Positive Psychology at Work

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Agenda

• What is Positive Psychology?
• Experiments With Positivity
• The Flow State
• Self-Care At Work
• Managing With Positive Psychology
• Positive Psychology for Organizations
WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

What is Positive Psychology?

• Concerned with strength
• Building the best things with life
• Making lives of normal people fulfilling
• Nurturing high talent
• Investigating positive outliers
Reversing the formula

• Success does not create happiness
• Positivity increases our chances for success
• Optimism:
  – Increases motivation
  – Increases sales productivity
    Optimistic salespeople sell 35% more insurance than pessimists.
  – Improves physical health

EXPERIMENTS WITH POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
Experiments With Positive Psychology

• 3 Gratitudes
• Journaling
• Meditation
• Appreciation Letters
• Cognitive Training for Optimism
• Change Your Questions, Change Your Life

3 Gratitudes

• Trains the brain to scan for the positive
3 Gratitudes

Write down three things that went well today.

1.

2.

3.
Journaling

• Allows your brain to relive a positive experience
Journaling About Positive Experience

Write about a positive experience you had today or yesterday. What made the experience positive? What happened and how did you feel right after it occurred? How do you feel after writing about it?
Meditation

• Meditation is scientifically proven to help:
  – Overcome stress  
  – Decrease blood pressure  
  – Boost creativity  
  – Cultivate healthy habits  
  – Increase focus and attention

Pro-Social Generosity: Appreciation Letters

• Experiment:
  – Money spent pro-socially creates more happiness than money spent selfishly.  
  – Encouraging pro-social behavior enhances team productivity  
  – Appreciation letters increase happiness
Appreciation Letter

Draft a letter to someone thanking them for their kindness. When you get back to your office, actually send the message as a note, email, Facebook wall post, or whatever works for you.
Cognitive Training for Optimism

1. Identify self-defeating beliefs
2. Gather evidence to evaluate accuracy of self-defeating beliefs.
3. Replace maladaptive thoughts with more constructive and accurate beliefs.
Table 15.1.  
Common Cognitive Distortions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distortion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dichotomous thinking</td>
<td>Viewing experiences in terms of two mutually exclusive categories with no “shades of gray” in between. For example, believing that one is either a success or a failure and that anything short of a perfect performance is a total failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overgeneralization</td>
<td>Perceiving a particular event as being characteristic of life in general rather than as being one event among many. For example, concluding that an Inconsiderate response from one’s spouse shows that she doesn’t care despite having shown consideration on other occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective abstraction</td>
<td>Focusing on one aspect of a complex situation to the exclusion of other relevant aspects of that situation. For example, focusing on the one negative comment in a performance evaluation received at work and overlooking the positive comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disqualifying the positive</td>
<td>Discounting positive experiences that would conflict with the individual’s negative views. For example, rejecting positive feedback from friends and colleagues on the grounds that they’re only saying that to be nice rather than considering whether the feedback could be valid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind reading</td>
<td>Assuming that one knows what others are thinking or how others are reacting despite having little or no evidence. For example, thinking, “I just know he thought I was an idiot” despite the other person’s having given no apparent indication of his reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortune telling</td>
<td>Reacting as though expectations about future events are established facts rather than recognizing them as fears, hopes, or predictions. For example, thinking “He’s leaving me. I just know it!” and acting as though this is definitely true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophizing</td>
<td>Treating actual or anticipated negative events as intolerable catastrophes rather than seeing them in perspective. For example, thinking, “Oh my God, what if I faint?” without considering that although fainting may be unpleasant or embarrassing, it is not terribly dangerous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximization and minimization</td>
<td>Treating some aspects of the situation, personal characteristics, or experiences as trivial and others as very important, independent of their actual significance. For example, thinking “Sure, I’m good at my job, but so what, my parents don’t respect me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reasoning</td>
<td>Assuming that one’s emotional reactions necessarily reflect the true situation. For example, concluding that because one feels hopeless, the situation must really be hopeless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Should” statements</td>
<td>The use of “should” and “have to” statements that are not actually true to provide motivation or control over one’s behavior. For example, thinking “I shouldn’t feel aggravated. She’s my mother, I have to listen to her.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labeling</td>
<td>Attaching a global label to oneself rather than referring to specific events or actions. For example, thinking “I’m a failure” rather than “Boy, I blew that one!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>Assuming that one is the cause of a particular external event when, in fact, other factors are responsible. For example, thinking “She wasn’t very friendly today, she must be mad at me,” without considering that factors other than one’s own behavior may be affecting the other individual’s mood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15.2
Alternatives to Pessimism in Approaching a Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative approach</th>
<th>Specific thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate the best possible outcome</td>
<td>“I'll be charming. She'll have a great time. We'll get married and live happily ever after.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a less pessimistic view</td>
<td>“I probably won't be charming enough but I'll give it a try anyway. There's a chance that I could do OK.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a mildly positive view</td>
<td>“I'm a decent guy. If I don't get so anxious and pressured it will go OK. If I keep trying, I'll end up getting more comfortable with dating and it will go better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to be realistic in anticipating likely outcomes</td>
<td>“I'll give it a good try but the odds are that I'll need to date a number of women before I find a relationship that works out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept realistically negative aspects of the situation and plan how to cope with them</td>
<td>“When I get self-conscious, I tend to hold back and get tongue-tied. When I get involved in the conversation, it goes better. I'll make a point of speaking up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be mindful of negative emotions without letting them determine the outcome</td>
<td>“I'm nervous and self-conscious but that's just the way I react when dating. I'll go ahead and give it a good try anyway.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on pursuing positive outcomes rather than on avoiding negative outcomes</td>
<td>“How can I approach it so that we both have a good time? I'll pick an activity that we both like.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific Cognitive and Behavioral Interventions

