



WORKING WITH MENTAL HEALTH IN THE YOUTH FIELD

field guide

From the international training course

NATURAL MINDS

2018, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Material developed by **Dreams for Life** from Romania. The project was implemented with the support of the **Erasmus+** Programme of the European Union.

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The project and the coordinating organization

Coordinating organization - Dreams for Life, Romania

Dreams for Life is a youth organization from Romania, which operates in Cluj-Napoca. Our organization unites young adults and youth that are passionate about personal and community development.



Our mission is to support youth for following their true meaning in life, being in strong connection with nature and living in sustainable communities. (www.dreamsforlife.ro)

We implemented this project due to the following aspects:

- A. Increasing mental health problems among young people.
- B. The difficulty of working with young people with mental health problems, faced by youth workers.

Training objectives:

1. Increasing the understanding of the social, psychological and economic characteristics of young people with low opportunities, especially those with mental health problems, for 21 youth workers, during the project period.
2. Developing the professional capacity (knowledge, abilities and attitudes) to work with young people with reduced opportunities, especially with young people with mental health problems, for 21 youth workers, during the project period.
3. Increasing the level of understanding and achievement of the professional insertion of young people with low opportunities, especially of young people with mental health problems, for 21 youth workers, during the project period.
4. Increasing the motivation to work with young people with fewer opportunities, especially with young people with mental health problems, of 21 youth workers, during the project period.

Mental Health Basics: Types of Mental Illness, Diagnosis, Treatment, and More

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health refers to your emotional and psychological well-being. Having good mental health helps you lead a relatively happy and healthy life. It helps you demonstrate resilience and the ability to cope in the face of life's adversities.

Your mental health can be influenced by a variety of factors, including life events or even your genetics.

There are many strategies that can help you establish and keep good mental health. These can include:

- keeping a positive attitude
- staying physically active
- helping other people
- getting enough sleep
- eating a healthy diet
- asking for professional help with your mental health if you need it
- socializing with people whom you enjoy spending time with
- forming and using effective coping skills to deal with your problems

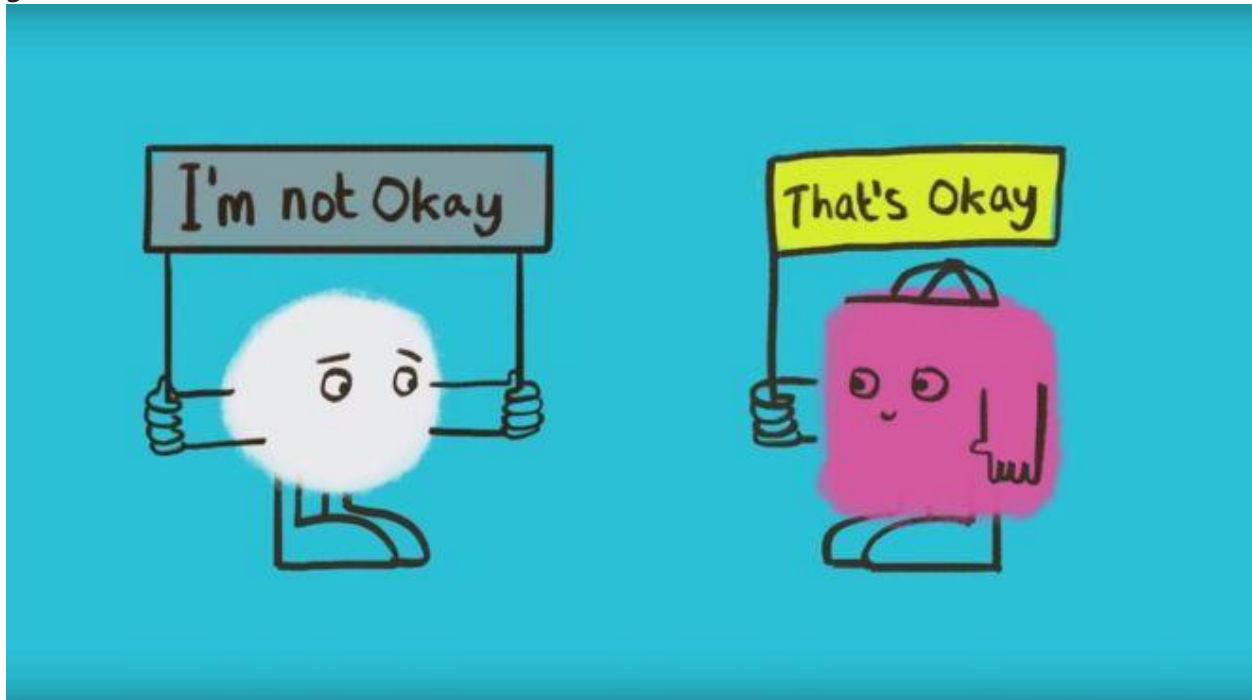
What is mental illness?

