Promoting Well-Being: What is it? And how to promote it?

Positive Psychology Interventions

Shannon Suldo, Ph.D.
School Psychology Program, College of Education
University of South Florida
Positive Psychology Approach

Aim of Positive Psychology

• Traditional Psychology: devoted to healing-repairing damage using a disease model of human functioning
• Positive psychology: move from repairing the worst things in life to building the best things in life

Positive Emotions
- Past (Gratitude, Forgiveness)
- Present (Positive affect, Savoring, Flow)
- Future (Hope, Optimism)

Positive Character
- Personal Strengths (Courage, Creativity, Humor, Bravery, etc.)

Positive Institutions
- Communities
- Schools
- Families
- Workplaces

See: viacharacter.org

- Snyder & Lopez, 2005
Considering Mental Health as Indicated by Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Subjective Well-Being

- Life Satisfaction
- Positive Emotions
- Negative Emotions

Positive Psychology Approach to Mental Health Care
Assessing Subjective Well-Being in Youth

Life Satisfaction

- Global measures
  - *Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale* (Huebner, 1991), 7 items
- Multidimensional measures
  - *Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale* (MSLSS; Huebner et al., 1994)
    - 5 domains, 40 items
  - *Brief Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale* (BMSLSS; Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003), 6 items

Affect

- *Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children* (PANAS-C; Laurent et al., 1999)
  - Positive affect (12 items)
  - Negative affect (15 items)
Defining Mental Health and Well-Being

Is Happiness the Opposite of Emotional Distress?

Photo by MI PHAM and Chinh Le Duc on Unsplash
Dual Factor Model of Mental Health

- Factor 1 (Traditional Psychology): Mental *illness* or mental health *problems* (symptoms of emotional distress)
- Factor 2 (Positive Psychology): Subjective well-being

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Problems</th>
<th>Subjective Well-Being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Troubled</td>
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Mental Health Problems: Low or High
Subjective Well-Being: Low, Average to High, Vulnerable, Complete Mental Health, Troubled, Symptomatic but Content
% of Students in Mental Health Groups

PERCENT OF MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 60% Complete Mental Health
- 15% Troubled
- 12.5% Vulnerable
- 12.5% Symptomatic but Content

-Suldo & Shaffer, 2008; Suldo, Thalji-Raitano, Kiefer, & Ferron, 2016
Benefits of Complete Mental Health (High SWB + Low MH Problems) vs. Vulnerable (Low SWB + Low MH Problems)

Physical Health
- Illness Frequency and Overall Health
- Activity Limitations

Social Adjustment
- Social Support
- Less Victimization

Identity Development
- Self-Concept Clarity
- Self-Esteem

Academic Outcomes
- Engagement (Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral)
- Academic Skills, as assessed by GPA, high stakes test scores

-Suldo & Shaffer, 2008; Suldo, Thalji-Raitano, Kiefer, & Ferron, 2013; Antaramian, Huebner, Hills, & Valois, 2010
Complete Mental Health

**Negative Indicators**
(Mental Illness or Problems)
- Anxiety, Depression, and other forms of internalizing problems
- Trauma and other environmental stressors
- Thinking errors, behavioral withdrawal
- Risky/unsafe settings
- Inconsistent rules and expectations across settings

**Positive Indicators**
(Mental Wellness or Well-Being)
- Life Satisfaction and Happiness
- Strong Social Relationships
- Social-emotional learning
- Basic needs are met
- Social skills
- Healthy interactions (minimal bullying, high support)

Decrease Risk Factors & Symptoms
Increase Promotive & Resilience Factors

Positive Behavioral Supports
Positive Psychology
Trauma-Informed Care
Subjective Well-Being Matters to Student Success

Happier children and adolescents…

- Earn better grades
- Perform better on standardized tests
- Have more positive attitudes towards school and learning
- Are physically healthier
- Have better social relationships
- Experience less peer victimization (bullying perpetrator or victim)
- Have fewer symptoms of mental health problems like depression and anxiety

- Alcantara, Gonzalez-Carrasco, Montserrat et al., 2017; Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2016; Suldo, 2016
How to Increase Happiness?

