

# Positive Psychology Course Manual

**A ten week discussion- and experience-based course which is informed by the evidence and research in the field of positive psychology,**

**A co-produced programme by and for people who have experienced mental health difficulties,**

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## Positive Psychology Course Overview

*A ten week course, informed by evidence and research, exploring the topic of positive psychology. This includes personal strengths, positive emotions and relationships and the theory of wellbeing. Learners will have the opportunity to develop their knowledge, and practise using the skills and tools that positive psychology has to offer. It will involve a mixture of group discussion, practical exercises and will promote individual reflection.*

Aim of the course:

To improve overall wellbeing through developing understanding of positive psychology and practising exercises.

Objectives:

- To gain knowledge and understanding of positive psychology
- To increase learners' self-awareness of the way in which they relate to themselves and others
- To learn skills and exercises to enhance the experience of positive emotions, interactions and events
- To find out their personal strengths and explore how to put them into practice
- To challenge, with support and through sharing with others, personally identified roadblocks towards greater wellbeing

Session 1	What is Happiness and Positive Psychology?
Session 2	Strengths I
Session 3	Strengths II and Flow
Session 4	Positive Emotions and Savouring
Session 5	Self-Compassion and Kindness
Session 6	Recap Session
Session 7	Optimism and Pessimism
Session 8	Positive Relationships
Session 9	Mindset
Session 10	Ending and Group Task



## Using the Manual

There are three parts to the manual:

1. Text Manual
  - a. Session by session instructions for the tasks and activities. Sessions are planned to last between 2 hours to 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a short break.
  - b. Crib sheets which can be annotated to support facilitators to deliver the programme. They provide a brief overview of each exercise and the aim of the exercise.
  - c. Grey boxes which provide additional information based on the positive psychology evidence base. Where relevant the titles in bold correspond to the title of the slide presentation.
2. PowerPoint Presentation for Weeks 1 to 9 (there are no slides for Session 10)
3. Positive Psychology Course Workbook
  - a. Contains handouts which are used in the sessions and provided for participants to take away to complete the suggested practice activities.

### Delivery of the Programme

The course was designed to be delivered in recovery-oriented services as part of Recovery College courses offered or similar. As such, the programme has been designed to be delivered by non-mental health professionals, and it is not considered to be a therapy programme. It would be recommended, however, that the course is delivered by individuals who are familiar with group facilitation and who are familiar with and have practiced the positive psychology exercises described. Ideally facilitators will have had an opportunity to attend the course as participants.

## Evaluation

The pilot programme has been evaluated using a number of different methods. The findings from this will be written up separately.

### 1) Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

This was used at three time points in Week 1, Week 6 and Week 10 of the programme. The WEMWBS was developed to monitor mental wellbeing in the general population and to support the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing.

WEMWBS is a 14 item self-response scale with five response categories, summed up to provide a single score ranging from 14-70. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing. It has been validated across a number of different populations and has also been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of mental wellbeing in a secondary care mental health service user population (Bass et al, 2016).

The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Government National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh.

### 2) Idiosyncratic Positive Psychology Course Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by the programme development group and the evaluation partners in order to monitor learning over the duration of the programme. Items are closely aligned to the content and learning outcomes from the sessions. The questionnaire has not yet been validated.

Q1	How familiar are you with your personal strengths? Very much so                  Somewhat                  A little                  Not at all
Q2	How often do you experience positive emotions? Nearly Always                  Often                  Sometimes                  Rarely                  Never
Q3	How often are you able to be compassionate towards yourself? Nearly Always                  Often                  Sometimes                  Rarely                  Never
Q4	How often are you able to find a balanced view of a situation? Nearly Always                  Often                  Sometimes                  Rarely                  Never
Q5	How able do you feel to build quality relationships? Very much so                  Somewhat                  A little                  Not at all
Q6	How open are you to new experiences and learning new skills? Very much so                  Somewhat                  A little                  Not at all
Q7	How often do you intentionally do things to increase your personal wellbeing? Nearly Always                  Often                  Sometimes                  Rarely                  Never



## Taster Session

### Aims and Objectives

To provide a brief overview of the positive psychology course and of the types of discussions and exercises which are part of the programme.

This taster session was originally developed in order to provide interested participants with a 'taste' of the course, and therefore it would be recommended that this is run in advance of the course e.g. a few weeks or months before it is due to run. Some of the content is repeated at other points in the course, particularly Session 1, and it would not be recommended to run the Taster and Session 1 too closely together.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Spent time reflecting on the concepts of happiness and wellbeing
- Explored and shared some language related to positive actions towards others
- Been introduced to some of the key ideas in Positive Psychology

### Session Content

#### 1. Introduction 20 minutes

- Welcome participants, facilitators introduce themselves**
- Icebreaker**
- Housekeeping/Agreement for the day**
- Brief overview of the session**

#### 2. Something for Someone 20 minutes

- Ask the participants to do the following:**
  - Split into pairs. Work in your pair with each person taking a turn.**
  - Tell your partner about a time that you have done something for another (it doesn't matter who it was, whether it was a friend, an animal, a stranger or perhaps you didn't even know who it would benefit).**
  - Try to be detailed, set the scene of where you were, what was happening, how the person reacted and how you felt.**
  - Your partner will listen carefully and when you have finished will reflect back what strengths of qualities they noticed you demonstrated or anything that struck them about the story.**
- Take feedback from the group, on the types of words they noticed themselves/their partner using and write these up. Invite the group to reflect on this list.**

When introducing the exercise to participants facilitators may want to:

- Emphasise it doesn't have to be something big - the facilitator can give some examples to help group
- Encourage everyone to have a go, and emphasise they can be as brief as they like
- Encourage participants to share something they are comfortable sharing

### 3. Wellbeing/Happiness

30 minutes

- a. Divide the group into two smaller groups and ask them to do the following:
  - i. **Group 1: Brainstorm ideas for “What is Wellbeing?”**
  - ii. **Group 2: Brainstorm ideas for “What is Happiness?”**
- b. After 10 minutes ask both groups to consider how happiness and wellbeing are similar/different. Take feedback and discuss as a whole group.
- c. Review Slide: Happiness and Wellbeing

**(Title in bold corresponds to slide title)**

#### **Happiness and Wellbeing**

Although it is likely that the discussions participants have had highlight differences between ‘happiness’ and ‘wellbeing’ the literature has often used the two terms interchangeably.

The key point to note is they talk about ‘subjective’ wellbeing, i.e. the emphasis on the person’s own experience and not something which can be judged/perceived by others.

The positive psychology research has looked at what people say makes them happy - interestingly, it’s not necessarily the things we might expect. For example, you might think that having lots of positive feelings and no negative ones would be the pinnacle of what we might want to achieve in terms of how we feel about our life, but actually that’s not quite the case... but further details about this work will be for another session!

One of the challenges in the field of positive psychology is how the media has portrayed this topic and also popular psychology book titles such as “How to be Happy” and “Authentic Happiness”, which actually talk about overall wellbeing but set up an expectation from the outset which many may not see as realistic.

### 4. Introduction to Positive Psychology

40 minutes

- a. Review Slide: PERMA Wellbeing Model

**(Title in bold corresponds to slide title)**

#### **PERMA Wellbeing Model**

This is an overall model of wellbeing which Martin Seligman presented and which he thought covered all the different components which together lead to people flourishing. The model is very broad but this is positive as it allows for individual differences and ways of putting things into action. The positive psychology course will loosely cover ideas, discussions and skills around these different aspects.

Positive emotions: These are an important part of wellbeing, and might include emotions such as joy, comfort and happiness.

Engagement: When time stops for you, when you are in ‘flow’ (a state of complete immersion in an activity).

Relationships: We are social beings, and flourish when we have relationships which are meaningful and positive.

Meaning: Belonging to and serving something bigger than yourself.

Accomplishment: We experience greater wellbeing when we can look back on our accomplishments, when we experience a sense of achievement or develop mastery of a task or skill.

**b. Positive Psychology Quotes - hand out the quotes (see handout and box below)**

- i. **Invite the group to look at the quotes and ask for their thoughts on these statements.**
- ii. **Prompt questions: Is there anything that struck you? Things which you may agree with? Things you disagree with? Does it evoke any particular thoughts/feelings for people?**

*To live a good life, it is not enough to remove what is wrong with it. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)*

*People want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experience of love, work and play.*

*The aim of positive psychology is to study the other side of the coin, the ways that people feel joy, show altruism, and create healthy families and institutions-thereby addressing the full spectrum of human experience. (Gable & Haidt, 2005)*

*[Positive Psychology is] nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. (Sheldon and King, 2001)*

*Positive psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)*

This exercise allows participants to explore and discuss some of the ways positive psychology is defined and the orientation of this work. Participants are invited to give their own perspectives however it may be helpful for facilitators to emphasise some key points:

- Positive psychology positions itself as a 'psychology for all' (where psychology has been associated more with pathology)
- It recognises psychology has a role in not only reducing distress but also learning what works for people, and what helps people to thrive and bounce back from adversity
- It recognises and values what is intrinsically good and unique in every single person

**c. Review slides:**

- i. **How does Positive Psychology achieve these ideas?**
- ii. **Course Overview**

**5. Gratitude Exercise**

**15 minutes**

- a. **Introduce the gratitude exercise to the group:**
  - i. **Individually, write down up to 5 things which you are grateful for. These can be little things that happened during the day (e.g. feeling thankful that you got to eat your favourite food for lunch), things that you notice (e.g. feeling thankful for good weather or an interesting article you read), or people in your life. It doesn't matter what it is, but try to be specific e.g. instead of 'I am grateful for my friends', you might want to think of a specific example of something a friend has done.**
- b. **The facilitator may want to give an example of something they would write down.**
  - ii. **Once the group has written their list ask them to rate on a scale of 0-10 (0 being not grateful at all and 10 being the most grateful they could be), how grateful they feel for this.**
  - iii. **Take feedback on the experience of doing this exercise (i.e. what was it like?), not on individual responses.**

Gratitude interventions have been one of the more researched areas in positive psychology, with research beginning to suggest that noticing and appreciating things for which we are thankful or grateful can have a positive effect on wellbeing. This type of exercise illustrates the kind of practice we might be asking participants to take part in throughout the course, and is something that if they wish, they can take away with them and put into practice.

On reflection participants may describe noticing feelings which came about doing the exercise or comment on what it was like paying attention to something which we may not usually turn our minds to.

- b. **Ask for feedback from the group. Potential prompt questions: What was it like doing the exercise? How did you feel completing it? Was it easy/was it hard? Did you enjoy it/not enjoy it?**
6. **Ending**
- a. **Briefly summarise key topics covered today. Invite any final comments/questions from participants.**
  - b. **Inform participants of the dates for the course, and the process for signing up for this.**

## Taster Session: Crib sheet

Session Aim: To provide a brief overview to the positive psychology course and of the types of discussions and exercises which are part of the programme.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 20 minutes	Welcome participants, facilitators introduce themselves.	For the group to introduce themselves and become comfortable working with one another. To establish a shared working agreement for the day amongst the group and familiarise them with the session outline.	
	Icebreaker		
	Housekeeping/Agreement for the day		
	Brief overview of the session		
<b>Something for Someone</b> 20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in pairs with each person taking a turn. Tell your partner about a time that you have done something for another - try to be detailed</li> <li>Partner will listen and reflect back strengths/qualities they noticed or anything that struck them</li> <li>Group feedback and write up the words elicited</li> </ul>	To experience giving and receiving feedback which is focussed on positive qualities of an individual. For participants to generate a shared list of positive words which describe characteristics and actions.	
<b>Wellbeing &amp; Happiness</b> 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divide into two smaller groups. Ask one group to brainstorm 'What is Wellbeing?' and the other group "What is Happiness?" After 10 minutes ask both groups to consider how happiness and wellbeing are similar/different. Take feedback and discuss.</li> <li>Review Slide: Happiness and Wellbeing</li> </ul>	To encourage participants to critically think about the relationship between happiness and wellbeing and to share their views with others. To provide an introduction to these ideas from a positive psychology perspective.	
<b>Brief Introduction to Positive Psychology</b> 40 minutes	Review slide: PERMA Wellbeing Model.	Participants to be introduced to a model of wellbeing and think about overall wellbeing.	
	Hand out quotes. Invite the group to discuss and share their perspectives.	Introducing participants to what positive psychology would say it is and inviting an open discussion and individuals to share their perspectives.	
	Review Slides: How does Positive Psychology achieve these ideas? Course Overview.	To provide participants with an understanding about how positive psychology has evolved and the emphasis on how we can cultivate characteristics to improve our wellbeing. To provide an overview of the course.	
<b>Gratitude Exercise</b> 10 minutes	Introduce Gratitude Exercise and ask participants to complete individually - take feedback on experience of this.	For participants to practise reflecting on things they are grateful for, to provide an experience of an intervention which they could practice at home.	
<b>Ending</b> 5 minutes	Summarise the key things covered this session. Inform the group about course start date and sign up process.	So participants know how to sign up to for the full course if they wish to do so.	

## Session 1: What is Happiness and Positive Psychology?

### Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the session is to provide a context for this positive psychology course and to establish a working agreement amongst the group.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Developed a shared agreement of working together which will shape the forthcoming programme
- Received an overview of the course and understood the way in which learning will take place
- Developed an understanding of the five components of Wellbeing Theory (Seligman, 2011)
- Explored and discussed some of the findings from 'happiness' research

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction** **30 mins**
  - a. Icebreaker to introduce participants (to be decided by facilitators)**
  - b. Contracts**
  - c. Working agreement/Ground Rules**
    - i. Given the fact that this course encourages exercises which focus on self-reflection and allows space for sharing own experiences, facilitators should be mindful to ensure ground rules related to confidentiality and respect for others opinions and experiences are emphasised.**
- 2. What is Happiness?** **45 mins**
  - a. In small groups or pairs discuss and brainstorm ideas about 'What is happiness and why does it matter?'**
    - i. Take feedback and discuss as a wider group.**
  - b. Happiness Research**
    - i. Review slide: So what does happiness research tell us?**
    - ii. Introduce quiz - a copy is in the handouts. Encourage the groups to discuss their answers, as not everyone will have the same view.**

#### Quiz questions and answers

Research into happiness has allowed us to discover more about individual, group, community and cultural differences and similarities. Some are things we might expect, and some might be less predictable. Other things we might not even have ever really thought about. Have a go with the following True or False questions.

1. Winning the lottery makes you happier than before. (False: People adapt to situations and events, whether they are good or bad they become accustomed to them and over time they exert less influence on wellbeing.)