A mental illness is a broad term which encompasses a wide variety of conditions which affect the way you feel and think. It can also affect your ability to get through day-to-day life. Mental illnesses can be influenced by several different factors, including:

- genetics
- environment
- daily habits
- biology

Mental health disorders

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) helps mental health professionals diagnose mental illnesses. There are many types of mental health disorders. In fact, almost 300 different conditions are listed in DSM-5.



These are some of the most common mental illnesses affecting:

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is a chronic mental illness that affects about 2.6 percent of Americans each year. It is characterized by episodes of energetic, manic highs and extreme, sometimes depressive lows.

These can affect a person's energy level and ability to think reasonably. Mood swings caused by bipolar disorder are much more severe than the small ups and downs most people experience on a daily basis.

Persistent depressive disorder

Persistent depressive disorder is a chronic type of depression. It is also known as dysthymia. While dysthymic depression isn't intense, it can interfere with daily life. People with this condition experience symptoms for at least two years. About 1.5 percent of American adults experience dysthymia each year.

Generalized anxiety disorder

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) goes beyond regular everyday anxiety, like being nervous before a presentation. It causes a person to become extremely worried about many things, even when there's little or no reason to worry. Those with GAD may feel very nervous about getting through the day. They may think things won't ever work in their favor. Sometimes worrying can keep people with GAD from accomplishing everyday tasks and chores. GAD affects about 3 percent of Americans every year.

Major depressive disorder

Major depressive disorder (MDD) causes feelings of extreme sadness or hopelessness that lasts for at least two weeks. This condition is also called clinical depression. People with MDD may become so upset about their lives that they think about or try to commit suicide. About 7 percent of Americans experience at least one major depressive episode each year.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) causes constant and repetitive thoughts, or obsessions. These thoughts happen with unnecessary and unreasonable desires to carry out certain behaviors, or compulsions. Many people with OCD realize that their thoughts and actions are unreasonable, yet they cannot stop them. More than 2 percent of Americans are diagnosed with OCD at some point in their lifetime.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental illness that's triggered after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. Experiences that can cause PTSD can range from extreme events, like war and natural disasters, to verbal or physical abuse.

Symptoms of PTSD may include flashbacks or being easily startled. It's estimated that 3.5 percent of American adults experience PTSD.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia impairs a person's perception of reality and the world around them. It interferes with their connection to other people. It's a serious condition that needs treatment.

They might experience hallucinations, have delusions, and hear voices. These can potentially put them in a dangerous situation if left untreated. It's estimated that 1 percent of the American population experiences schizophrenia.

Social anxiety disorder

Social anxiety disorder, sometimes called social phobia, causes an extreme fear of social situations. People with social anxiety may become very nervous about being around other people. They may feel like they're being judged.

This can make it hard to meet new people and attend social gatherings. Approximately 15 million adults in the United States experience social anxiety each year.



Coping with mental illnesses

The symptoms of many mental illnesses may get worse if they're left untreated. Reach out for psychological help if you or someone you know may have a mental illness.

If you're unsure where to start, visit your primary care doctor. They can help with the initial diagnosis and provide a referral to a psychiatrist.

It's important to know that you can still have a full and happy life with a mental illness.

Working with a therapist and other members of your mental health team will help you learn healthy ways to manage your condition.

Mental health symptoms

Each type of mental illness causes its own symptoms. But many share some common characteristics.

Common signs of several mental illnesses may include:

- not eating enough or overeating
- having insomnia or sleeping too much
- distancing yourself from other people and favorite activities
- feeling fatigue even with enough sleep
- feeling numbness or lacking empathy
- experiencing unexplainable body pains or achiness
- feeling hopeless, helpless or lost
- smoking, drinking, or using illicit drugs more than ever before
- feeling confusion, forgetfulness, irritability, anger, anxiety, sadness, or fright
- constantly fighting or arguing with friends and family
- having extreme mood swings that cause relationship problems
- having constant flashbacks or thoughts that you can't get out of your head
- hearing voices in your head that you can't stop
- having thoughts of hurting yourself or other people
- being unable to carry out day-to-day activities and chores

Stress and periods of emotional distress can lead to an episode of symptoms. That may make it difficult for you to maintain normal behavior and activities. This period is sometimes called a nervous or mental breakdown.

