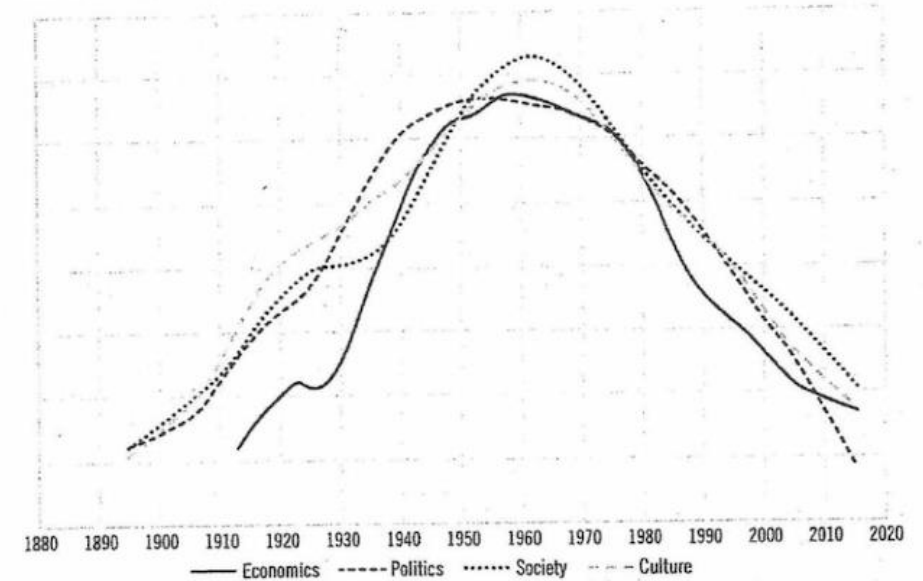
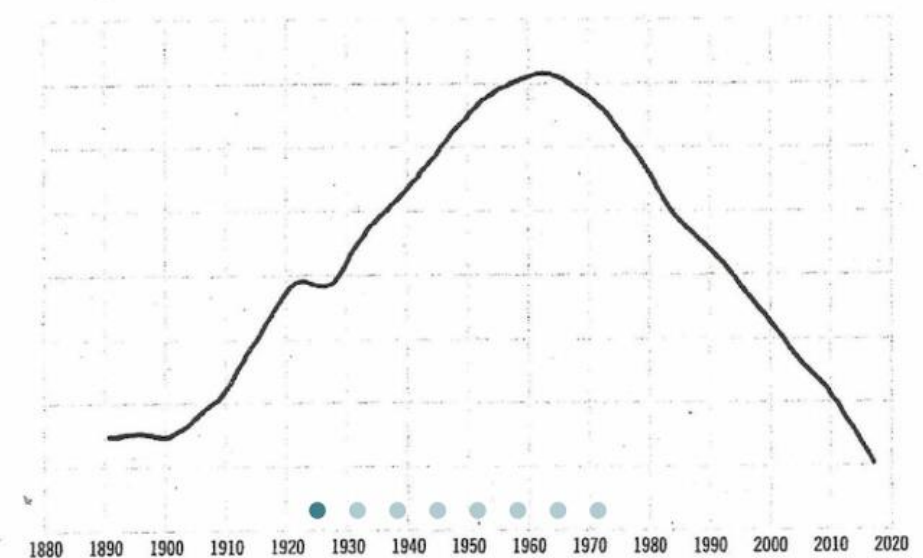
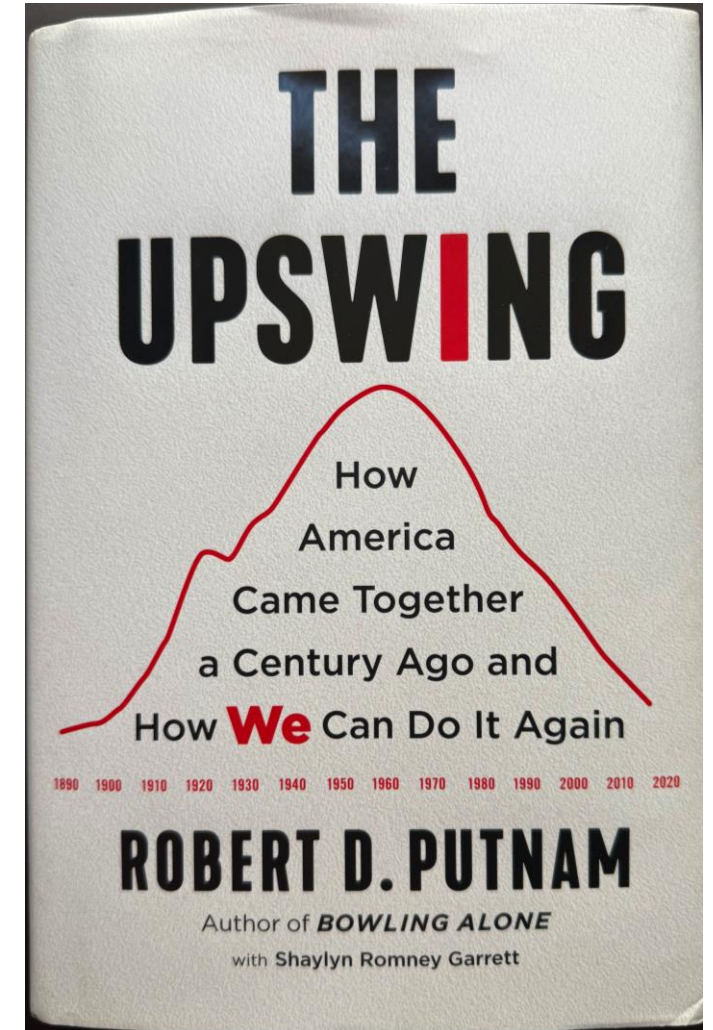