2. After having their basic needs met, money has a very small effect on overall happiness. (True: Other than for those living in poverty, or in poor countries where money does have a positive impact on happiness, after basic needs are met money has very little effect on overall happiness/subjective wellbeing.)
3. When people spend money on material things they think make them happy, this happiness is long lasting. (False: After our basic needs are met we might spend money on things we think will make us happy but the effects are very short-lived as we habituate quickly. This only differs depending on how much meaning we attribute to what we purchase, i.e. if we attribute personal meaning to something we are more likely to feel happy with the purchase than if it was purely based on aesthetics or impulse.)
4. Spending money on other people leads to a bigger increase in happiness than spending money on yourself. (True.)
5. Across society, having children leads to an overall increase in parents' happiness. (False: It depends on the point of the family cycle, as having children doesn't necessarily lead to greater happiness in parents.)
6. Happiness increases with age. (True: Exact reasons are unclear, though this may relate to opportunities that people have and how they make sense of their lives.)
7. Happier individuals tend to be healthier and live longer. (True: Greater levels of life satisfaction are also associated with better health.)
8. Wellbeing improves when we compare ourselves to those less fortunate than ourselves. (True: In contrast, wellbeing decreases when we compare ourselves to those who we perceive to have more or as doing better than ourselves.)
9. We tend to rate ourselves and our friends as 'above average' in positively valued traits e.g. thinking we are better than average drivers. (True.)
10. Having a purpose or long term goal in life is linked to happiness. (True.)
11. Witnessing others performing a good deed makes us want to carry out a good deed ourselves. (True: People who witness others performing good deeds experience an emotion called 'elevation' and this motivates them to perform their own good deeds.)
12. We overestimate how long we will be sad for following a bad event, e.g. a relationship breakdown. (True: And we don't tend to learn from our wrong predictions when making further predictions in the future i.e. we will tend to over-predict the negative impact on us if a situation repeats itself in future, rather than learn from experience.)

Surveys have asked people what is meant by happiness, and the usual responses fall within three domains: a state of joy or other positive emotions; being satisfied with one's life, and the absence of depression or other negative emotions (Argyle, 2001, pp2).

Within the positive psychology literature happiness is often used synonymously with the scientific term 'Subjective Wellbeing' (SWB). In this sense they are used interchangeably. Subjective

Wellbeing (SWB) refers to people's evaluation of their lives - how they appraise their lives through their thoughts and feelings (Diener and Scollon, 2014).

Whilst people have sought to answer questions such as 'what is happiness?' for centuries, it is only recently that psychologists have empirically studied SWB, and this has involved developing ways of reliably measuring SWB. This is mostly done through surveys which ask subjective views (based on the individual's opinion) on level of life satisfaction or frequency of positive feelings, however sometimes objective measures which look at 'social indicators' such as income and health have been used. The most widely used measure is the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al, 1984).

### 3. Slide Presentation

30 minutes

**Emphasis on this section should be on the interactive elements, inviting opinions and discussion based on the information and individual's thoughts, rather than on didactic teaching.**

- a. **Positive Psychology**
- b. **There is a History to Happiness**
- c. **Why Study Happiness?**
  - i. **Invite the group to consider possible critiques of this subject which come to mind. This also gives the group a chance to voice any potential anxieties about the topic.**
- d. **Two Traditions of Happiness**
- e. **Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory**
- f. **Theory of Wellbeing**
  - i. **Talk through the PERMA model giving examples and allowing discussion with the wider group.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

#### **Positive psychology**

Positive psychology has positioned itself as a relatively new discipline and is largely cited back to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) paper. In this paper they outlined a compelling argument for Clinical Psychology having been misdirected since World War II to focus on pathology and illness, at the expense of learning about positive qualities and what makes people thrive.

We know that happiness is not just the absence of negative emotion. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi talk about 'psychology (being) just as concerned with what is right with people as it is with what is wrong.'

#### **There is a history to happiness**

Despite being perceived as a 'new' discipline, the roots of positive psychology can be traced back thousands of years to Chinese, Ancient Greek and Islamic Philosophy as well as to psychologists working in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the humanistic psychology movement.

Positive psychology has tried to distance itself from humanistic psychology, citing that 'it did not attract much of a cumulative empirical base, and it spawned a myriad of therapeutic self-help movements.' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It has received criticism for this purposeful distancing (Froh, 2004), although has done so by emphasising the scientific and empirical aspects of the positive psychology movement.



The schools of thought which pre-date positive psychology are entire subjects on themselves which cannot be described here, however a summary can be found at <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/>.

### **Why Study Happiness?**

Rationale for people turning to consider a 'good life' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011).

Critiques of Positive Psychology:

- It hasn't paid enough tribute to the historical movements, philosophies and schools of thoughts that preceded it
- People who study positive psychology fail to recognise the negative side of life, with a tendency towards a Pollyanna view of the world
- Can we do too much of a good thing?
- There is a difference between describing something as good and prescribing it as good.
- Do we really need all this evidence and research to know what makes us happy? Does that take something away from these activities/events?
- There are still some disagreements within this field about what results should be considered 'significant', and therefore how meaningful results are
- All scientific research has flaws

### **Two Traditions of Happiness**

Henderson & Knight (2012) review the concepts of eudemonia and hedonia and highlight some of the recent debate about the use of these terms. In spite of the debate it is generally accepted that both describe ways of living and behaving and both are pathways to wellbeing. Hedonic tradition is associated with people such as Locke, Epicurus and Bentham, and fundamentally associates wellbeing with positive emotional states which accompany the satisfaction of desire. That is, a hedonistic approach to life would be one where you minimise pain and maximise pleasure and where the end pursuit is the positive emotional state. In contrast, eudemonic approaches consider living a life of virtue and contemplation as the pathway to wellbeing. This approach values behaving in a noble manner and developing your potential through the pursuit of meaning, and recognises that whilst positive emotional states may arise from this, it is not the pursuit of them which is of greatest importance. Eudemonism is associated with Aristotle and others such as Plato.

Seligman (2002, 2011) is one of the modern researchers who has aimed to combine the two conceptualisations of eudemonia and hedonia into a more integrated theory of wellbeing.

### **Authentic Happiness Theory**

Seligman (2002) first presented an Authentic Happiness theory, an attempt to conceptualise what it is that people do in order to achieve 'happiness'. This theory was made up of three elements:

1. *The Pleasant Life* - This relates to the experience of pleasure, rapture and positive feelings and can be associated with the hedonic conceptualisation of wellbeing. An example would be any activity that led to someone experiencing a positive emotion, e.g. singing, cooking, seeing friends, shopping.

2. *The Engaged Life* - This relates to the experience of being at one with what you are doing, losing a sense of consciousness and being fully absorbed. Examples are difficult because this is so individual, but it is often doing something where you are challenged to the right degree, and where you are using your strengths. The facilitator might want to prompt participants that we will come to look at this later in the course (Session 3).
3. *The Meaningful Life* - This relates to purpose and belonging, and the experience of doing and being part of something bigger than just yourself. This could be a religion/place of worship, a political group, "being green", your family, a community.

### **...Became the Wellbeing Theory**

In 2011, Seligman updated the 'Authentic Happiness' theory citing a number of reasons, amongst which was the fact that the initial theory placed too much emphasis on happiness and positive emotion. He developed another Wellbeing theory which he described as leading to 'Flourishing' i.e. rather than a conceptualisation of what people do in order to achieve happiness, what they do in order to flourish.

The Wellbeing Theory came from a revision of the first theory with two additional elements:

*The Achieving Life* - The pursuit of accomplishments, achievements and winning. An example might be people who take part in a game or a sport simply in order to win (this might be a momentary accomplishment) or people who do something which is about the longer term accomplishment such as building up a career in a specific area (the Achieving Life).

*Positive Relationships* - This recognises that we are social creatures and that good experiences can often come from being with others. This might be spending time with friends, getting on well with your boss at work, a kind gesture from a stranger.

Although this is a theory which attempts to describe what people do in the pursuit of wellbeing, it has not been empirically validated yet. There are some measures which have been developed to try and measure the different elements and see whether they are consistent with overall wellbeing.

4. **Overview of Course** **10 minutes**
  - a. **Review Slide: Overview of the Course**
    - i. **Talk briefly through the outline of ten week course**
  - b. **Review Slide: Course Structure**
5. **Good things in Life** **15 minutes**
  - a. **Ask participants to complete the exercise individually (handout is available). Think about three good things which have happened today, and then write down why they happened.**
  - b. **Take feedback from the group on the process (i.e. what was it like?), but not asking people to share what they have written (unless they choose to).**

This exercise is designed to increase positive emotions about the past. One study (Seligman et al, 2005) asked participants to record, every day for a week, three good things that happened to them that day and then to write down causal explanations (i.e. why that thing happened or why it

went well). They only had to complete the exercise for week and then completed further testing at one month, three month and six month follow up. Results showed that at three month and six month follow up participants reported being happier and less depressed and this effect was sustained over time. It is important to note that those who reported the greatest level of happiness were also those who had intermittently continued to carry out the exercise.

## **6. Ending**

**15 minutes**

### **a. Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**

Suggested practice is the 'Good things in Life Exercise' described above. Although further studies need to be carried out, results suggest that completing the exercise every night for one week isn't necessarily sufficient to have lasting positive impact on happiness. We tend to habituate quickly to changes and don't want the task to become onerous so perhaps facilitators could suggest completing it once or twice a week over a sustained period of time, and remind group members that we will check in every week to give an opportunity to feedback or update on things they are trying if they choose to.

### **b. Evaluation (External Evaluators)**

**10 minutes**

- i. **WEMWBS**
- ii. **Idiosyncratic Questionnaire**

Session 1: Crib sheet

Session Aim: To provide a context for this positive psychology course and to establish a working agreement amongst the group

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
Introduction 30 minutes	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Contracts/Working Agreements (where relevant)	To establish a shared working agreement amongst the group and create a safe environment with clear boundaries in which the group members can take part.	
	Ground Rules		
What is Happiness & Why does it Matter? 45 minutes	Small groups or pairs: Discuss and brainstorm ideas/thoughts related to this question.	To encourage group members to think about the topic of 'happiness'.	
	Review slide: What does happiness research tell us? Quiz for the group on happiness research.	To introduce the group to some of the findings from happiness research.	
Slide Presentation & Discussion 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive Psychology</li> <li>- There is a History to Happiness</li> <li>- Why Study Happiness?</li> </ul> Invite the group to consider possible critiques of this subject which come to mind. This also gives the group a chance to voice any potential anxieties about the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two Traditions of Happiness</li> <li>- Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory</li> <li>- Theory of Wellbeing</li> </ul> Talk through the PERMA model giving examples and allowing discussion with the wider group.	To provide a context for the topic of Positive Psychology and allow participants to voice potential anxieties and questions they may have about this topic.  To introduce an accessible, simple overall theory of wellbeing which will be referred to throughout the course.	
Overview of Course 10 minutes	Review Slides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of Course</li> <li>- Course Structure</li> </ul>	So participants are familiar with the outline of the course and what to expect over the coming weeks.	
Good Things in Life Exercise 15 minutes	Invite participants to complete the exercise individually and then feedback on the process.	To introduce a positive psychology exercise that participants can practise at home.	
Ending 5 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice. Handout: Practising Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions.	To review the session content and highlight an exercise participants can practise over the coming week.	

## Session 2: Strengths I

### Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this session is to introduce the topic of individual character strengths based on Seligman and Peterson's (2004) VIA Classification, and to practise identifying strengths in everyday actions.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Developed and built on a shared language for talking about strengths
- Thought about the meaning of strengths and weaknesses
- Learned about strengths work in positive psychology research
- Practised recognising character strengths in everyday actions and activities

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **15 minutes**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Exploring Characteristics and Qualities in Others** **20 minutes**
  - a. As a group (if more than five split into two groups) - hand out cards, each with a different photograph on (such as an animal, or a well known person). The group has to name some of the positive qualities and characteristics which they associate with this person/animal - include fictional characters and also some that may not be obviously admirable.**
    - i. Facilitators to choose their own example photographs.**
    - ii. If participants are really struggling with the prompts then you could ask them to consider qualities they admire in people/pets they care about.**
  
  - b. Have all the words which were generated on a flipchart/in such a way that participants can see the words. Ask the group to reflect on:**
    - i. What comes to mind when they look at these words?**
    - ii. What was it like completing the exercise? Were the words easy/hard to generate?**
  
- 3. Strengths and Weaknesses** **20 mins**
  - a. Looking at the quotes below (also See Handouts) in small groups discuss:**
    - i. What do we mean by strengths?**
    - ii. What do we mean by weaknesses?**

Quotes (also on handout):

**Build upon strengths and weaknesses will gradually take care of themselves**

**Knowing your weaknesses is as important as knowing your strengths**  
**A weakness is nothing but an untrained strength**  
**Success is achieved by developing our strengths, not by eliminating our weaknesses**

In the positive psychology literature some studies have looked specifically at the impact of developing strengths alongside identified relative weaknesses, and others have not considered weaknesses at all. Interventions that have explored working concurrently on one's weakness and strengths suggest this may provide equivalent benefits to just focusing on strengths for 'many but not all people'; and it has been suggested that particularly for women it may be as effective (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick, 2012). Identifying weaknesses has been done through completion of the online version of the VIA questionnaire. On completion of the questionnaire it generates a list of all 24 character strengths in order of strength, and 'weaknesses' would be the ones at the bottom of the list. It is not clear from the literature how else weaknesses might be identified.

Whilst the positive psychology approach would advocate focussing on building strengths rather than 'correcting weaknesses', being able to consider and acknowledge the broader spectrum of our abilities may result in a more synthesised view of human experience (Linley et al, 2006) and therefore the topic seems relevant to acknowledge.

This exercise allows participants to explore what comes to mind when they hear these terms, and what the term 'weakness' means to them. The quotes act as a prompt to begin to think about the value of focussing on strengths, the potential value in acknowledging the areas in which we may want to develop and what the personal impact of terminology such as 'weaknesses' evokes for the group.

#### 4. Strengths Presentation

15 mins

- a. **What are Strengths?**
- b. **Why Strengths?**
- c. **Value of Strengths**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

##### **What are Strengths?**

Definitions such as these (on the slides) are not limited by classifications and can be broadly applied in a range of contexts. Strengths are considered to be protective factors that support individual wellbeing.

##### **Why Strengths?**

Peterson and Seligman (2004) were keen to develop ways of measuring and assessing strengths in a valid and reliable way and so they developed a **24 item VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues**. They developed this work via a process of refining a list of strengths which evolved from speaking with colleagues at conferences, developing questionnaires and surveys, and looking at research, literature and scriptures.