Mental health diagnosis

Diagnosing a mental health disorder is a multi-step process. During a first appointment, your doctor may perform a physical exam to look for signs of physical issues that could be contributing to your symptoms.

Some doctors may order a series of laboratory tests to screen for underlying or less obvious possible causes.

Your doctor may ask you to fill out a mental health questionnaire. You may also undergo a psychological evaluation. You might not have a diagnosis after your first appointment.

Your doctor may refer you to a mental health expert. Because mental health can be complex and symptoms may vary from person to person, it may take a few appointments for you to get a full diagnosis.



Mental health treatment

Treatment for mental health disorders is not one size fits all, and it does not offer a cure. Instead, treatment aims to reduce symptoms, address underlying causes, and make the condition manageable.

You and your doctor will work together to find a plan. It may be a combination of treatments because some people have better results with a multi-angle approach. Here are the most common mental health treatments:

Medications

The four main categories of medications used to treat mental health disorders are antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, antipsychotic medications, and mood-stabilizing medications.

Which type is best for you will depend on the symptoms you experience and other health issues you may face. People may try a few medications at different doses before finding something that's right for them.

Psychotherapy

Talk therapy is an opportunity for you to talk with a mental health provider about your experiences, feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Therapists primarily act as a sounding board and neutral mediator, helping you learn coping techniques and strategies to manage symptoms.

Hospital and residential treatment

Some people may need brief periods of intensive treatment at hospitals or residential treatment facilities. These programs allow an overnight stay for in-depth treatment. There are also daytime programs, where people can participate in shorter periods of treatment.

Lifestyle treatments and home remedies

Alternative treatments can be used in addition to mainstream treatments as a supplement.

These steps won't eliminate mental health issues alone, but they can be helpful.

They include sticking to your treatment plan as closely as possible, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and adopting a healthy lifestyle that incorporates foods that may be a benefit to your brain.

Mental health therapy

The term therapy refers to several styles of talk therapy. Therapy can be used to treat a variety of disorders, including panic disorders, anxiety, depression, anger issues, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Therapy helps people identify mental health issues and unhealthy behaviors or thought patterns. During sessions you and your therapist can work to change these thoughts and behaviors.

In most cases, therapists focus on current issues, things that are affecting your daily life, and help you find solutions to what you're experiencing in real time, but each doctor's approach is different.



Mental health exercises

Physical exercise is great for your body. Dancing, swimming, walking, and jogging boost cardio health and strength. They're also great for your mind. Research shows they can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

However, there are also "exercises" you can do for your brain. These include:

- **Striking a power pose.** People who use "power poses" (aka hands on hips) may see a temporary drop in feelings of social anxiety.
- **Listening to calming music.** A 2013 study of 60 women revealed that people who listen to relaxing music recover faster after stress than people who relax but do not listen to music.
- **Practicing progressive muscle relaxation.** This process involves tightening and then slowly relaxing various muscle groups. It may be combined with other techniques like listening to calming music or breathing exercises.
- **Finding a yoga pose.** One 2017 study showed that just two minutes of performing yoga poses can boost self-esteem and help increase bodily energy.

Mental health in teens

Twenty percent of teenagers between 13 and 18 experience some form of mental health disorder. Half will develop a disorder by the time they're 14 years old.

The signs and symptoms may be brushed aside as the angst of the turbulent teenage years. But, these may be the earliest predictors of mental health disorders or issues that require treatment.

Signs of mental health issues in teenagers include:

- loss of self-esteem
- excessive sleeping
- loss of interest in activities or favorite hobbies
- sudden and unexpected decline in academic performance
- weight loss or changes in appetite
- sudden personality changes, such as anger or aggression

Source of information: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health#teens>



Positive Psychology for mental health

Introduction

Psychology has, since World War II, become a science mostly about healing. It focuses on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive concentration to pathology neglects the fulfilled individual and the thriving community.¹ In one metaphor, psychology was said to be learning how to bring people up from negative eight to zero but not as good at understanding how people rise from zero to positive eight.²

In this spectrum, the field of positive psychology has been initiated and flourished the last 2 decades. The field is founded on the belief that people can, want and should lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of life, love and work.³

¹ Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

² Gamble & Haidt (2005)

³<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>

This online course is dedicated to positive psychology, as well as its key elements. It serves as an opportunity for helping our young people (and every individual) to explore their full potential and to enable them to lead meaningful lives in a flourishing community!