In addition to using “standard” CT interventions, therapists can tailor standard techniques to focus more specifically on optimism. Fresco and his colleagues (Fresco, Craighead, et al., 1995; Fresco, Sampson, et al., 1995) adapted the cognitive-behavioral techniques of self-monitoring and cognitive restructuring by combining them into a self-administered format and instructing participants to keep a “daily diary” in which they monitored both good and bad events and rated the causes of the events in terms of their stability, internality, and globality. He directed the research participants to then think of other possible causes of the events and to rate those causes on the same dimensions. In theory, tailoring “standard” interventions to address aspects of cognition that are directly related to optimism or pessimism should increase their impact.

It is also possible to design interventions that are specifically designed to decrease pessimism or increase optimism. One such technique, which Riskind et al. (1996) propose, consists of the therapist helping the client to identify and modify dysfunctional “optimism-suppressing” beliefs. Their assumption is that an individual who holds a belief such as “I don’t deserve..."
Cognitive Training for Optimism

1. Think of a situation that left you feeling disappointed, frustrated, angry, or hopeless. What are the facts of what happened?

2. What thoughts did you have immediately after the unpleasant event?

3. Look at the list of Common Cognitive Distortions (Table 15.1). Is it possible that any of these played a part in your thinking? Which ones? Circle all that might apply.

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<th>Cognitive Distortion</th>
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<td>Dichotomous thinking</td>
<td>Black and white thinking, assuming you know what’s going to happen in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fortune telling</td>
<td>Assuming you know what’s going to happen in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Should” statements</td>
<td>Insisting that things should be other than they are right now, regardless of the context.</td>
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<td>Selective abstraction</td>
<td>Catastrophizing, assuming possible future outcomes will be intolerable disasters.</td>
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<td>Labeling</td>
<td>Attaching a global label to oneself rather than referring to specific events or actions, e.g. “I’m a failure.”</td>
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<td>Disqualifying the positive</td>
<td>Maximization and minimization, selectively trivializing some information while magnifying the significance other things.</td>
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<td>Personalization</td>
<td>Assuming you are the sole reason why the other person is doing or saying something, or why something didn’t happen as you hoped.</td>
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<td>Mind reading</td>
<td>Assuming you know what the other person thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reasoning</td>
<td>Assuming one’s feelings about things reflect reality, i.e. if you feel hopeless there really is no hope.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. What thoughts about the event could you substitute that would be more positive? Refer to some options below, and then re-write your thoughts about the event:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Action Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Anticipate the best possible outcome</td>
<td>Anticipate more realistic likely outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a less pessimistic view</td>
<td>Accept realistic negative aspects of the situation and plan how to cope with them.</td>
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Change Your Questions, Change Your Life