They identified six core virtues that they thought to be endorsed across all philosophical and religious cultures, and under each virtue they identified different strengths. The six virtues are:

- 1) **Wisdom and Knowledge** (the way we acquire and use knowledge)
- 2) **Courage** (emotional strengths)
- 3) **Humanity** (interpersonal strengths)
- 4) **Justice** (civic strengths)
- 5) **Temperance** (strengths protecting against excess)
- 6) **Transcendence** (strengths that provide meaning)

Having identified the virtues they then developed a list of ten criteria (the key ones are below), based on which they decided whether a strength would be included in the classification or not. The strengths had to:

- Be widely recognised and celebrated across cultures
- Contribute to a person's sense of fulfilment and satisfaction
- Be morally valued
- Not diminish (or lessen) others
- Not have obvious negative opposites
- Be an individual difference
- Be measurable
- Be distinct (be different enough from other strengths)

One important point to note is that Positive Psychology researchers are open to the fact that this classification is likely to change, and that there are probably other ways to think about and organise these ideas.

### **Values of Strengths**

Research on strengths has looked at differences between individuals, groups, communities and cultures. It explores whether in certain circumstances, some strengths are more prevalent or more strongly associated with certain outcomes.

Examples of some of the research findings are:

- Hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity and love are most strongly associated with life satisfaction (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004)
- Recovery can sometimes be associated with greater character strengths. For individuals who had recovered from a psychological disorder, their appreciation of beauty, creativity, curiosity, gratitude and love of learning were somewhat higher relative to those without a history of psychological disorder (Peterson et al 2008)
- Character strengths buffer people from vulnerabilities (such as the need for approval and perfectionism) that can lead to depression and anxiety (Huta & Hawley, 2010)
- Recovered individuals may show increased strengths of character that contribute to renewed life satisfaction (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2006), and this may link to post-traumatic growth

**\*\*NB:** A review of the research on strengths suggests that where therapists have endorsed and practised a strengths-based approach it appears to influence the outcome in a positive way (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick 2012). It would be suggested that facilitators should themselves attempt the VIA questionnaire and practices prior to carrying out the session.

## 5. Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions

45 mins

- a. **On cue cards write the 24 VIA character strengths and put them on a wall. Have a list of activities/situations - ask the group to consider which strengths are being illustrated.**
  - i. **To make the exercise more visual you could have the examples on pieces of paper to stick up near the relevant strengths.**

NB: This is also on a handout.

Examples:

- You send a message to someone who you know is having a difficult time
- You drop a £5 note when out in town, your friend tells you
- You meet a new person at your community centre, the person asks you a lot of questions about yourself
- Your button has just fallen off and you can't repair it, you dig through your bag to find a temporary fix
- A friend of yours really wants to complete a marathon, she has been training regularly for the past eight months so that she is ready for it
- Your colleague always goes to local rallies and demonstrations to support public sector workers
- If you see something happen which you believe is fundamentally wrong then you always speak out against it

- b. **Ask the group if they can think of some other examples of things which have happened to them or someone they know in the past week or so.**
  - i. **If you are using a more visual way of presenting this exercise, as people come up with examples write them down and stick up next to the strengths. This might help the group to think of examples for all the different strengths.**

The VIA Classification provides a shared language to facilitate a conversation about strengths and promotes the idea that the positive effect of strengths on wellbeing occurs 'between us' as well as 'within us' (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick 2012). The work recognises that people predominantly exist and function within groups or networks, and often we will remark on or notice the actions of others. Although this exercise uses the VIA Classification to frame the language of strengths, that is not to say that there aren't other words that could be used.

Character strengths research has identified that 'using ones top strength is an essential component of a strengths based intervention' (Seligman, 2005). It is not clear exactly



what 'noticing strengths in others' contributes to wellbeing (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick 2012) however this exercise has been included in order to support participants to:

- a) practice identifying strengths in everyday tasks
- b) apply a shared language of strengths
- c) illustrate how 'everyday tasks' demonstrate strengths - to mitigate against cognitive biases which may get in the way such as dismissing behaviours

**6. Ending**

**15 minutes**

**a. Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**

- i. Handout for participants to take home: Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions.**

## Session 2: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To introduce the topic of strengths and explore what we mean by this term, why they might be important to notice and building awareness of recognising them in others.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Exploring Characteristics and Qualities in Others</b> 20 minutes	Hand out prompt images (to be selected by facilitators) - ask the group to name positive qualities and characteristics which they associate with this person/animal.	For participants to think about character qualities in others and practise identifying them, external to themselves initially.	
	Write up all the words generated on flipchart. Take feedback from the group.	To develop a shared language for character strengths.	
<b>Strengths and Weaknesses</b> 20 minutes	Looking at the quotes: What do we mean by strengths? What do we mean by weaknesses?	To explore thoughts, beliefs and personal impact of this terminology. To consider the potential value of focussing on strengths and/or weaknesses and what this means.	
<b>Strengths Presentation</b> 15 minutes	Review slides: What are Strengths? Why Strengths? Value of Strengths	For participants to understand the context for strengths research in positive psychology.	
<b>Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions</b> 45 minutes	On cue cards write the 24 VIA Character strengths and put them on a wall. Use "Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions" examples to identify strengths as a whole group.  Ask the group if they can think of any other examples of things people have done or that they have done and identify the strengths illustrated.	To practise identifying strengths in everyday tasks and applying a shared language of strengths to these actions.	
<b>Ending</b> 5 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practise. Handout: Practising Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions.	To review the session content and highlight an exercise participants can practise over the coming week.	

## Session 3: Strengths II and Flow

### Aims and Objectives

The aim of this session is for participants to find out about their own signature strengths and be introduced to the concept of Flow.

By the end of the session participants:

- Will have identified their top character strengths
- Will have discussed how strengths can be used in everyday tasks and thought about new ways in which they can use strengths
- Will be familiar with the concept of Flow and have identified some flow experiences

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **15 minutes**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Identifying your Strengths** **30 minutes**
  - a. Review Slide:**
    - i. Signature Strengths**
    - ii. Identifying your Strengths**
  
  - b. Hand out a copy of “My Character Strengths” to each person and ask them to spend 10 minutes reading through the list and identifying the five strengths which best reflect them.**
  
  - c. Ask the group for feedback on what the process was like. The identified strengths are private, if people wish to share they can but we are really interested in what it was like for everyone doing the exercise.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

#### **Signature Strengths**

Strengths interventions have been defined as a process that identifies and develops strengths in an individual or group, with the overall goal being to promote wellbeing or influence other desirable outcomes (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick, 2012). It is widely accepted that the identification of individual and personal strengths is a key component of this process.

Peterson and Seligman suggest starting with identifying your top five character strengths. They term these 'Signature Strengths' and define them as 'positive traits a person owns, celebrates and frequently uses'.

### **Identifying Strengths**

We have decided to use the character strengths from the VIA Classification which is based on universally valued character traits and defines individual character strengths, as described in the previous session.

For reference, there are different classifications of strengths which have been developed and which differ in their origin and purpose, and therefore there isn't one which is considered 'best' (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick, 2012).

Other classifications:

- Strengths Finder (Rath, 2007) is designed to support workplace success and personal development
- Virtues Project (Popov, 2000) seeks to promote virtuous behaviour and wellbeing by encouraging use of all virtues
- Realise 2 (Linley, 2009) is primarily used in workplace and coaching to emphasise performance ability, energy derived from the use of strengths and how often strengths are used

### **3. Using Strengths**

**30 minutes**

#### **a. Review Slide:**

- i. What do you do with your Strengths?**
- ii. Using Strengths**

#### **b. Hand out "Using Strengths" workbook**

**c. In small groups (three or four people) ask each person to select one of their strengths and talk about how they might practise their strength, using the workbook to guide thinking and discussion. The group can help to generate ideas depending on what that person's interests are. Each person to take a turn.**

**d. Take feedback from the wider group about what it was like completing the exercise, sharing any tips/ideas for how it might be used.**

- i. Suggest it might be something people can practise and fill out over time, not necessarily just for their strengths but working through all of the strengths.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

#### **What do you do with your strengths?**

Research has not yet explored the exact mechanisms related to the use of strengths however there are a variety of approaches which have been used, all of which share a common feature which is to plan or envision future use of strengths (Quinlan, Swain & Vella-Brodrick, 2012).

Using top strengths has been linked to enhanced wellbeing (Seligman, 2005) and influences progress towards goals. Actively planning or thinking about how a strength may be used requires purposeful thought and action, which may result in implicit or explicit goal setting. Seligman (2005) emphasises the importance of not simply knowing what one's strengths are but using them too.

#### 4. The Right Dose

10 minutes

a. **Review slide:**

i. **The Right Dose**

b. **Invite the group to consider other character strengths, and what an 'excess' may mean.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

**'The Right Dose'**

Peterson and Seligman's (2004) work runs the risk of implying that the more developed a strength is, then the better that is. However it has also been recognised that 'there is no such thing as unmitigated good' (Grant and Schwartz, 2011) and this has been discussed in relation to the "Inverted U" theory which originally describes the relationship between arousal and performance.

Grant and Schwartz (2011) highlight that by applying this model to the use of strengths it can help to think about the importance of finding the 'right mean' and understanding the consequences of not doing so. For example:

- The overuse or demonstration of forgiveness may lead to overlooking a transgressor's actions and may lead to someone making choices which lead to negative future consequences
- High-level virtues of wisdom and knowledge are more likely to be associated with complex jobs which tend to carry a heavy burden, higher levels of stress and burnout, and which ultimately undermine wellbeing
- Very high levels of conscientiousness can lead to perfectionism, which in turn may lead to an over-preoccupation with things being a certain way

#### 5. Introducing Flow

30 mins

a. **Review Slide:**

i. **What is flow**

ii. **How to recognise flow**

b. **Ask participants to work in pairs and to discuss the following:**

i. **Try to identify some flow activities/experiences you have had. You can use the "Find your Flow Handout".**

ii. **What gets in the way of flow?**

c. **Feedback to whole group.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

The slides on this section have been purposely kept brief as one of the themes within the application of flow principles is that the goal is not to directly foster a state of flow, but to help individuals identify activities they enjoy and learn how to invest their attention in these activities (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). That is, doing something with the intention of experiencing flow will probably be inhibitory.

We have joined 'Flow' onto strengths as a topic because it can often be found that people will experience flow in activities or tasks which relate to them using their own strengths. Flow research had its origins in a desire to understand the nature of activity which is intrinsically motivating and rewarding in and of itself (autoletic). The conditions of flow include:

- Opportunities that stretch existing skills (challenges)
- Clear proximal goals and immediate feedback about the progress being made

The state of flow is thought to be one of 'dynamic equilibrium'; if challenges begin to exceed skill then a person becomes anxious, and if skill exceeds challenge then a person becomes bored and apathetic. As it is a state that is intrinsically rewarding then the person seeks to replicate it, and in order to maintain the equilibrium they will progressively move to greater levels of challenge as they master the prior level of skill (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

### **Recognising Flow**

A person can find flow in virtually any experience or activity as it is the subjective experience which is important. Some of the features highlighted to help recognise flow may help individuals to consider the activities they carry out in their day-to-day lives. One important point to note is the difference between active and passive leisure pursuits e.g. playing a sport vs watching television. Higher levels of flow tend to be reported with more 'active' pursuits, which makes sense when thinking about the role of skill and challenge in the flow experience.

### *Obstacles to Flow*

Although the capacity to experience flow is thought to be universal, the way in which individuals experience it, the frequency and quality of experience will vary (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Obstacles may arise as a result of environmental factors which make it difficult to fully immerse attention in something, or for individuals there might be factors such as feeling self-conscious, or over-attending to information in the environment, therefore finding it hard to focus attention on one thing.

### *Emotions*

One of the distinguishing features of a flow experience is that the person may be so absorbed they do not have a sense of their own emotion during the activity. Individuals may report enjoyment, although this tends to be a reflection of the experience following the activity.

## **6. Ending**

**5 minutes**

### **a. Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**

### Session 3: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: The aim of this session is for participants to find out about their own signature strengths and be introduced to the concept of flow.

<b>Title/Time</b>	<b>Exercise</b>	<b>Aim of Exercise</b>	<b>Comments/Notes</b>
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Identifying your Strengths</b> 30 minutes	Review Slide: Signature Strengths and Identifying your Strengths. Hand out “My Character Strengths” and ask each person to identify the five strengths which most reflect them. Group feedback and discussion.	For participants to identify their own signature strengths.	
<b>Using your Strengths</b> 30 minutes	Review Slide: What do you do with your Strengths? And Using Strengths. Hand out ‘Using Strengths’ Workbook. In small groups (three or four people) work through some strengths examples - everyone to take a turn. Group feedback.	To emphasise the importance of using signature strengths and for participants to think of everyday ways in which they can develop this and are already doing it.	
<b>The Right Dose</b> 10 minutes	Review slide: The ‘Right Dose’. Invite group to discuss other character strengths, and what an ‘excess’ may mean.	To reflect on and acknowledge the fact that strengths must be used in a balanced way, as excess can be unhelpful too.	
<b>Flow</b> 30 minutes	Review Slides: What is flow and How to recognise flow. In pairs: Try to identify some flow activities. Use the “Find your Flow Handout”. What gets in the way of flow? Feedback to whole group.	To introduce the concept of flow and help participants to think about their own experiences of flow and identify activities which they might want to spend more time practising.	
<b>Ending</b> 5 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice.	To review the key points from the session and highlight an area of potential practice in the coming week.	

## Session 4: Positive Emotions and Savouring

### Aims and Objectives

Exploring and building awareness of what positive emotions are, when we experience them and some of the processes which contribute to enhancing or dampening our experience of these emotions.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Reflected on their personal experience of positive emotions
- Learned about the “Broaden and Build” theory of positive emotions
- Discussed the positive impact of negative emotions
- Shared ideas on how to bring about positive emotions
- Discussed Savouring and Dampening strategies and thought about how they impact on our experience of positive emotions

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **15 minutes**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Positive Introductions** **20 minutes**
  - a. Working in pairs, tell the person next to you about a positive experience that you have had. When you tell them about the experience, try to describe how you felt and what you valued about the moment and what that was like for you. As you speak your partner will listen carefully for the types of words you use to explain the experience. Switch over so you both have a go.**
  - b. Feedback from the group**
    - i. What was the exercise like?**
    - ii. What words did people notice themselves/or their partner using to describe their experience? To be written up on flipchart by facilitator.**
  
- 3. Positive Emotions - First Thoughts** **20 minutes**
  - a. Review Slide: Positive Emotions - First Thoughts**  
**Both exercises are written on this slide.**
    - i. Individually write down on post-it notes ‘Hopes’ and ‘Fears’ that come to mind when you think of Positive Emotions (stick on flipchart paper - all anonymised).**



- ii. **Then as a small group have a brief discussion (you may want to write down some key points) about what comes to mind when you hear the words 'Positive Emotion'.**
- b. **Feedback to whole group and generate some "positive emotion" words as a group.**

4. **Positive Emotions Presentation and Discussion**

**20 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide:**
  - i. **Why do positive emotions matter?**
  - ii. **Positive impact of negative emotions**
- b. **Ask the group what they think of when they hear the term 'negative emotions' and whether this is a helpful distinction from positive emotions.**
  - i. **Some people may prefer to talk about the way in which we negative or positive way in which we experience an emotion. This acknowledges that whether it is positive or negative is also dictated by the attribution we make to the experience.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

**Why do positive emotions matter?**

Barbara Fredrickson (2003) developed the 'broaden-and-build theory' of emotion which seeks to provide a framework for understanding the adaptive function of positive emotions. The evolutionary benefits of negative emotions such as fear and anger are widely understood (e.g. the fight or flight response elicited in a situation of fear works to keep us safe in the face of danger), however the evolutionary benefit of experiencing positive emotion has received less attention.