Enjoy it!



Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.⁴

In the past decade, psychologists have become concerned with prevention. How can psychologists prevent problems like depression or substance abuse or schizophrenia in young people who are genetically vulnerable or who live in worlds that nurture these problems? How can psychologists prevent murderous schoolyard violence in children who have access to weapons, poor parental supervision, and a mean streak? What psychologists have learned over 50 years is that the disease model does not move psychology closer to the prevention of these serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have come largely from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not on correcting weakness.

Prevention researchers have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much

⁴ Gamble & Haidt (2005)

of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people.

Working exclusively on personal weakness and on damaged brains, however, has rendered science poorly equipped to effectively prevent illness. Psychologists need now to call for massive research on human strengths and virtues. Practitioners need to recognize that much of the best work they already do in the consulting room is to amplify strengths rather than repair the weaknesses of their clients. Psychologists working with families, schools, religious communities, and corporations, need to develop climates that foster these strengths. The major psychological theories have changed to undergird a new science of strength and resilience. No longer do the dominant theories view the individual as a passive vessel responding to stimuli; rather, individuals are now seen as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful, efficacious, or in malignant circumstances, helpless and hopeless. Science and practice that rely on this worldview may have the direct effect of preventing many of the major emotional disorders. They may also have two side effects: They may make the lives of clients physically healthier, given all that psychologists are learning about the effects of mental wellbeing on the body. This science and practice will also reorient psychology back to its two neglected missions-- making normal people stronger and more productive and making high human potential actual. ⁵

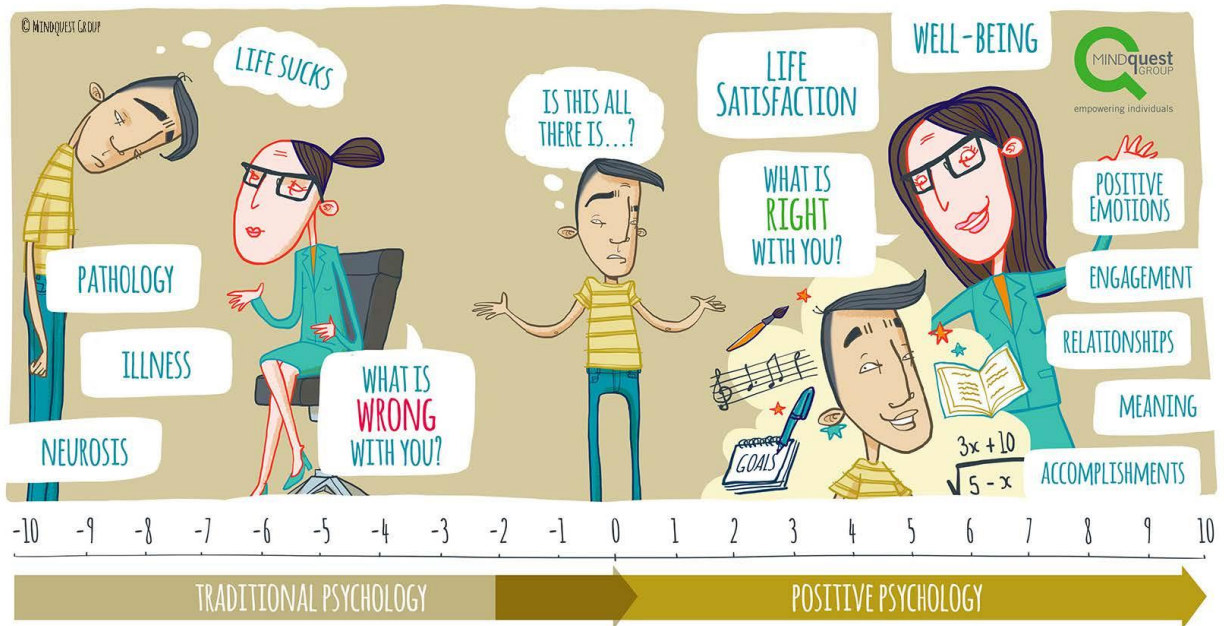
The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities. The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love, courage, interpersonal skill, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic. ⁶

Having this in mind, one can say that positive psychology builds the capacities of the community, by helping individuals develop basic but fundamental competences that are neglected in the 21st century lives and educational systems. These competences include the ability to be authentic, grateful, joyful, resilient, mindful, happy and many more!