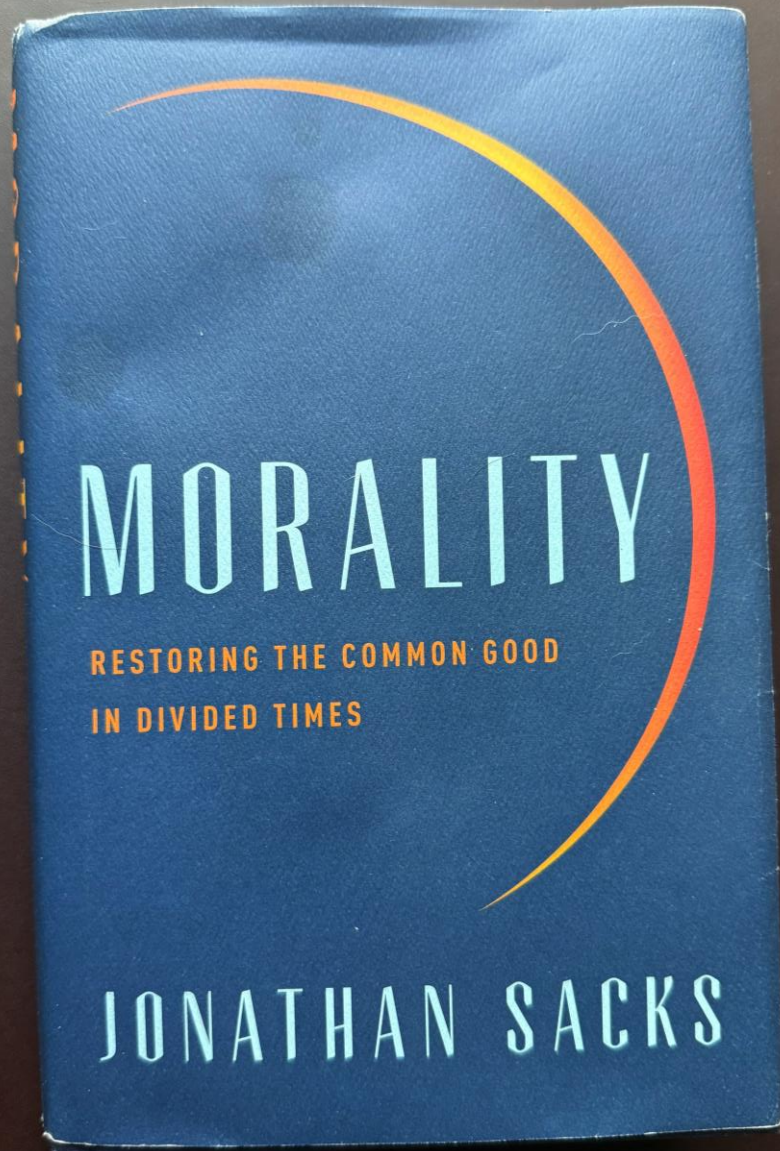
FIGURE 1.2: COMMUNITY VS. INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICA, 1890–2017



# Building Community

- **Social Capital** is cohesion through shared endeavors, networks and trust
- **Bonding** Social Capital is the strength of a group
  - Similar interests and goals
  - Relatively homogeneous
- **Bridging** Social Capital is joining of strengths of dissimilar groups
  - Necessary for larger growth and collective endeavors
  - Creates social trust