Within this framework it is thought that positive emotions solve problems related to personal growth and development, by leading to a state of mind which indirectly leads to behaviours which indirectly prepare us for more difficult times (i.e. to help build resilience).

1. **Positive emotions lead to us having a broader pattern of thinking.** Fredrickson identifies that this broadened mindset is short-lived but can have long-lasting implications as it creates a chance to create bonds, foster creativity and flexible thinking and see greater opportunities. This is the opposite of negative emotions which are associated with a much narrower thought-action repertoire.
2. **Positive emotions build psychological, social, physical and intellectual resources.** Positive emotions can lead to building resources through the activities that a person carries out when experiencing these emotions e.g.
  - Developing intellectual resources by a person learning new information and developing a problem-solving skill
  - Developing physical resources, e.g. developing coordination, strength and health through activity

- Developing social resources through strengthened bonds in relationships and new bonds
- Developing psychological resources through increased resilience and optimism

### 3. **Positive emotions undo physical effects of negative emotions**

Negative emotions are associated with specific physiological responses, helping the body prepare to respond (e.g. as in fight or flight) which includes cardiovascular activity and which in the case of prolonged exposure to stress is related to heart disease. Fredrickson proposes the 'undoing hypothesis', a process whereby positive emotions 'dismantle preparation for specific action and undo the physiological effects of negative emotions.' This was tested by exposing participants to different conditions which elicited positive, negative or neutral emotional responses (amusement, contentment, no emotion, sadness) and then putting them in a situation to create stress (telling them they had to prepare a one minute videoed speech). Those exposed to the positive emotion condition recovered their baseline cardiovascular activity quicker than the neutral condition or the negative emotion condition, which had the longest recovery time.

### 4. **Positive emotions can help us to bounce back from difficult experiences (resilience)**

This relates to the previous point whereby positive emotions allow us to build resources, which can then be used in future to help us manage more difficult times.

### 5. **Positive emotions can trigger an 'upward spiral'**

Positive emotions and the impact on broadened thinking and subsequent actions may lead to further positive emotions and therefore lead to an upward spiral of positive emotions.

Fredrickson (2003)

### **Positive impact of negative emotions**

The positive emotions work does not intend to imply that we should only experience positive emotions, but focuses on how we build on positive emotions and grow them. Fredrickson (2001) found that we need to have more positive emotions for each negative emotion we experience in order to experience some of the benefits.

Some of the benefits of negative emotions may be:

- *They communicate to us and can help us to understand a situation* i.e. experiencing a negative feeling in a situation may help us to understand that this is not good for us or that we need to get out of that situation
- *They lead to physiological changes which are helpful to us* e.g. experiencing fear triggers the fight or flight response, so on a dark street alone at night this might lead to having a heightened sense of awareness
- *They can help us to communicate with others* - not only do they let us know how we are feeling but they can let those around us know how we are feeling, sometimes in the absence of words
- Evidence suggests that following a negative event, people who experience positive emotions alongside negative ones show greater psychological wellbeing a year on, possibly because positive emotions are associated with ability to take a longer view

and develop plans and future goals. This highlights another important side to our emotions, *we can experience positive and negative emotions at the same time, related to the same event.*

## 5. Experiencing Positive Emotions

20 minutes

- a. **Review slide:**
  - i. **How do we experience positive emotions?**
- b. **Group Exercise: Brainwriting** - participants are asked to write down on post-it notes ideas for things they do/could do to bring about positive emotions. These are then stuck to a wall and participants are given a chance to read them.
- c. **Optional: Brief meditation practice with the group**

## 6. Savouring and Dampening

15 minutes

- a. **Review the slides 'Savouring' and 'Dampening', giving participants an opportunity to comment/discuss.**

(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)

Savouring and dampening strategies are a set of cognitive or behavioural strategies that regulate the intensity or duration of positive feelings in reaction to positive experiences (Bryant, 2003). Savouring strategies enhance positive emotions and dampening strategies are associated with a decrease in positive emotions. Savouring and dampening strategies are considered to be two spectrums of the same process - in the same way that coping strategies can both decrease and increase distress, both of these types of strategies are attempts to regulate emotional experience (Jose, Lim and Bryant, 2012).

### **Savouring**

We present a number of different savouring strategies that individuals might use to enhance their emotional experiences. The wider the range of savouring strategies individuals use then the happier they report being (Quoidbach et al, 2010). Using a greater variety of savouring strategies might facilitate the up-regulation of positive emotions in a broader range of situations.

1. *Behavioural Display* - Showing positive emotions, expressing positive emotions with non-verbal behaviours
2. *Being Present* - Deliberately directing attention to the present pleasant experiences, focusing on a specific feeling, counting your blessings and being completely absorbed
3. *Capitalizing* (Langston, 1994) - Communicating, sharing and celebrating the positive event with others, congratulating yourself
4. *Positive Mental Time Travel* - Vividly remembering or anticipating positive events, memory building by purposefully trying to remember the positive event, taking mental pictures

### **Dampening**

1. *Suppression* - Repressing or hiding positive emotions due to shyness, modesty, fear or other reasons

2. *Distraction* - Engaging in activities and thoughts (often worries) which are not related to the current positive event
3. *Fault Finding* - Turning attention to the negative aspect of positive situations or focussing on what could be better
4. *Negative Mental Time Travel* - Reflecting on the cause of a positive event with a negative attribution or the negative anticipation of future consequences

**7. Ending**

**5 minutes**

**c. Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**

- a. Hand out "Savouring"

## Session 4: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: Exploring what positive emotions are, when we experience them and some of the processes which contribute to enhancing or dampening our experience of these emotions.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Positive Introductions</b> 20 minutes	In pairs, tell the person next to you about a positive experience that you have had. Switch over so you both have a go. Feedback from the group on exercise, and type of words they used.	To encourage participants to think about a positive experience and notice what happens when they recall and reflect on it, beginning to notice the language they use.	
<b>Positive Emotions- First Thoughts</b> 20 minutes	On post-it notes write 'Hopes' and 'Fears' that come to mind when you think of Positive Emotions. Small Group Discussion: What comes to mind when you hear the words 'Positive Emotion'? Feedback to whole group and generate some 'positive emotion' words as a group.	To allow for participants to give their initial reactions to this topic, and listen to the experience of others. To generate a list of words related to 'positive emotions'.	
<b>Positive Emotions Presentation</b> 20 minutes	Review Slide: Why do positive emotions matter? Positive impact of negative emotions.	To teach participants some of the ideas from 'Broaden and Build' theory and have a discussion about the function of negative emotions.	
<b>Experiencing Positive Emotions</b> 20 minutes	Review slide: Ideas for how positive emotions might be experienced. Exercise: Invoking positive emotions. Optional: Brief meditation practice with the group.	To introduce and share ideas for how to bring about a positive emotion.	
<b>Savouring and Dampening</b> 15 minutes	Review slides: 'Savouring' and 'Dampening'. Invite group to comment and discuss.	To build participant awareness of strategies we may use that promote or inhibit experiencing positive emotion.	
<b>Ending</b> 5 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice. Handout: Savouring Worksheet.	To review the key points from the session and highlight an area of potential practice in the coming week.	

## Session 5: Self-Compassion and Kindness

### Aims and Objectives

To open up a discussion about compassion and kindness, specifically to encourage participants to focus on self-compassion and how they can foster this.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Developed a shared understanding of what compassion and kindness mean
- Shared some thoughts on what self-compassion is and what gets in the way of being compassionate to yourself
- Been introduced to two exercises to help foster self-compassion
- Understood the positive impact of acts of kindness

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **15 mins**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Compassion and Kindness** **30 minutes**
  - a. Split into two groups, and discuss/brainstorm some ideas for the following questions:**
    - i. What is compassion? Can you give some examples of compassion?**
    - ii. What is kindness? Can you give some examples of kindness?**
  
  - b. Once the groups have finished invite feedback from the two groups.**
    - i. What are the similarities or differences?**
    - ii. Does everyone agree?**
    - iii. How does this relate to thinking about 'self-compassion' and 'kindness to yourself'?**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

#### **Compassion and Kindness**

Kindness and compassion are often thought of in similar ways, and rather than focus too much on the definitions this exercise encourages the group to think about these two concepts. Previously the feedback from this exercise has drawn the distinction that 'kindness is something we do', and normally associated with an action which demonstrates consideration, generosity, thoughtfulness and helpfulness. Compassion relates more to feelings. Literally meaning to 'suffer together', being compassionate is the ability to feel empathy with and for another.

c. **What gets in the way of self-compassion or being kind to yourself? (Write on post-it notes and then stick on the wall around the flipchart paper - or discussion.)**

When the group is generating ideas for 'what gets in the way of self-compassion' there may be a range of responses about external factors (e.g. things in the environment and day-to-day life which get in the way) and internal factors (e.g. personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs and memories).

Often people can find being compassionate and kind to others comes more easily and with less things that 'get in the way' than when we try to be compassionate or kind to ourselves. This will lead into the following section where we introduce a couple of exercises which might help us to try to develop self-compassion or remind us to be kind to ourselves.

**3. Self-Compassion Exercises**

**45 minutes**

**a. Review slide:**

**i. Why Self-Compassion?**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

Self-compassion involves being caring and compassionate towards oneself in the face of hardship or perceived inadequacy (Bennett-Goleman, 2001). Neff (2003) has defined self-compassion as made up of three components:

1. ***Self Kindness Vs. Self Judgement*** - Offering yourself warmth and non-judgemental understanding instead of berating or criticising yourself.
2. ***Common Humanity Vs. Isolation*** - An understanding that going through pain and difficulty and making mistakes is part of the shared human experience not just 'me' alone.
3. ***Mindfulness Vs. Over-identification*** - A balanced approach to painful and difficult feelings, neither pushing them away nor denying they are there but also not exaggerating them and getting swept away by them. A position of 'mindful objectivity'.

**Why Self-Compassion?**

- Self-compassion can help to foster a more interconnected and less separate view of the self as a whole, e.g. by protecting against anxiety when thinking about personal weaknesses (Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007).
- Self-compassion and self-esteem measures are strongly correlated, however self-esteem is based on positive self-evaluations, and self-compassion is based on feelings of care and non-judgemental understanding.
- Self-compassion is related to positive psychological health and may be protective against depression; high levels of self-compassion are associated with greater life satisfaction and mastery of goals (Neff, 2009).
- Compared to distraction self-compassion doesn't reduce negative feelings but increases positive feelings (Oudou & Brinkner 2015).

- Self-compassion can help to protect against self-evaluative anxiety, e.g. when thinking about personal weaknesses it allows us to do so in a more open way (Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007).

#### **4. How to treat a friend exercise**

- a. Facilitator gives an 'everyday example' of a time when something has happened and the inner/self-critical voice has kicked in, and then how they might have spoken to a friend who had the same thing happen to them.**
- b. Ask participants to all take a moment to think about something which has happened, something small where their inner voice has kicked in and which they would feel comfortable sharing with just the person next to them.**
- c. Ask participants to pair up and tell each other the story i.e. what happened, how the inner critic came out and what it said, and how they would speak to a friend who had the same thing happen to them.**
- d. Feedback from participants about the exercise: What did people notice? Was it easy or hard?**

#### **5. Self-compassion break**

- a. Review Slide:**
  - i. Self-Compassion Break (2 slides)**
  - ii. Talk the group through the exercise to come up with the three statements which they may be able to use to remind themselves to be kind to themselves.**

We introduce the group to two exercises adapted from Neff - <http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises> - to facilitate a process of self-compassion. These are by no means exhaustive and it is important to acknowledge there is much more written on this topic which sits within a more clinical context, for example Paul Gilbert's 'Compassionate Mind Training'.

#### **6. Kindness**

**20 minutes**

- a. Go back to the brainstorm from the beginning of the session. Can the group generate more of a list of 'kind acts' that they are aware of?**
  - i. Things you have done or that others have done (including focus on small things - try to get a range).**
  - ii. Where do we hear about them? Positive news - e.g. 'Happy Newspaper', television programmes.**
- b. Review slide: Random Acts of Kindness**



### **Random Acts of Kindness**

Research has looked at prosocial behaviour i.e. 'actions to benefit others', including small acts of kindness e.g. calling a friend who is sick, picking up something someone has dropped and giving it back to them - all the way to more formal methods of helping such as volunteering at a local project.

A relationship has been found between prosocial behaviour and increased wellbeing for people who are both 'psychologically healthy' as well as people who have recently experienced a traumatic event. Performing kind acts has been shown to boost happiness, and in turn experiencing positive emotions has been related to putting in more effort when carrying out prosocial behaviour (Layous et al, 2016).

Research into kindness suggests the following to be conditions in which the greatest benefit may be experienced:

- Carrying out several random acts of kindness in one day rather than spread over the week leads to a greater boost to wellbeing (Lyubomirsky, 2005)
- People demonstrate greater improvements to wellbeing when left to choose which acts of kindness they carry out rather than having them prescribed (Sheldon et al, 2012)
- Providing autonomy support can be better for both helper and recipient i.e. when people feel autonomous in carrying out acts of kindness it leads to greater increases in wellbeing. This is done by promoting a sense of autonomy in prescribed acts of kindness and in this study was done by:
  - Providing participants a rationale e.g. that acts of kindness leads to happiness
  - Reminding participants that they can carry out acts of kindness in whatever way and place suits them
  - Acknowledging to participants the challenge in performing five acts of kindness in one day (for example)

(Nelson et al, 2015)

## **7. Ending**

**15 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**
  - i. **Handout: Practicing Self Compassion**
- b. **Review Slide: We're Taking a Break**
  - i. **Optional ideas between Session 5 and Session 6**
    - **Do an activity which increases positive emotion**
    - **Take a walk and savour the environment**

## Session 5: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To open up a discussion about compassion and kindness, specifically to encourage participants to focus on self-compassion and how they can foster this.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Compassion and Kindness</b> 40 minutes	Two group brainstorm: What is Kindness?/What is Compassion? Large group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Reflecting on the responses</li> <li>o Relating to self-compassion and kindness to self</li> </ul> Post-it notes/Discussion- What gets in the way of self-compassion and kindness to self?	To highlight the discrepancy between what we wish for others compared to ourselves, therefore promoting the importance of treating ourselves equally. To encourage participants to think about what how they are self-compassionate and share some thoughts on what gets in the way of this.	
<b>Self-Compassion</b> 45 minutes	Review Slide: Why Self-Compassion? How to Treat a Friend Exercise. Self-Compassion Break.	So participants can experience an exercise to grow self-compassion which they can take away and practise.	
<b>Kindness</b> 20 minutes	Review brainstorm from beginning of session and generate further ideas. Review Slide: Random Acts of Kindness.	To introduce some of the findings from research about kindness to others and the impact on wellbeing.	
<b>Ending</b> 20 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice. Review Slide: We're taking a break <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Wider group discussion of ideas for activity and time to plan if necessary.</li> </ul>	To review session content and highlight exercises participants can practice. To promote a sense of agency by encouraging participants to try something even when the course is not on next week.	