Principles of Positive Psychology Interventions
Big Picture Rationale for Intervention Goals and Targets

Principles of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs)

- Evoke positive emotions about the past, present, and future in and out of sessions/meetings.
- Build and strengthen relationships in and out of interventionist-student meetings.
- Harness motivation to engage in learning and using PPIs in ways that fit with personal values and lived experiences.
Promoting Happiness through School-Based Positive Psychology Interventions

Evoke Positive Emotions about the

Past
• You at Your Best
• Gratitude journals
• Gratitude visits

Present
• Acts of kindness
• Identify and use signature character strengths
• Savoring

Future
• Best possible self in the future
• Optimistic thinking

Strengthen Classroom Relationships
Tier 1 School-Based Positive Psychology Interventions Improve Student Outcomes

**Takeaway:** Positive psychology practices taught in schools to teachers and students lead to robust positive effects on mental health, student engagement, and course grades.

- Positive psychology practices adopted class/schoolwide across 2 years
- Secondary teachers trained in positive psychology (15 2-hr workshops) or control group

**Random assignment**

**1-2 year follow-up: social-emotional-behavioral**
- In positive psychology classrooms:
  - Increased subjective well-being (more positive emotions, less negative affect)
  - Reduced emotional problems (depression, anxiety)
  - Improved peer relations

**1-2 year follow-up: academics**
- Increased student engagement (cognitive, emotional)
- Higher grade point averages

- Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014; Shoshani, Steinmetz, & Kanat-Maymon, 2016
Resources for Promoting Happiness in Teachers, Students, and Classrooms

WISE Teacher Well-Being Workbook

Mindfulness for Teachers

THE HOW OF HAPPINESS

Promoting Student Happiness

Resilient Classrooms
Positive Psychology Interventions for Teachers

- Strengthening relationships
- Character strengths (McCullough, 2015)
- Mindfulness (Flook, Golberg et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017)
- Gratitude (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012)
- Multitarget: ACHIEVER (Cook et al., 2017) and WISE (Bostic, 2019)

- WISE, free download: www.medstarwise.org/resources/
Classwide Curricula that Increase Positive Emotions

Well-Being Promotion Program (WBPP) developed by Positive Psychology Research Team at USF, Classwide Version (Suldo, 2016)

Activities divided into 3 phases: past, present, and future aspects of SWB

- Past
  - Gratitude journals
  - Gratitude visits

- Present
  - Acts of kindness
  - Character strengths

- Future
  - Hopeful and goal-directed thinking

Additions to WBPP (Classwide version)

- Teacher information and weekly co-facilitation (Teacher-Student Relationships)
- Team-building (Classmate Relationships)

- Suldo, Hearn, Bander, McCullough, Garofano et al., 2015

MindUp SEL Program
https://mindup.org/
Universal screening to identify students in need of additional mental health services, students who may be:
- Vulnerable
- Symptomatic but Content
- Troubled

Evidence-based interventions for:
- Mental Health Problems
  - Internalizing
  - Externalizing
- Low Subjective Well-Being

- Suldo, 2016
Well-Being Promotion Program (WBPP)

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<th>Target</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<td>Psychoeducation</td>
<td>Introduction to Key Positive Psychology Constructs and Focus of Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>Rationale for Positive Activities; Me at My Best</td>
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<td>Gratitude</td>
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<td>Introduction to Character Strengths</td>
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<td>Character Strengths</td>
<td>Character Strengths Assessment (VIA Youth Survey); Application of Signature Strength 1 in New Ways</td>
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<td>Character Strengths</td>
<td>Application of Signature Strength 2 in New Ways; Savoring</td>
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<td>Examples of Optimistic Thinking; My Optimistic Thoughts</td>
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<td>Hope</td>
<td>My Best Possible Self in the Future</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Termination; Review of Strategies and Plan for Future Use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booster 1</td>
<td>All; Gratitude</td>
<td>Review &amp; Spotlight on Gratitude (Gratitude Journals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booster 2</td>
<td>All: Strengths</td>
<td>Review &amp; Spotlight on Signature Strengths (Use in New Ways)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booster 3</td>
<td>All: Optimism</td>
<td>Review &amp; Spotlight on Optimistic Thinking (My Optimistic Thoughts)</td>
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Tier 3 for Troubled Youth: Positive Psychotherapy

Developed to help those experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression.

Utilizes the PERMA model and character strengths

3 Phases; 15 sessions

Promising empirical support for positive psychotherapy with clinical populations of both youth and adults.

- Reductions in negative symptoms of mental illness
- Increases in subjective well-being
- Compared to wait-list control groups and those receiving traditional mental health treatment methods (i.e., CBT; Mahmoudi & Khoshakhlagh, 2018).

- Rashid & Seligman (2018)
Reactions and Question?

suldo@usf.edu