⁵ Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

⁶ Seligman (2000)

Positive psychology and the regular psychology



Positive psychology does not imply that the rest of psychology is negative, although it is understandable that the name may imply that to some people. In fact, the large majority of the gross academic product of psychology is neutral, focusing on neither wellbeing nor distress. Positive psychology grew largely from the recognition of an imbalance in clinical psychology, in which most research does indeed focus on mental illness. Researchers in cognitive, developmental, social, and personality psychology may not believe that things are so out of balance.

Despite these inequities, positive psychology's aim is not the denial of the distressing, unpleasant, or negative aspects of life, nor is it an effort to see them through rose-colored glasses. Those who study topics in positive psychology fully acknowledge the existence of human suffering, selfishness, dysfunctional family systems, and ineffective institutions. But 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. Moreover, positive psychology makes the argument that these positive topics of inquiry are important to understand in their own right, not solely as buffers against the problems, stressors, and disorders of life (although we believe the evidence is clear that many positive processes shield us from negative outcomes, a point we return to later). Sheldon and King (2001) defined positive psychology as “nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues,” one that “revisits the average person” (p. 216; italics).

added). In this definition is the acknowledgment that our field as a whole is relatively silent regarding what is typical, because what is typical is positive.⁷

Positive emotions

It is true that emotion, a concept often cast as ethereal, was an early topic within psychology (e.g., Cannon, 1929; James, 1884). Yet, emotions science did not emerge as an organized subspecialty until the mid-1980s, as marked by the formation of the International Society for Research on Emotions (ISRE) in 1984, the first multidisciplinary professional association for scholars specializing in this area. It is fair to say that in the 30 years since, research on emotions has exploded. Yet even decades after emotions became a rigorous and accepted topic of scientific inquiry, psychology's inferiority complex held sway to keep the focus on the most serious of emotions, namely, fear, anger, sadness, and the like. Even disgust made its way to the fore (e.g., Rozin & Fallon, 1987). It was as if the light-hearted emotions within the human repertoire might somehow weaken the fibers of the cloak of rigor that has been so important for psychology to don.

In this context, Barbara Fredrickson has sought to create an evidence-based understanding of light-hearted moments, charting their variety, the ways they change how the human mind works, and how, little-by-little, they change people's lives. Fredrickson sets the stage for this review by briefly describing 10 key positive emotions. This is by no means an exhaustive list. She choose to focus on these 10 emotions not only because they are the targets of increasing research but also because evidence from the lab suggests that these 10 are experienced relatively frequently in people's daily life. With one important exception, she describes them in the order of their relative frequency, starting with the positive emotions people appear to feel most often and moving on to those that they feel more rarely. The exception is love, which in their studies emerges as the most frequently experienced positive emotion. As described below, she sees good reason to describe it last.

Like all emotions, positive emotions are brief, multisystem responses to some change in the way people interpret—or appraise—their current circumstances. When this multisystem response registers that circumstances are somehow bad for the self, a negative emotion arises; when it registers good prospects or good fortune, a positive emotion arises. To foreshadow the broaden-and-build theory, for each of these 10 positive emotions, she describes (a) the appraisal patterns that trigger it, (b) the broadened thought–action repertoire it sparks, and (c) the durable resources that it helps to build. Table 1.1 offers these in summary form across its first four columns.

⁷ Gamble & Haidt (2005)

Joy. Joy emerges when one's current circumstances present unexpected good fortune. People feel joy, for instance, when receiving good news or a pleasant surprise. Joy creates the urge to play and get involved, or what Frijda (1986) termed free activation, defined as an "aimless, unasked-for readiness to engage in whatever interaction presents itself" (p. 89). The durable resources created through play are the skills acquired through the experiential learning it prompts.



Gratitude. Gratitude emerges when people acknowledge another person as the source of their unexpected good fortune. Joy becomes gratitude, for instance, when awareness of one's own good fortune is combined with admiration for another person for thoughtfully going out of their way to create that good fortune (Algoe, 2012). Gratitude creates the urge to creatively consider new ways to be kind and generous oneself. The durable resources accrued when people act on this urge are new skills for expressing kindness and care to others.