## Session 6: Recap Session

### Aims and Objectives

To review the course content so far, offering opportunities to reflect on and embed learning and promote use of skills.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Recapped the content of the first five weeks of the course
- Shared ideas and experiences relating to the practice of positive psychology exercises and activities - reviewing barriers and how they overcame these and what was helpful
- Learned some evidence-based tips for using positive activities

### Session Content

1. **Introduction to Session** **20 minutes**
  - a. **Session outline**
  - b. **Icebreaker**
  - c. **Review from last week and invitation to update on any activities which have been done**
  
2. **Review of Sessions** **40 minutes**
  - a. **Review Slide: The Course so Far**
  - b. **As a larger group brainstorm what topics have been covered. Share the list of topics (table below is a prompt for facilitators of what we have covered so far and can be used in whichever way is most appropriate).**

Topic	Positive Activities
1) Happiness Introduction <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is happiness and why does it matter?</li> <li>b. Some findings from Happiness Research</li> <li>c. How Positive Psychology has developed</li> <li>d. PERMA model of wellbeing</li> </ol>	- Good things in Life exercise
2) Character Strengths and Flow <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Sharing and developing a list of words to describe strengths and qualities in people</li> <li>b. Discussing Strengths and Weaknesses</li> <li>c. Learning about the Strengths research and work in Positive Psychology</li> <li>d. Identifying and Using Strengths</li> <li>e. Learning about Flow</li> </ol>	- Noticing Strengths in everyday actions - Identifying your Signature Strengths - Exploring ways to use Signature Strengths and develop other Strengths - Identifying flow activities

<p>3) Positive Emotions and Savouring</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial thoughts on positive emotions</li> <li>The benefits of positive emotions</li> <li>The positive impact of negative emotions</li> <li>How to bring about positive emotions</li> <li>Savouring and Dampening</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invoking positive emotions</li> <li>- Build a positivity portfolio</li> <li>- Practice Savouring something</li> <li>- Become aware of when 'Dampening' may be in action</li> </ul>
<p>4) Self-Compassion and Kindness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are compassion and kindness?</li> <li>What gets in the way of self-compassion?</li> <li>Practicing self-compassion</li> <li>Acts of kindness</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practising self-compassion</li> <li>- Self-compassion break</li> <li>- 'How would you treat a friend?' exercise</li> <li>- Carrying out Random Acts of Kindness</li> </ul>

- c. **Discussion: Creating a forum for social support, inviting participants to share ideas and tips with each other.**
- What have people tried?**
  - What has been helpful?**
  - Have there been any barriers to trying things out?**

### 3. Tips for Positive Activities

**20 minutes**

#### a. Review slide: Tips for Positive Activities

Positive activities have been defined as 'simple, intentional and regular practices meant to mimic the healthy thoughts and behaviours associated with naturally happy people' (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

A positive-activity model (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013) has been developed based on theoretical and empirical evidence which present an overview of a) 'activity features' (type of behaviour and how often it is practiced) and 'person features' (e.g. whether the person is motivated to pursue happiness), which lead to the most effective positive activity, and b) mechanisms which underpin improvement of wellbeing as a result of positive activity.

#### Activity Features:

- *Dosage* - frequency and timing of when positive activity is completed. Studies indicate varying levels of effectiveness in terms of frequency e.g. random act of kindness were more effective when completed in one day rather than across a week, and the counting your blessings exercise was less effective three times a week than once a week, however some other exercises have been most effective when frequency has ranged from weekly to daily.
- *Variety* - when people have free choice over their activities they are more likely to vary practices and it is more likely to lead to a better person-activity fit.
- *Social Support* - making behavioural changes is more successful when people have social support, and this is also the case for the success of carrying out positive activities. This

can range from receiving a message of support to sharing a goal or gaining support via social media.

Person Features:

Studies have indicated individual differences and features about people which lead to greater benefits:

- Motivation to become happier
- Belief that efforts will be rewarded
- Effortful engagement in positive activities
- There is mixed evidence about how the mood state prior to a positive activity affects outcome
- Degree to which people feel supported by a social network

**4. Introduce Creative Task**

**20 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide: Group Creative task**
- b. **Give the group time to discuss ideas, e.g.**
  - i. **What kind of information/stories?**
  - ii. **Where people can look? Internet, social media, websites e.g. random acts of kindness, observing the world around you, writing your own stories/experiences or something which you heard someone else has done.)**
  - iii. **What format it might take.**

**5. Ending**

**15 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide: Evaluation**

## Session 6: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To review the course content so far, offering opportunities to reflect on and embed learning and promote use of skills.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 20 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Review of Sessions</b> 45-60 minutes	As a larger group brainstorm what topics have been covered Share the list of topics covered with the group	To reflect and recap on course content so far and provide an opportunity for clarification. To embed learning.	
	Discussion: Inviting participants to share ideas and tips with each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have people tried?</li> <li>• What has been helpful?</li> <li>• Have there been any barriers to trying things out?</li> </ul>	To create a forum of social support where people are able to share ideas, tips, successes and challenges. This models one of the 'tips for positive activities'.	
<b>Tips for Positive Activities</b> 15 minutes	Review slide: Tips for Positive Activities	To remind participants about the value of practicing positive activities and provide some evidence based prompts to enhance effectiveness.	
<b>Introduce Creative Task</b> 20 minutes	'Happy newspaper' project - can take the form that the group wishes e.g. canvas, large poster, magazine. To be put together in Session 10 as a group. Ideas for: What kind of information/stories? Where people can look?	Increase participants' attention to positive news stories. To encourage group to complete something as a collective, to acknowledge the ending of the group as coming up and promote creativity in individuals as a way to use strengths.	
<b>Evaluation</b> 10 minutes		To monitor the ongoing impact of the course.	

## Session 7: Optimism and Pessimism

### Aims and Objectives

To explore optimistic and pessimistic explanatory styles, identifying associated benefits and how we can cultivate more optimistic ways of thinking.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Defined optimism and pessimism in relation to explanatory styles
- Shared ideas and thought about helpful/unhelpful aspects of optimism and pessimism
- Practised an exercise to cultivate an attitude of gratitude

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **15 mins**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Introduction to Optimism/Pessimism** **30 mins**
  - a. Brief group discussion to identify the meaning of optimism/pessimism**
  - b. Review Slide: Optimism**
  - c. Review Slide: Explanatory Style**
    - i. Invite the group to think about their own tendencies, emphasising that we are not always responding in one style or the other but there may be one which features most often.**
      - **In taster sessions this has also led to the group bringing up the topics of different reasons for explanatory styles - which leads on to the following section.**

Optimism influences how individuals perceive themselves, their environment, how they process incoming information and how they decide to act on it (Foregaurd & Seligman, 2012).

There are two main ways in which optimism has been conceptualized; 'optimistic explanatory styles' (Seligman, 2011) and 'dispositional optimism' (Carver et al, 2009). We are going to focus on explanatory styles.

An optimistic explanatory style is one where bad events are considered unstable and specific. Negative events are thought of in a constructive and non-fatalistic manner, they are not catastrophized and the person is able to confront them with trust in their own ability to deal with ensuing stress.

A pessimistic explanatory style has been associated to 'learned helplessness'. A person with this explanatory style is likely to consider negative events as stable and with global consequences. Negative events are considered pervasive, i.e. the person thinks good things won't last, and if they happen then they are considered specific impacting only one area of life. A person with a pessimistic explanatory style is also likely to think that events are a result of own traits and may blame themselves, for example, for negative events.

### 3. Helpful and Unhelpful vs Optimism/Pessimism

30 minutes

#### a. Large group discussion inviting thoughts and perspectives on the helpful and unhelpful aspects of optimism and pessimism.

Optimism and pessimism are important in terms of how people deal with challenges and stress.

Optimism is associated with

- Higher levels of subjective wellbeing even in the face of stressful events
- Better physical health
- More success, particularly in jobs where one encounters failure e.g. sales jobs (and this in turn helps individuals to foster confidence in themselves)
- Extraversion, self-confidence, and self-esteem

Although the evidence would suggest that optimism is a positive thing, and something we could all gain benefit from, the emphasis is not on people being optimistic all of the time, or necessarily stating that it is always better.

**Unrealistic optimism:** The suggestion that being over optimistic can lead to negative consequences and outcomes e.g. optimists who remembered feedback about a performance as significantly more positive than it was, saw less that they needed to do to develop (Norem, 2001).

**Defensive pessimism: (discussed in Norem and Chang 2002)** A strategy used by people who experience anxiety to help them pursue important goals, characterised by people setting themselves unrealistically low expectations and then spending time playing through all the possible outcomes for the situation. This is often compared to strategic optimism where the person sets themselves optimistic expectations and avoids reflection on the event. Generally both groups perform as well as each other when employing their preferred strategy and performance is impacted and anxiety is increased when prevented from using their preferred strategy.

### 4. Developing Optimism

20 minutes

- a. Review Slide: Adaptive Optimism/Pessimism
- b. Exercise: One Door Closes, Another Opens



- i. **Invite participants to complete this exercise individually, and take feedback on process as a large group. It may be helpful for the facilitator to provide a personal example at the beginning and prompt the group to think of events/situations which will not be overwhelming.**
- ii. **This exercise is just one which could be practised to foster a more optimistic outlook. The box below describes some common themes present in work on developing optimism.**

Optimism and pessimism are thought to be quite stable personality traits, however some interventions, such as cognitive therapy, have helped individuals to become more optimistic. The key features of interventions that have been helpful/are being developed are:

- Learning to recognise the link between thoughts and feelings
- Learning to adopt more constructive beliefs (challenge beliefs) when faced with a difficult situation
- Evaluating evidence and generating alternative explanations following a stressful situation
- Improving social problem-solving skills

Foregaurd & Seligman (2012)

## 5. Gratitude

30 mins

### a. Small group exercise: Defining Gratitude

- ii. **What does gratitude mean to you?**
- iii. **What are the different ways that you can experience gratitude?**
- iv. **What does it feel like? (From different perspectives, to express gratitude and to receive an expression of gratitude.)**

### b. Gratitude List

- i. **Introduce the exercise to the group: individually, write down up to five things which you are grateful for. Try to be specific e.g. instead of 'I am grateful for my friends', you might want to think of a specific example of something a friend has done.**
- ii. **Take feedback on the process (i.e. what was it like?) not on individual responses.**

Gratitude has been described as the 'poster child' of positive psychology (Wood et al, 2010) due to the positive effects found on wellbeing in empirical studies. The criticisms of these studies is that often their control conditions arguably may have caused a reduction in wellbeing i.e. comparing gratitude condition to a control condition of asking people to think about hassles.

Gratitude is an emotion which occurs when people receive something which they perceive as costly, valuable and altruistic; it is a state of noticing and appreciation. Based

on three scales which have been developed to measure gratitude Wood et al (2010) identified eight different aspects of gratitude:

- 1) Individual differences in grateful affect (frequency, intensity, duration)
- 2) Appreciation of other people (gratitude towards others)
- 3) A focus on what the person has (tangible and intangible assets a person has)
- 4) Feelings of awe
- 5) Behaviours which express gratitude
- 6) Focusing on the positive in the present moment (gratitude towards things other than people)
- 7) 'Life is short'- appreciation that nothing is permanent
- 8) Positive social comparisons - appreciation arising from recognition that life could be worse

Gratitude has been related to experiencing positive affect more frequently, and greater life satisfaction, and there is a consistent picture that gratitude is important for wellbeing. It is also associated with prosocial behaviour, post-traumatic growth and forgiveness (DeShea, 2003).

#### **Gratitude Interventions**

- 1) Grateful Recounting/Gratitude List (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Seligman, 2005)
  - Five things which you are grateful for (the exercise we complete in the session)
  - Three good things in life and why (completed in Session 1)
- 2) Grateful Contemplation (Watkins et al 2003)
  - Think or write about things you are grateful for (this asks individuals to think more globally and may be more of a one-off exercise or something completed now and again - different to the list which may be more specific and more frequent)
- 3) Behavioural Expression
  - Writing a letter of gratitude to someone to whom you have not expressed your gratitude, and then delivering the letter in person

## **6. Ending**

**10 minutes**

### **a. Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**

### **b. Handouts/Worksheets (optional):**

- i. **One Door Closes, Another Opens**
- ii. **Gratitude List**
- iii. **Noticing Optimism and Pessimism**

Session 7: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To explore optimistic and pessimistic explanatory styles, identifying associated benefits and how we can cultivate more optimistic ways of thinking.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Introduction to Optimism and Pessimism</b> 30 minutes	Brief group discussion to identify the meaning of optimism/pessimism. Review Slide: Optimism.	For participants to have a share understanding of what optimism and pessimism is.	
	Review Slide: Explanatory Style- talk through the differences providing examples where relevant Invite the group to think about their own tendencies or reflect on thoughts they have.	To introduce the idea of explanatory styles and build participants awareness about their own styles.	
<b>Helpful/Unhelpful Optimism/Pessimism</b> 30 minutes	Whole group discussion to be written up on a flipchart inviting different views and perspectives from participants.	For participants to explore and share their views, not promoting one thing as better than the other but weighing up the different perspectives.	
<b>Developing Optimism</b> 20 minutes	Review Slide: Adaptive Optimism/Pessimism. One Door Closes, Another Opens Exercise.	To provide a tool for participants to practice fostering optimism.	
<b>Gratitude</b> 30 minutes	Small group exercise: What does gratitude mean to you? How do you experience gratitude? What does it feel like? (As a giver and receiver.)	To introduce the idea of gratitude and encourage participants to reflect on their experiences of gratitude and what this feels like.	
	Exercise: Gratitude List.	To give participants an experience of practising gratitude by writing a gratitude list, and provide a tool they can take away with them.	
<b>Ending</b> 10 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice.	To review session content and highlight exercises participants can practise.	

