Feeling Good and Doing Good

An introduction to positive psychology
and its application to positive education

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SA – State of Wellbeing

Building the State of Wellbeing
A Strategy for South Australia

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Big Impact

- 238,092 minutes
- 65,000 viewers
- 39,500 accounts reached during Martin Seligman final lecture

14,000 people attended public events
SA – State of Wellbeing
Positive Psychology

• “Positive Psychology is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work and play” Martin Seligman

• “Positive Psychology is an umbrella term for work that investigates happiness, wellbeing, human strengths and flourishing” Shelley Gable and Jonathan Haidt

• “Positive Psychology is not a spectator sport” Christopher Peterson

• Learn it, live it, teach it, embed it Geelong Grammar
Mental health data

• 1 in 4 young people experience mental health problems during adolescence Sawyer, et al 2001

• 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness in any year ABS 2009

• Suicide is the largest single cause of death in young Australian males aged 15-24 years (22%) ABS 2013

• 75% of all mental health conditions start before the age of 25 Kessler et al 2007
Flourishing

The presence of wellbeing is **MORE THAN** the absence of illness
What is wrong with you? & What is right with you?

How do we go beyond 0 (e.g., from +3 to +8)?

What is above the line is as important to study and be aware of, as what is below the line.

So much deficit-based psychology focused on getting people back to 0. There is a range of experience above and below neutral.
Inoculate the population
PERMA Dashboard

P ositive emotion
E ngagement
R elationships
M eaning
A ccomplishment

Strengths of Character – Virtues
Each is Measurable and each is Teachable
PERMA Plus Dashboard

P ositive emotion
E ngagement
R elationships
M eaning
A ccomplishment

Plus
Sleep, Nutrition, Physical Fitness, Optimism

Strengths of Character – Virtues
Some Seligman snippets

- "As our ability to measure positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and positive relations improves we can ask with rigor how many people in a nation, in a city, or in a corporation are flourishing. We ask with rigor when in her lifetime an individual is flourishing. We ask with rigor if a charity is increasing the flourishing of its beneficiaries. We can ask with rigor if our school systems are helping our children flourish." (Martin Seligman, Flourish, 2011)
Seligman again

- Psychology and medicine get turned on their heads when we ask about the opposite of pathology: about the strengthening effects of benevolent events. Indeed, any endeavour - nutrition, the immune system, welfare, politics, education, or ethics - that is fixated on the remedial misses this insight and does just half the job: correcting deficits while failing to build strength." (Martin Seligman, Flourish, 2011)
Pause for breath….

‘We can have the experience, but miss the meaning…’ (attributed to someone famous)

In what has been presented so far…

• What struck you?
• What surprised you?
• What is the key point you have taken from the presentation so far?

• The idea I most take issue with in the presentation is...

• One question I would like to ask the presenter is…
Positive Psychology (+P)

- Positive Psychology is not just
PERMA
Positive Emotions

Gratitude
Hope
Serenity

Inspiration
Joy
Interest

Love
Pride
Awe

Amusement

Fredrickson, 2009
PERMA

Why Positive Emotion?

• The negativity bias
• Broaden and Build theory
  – Positive emotions broaden our thinking and attention
  – Build our psychological resources and resilience
  – Undo negative emotions and trigger upward spirals Barbara Fredrickson 2001

• The balance between positive and negative emotion is critical to wellbeing
• Gratitude – hunt the good stuff
Time stood still…”
“I was at one with the music”
“...so absorbed, nothing else seemed to matter”

• **Ingredients for flow**
  – Completely focused motivation
  – Balance between the challenge of the task and the skill of the individual.

• **Possible benefits**
  – Positive emotion
  – Rejuvenation
  – Improved performance
  – Further learning & skill development
PERMA
Positive Engagement

- 8 States of engagement

![Diagram of 8 states of engagement: Anxiety, Arousal, Flow, Control, Relaxation, Boredom, Apathy, Worry. The x-axis represents low to high skill level, and the y-axis represents low to high challenge level. The diagram illustrates the transition between these states at different levels of challenge and skill.]
Flow

- **Goldilocks task**
  - Not too hard
  - Not too easy
  - JUST RIGHT

- Using character strengths more is one of the best ways to increase engagement
Positive Engagement

- Flow is the optimal state of engagement
- Performing at your best while enjoying yourself the most
- You can experience solitary flow and social flow
- Challenge/skill balance
- Using your character strengths more is one of the best ways to increase engagement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Transcendence</th>
<th>Temperance</th>
<th>Wisdom and Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning</td>
<td>Strengths that protect against excess</td>
<td>Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
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<td>Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in the face of opposition, external or internal</td>
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<td>Humanity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Civic Strengths that underlie healthy community life</td>
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</table>
### VIA Character Strengths and Virtues

http://www.viacharacter.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisdom &amp; Knowledge</th>
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<th>Justice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Bravery</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Appreciation of beauty &amp; excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Social intelligence</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Prudence</td>
<td>Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love of Learning</td>
<td>Zest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>Humour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
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<td>Spirituality</td>
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Character Strengths

Using your signature strengths typically:

• Builds positive emotion.

• Feels energising and satisfying.

• Fosters a sense of ownership and authenticity, as well as greater vitality and self-esteem.

• Increases the rate of learning something new.

• Increases happiness and decreases depression (at home and at work).

• How can you find ways to incorporate your signature strengths more in what you do?
Martin Seligman and Character Strengths
PERMA
Positive Relationships

Active-Constructive Responding to Good News

Constructive       Destructive

Active

Passive
PERMA
Positive Relationships

- Other people matter
  - Increase resilience
  - Increase feelings of autonomy, competence & relatedness (self-determination)
  - Buffer against depression
  - One of the strongest indicators of your satisfaction with life
People who can identify a source of meaning in their lives report:

- Greater happiness and life satisfaction
- Physically and emotionally healthier
- More resilience
- Greater sense of control over their lives

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<th>Eudaimonic Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Short Term</strong></td>
<td>Pleasant feelings, less negative emotions, more energy</td>
<td>Greater life satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable</strong></td>
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PERMA
Meaning and Purpose

• Who are you?
• Who are you to others?
• What do you give to others?
• What are your core values?

• Cultivating Altruism
• Random Acts of Kindness
• Considering priorities
• Time machine – 110 year old self
PERMA
Positive Accomplishment

• Fixed Mindsets
  – You believe your talents and abilities are set.
  – You must prove yourself over and over, trying to look smart and talented at all times

• Growth Mindsets
  – You know that talents can be developed and that great abilities are built over time.
  – You believe your qualities can be cultivated through your efforts

Carol Dweck 2006

• Self Esteem vs Self Worth
PERMA
Positive Accomplishment

• One pathway is GRIT

• Angela Duckworth PhD studies show grit is essential to high achievement
  – Roughly twice as important as IQ in academic success
  – GRIT = passion and perseverance for long-term goals (stick-to-it-ness)
Martin Seligman – Great teachers
Pause for breath….

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