Serenity. Also called contentment, serenity emerges when people interpret their current circumstances as utterly cherished, right, or satisfying. People feel serenity, for instance, when they feel comfortable, at ease in, or at one with their situation. Serenity creates the urge to savor those current circumstances and integrate them into new priorities or values. The durable resources created through savoring and integrating include a more refined and complex sense of oneself and of one's priorities.

Interest. Interest arises in circumstances appraised as safe but offering novelty. People feel interest, for instance, when they encounter something that is mysterious or challenging, yet not overwhelming. Interest creates the urge to explore, to learn, to immerse oneself in the novelty and thereby expand the self (Izard, 1977; Silvia, 2008). The knowledge so gained becomes a durable resource.

Hope. Whereas most positive emotions arise in circumstances appraised as safe, hope is the exception. Hope arises in dire circumstances in which people fear the worst yet yearn for better (Lazarus, 1991). People feel hope, for instance, in grim situations in which they can envision at least a chance that things might change for the better. Hope creates the urge to draw on one's own capabilities and inventiveness to turn things around. The durable resources it builds include optimism and resilience to adversity.

Pride. Pride emerges when people take appropriate credit from some socially valued good outcome. People feel pride, for instance, when they accomplish an important goal (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Pride creates the urge to fantasize about even bigger accomplishments in similar arenas. The big dreams sparked by pride contribute to the durable resource of achievement motivation (Williams & DeSteno, 2008).

Amusement. Amusement occurs when people appraise their current circumstances as involving some sort of non-serious social incongruity. It can erupt, for instance, in the wake of a harmless speech error or physical blunder. Amusement creates urges to share a laugh and find creative ways to continue the joviality. As people follow these urges, they build and solidify enduring social bonds (Gervais & Wilson, 2005).

Inspiration. Inspiration arises when people witness human excellence in some manner. People feel inspired, for instance, when they see someone else do a good deed or perform at an unparalleled level. Inspiration creates the urge to excel oneself, to reach one's own higher ground or personal best. The durable resource it builds is the motivation for personal growth (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Thrash & Elliot, 2004).

Awe. Awe emerges when people encounter goodness on a grand scale. People feel awe, for instance, when overwhelmed by something (or someone) beautiful or powerful that seems larger than life. The experience of awe compels people to absorb and accommodate this new vastness they have encountered. The durable resources awe creates are new worldviews (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007).

Love. Love, which appears to be the positive emotion people feel most frequently, arises when any other of the positive emotions is felt in the context of a safe, interpersonal connection or relationship. Love broadens thought–action repertoires both in an “all of the above” manner and

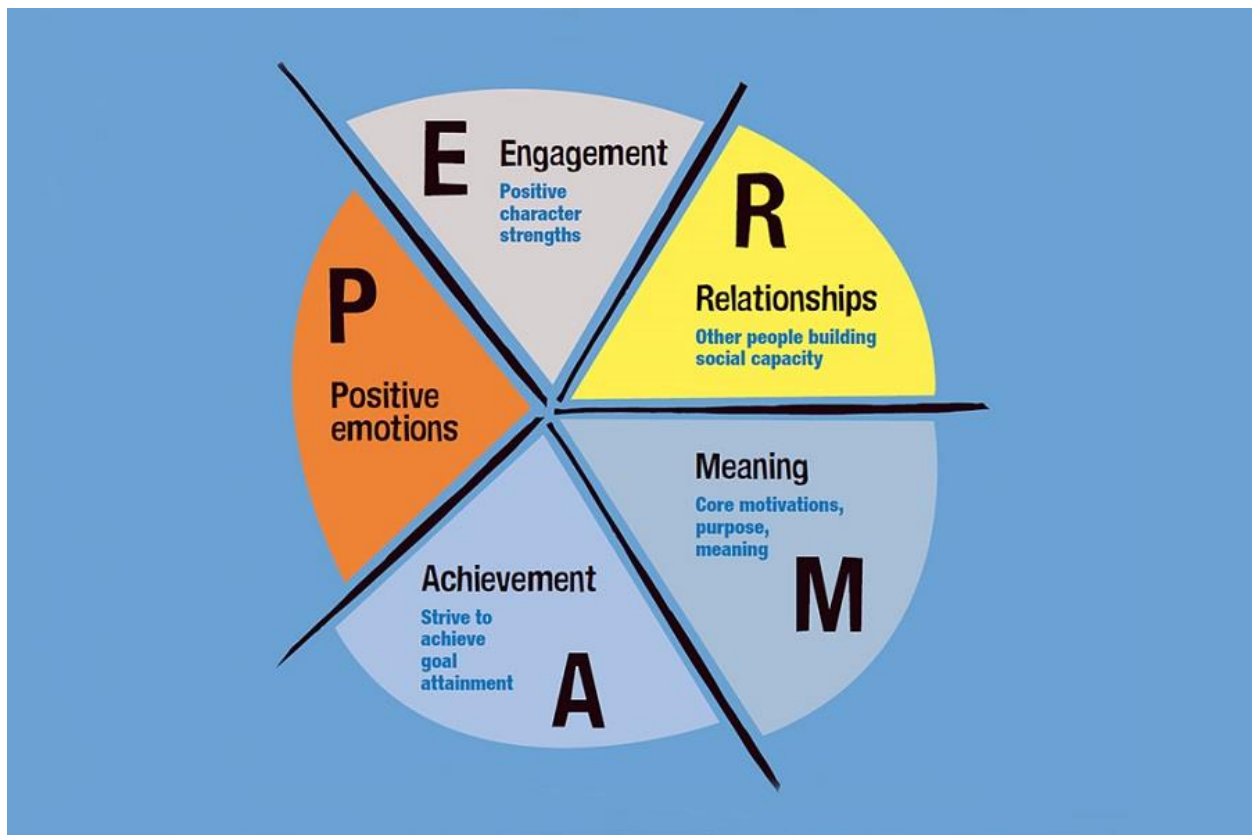
by creating momentary perceptions of social connection and self-expansion. Likewise, love builds a wide range of enduring resources, especially social bonds and community.