THE FLOW STATE
The Flow State: Focusing for Engagement

- Intrinsic Motivation
- Concentration w/ no distractions
- Complete immersion
- Clear set of goals that require appropriate responses
- High skill level, high challenge level

Getting to Know Your Strengths

- Pair up.
- Think of a time when you felt most happy in your career – a time when you were having fun and doing a great job.
- Explore with your partner:
  - What created the sense of happiness and fulfillment
  - What did you do that contributed to the sense of happiness and fulfillment?
  - How did the workplace facilitate this experience?
  - What skills or strengths did you use?
  - How could you plan to have an experience like this one more time?
Making Choices

• Self-efficacy: Believing in our capacity to produce desired effects
• Self-efficacy determines what choices we give ourselves and how much we persevered.
• The more choices we make, the more we can build our self-efficacy.
### Make A Choice

1. What choice can you make **today** that would make a positive difference in your life?

2. Is the choice realistic? If not, what would be a more realistic choice?

3. Are there any obstacles that might prevent you from taking this action today?

4. How might you manage any obstacles?

5. Share your choice with a colleague and make sure you have their contact information. Contact them to confirm that you’ve acted on your choice.
### Thoughts that enhance intrinsic motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procrastinators</th>
<th>Producers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have to.</td>
<td>I choose to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must finish.</td>
<td>When can I start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project is so big and important.</td>
<td>I can take one small step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must be perfect.</td>
<td>I can be perfectly human.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have time for fun.</td>
<td>I must enjoy myself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In Sum:** I have to finish something big and do it perfectly by working hard for long periods of time without ever having fun.  
**In Sum:** I choose to start on one small step, knowing I have plenty of time for play.

### Priming your brain for concentration and immersion

- 3 breaths: letting go of the past
- 3 breaths: letting go of the future
- 3 breaths: coming into the present moment
- 3 breaths: arriving at the right level of energy, creativity, concentration, etc.
- Visualize success
Kenken

- Now solve the puzzle.
- Notice your thoughts and feelings
- Any difference from the first time?
SNAKE Addition & Subtraction Puzzle 2 (3x3)

Let’s play KenKen! Use the numbers 1 through 3 to fill in the boxes. Every row and column will use each number one time. Each area below has a sum (+) or a difference (-). Use these clues to help you fill in the boxes.
Timing High Effort Tasks

- David Rock: Your Brain At Work
- I’ll start as soon as I finish
  - ... my email
  - ... my filing
- Instead, start early, while you have the energy
- Use the low energy task as a relaxing “reward”

SELF-CARE AT WORK
What is your work ethic?

Our High Performance Culture
Everyday Awards

- Minimal crying in a vehicle
- Vaguely remembered a deadline
- Had some clean laundry
- Actually relaxed a phone call
- Did best job under tough circumstances
- Opened up to someone about how you feel

Self-Care at Work

- Acknowledging your needs for:
  - Socializing
  - Rest
  - Play
  - Reflection
Computer & Desk Stretches
Approximately 4 Minutes

Sitting at a computer for long periods often causes neck and shoulder stiffness and occasionally lower back pain. Do these stretches every hour or so throughout the day, or whenever you feel stiff. Photocopy this and keep it in a drawer. Also, be sure to get up and walk around the office whenever you think of it. You'll feel better!

1. 10-20 seconds, 2 times
2. 10-15 seconds
3. 5-10 seconds each side
4. 15-20 seconds
5. 3-5 seconds, 2 times
6. 10-12 seconds each arm
7. 10 seconds
8. 10 seconds
9. 8-10 seconds each side
10. 8-10 seconds each side
11. 10-15 seconds, 2 times
12. Shakes out hands, 8-10 seconds
MANAGING WITH POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Appreciative Management

• Show appreciation for desired work behaviors
  – University employees who heard messages of gratitude from their supervisor made 50% more fund-raising calls than those who did not.
  – Be specific about the behavior and the positive outcome
  – Praise frequently, for both big and small things
  – Praise poor performers when you catch them doing something right.
  – Make recognition public so the group sees what gets rewarded.
3 Motivators

• Autonomy
• Mastery
• Purpose
Positive Approaches to Organizations

Positive Deviance

• Community engages to identify a problem
• Seek out those who succeed even facing the same challenges
• Surface and spread the story of what works
• Empower members at all levels of the community to lead.
Thank You!

• Program evaluation link will be emailed to you today.