# Morality

- Morality is the self, behaving for the betterment of the group
- Morality is the basis of all values
- Self transcendence - to give to something outside of and beyond yourself
- Self is where it BEGINS
  - To much focus on self results in selfishness and narcissism
  - Self care is a way to be healthy to help others
  - Care for one another is **we care**



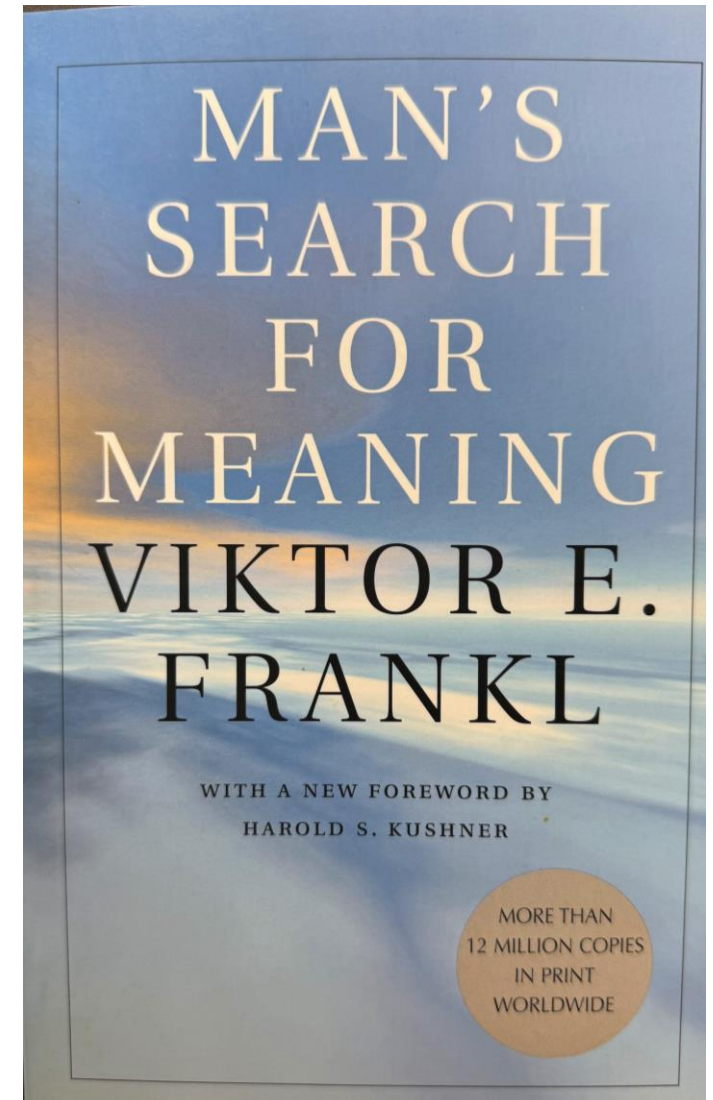
# Durkheim's two levels of human functioning

- The ***Profane and the Sacred***
- Profane level either alone or together
  - Common, ordinary, day to day
- Sacred level especially together with others
  - Sporting or concert event where crowd is one
  - Sense of awe in nature, music, moral beauty
  - Becoming part of a larger whole
  - Transcendence
- You lose your sense of self and feel more generous and connected to others
- This helps create and strengthen community
- **Survivorship is a sacred opportunity**

# Meaning

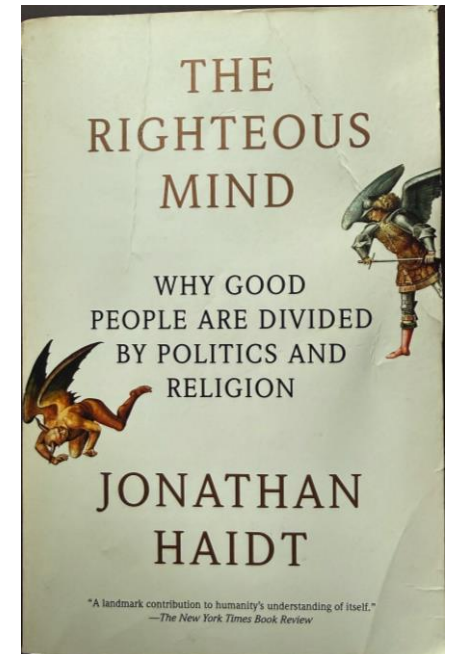
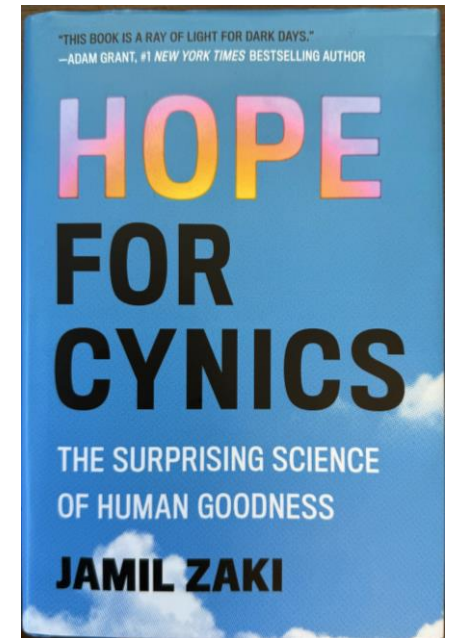
We retain agency to determine how we respond to suffering