## Session 8: Positive Relationships

### Aims and Objectives

To explore the features of positive relationships and increase awareness of different ways our responses can affect them.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Discussed the role of positive relationships in our overall wellbeing
- Described the features of a positive relationship that they have experienced
- Learned about the four different response styles when receiving positive information
- Practised active-constructive responding

### Session Content

1. **Introduction to Session** **15 minutes**
  - a. **Session outline**
  - b. **Icebreaker**
  - c. **Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
2. **PERMA and Positive Relationships** **20 minutes**
  - a. **Review slide: Let us remind ourselves about PERMA**
    - i. **Invite group to comment/discuss the question, 'What is the role of relationships in overall wellbeing?' - some key points noted below.**

(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)

#### **Let us remind ourselves about PERMA**

Positive Relationships is one of the five elements that contribute to wellbeing, identified in Seligman's Wellbeing Theory (2011). He notes that being social is the most successful form of higher adaptation known, and studies have shown that close relationships have a positive impact on health and wellbeing (Maisel & Gable pp 455), however the *quality of relationships is important* as negative relationships can have a detrimental effect, as one might predict. There is no comment on number of relationships and impact on wellbeing, and facilitators should *acknowledge individual differences and preferences* e.g. that some people are more social than others, life experiences may lead some people to be more cautious about relationships, we may choose to moderate the depth of our relationships.

Relationships appear to have an important role when you look at the PERMA model as they *inherently link into all the other elements*:

- *Positive affect* - associated with positive relationships
- *Engagement* - Relationships can foster connectedness and moments of being fully absorbed in the moment with the other

- *Meaning* - Often relationships form as part of broader social networks and communities, beyond just ourselves
- *Accomplishment* - Relationships can help us in the pursuit of achievements and build our internal resources

### 3. Exploring Positive Relationships

30 minutes

- Review Slide: Exploring Positive Relationships.**
  - Introduce exercise - working with a partner, share an experience of a positive relationship (it can be any kind of relationship: friendship, family, online, pets, past or present). Describe what it is/was about the relationship which led you to experience it in a positive way. Both take a turn.**
- Feedback to the whole group - what features that contribute to a positive relationships have you discussed, without sharing details of the relationships.**

### 4. Sharing Positive News

45 minutes

- Review Slide: Sharing Positive News**
- Review Slide: Four Response Styles and the Worked Examples**
  - Allow participants time for questions/clarification**

Research into relationships has identified two independent dimensions which distinguish between positive and negative aspects of relationships; these are appetitive and aversive. This section focuses specifically on how we respond to incoming positive news, and not how we respond to negative news as the work is based on a study (Gable et al, 2004) which illustrated how response style can be effective in building relationships when good news is received.

Facilitators should still be mindful to acknowledge that all relationships can be difficult at times, some more than others and that under strain individuals in relationships can fall into response habits which create a detrimental cycle of handling conflict (e.g. stonewalling, criticism, contempt). In addition, if a relationship is difficult then people may be less likely to share their good news as they may anticipate rejection, defensiveness or a response they don't want (Gable et al, 2004). In essence, the active-constructive method of responding is not for resolving difficult relationships but for helping to build and strengthen our relationships when opportunities arise.

Capitalisation (Langston, 1994) is the effect found when people share news of a positive event with others, or celebrate the event in some way. It has been associated with increases in positive emotions, even greater than the positive emotions generated by the good news itself. This is also a form of a savouring - sharing with others.

Gable et al (2004) developed a new scale, Perceived Responses to Capitalisation Attempts (PRCA) which sought to measure perceptions of a partner's response to the sharing of

positive news. The four response styles have been drawn from this scale (as described by Seligman, 2011). Results showed that Active-Constructive responses were positively correlated with commitments, satisfaction, intimacy and trust and overall better relationship quality. None of the other response styles were related to better relationship quality, hence where the notion that active-constructive responses are the only ones that build relationships (Seligman, 2011) comes from.

It is important to note that this work would need to be replicated further and also that research was carried out on couples, though the concept has been taken and applied to other relationships. Furthermore, perception of how someone is responding to us may be influenced by other factors such as expectation or current status of relationship.

**c. Review Slide/ Group Discussion**

- i. **Invite the group to discuss: What does giving/receiving the different responses feel like?**
- ii. **Normalise that we all give responses in all the categories at times. Facilitators can give own examples of times they might have given different responses.**

**d. Review Slide: A Balanced View**

- i. **Invite the group to discuss: What might get in the way of giving active-constructive responses? (e.g. how you feel about that relationship, finding positives, your personal views etc.)**

**e. Practice**

- i. **Small group exercise: Working as a small group - come up with some recent examples of something positive someone has said to you and an active-constructive response that could be given. Ask the groups to come up with two examples.**
- ii. **Optional (time and group dependent)**
  - **As a whole group ask everyone to write down a positive statement which will be read out to someone else in the group (facilitator to give example e.g. I've just booked a holiday), and the other person must come up with an active-constructive response. The other person then reads theirs and exercise is repeated. To be completed three times, i.e. change partners three times.**
  - **This is an active exercise, encourage all members to be standing up.**

**5. Ending**

**10 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice**
- b. **Optional Handout: Active Constructive Responding**

## Session 8: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To explore the features of positive relationships and increase awareness of different ways our responses can affect them.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>PERMA and Positive Relationships</b> 20 minutes	Review slide: Let us remind ourselves about PERMA. Invite group to comment/discuss the question, 'What is the role of relationships in overall wellbeing?' (some key points noted in the grey box in manual.)	To refresh participants' memory about the PERMA model and link back to thinking about overall wellbeing and how relationships are important in this.	
<b>Exploring Positive Relationships</b> 30 minutes	Review Slide: Exploring Positive Relationships. Introduce exercise in pairs - share an experience of a positive relationship, taking turns. Feedback to the whole group.	To encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences of a positive relationship and drawing from their knowledge to think about the features of a positive relationship.	
<b>Sharing Positive News</b> 45 minutes	Review Slide: Sharing Positive News. Review Slide: Four Response Styles and the Worked Example. Explain and discuss with the group the four response styles.	To introduce participants to the different response styles in relation to being told positive news.	
	Invite the group to discuss: What does giving/receiving the different responses feel like?	To encourage participants to reflect on the impact of words from others or towards others.	
	Review Slide: A Balanced View. Invite the group to discuss: What might get in the way of giving Active-Constructive Responses?	To encourage participants to reflect on the different situations which may influence response styles.	
	Practice: Small group exercise - come up with some recent examples and an active-constructive response that could be given. Optional follow-up exercise (see manual).	For participants to practice the active-constructive responses in a supportive environment and reflect on the impact of this.	
<b>Ending</b> 10 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice.	To review session content and highlight exercises participants can practise.	

## Session 9: Mindset

### Aims and Objectives

The aim of this session is to introduce participants to the concept of mindset and think about the impact of growth mindset and fixed mindset on us achieving our goals.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Learned the difference between growth mindset and fixed mindset
- Had an opportunity to discuss the different contexts in which they might be in one mindset or the other, and thought about the relative benefits or disadvantages
- Learned some basic principles about brain plasticity and neurogenesis and the implication for learning new skills.
- Been introduced to some approaches they could adopt to develop a growth mindset

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **10 minutes**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Icebreaker**
  - c. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Learning New Skills** **30 minutes**
  - a. Ask participants to reflect on a time that they didn't have a skill which they were trying to learn.**
    - i. How did you approach learning a new skill?**
    - ii. Did you learn it straight away or did it take time?**
    - iii. What helped you to persist in learning the new skill? Or if you didn't, what got in your way?**
  - b. Feedback to the person next to you**
  - c. Wider group feedback**
  
- 3. Mindset** **45 minutes**
  - a. Review Slides:**
    - i. What is Mindset?**
    - ii. Two Mindsets**
    - iii. Where they come from**
    - iv. Hold in Mind**
    - v. Why does it matter?**
    - vi. How Mindsets impact on learning**



- b. **Exercise: Whole group discussion inviting thoughts about what the Helpful/Unhelpful aspects of Growth/Fixed Mindset are.**
- i. **Opportunity for participants to explore their views on Mindset, particularly as the message can be that growth mindset is good and fixed mindset is bad.**

**(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)**

**What is Mindset?**

Carol Dweck has led the research on 'Mindset', which she describes as beliefs about ability and qualities influencing the way in which we learn, grow and achieve our goals. Dweck's work has derived from observations of differences between people, e.g. how people respond to failure or success in different ways and how people approach learning challenging skills. She describes two meanings of ability: a fixed ability or belief that your qualities are 'carved in stone' and that needs to be proven; and a changeable ability that can be cultivated, and developed through learning.

**Two Mindsets**

She identifies two different mindsets: Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset.

**Where do they come from?**

As with many of our beliefs they are shaped and influenced by our experiences and our environment including those around us. This is not about assigning blame with regards to mindset but understanding how our beliefs may have evolved, and therefore understanding that we can continue to change and influence our beliefs and the way we see the things.

**Hold in Mind**

The emphasis on this slide is that 'Mindset' doesn't mean that as long as a person puts in effort that is all they need in order to achieve their goals, but that it can be helpful if our beliefs are getting in the way. It is helpful to give the group a moment to consider the aspects of their lives where growth mindset may be present, and similarly where they may have more of a fixed mindset.

Dweck has researched mindset in relation to children learning at school, but also applied this model to thinking about sports performance, business and leadership as well as relationships. For example in relationships a person may adopt a fixed mindset, and this could manifest as believing that not only your qualities but those of your partner and the relationship itself are fixed. Someone with a fixed mindset towards their relationship may take the view that, if it has to be worked on then it probably isn't good. On the other hand longevity in relationships is often linked to growth and change in both individuals and relationships, which is indicative of a 'growth mindset'.

**4. Developing a Growth Mindset**

**30 minutes**

- a. **Review Slide:**

- i. **Developing a Growth Mindset**
- ii. **Biological: Brain Plasticity**
- iii. **Brain Plasticity**
- iv. **Change our Actions**
- v. **From Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset**

(Titles in bold are corresponding slide titles)

### **Developing a Growth Mindset**

Changing your mindset doesn't mean that the old beliefs aren't still there, but that the new ones can exist alongside them, and maybe even be louder sometimes, giving you a different way to think, feel and act.

### **Brain Plasticity**

'Use it or Lose it' refers to a process whereby the more we use certain pathways the stronger they get, whereas if we don't use certain pathways they get weaker. This supports the action of practising or repeating a task over and over as it strengthens that pathway. Neurogenesis (the formation of new neurons) is important because neurons act as transmitters in our brain - they send and receive information which can help strengthen and develop our pathways, and in turn this contributes to developing learning. Dweck's research has shown that teaching students the science underlying people's potential to change their academically- and socially-relevant characteristics can be helpful in supporting them to move towards a growth mindset.

### **From Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset**

Cognitive therapy may work with 'fixed mindset' by identifying thoughts and encouraging the client to challenge these beliefs/assumptions. However, Dweck points out that this means that the underlying assumption - that traits are fixed - is never challenged. The strategy of learning to identify 'fixed mindset thinking' and then talk back in growth mindset and take actions, leads to people challenging these assumptions more directly.

#### **b. Exercise: From Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset**

- i. **As a whole group: Imagine you are making a 'growth mindset' cake, what are the ingredients which you would put in their cake?**
- ii. **Working in pairs: Identify a fixed mindset thought/belief that you might have and think about how you could talk back in growth mindset. Each take a turn.**
  - **The slide "From Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset" can guide this discussion**
  - **It may be helpful for the facilitator to provide an example of their own**

#### **5. Ending**

**10 minutes**

##### **a. Recap and Suggested Practice**

## Session 9: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To introduce participants to the concept of mindset and think about the impact of growth mindset and fixed mindset on us achieving our goals.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 10 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Icebreaker	Participants to familiarise themselves with each other.	
	Review of last week/ Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Learning New Skills</b> 30 minutes	Exercise - sk participants to reflect on a time that they didn't have a skill which they were trying to learn. See prompt questions in manual. Share with the person next to you. Wider group feedback.	For participants to reflect on a time when they will have used a growth mindset and reflecting on the process of learning in this context.	
<b>Mindset</b> 45 minutes	Review Slides: What is Mindset?/Two Mindsets/Where they come from/ Hold in Mind/Why does it matter?/How Mindsets impact on learning.	To introduce participants to the theory around 'Mindset' and why it may be helpful.	
	Exercise - whole group discussion inviting thoughts about what the Helpful/Unhelpful aspects of Growth/Fixed Mindset are?	To invite participants to explore and weigh up different views and perspective on the two mindsets.	
<b>Developing a Growth Mindset</b> 30 minutes	Review Slides: Developing a Growth Mindset/ Biological: Brain Plasticity/ Brain Plasticity/ Change our Actions/ From fixed mindset to growth mindset.	To teach participants about the 'science of learning' to develop rationale for employing a growth mindset.	
	Exercise - from Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset. As a whole group: Growth Mindset Cake. Working in pairs: Identify a fixed mindset thought/belief that you might have and think about how you could talk back in growth mindset. Take turns.	To provide participants with a model to practise identifying a fixed mindset and cultivating a growth mindset.	
<b>Ending</b> 10 minutes	Review Slide: Recap and Suggested Practice.	To review session content and highlight exercises participants can practise.	

## Session 10: Ending and Group Task

### Aims and Objectives

To review the overall course with participants and mark the ending through the completion of a group task.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- A set of positive statements and reflections from peers on the course
- Completed a group task collating positive stories/news
- Recapped on the overall course content
- Completed the evaluation

### Session Content

- 1. Introduction to Session** **5 minutes**
  - a. Session outline**
  - b. Review from last week and invitation to update**
  
- 2. Positive Affirmations** **20 minutes**
  - a. Each person to have an envelope with their name on it - participants are invited to write on a piece of paper something for each of the other participants (this can then be taken away at the end of the session). This can be:**
    - i. Something you have valued**
    - ii. Words of encouragement**
    - iii. A reflection on something the person has said/done that helped you**
    - iv. Anything which the person has said/done you have experienced in a positive way**
  
- 3. Recap** **20 minutes**
  - a. Large group brainstorm of topics/material covered during the course (this may include the first half - as reviewed in Session 6.)**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Positive Activities</b>
1) Optimism and Pessimism <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Explanatory Styles</li><li>b. Helpful and Unhelpful Optimism/Pessimism</li></ol>	- One Door Closes, Another Opens

2) Gratitude a. What gratitude is b. How it is experienced	- Gratitude List
3) Positive Relationships a. Features of a positive relationship b. Sharing positive news - Active-Constructive Responding	- Active-Constructive Responding
4) Mindset a. What growth mindset and fixed mindset are b. Where they come from and how they influence us c. Developing a growth mindset	- Recognising your fixed mindset and talking back in growth mindset - Using positive affirmations and positive self-talk - Mindfulness, to build awareness of the present moment

b. Offer opportunity to revisit anything participants would like to clarify.