Adapted from Chapter "Positive Emotions Broaden and Build" by Barbara Fredrickson

Emotion label	Appraisal theme	Thought-action tendency	Resources accrued	Core trio in mDES item
Joy	Safe, familiar unexpectedly good	Play, get involved	Skills gained via experiential learning	Joyful, glad, or happy
Gratitude	Receive a gift or benefit	Creative urge to be prosocial	Skills for showing care, loyalty, social bonds	Grateful, appreciative, or thankful
Serenity (a.k.a., contentment)	Safe, familiar, low effort	Savor and integrate	New priorities, new views of self	Serene, content, or peaceful
Interest	Safe, novel	Explore, learn	Knowledge	Interested, alert, or curious
Hope	Fearing the worst, yearning for better	Plan for a better future	Resilience, optimism	Hopeful, optimistic, or encouraged
Pride	Socially valued achievement	Dream big	Achievement motivation	Proud, confident, or self-assured
Amusement	Nonserious social incongruity	Share joviality, laugh	Social bonds	Amused, fun-loving, or silly
Inspiration	Witness human excellence	Strive toward own higher ground	Motivation for personal growth	Inspired, uplifted, or elevated
Awe	Encounter beauty or goodness on a grand scale	Absorb and accommodate	New worldviews	Awe, wonder, amazement
Love	Any/all of the above in an interpersonal connection	Any/all of the above, with mutual care	Any/all of the above, especially social bonds	Love, closeness, or trust

PERMA

The PERMA model was designed by Martin Seligman with five core element of psychological well-being and happiness. Seligman believes that these five elements can help people reach a life of fulfilment, happiness, and meaning. This model can also be applied to institutions to develop programs to help people develop new cognitive and emotional tools.



P – Positive Emotion

This element of the model is one of the most obvious connections to happiness. Being able to focus on positive emotions is more than just smiling, it is the ability to be optimistic and view the past, present, and future in a positive perspective.

This positive view of life can help you in relationships, work, and inspire you to be more creative and take more chances. In everyone's life, there are highs and lows, focusing on the lows increase your chances of developing depression, therefore, you should focus on the high and positive aspects of life. There are also many health benefits to optimism and positivity.

Distinguishing between pleasure and enjoyment is important in this element of the model. Pleasure is connected to satisfying bodily needs for survival; such as thirst, hunger, and sleep.

Whereas enjoyment comes from intellectual stimulation and creativity, for example when a child completes a complex lego car that requires his concentration, he will be beaming with joy and satisfaction from his work.

This type of positive emotion is needed, as when someone enjoys the tasks in their lives they are more likely to persevere and battle challenges through creative and alternative solutions.

E – Engagement

It is important in our lives to be able to find activities that needs our full engagement. Engagement in the activities in our lives is important for us to learn, grow and nurture our personal happiness.

Everyone is different and we all find enjoyment in different things whether it's playing an instrument, playing a sport, dancing, working on an interesting project at work or even just a hobby.