Meaning is created through responsibility, love, and the stance you take toward suffering and towards others



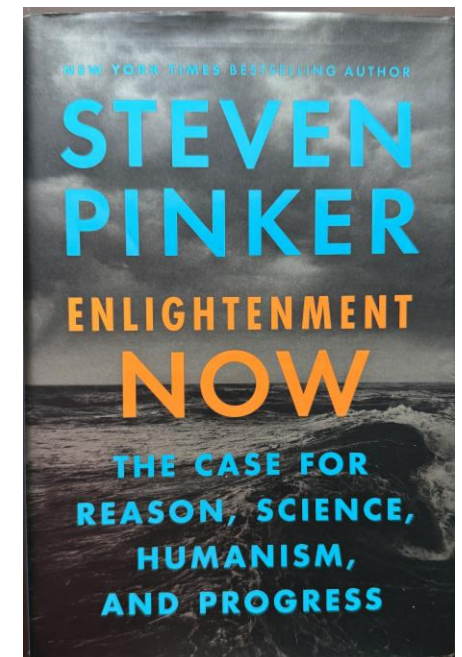
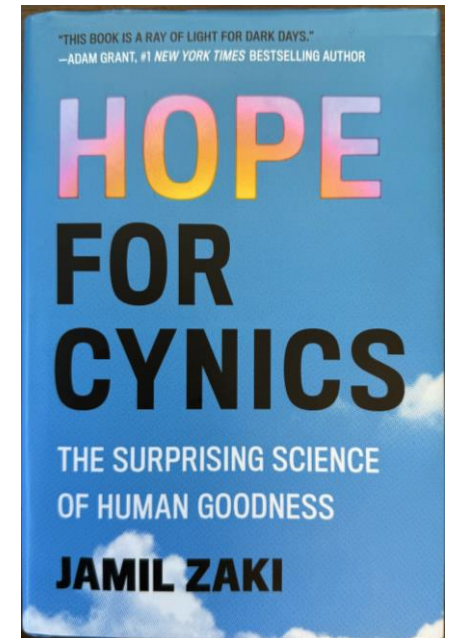
# Community

- A human **connection** at a basic level to reduce misunderstanding and fear
- Engenders **hopeful skepticism** (not assuming the worst of someone rather a balance between critical analysis and trust)
- Stresses **responsibility** and **accountability** to do your duty to something larger than yourself:
  - Your family, your friends, your neighbors, your community, your God
- **Buffer** against loneliness, depression and anxiety
- **Community engenders morality and vice versa**



# Perspective: Don't be a Cynic

- Two Stanford's (Jamil Zaki)
  - 95% of Stanford students enjoyed helping peers who were feeling down
  - 85% of students were eager to connect with other students
  - They also believed the average student would not want to help or were eager to connect
- Negativity bias distorts perceptions of human nature  
Takes multiple positive experiences to counter one negative
  - Cynics tend to have more depression, less financial success, higher divorce rates and more problematic drinking
  - There is opportunity cost to cynicism
- We live in the best time in human history (Steven Pinker)
  - Highest Life Expectancy
  - Greatest wealth and prosperity
  - Most safety and peace



A Life in Surgery: Great Highs and Great Lows

*“Thank you for saving my life”*



# Survivorship

- Is a profoundly moral experience
- Meaning is created through suffering and our response to it
- All parties involved in care can gain meaning
- Community is the sacred connection between us that builds meaning and purpose
- Survivorship is an opportunity to build community by the moral weight you carry and have earned

Volunteer

Reach out to someone going through or especially soon after completing therapy

Look up volunteer organizations

You have a moral heft

We care is self care

# Thank you

- To Brenda for the invitation
- To Stephanie and Kay for sharing your ideas with the IRB and having the inspiration to do something to build a community
- To my partners and colleagues for supporting me through low points of grief and shame
- To my patients and family, who have given me purpose and shown me the meaning of life
- To all of you for showing up, caring for each other and giving meaning to others



# Relationships