4. **Savouring the Course**

**10 minutes**

**Individually ask participants to write down:**

- i. **A stand out/memorable moment from the course.**
- ii. **One thing they will take away.**

5. **Creative Task**

**60 minutes**

a. **Individual group facilitators/group to arrange materials and plan for this.**

6. **Evaluation**

**15 minutes**

## Session 10: Crib Sheet

Session Aim: To review the overall course with participants and mark the ending through the completion of a group task.

Title/Time	Exercise	Aim of Exercise	Comments/Notes
<b>Introduction</b> 15 minutes	Session Outline	So participants know what to expect.	
	Review of last week/Updates	To encourage a space to reflect on practice in between sessions.	
<b>Positive Affirmations</b> 20 minutes	Each person to have an envelope with their name on it - participants are invited to write on a piece of paper something for each other participant (this can then be taken away at the end of the session). This can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Something you have valued</li> <li>● Words of encouragement</li> <li>● A reflection on something the person has said/done that helped you</li> <li>● Anything which the person has said/done you have experienced in a positive way.</li> </ul>	For participants to be able to reflect and express something positive towards the other group members and for each person to have something to take away from the session.	
<b>Recap</b> 20 minutes	As a larger group brainstorm what topics have been covered in Session 7-9. Share the list of topics covered with the group.	To reflect and recap on course content so far and provide an opportunity for clarification. To embed learning.	
	Offer opportunity to revisit anything participants would like to clarify.	For participants to improve their understanding of materials	
<b>Savouring the Course</b> 10 minutes	Individually ask participants to write down: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stand out/memorable moment from the course</li> <li>One thing they will take away</li> </ol>	To encourage participants to reflect on the positive experiences from the course and to think ahead to something they will use in the future.	
<b>Creative Task</b> 60 minutes	Group task to have been decided in Week 6 by the group and facilitators.	A shared group activity to mark the end of the course.	
<b>Ending</b> 10 minutes	Evaluation.	To monitor the ongoing impact of the course.	

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**Positive  
Psychology  
Course  
Workbook**

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# Week 1: Happiness & Wellbeing Quiz

Research into happiness has allowed us to discover more about individual, group, community and cultural differences and similarities. Some things we might expect and some might be less predictable, some things we might not even have ever really thought about. Have a go with the following **True or False** questions.

1. Winning the lottery makes you happier than before.
2. After having their basic needs met, money has a very small effect on overall happiness.
3. When people spend money on material things they think make them happy, this happiness is long lasting.
4. Spending money on other people leads to a bigger increase in happiness than spending money on yourself.
5. Across society, having children leads to an overall increase in parents happiness.
6. Happiness increases with age.
7. Happier individuals tend to be healthier and live longer.
8. Wellbeing improves when we compare ourselves to those less fortunate than ourselves.
9. We tend to rate ourselves and our friends as 'above average' in positively valued traits e.g. thinking we are better than average drivers.
10. Having a purpose or long term goal in life is linked to happiness.
11. Witnessing others perform good deeds makes us want to carry out a good deed ourselves.
12. We overestimate how long we will be sad for following a bad event (e.g. a relationship breakdown).

# Week 1: Good things in Life

Write down three things that went well today

1.

2.

3.

Now, write down next to each one why those things occurred.

## Try it over the next few weeks:

Write down three things that went well today

1.

2.

3.

Now, write down next to each one why those things occurred.

Write down three things that went well today

1.

2.

3.



Now, write down next to each one why those things occurred.

Write down three things that went well today

1.

2.

3.

Now, write down next to each one why those things occurred.

# Week 2: Noticing Strengths in Everyday Actions

Below is the list of the 24 character strengths developed for the VIA Classification of Strengths.

Curiosity- Creativity- Judgement- Love of Learning- Perspective- Bravery- Perseverance- Honesty- Zest- Love- Kindness- Social Intelligence- Teamwork- Fairness- Leadership- Forgiveness- Humility- Prudence- Self-Regulation- Appreciation of Beauty- Gratitude- Hope- Humour- Spirituality

Using the words above, think about what strengths are being illustrated in the examples below. There may be more than one strength being demonstrated.

Action	Character Strength
You send a message to someone who you know is having a difficult time.	
You drop a five pound note when out in town, your friend tells you	
You meet a new person at your community centre, the person asks you a lot of questions about yourself	
Your button has just fallen off and you can't repair it, you dig through your bag to find a temporary fix.	
A friend of yours really wants to complete a marathon, she has been training regularly for the past 8 months so that she is ready for it.	
Your colleague always goes to local rallies and demonstrations to support public sector workers.	

If you see something happen which you believe is fundamentally wrong then you always speak out against it.	
Other examples the group discussed:	

## Practicing Noticing Everyday Strengths

Noticing people’s actions as strengths is something which we can practice as it might not be something we are that familiar with doing. Over the next week or so you can use the table below to write down actions you notice and think about what strengths are being used. They might be things other people do or they might be things you do.

<b>What was the action you noticed/did?</b>	<b>Character Strength</b>

# Week 3: My Character Strengths

Curiosity

Creativity

Judgement

Love of Learning

Perspective

Bravery

Perseverance

Honesty

Zest

Love

Kindness

Social Intelligence

Teamwork

Fairness

Leadership

Forgiveness

Humility

Prudence

Self-Regulation

Appreciation of Beauty

Gratitude

Hope

Humour

Spirituality

**My top 5 Strengths are:**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

**4.**

**5.**

# **Week 3:**

## **Using your Strengths**

### **Workbook**

The following pages list the 24 VIA Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The workbook is designed to help people to think about how they can use their character strengths, and to provide some prompts for people to generate their own ideas. How you use your strength is very personal and depends on your own interests and character, so feel free to be creative!

# Curiosity

Curious people are open to new experiences, they are interested in exploring new ideas and activities; they are intrigued and want to find out more about what is happening around them. Curiosity leads to a wish to increase your own personal knowledge.

Other words associated to curiosity: Interested, inquisitive, wanting to know more

## Ideas for how to practice Curiosity:

- a) Buy something different in the supermarket, learn about where it comes from and other ways it is used.
- b) Visit somewhere you have never been before and find out more about it (it might be somewhere in the place you live, or a new town or city).
- c) Visit a new exhibition/ museum event
- d) Start a conversation with someone who you don't know.
- e) Choose to learn something new- it might be a new recipe, a new route to travel somewhere, a course for a new skill you will learn (e.g. sewing, a new language).

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'curiosity' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show curiosity in your day to day life?

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# Creativity

Creative individuals are original thinkers who are able to generate novel ways of addressing problems and expressing thoughts/feelings and opinions. Traditionally associated to artistic expression (painting, drawing, acting), creativity can be applied to any setting.

Other words associated to creativity: originality, imagination, ingenuity

## Ideas for how to practice Creativity

- a) Write an article, short story, poem or draw/paint/make something.
- b) Style/dress yourself in a different way to usual (it might be your hair or your outfit).
- c) Find a creative solution to something which you want to fix or change around your house.
- d) Spend time exploring and reading creative websites/blogs online.
- e) Take part in or go and watch a creative activity- singing, theatre, dancing, and production.
- f) Upcycle- make something from recycled/old materials which you have.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'creativity' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show creativity in your day to day life?

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# Judgement

Judgement (also sometimes Open Mindedness) is the ability to weigh up different perspectives. Open minded people are open to hearing all perspectives, willing to find evidence which is contrary (the opposite) to their own beliefs and to weigh up all the evidence fairly when making a decision.

Other words associated to Judgement: broad-minded, open to, impartial, open mindedness

## Ideas for how to practice Judgement:

- a) When solving your next problem write down all the possible solutions and ways which you could address it, then write down the pros and cons of each before making up your mind.
- b) Next time a friend is telling you about a difficulty help them to weigh up and examine the different viewpoints, or offer an alternative viewpoint.
- c) Become aware of when your own judgements are around, and challenge yourself to consider different solutions.
- d) Spend time with someone who has different views to you and practice being open-minded to their views, experiences- how does this affect you?

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'judgement' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show judgement in your day to day life?

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# Love of Learning

Love of learning describes the way in which a person approaches new information, new skills and topics- people with this strength experience these novelties positively, with enjoyment. Love of learning is associated to motivation, with people more able to persist through challenges and obstacles which might arise.

## Ideas for how to practice Love of Learning

- a) Look up something you don't know about and read about it.
- b) Deliberately learn five new words, including their meaning and try and use them in the coming week.
- c) Sign up to a free online course and take part in it.
- d) Follow the news/current affairs via TV or newspapers.
- e) Visit your local library/information centre and see what local events are coming up.
- f) Using skills and knowledge you have, sign up to volunteer and practice using them in a new way.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'love of learning' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show love of learning in your day to day life?

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# Perspective

Perspective is the ability to give advice and weigh up information from different standpoints. People with the strength of perspective think about the meaning in life and they are often seen as those who give guidance to others.

Other words associated with Perspective: Balance, Proportion, Wisdom

## Ideas for how to practice Perspective

- a) Reflect and weigh up your future actions or plans.
- b) Connect your beliefs with your emotions
- c) If someone asks, and only once you have listened carefully to them, offer your advice. Ask for advice from that person in the near future.
- d) Become a mentor for someone.
- e) Seek the perspectives of others, and also spend time thinking on your own.
- f) Think of the last few decisions you made- what led you to make the decisions you did?

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'perspective' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show perspective in your day to day life?

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# Bravery

Bravery falls under the virtue category of Courage. Brave individuals take action in spite of how they might feel, what others might think or what risks might be involved. A person can be physically brave (in what they do), psychologically brave (confronting different aspects of themselves) or morally brave (speaking out for what is right or what they believe in).

Other words associated to Bravery: Courage, Valorous, Lion-hearted,

## Ideas for how to practice Bravery:

- a) Challenge something you don't agree with.
- b) Do something which you are afraid of.
- c) Report an injustice, abuse or unethical action.
- d) Confront a situation which you might not normally speak out against.
- e) Act in a way which is true to yourself, even if others do not agree.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'bravery' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show bravery in your day to day life?

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# Perseverance

People with the strength of perseverance continue in the pursuit of their goals despite challenges and difficulties and discouragement. In doing so they demonstrate dedication, focus, patience and the mental strength to 'finish what they start'.

Other words associated with perseverance: Doggedness, Persistence, Dedication, Tenacity.

## Ideas for how to practice Perseverance:

- a) Keep a to-do list and regularly keep it updated.
- b) Set a goal and work towards it until it is complete.
- c) Finish something that you have already started (it might be something you haven't got round to finishing yet).
- d) Think about challenges you have had in your life and how you overcame them- write these things down.
- e) Buy a small plant and nurture it so it grows to be healthy.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'perseverance' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show perseverance in your day to day life?

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# Honesty

People who are honest live their lives in a genuine and authentic way, they are open and take ownership of their thoughts, feelings and beliefs. “What you see is what you get”, they are people who are straightforward and who try not to mislead others.

Other words associated with Honesty: Sincere, genuine, integrity, truthful, authenticity

## Ideas for how to practice Honesty

- a) Speak the truth, avoid telling lies, even small ones.
- b) When you are asked for advice or feedback, be fair but honest.
- c) Let yourself be guided by your true thoughts and feelings about a situation and notice what effect this has.
- d) Honour your commitments, if you have said you will do something then try and do it.
- e) Try and present yourself to others in a way which feels authentic to you.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of ‘honesty’ (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show honesty in your day to day life?

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# Zest

People who have the strength of zest approach their experiences in life with energy and enthusiasm. They approach life whole-heartedly and as an adventure, full of excitement.

Other words associated with Zest: Vitality, Energy, Animated.

## Ideas for how to practice Zest:

- a) Exercise regularly and notice how it affects your energy levels.
- b) Do something active which you haven't tried before or done for a while.
- c) Watch a film about new life experiences or adventure.
- d) Improve your sleep habits so that you get a better night's rest.
- e) Do something spontaneously.
- f) Call a friend and reminisce about old times.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'zest' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show zest in your day to day life?

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# Love

People with the strength of Love value the closeness of relations with others, particularly where there is caring and sharing reciprocated. Love can take different forms; intimate love (between partners/couples), attachment love (like that between siblings, parents and child), companionship (between friends) and compassionate (kindness).

Other words associated to love: cherish, affection, tenderness.

## Ideas for how to practice Love:

- a) Let those you love know it, you can express it to them in words or in other ways.
- b) Be a caring and warm listener to someone.
- c) Celebrate an occasion which is important for a close other.
- d) Spend time thinking about/reflecting on times with loved ones.
- e) Plan something with your children which they will find special.
- f) Appreciate the strengths of someone you love.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'love' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show love in your day to day life?

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# Kindness

People with this strength are kind and generous to others, even those they do not know well, without expectation of getting something back. They are people who have high levels of empathy for others and a sense of social responsibility and moral reasoning

Other words associated with Kindness: Generosity, Care, Compassion, Altruism.

## Ideas for how to practice Kindness:

- a) Make a small gesture for someone whom you don't know (e.g. hold the door open, smile at them, let them off the bus first).
- b) Give something you don't need to someone who needs it.
- c) Offer to do something which will help a friend.
- d) Carry out five random acts of kindness in one day.
- e) Say a kind word to someone who needs it.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'kindness' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show kindness in your day to day life?

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# Social Intelligence

People who are socially intelligent have a good awareness of the motives and feelings of other people and can adapt to fit into different situations. They are people who can make others feel at ease through their actions and way of being, and seek to help others feel included.

Other words associated with Social Intelligence: Emotional Intelligence, Connectedness, Social Awareness.

## Ideas for how to practice Social Intelligence:

- a) Help someone who seems to be unfamiliar with a situation/environment that you are more comfortable in.
- b) Practice becoming more aware of your feelings e.g. keeping a diary, reflecting on how you felt about a situation which has happened.
- c) Notice when others try something different or change and comment on it in a positive way.
- d) Acknowledge a kind or sincere gesture from someone else.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'social intelligence' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show social intelligence in your day to day life?

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# Teamwork

Teamwork involves working as part of a group towards a shared goal, people with this strength do particularly well working as part of a collective. They demonstrate loyalty, dedication and interest in succeeding on behalf of the collective team. Teamwork is also related to citizenship which applies the same principles in relation to the wider community.

Other words associated with Teamwork: Citizenship, Union, Partnership, Working Together

## Ideas for how to practice Teamwork:

- a) Join a discussion board for your local community and join in the conversations.
- b) Take part in a group discussion/activity.
- c) Offer to volunteer for a local event.
- d) Join a local sports team.
- e) Work side by side with others on a small project.
- f) Take part in a community activity; either by attending, donating, participating, volunteering, helping to organise.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'teamwork' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show teamwork in your day to day life?

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# Fairness

Fairness is treating everyone equally and involves an ability to make thoughtful and reasoned moral judgements, and to be able to put yourself in others shoes and be compassionate towards them. People with the strength of fairness are guided by the principles of equality and justice.

Other words associate with Fairness: Justice, Equality, Temeprate

## Ideas for how to practice Fairness:

- a) If someone is being excluded or treated unfairly make an effort to involve them equally.
- b) Learn more about local ways in which social inequality issues are a problem.
- c) Reflect on how your judgements affect your likes, dislikes and actions.
- d) Volunteer or learn about an organisation that campaigns for social justice.
- e) Actively seek to find out more information about a different culture or set of beliefs so that you have a better understanding of another perspective.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'fairness' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show fairness in your day to day life?

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# Leadership

Leaders are able to define and establish a common goal or direction which they motivate others to work towards with them. Leaders are able to encourage others to get things done, whilst maintaining harmony and motivation within the group, they are good organizers who are able to communicate their vision or end-point to others so they feel included.

Other words associated with Leadership: Guidance

## Ideas for how to practice Leadership:

- a) Take the lead on planning an activity with friends (an outing, a meal, a walk)
- b) Organise an event for a member of your family.
- c) Within a group offer to take a leadership role in a specific task.
- d) Read about a leader who inspires you and think about the qualities they demonstrate.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'leadership' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show leadership in your day to day life?

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# Forgiveness

Forgiveness is being able to put aside the negative feelings or actions we may have in relation to past transgressions (e.g. holding a grudge, feeling angry). Forgiveness is not forgetting or accepting an event or action, but choosing to give people a second chance, and to accept the shortcomings of others.

Other words associated with Forgiveness: Mercy

## Ideas for how to practice Forgiveness

- a) Evaluate your emotions before and after forgiving someone.
- b) Think of someone whom you have wronged recently and put yourself in their shoes to see their perspective.
- c) Think of someone whom you hold a grudge against, and imagine what it would be like to forgive them.
- d) Reflect on how you respond when people offend you, would you want to change this in future? If so, how could you respond?

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'forgiveness' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show forgiveness in your day to day life?

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# Humility

People who have the strength of humility do not regard themselves as special or in need of special attention, they recognise the value their modesty and let their strengths and achievements speak for themselves. People who show humility are able to accept their limitations and keep their accomplishments in perspective.

Other words associated with Humility: Modesty, Reservedness, Humble

## Ideas for how to practice Humility:

- a) Admit your mistakes and apologise for them when necessary.
- b) Be prepared to learn from anybody in any situation.
- c) Notice if you speak more than others in a group situation.
- d) Give others space to speak about themselves and their accomplishments.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'humility' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show humility in your day to day life?

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# Prudence

Prudence is being careful and cautious about what you say, do and the choices you make. People who are prudent are thoughtful in their plans whether short or long-term and demonstrate practical wisdom in the way they live their life. People who are prudent do not take undue risk and ‘think before they act’.

Other words associated with Prudence: Caution, Carefulness, Foresight

## Ideas for how to practice Prudence:

- a) Think before speaking- practice doing this regularly and notice the effect.
- b) Leave ten minutes extra time for any journey you are completing.
- c) Carefully weigh up the different options before making a decision.
- d) Visualize the consequence of a decision you are making in one or five year’s time.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of ‘prudence’ (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show prudence in your day to day life?

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# Self-Regulation

People whose strength is self-regulation consciously control what they feel and do in order to achieve their goals. Self-regulation is associated to having a strong sense of discipline and being able to monitor and manage instinctive responses and impulses.

Other words associated with Self-Regulation: Self-control,

## Ideas for how to practice Self-Regulation:

- a) Set yourself a goal for not using your phone or watching TV and stick to it.
- b) The next time you feel upset, take a step back before acting or responding to it.
- c) When you get an urge to snack try and resist, have a drink of water and notice if you are still hungry.
- d) Set goals to improve your everyday living (e.g., room cleaning, laundry, doing dishes, cleaning your desk) and make sure you complete the tasks.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'self-regulation' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show self-regulation in your day to day life?

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# Appreciation of Beauty

People who appreciate beauty are able to experience awe, satisfaction and richness from everyday experiences which surround them. Three types of beauty which people with this strength are responsive to are; physical beauty (it can relate to any of the senses we have), skill or talent or excellence (e.g. watching a gymnast, ballet performer or artist at work) and moral beauty (virtual goodness which inspire the person e.g. observing kind acts/generosity).

Other words associated with Appreciation of Beauty: Wonder, Awe, Elevation

## Ideas for how to practice Appreciation of Beauty:

- a) When you are out for a walk notice the natural beauty which is around you.
- b) Do something which makes your surroundings more beautiful (e.g. place flowers in a room, arrange it so the light catches and reflects on something colourful, hang a picture).
- c) Notice the actions of others which inspire and elevate you.
- d) Notice how other people around you appreciate beauty through their actions, gestures, words or interests.
- e) Take photographs of beautiful things which you appreciate.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'appreciation of beauty' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show appreciation of beauty in your day to day life?

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# Gratitude

Gratitude is an awareness and appreciation of the good things that happen to you and not taking them for granted. People who are grateful acknowledge the good things in their life, and the source of them as outside of themselves and take time to express their thanks for these things.

Other words associated with Gratitude: Thankfulness, Appreciation

## Ideas for how to practice Gratitude:

- a) Express your gratitude to someone whom you haven't told before.
- b) Select one small yet important thing that you take for granted. Work on being mindful of this thing in the future.
- c) Write a note to express thanks to someone who has helped you, being specific about what they contributed that you are grateful for.
- d) Set aside at least ten minutes every day to savour a pleasant experience
- e) Write down three things which you are grateful for everyday, try and be specific.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'gratitude' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show gratitude in your day to day life?

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# Hope

Hope is linked to optimism and a future oriented way of thinking that things will turn out well in the future, and leads people to expect the best from themselves and others.

Other words associated with Hope: Optimism, Future-mindedness

## Ideas for how to practice Hope:

- a) Recall a situation when you or someone close to you overcame a difficult obstacle and succeeded.
- b) Visualize a goal you would like to have achieved in the future.
- c) Read an inspirational story.
- d) Spend time with optimistic and future-minded people, particularly when facing a setback.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'hope' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show hope in your day to day life?

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# Humour

Humour involves the ability to make other laugh, smile and play. People with this strength enjoy bringing a smile to others and can often see the lighter side of life which allows them to sustain a good mood.

Other words associated with Humour: Playfulness, Cheerfulness

## Ideas for how to practice Humour:

- a) Laugh a lot.
- b) Watch a film or TV programme which you find funny
- c) Learn new jokes and tell people you know.
- d) When you get the chance, dress up in fancy dress.
- e) Be friends with someone who has great sense of humour.

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'humour' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

How do you already show humour in your day to day life?

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# Spirituality

Spirituality is the belief or being part of something which is bigger and more all-encompassing than what is simply seen around you, a higher purpose or meaning. For those who are spiritual, their beliefs strongly influence and shape their actions and are a source of comfort and strength. It can include religious beliefs but is not limited to this and includes any source of faith or spirituality a person may have.

Other words associated with Spirituality: Faith, Purpose, Meaning, Religiosity

## Ideas for how to practice Spirituality:

- a) Practice meditation/ mindfulness
- b) Spend time thinking about how your life experiences have influenced and shaped you.
- c) Spend some time every day in at least one activity that connects you to a sense of being part of something much bigger than yourself. Practice a religion or belief that you have with others who share that.
- d) Connect with people and organisations that enhance your signature strengths

What other ideas do you have for things you could do to use this strength?

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What comes to mind when you think of 'spirituality' (it might be a song, film, book, quote, image, saying...)

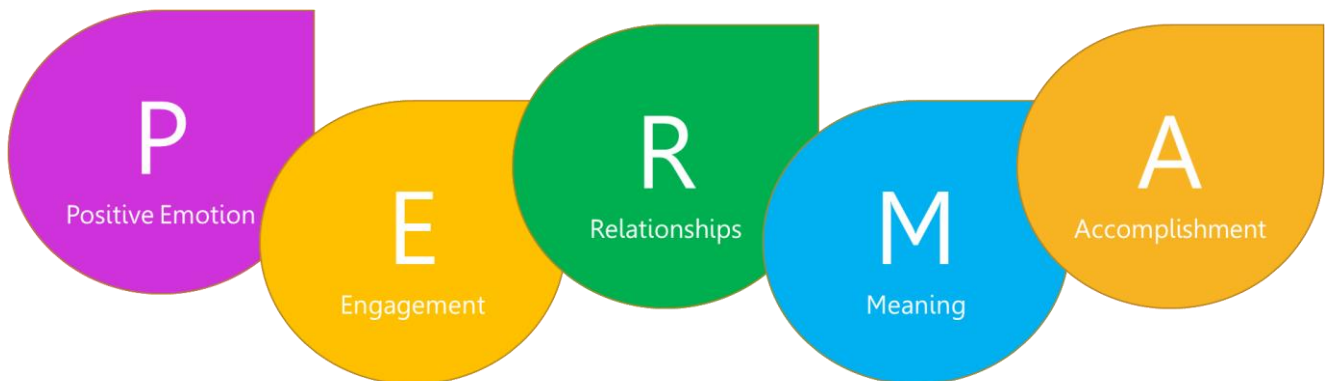
How do you already show spirituality in your day to day life?

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# Theory of Wellbeing



Seligman (2011) *Flourish*

Martin Seligman initially presented a “theory of happiness” which had three components: positive emotion, engagement and meaning- however he updated this and changed it to a **theory of wellbeing**- to include five areas:

1. Positive emotion: These are an important part of wellbeing and includes emotions such as; joy, comfort, happiness.
2. Engagement: This describes a state of mind when time stops for you, when you are in ‘flow’ (a state of complete immersion in an activity).
3. Relationships: This recognises the fact that we are social beings, and flourish when we have relationships which are meaningful and positive.
4. Meaning: Belonging to and serving something bigger than yourself.
5. Accomplishment: We experience greater wellbeing when we can look back on our accomplishments, when we experience a sense of achievement or develop mastery of a task or skill.

How could you use your strengths to increase your experience of Positive emotions?

How could you use your strengths to raise your level of engagement?

How could you use your strengths to build positive relationships?

How could you use your strengths to bring more meaning and purpose to your life?

How could you use your strengths to experience more accomplishment in your life?

# Week 3: Find your Flow

*Flow is an experience which can be described as being in a state where you are completely absorbed by what you are doing (like 'being in the zone').*

***There are some common characteristics which can help us to notice flow;***

- You experience a balance between your level of skill and the challenge that you are taking on.
- You experience a sense of reward.
- There is a clear goal.
- You experience a state of intense and focussed concentration in what you are doing.
- You lose self-consciousness, you are not aware of or concerned with others around you.
- You are getting immediate feedback from what you are doing and how it is going.
- You lose sense of time passing.
- You feel a sense of control.
- You experience effortless involvement.

**Can you think of a time when you were completely involved in something you were doing, where you recognise the experience described by the statements above?**



# Week 4: Savouring

**Savouring is when we attend to, appreciate and enhance the positive experiences in our life.**

There are lots of different ways that we can savour an experience, and it is good to try and do a variety of things. This worksheet can be a helpful start to help build your awareness of when you are savouring or trying out new ways of doing it.

Show the positive emotion (fist pump, jump up and down etc.)	Express the Emotion	deliberately pay attention to the pleasant experience
Share and celebrate with others	Focus on the feeling you have when something good is happening.	Good Things in Life exercise
Congratulate yourself	Try and remember of anticipate something positive happening	Take a mental picture of a moment

What was happening/ What I was doing?	How I felt? How I savoured that experience?

# Week 5: Practicing Self-Compassion

## 1. How would you treat a friend?

This exercise can help us to remind ourselves and notice that sometimes our own inner self-critic (which often happens automatically) can lead us to be very negative and hard on ourselves, much more so than we would ever treat anyone else. You can keep a log of some examples below to help build your awareness of these times and practice saying the 'what you would say to a friend' to yourself instead.

What happened?	What did your inner self-critic say?	What would you say to a friend if the same thing happened?

## 2. Self-Compassion Break

This exercise helps you to come up with three statements which can prompt you to remember to be compassionate to yourself.

Try and come up with some phrases which remind you:	My phrases:
1) This is a difficult moment	1)
2) You are not alone, other people are struggling too.	2)
3) Be Kind to yourself	3)

*Now practice using the self-compassion break you have come up with!*

# Week 7: One Door Opens, Another Closes

(Rashid, 2008)

An important door that closed on me was:

and the door that opened as a result was:

An important door that closed on me was:

and the door that opened as a result was:

*Please reflect upon the exercise you just did and briefly respond to the following questions:*

1. How long after these doors closed were you able to see the doors that opened?
2. What, if anything, tends to get in the way of your ability to see the open doors?
3. What can you do in the future when doors close on you to more readily find the open doors?

# Week 7: Gratitude List

Five things which I am grateful for today (be specific!)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

You could try this exercise once or twice a week and just notice what that is like...

# Week 7: Noticing Optimism and Pessimism

We might notice that sometimes we have a tendency to be more optimistic or more pessimistic, we describe this as our explanatory style. An explanatory style is simply a way of describing how we make sense of information.

If we think we might be overly pessimistic at times and this might get in our way, it might be helpful for us to become more aware of these times and try and think in a more optimistic way. Building this awareness takes practice, and it could be helpful to write down examples to help you think back and either notice what you did or what you might do next time.

The pessimistic thoughts that I noticed were...	What I thought/could have thought to try and make them more optimistic was...

# Week 8: Active Constructive Responding

Active Constructive responding is a way of responding to good/positive news that has been shared with you, and which has been shown to enhance relationships. At times we might all recognise that we might give other types of responses and this might be for a whole range of reasons. However, we can practice becoming more aware of our responses and using more active constructive responses for when we want to support someone to capitalise on their positive experiences.

The table below is a reminder of the four different response styles that we might give when responding to positive news:

## ACTIVE & CONSTRUCTIVE

- Enthusiastic, excited asks questions and re-lives the experience with you. Keeps conversation going.
- Non-verbals: eye contact, smiling, positive emotions

## PASSIVE & CONSTRUCTIVE

- Brief and fleeting positive acknowledgement of good news. Understated support. Not much dialogue
- Non-verbal: May smile in acknowledgment but not much emotional expression.

## ACTIVE & DESTRUCTIVE

- Raises alarm bells, devil's advocate, points out what might go wrong.
- Non-verbals: negative emotion, frowning, looks worried

## PASSIVE & DESTRUCTIVE

- Changes the topic of conversation, avoidance, disinterested
- Non-verbal: no eye contact, leaves room, turns away

For some people active-constructive responses come naturally, for others it can take a bit more practice, as though learning a new habit. You can use the table below if you want to practice developing these responses, you might write down something someone has said to you and how you responded, or how you could have responded. You could even take it one step further if it is a response you have given you can write down what the impact of this was e.g. it led to a really good conversation, you learnt something new about the person etc.

<b>What was the good news the person said to you?</b>	<b>Active-Constructive Response</b>

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COURSE

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