We all need something in our lives that entirely absorbs us into the present moment, creating a 'flow' of blissful immersion into the task or activity. This type of 'flow' of engagement is important to stretch our intelligence, skills, and emotional capabilities.

R – Relationships

Relationships and social connections are one of the most important aspect of life. Humans are social animals that thrive on connection, love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans. Building positive relationships with your parents, siblings, peers, and friends are important to spread love and joy. Having strong relationships gives you support in difficult times.

In an interview with Dr. Mitch Printein's about his course on the psychology of popularity, he mentioned that there has been researching that shows that pain centers in our brain become activated when we are at risk of being isolated. This is because, in an evolutionary perspective, isolation would be the worse thing we could do for survival.

M – Meaning

Having a purpose and meaning to why each of us is on this earth is important to living a life of happiness and fulfillment. Rather than the pursuit of pleasure and material wealth, there is an actual meaning to our life. Such meaning gives people a reason for their life and that there is a greater purpose to life.

To understand the greater impact of your work and why you chose to the pursuit that work will help you enjoy the tasks more and become more satisfied and happier.

A – Accomplishments

Having goals and ambition in life can help us to achieve things that can give us a sense of accomplishment. You should make realistic goals that can be met and just putting in the effort to achieving those goals can already give you a sense of satisfaction when you finally achieve those goals a sense of pride and fulfillment will be reached. Having accomplishments in life is important to push ourselves to thrive and flourish.

How to Apply the PERMA Model in Your Life

Being aware of the PERMA model is the first step to applying this theory to your life. Keep referring back to the 5 elements of the model to help you apply it to each aspect of your life. Remember to think in a positive perspective at home and at work.

Find the things that make you happy and can make you fully engaged. You could even put goals to achieving more and challenging yourself in the activities you enjoy. Focus on your relationships with your family and friends by finding ways to connect and enjoy each others company. Find the meaning to your life and what gives you a sense of purpose, it's different for everyone.

Adapted from <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/perma-model/>

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.⁸

The effects of mindfulness

Several disciplines and practices can cultivate mindfulness, such as yoga, tai chi and qigong, but most of the literature has focused on mindfulness that is developed through mindfulness meditation — those self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general

⁸ <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/mindfulness/definition>

mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calmness, clarity and concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006).

Researchers theorize that mindfulness meditation promotes metacognitive awareness, decreases rumination via disengagement from perseverative cognitive activities and enhances attentional capacities through gains in working memory. These cognitive gains, in turn, contribute to effective emotion-regulation strategies.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

More specifically, research on mindfulness has identified these benefits:

Reduced rumination. Several studies have shown that mindfulness reduces rumination. In one study, for example, Chambers et al. (2008) asked 20 novice meditators to participate in a 10-day intensive mindfulness meditation retreat. After the retreat, the meditation group had significantly higher self-reported mindfulness and a decreased negative affect compared with a control group. They also experienced fewer depressive symptoms and less rumination. In addition, the meditators had significantly better working memory capacity and were better able to sustain attention during a performance task compared with the control group.

Stress reduction. Many studies show that practicing mindfulness reduces stress. In 2010, Hoffman et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies that explored the use of mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. The researchers concluded that mindfulness-based therapy may be useful in altering affective and cognitive processes that underlie multiple clinical issues.

Those findings are consistent with evidence that mindfulness meditation increases positive affect and decreases anxiety and negative affect. In one study, participants randomly assigned to an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction group were compared with controls on self-reported measures of depression, anxiety and psychopathology, and on neural reactivity as measured by fMRI after watching sad films (Farb et al., 2010). The researchers found that the participants who experienced mindfulness-based stress reduction had significantly less anxiety, depression and somatic distress compared with the control group. In addition, the fMRI data indicated that the mindfulness group had less neural reactivity when they were exposed to the films than the control group, and they displayed distinctly different neural responses while watching the films than they did before their mindfulness training. These findings suggest that mindfulness meditation shifts people's ability to use emotion regulation strategies in a way that enables them to experience emotion selectively, and that the emotions they experience may be processed differently in the brain (Farb et al., 2010; Williams, 2010).

Boosts to working memory. Improvements to working memory appear to be another benefit of mindfulness, research finds. A 2010 study by Jha et al., for example, documented the benefits of mindfulness meditation among a military group who participated in an eight-week mindfulness training, a nonmeditating military group and a group of nonmeditating civilians. Both military groups were in a highly stressful period before deployment. The researchers found that the nonmeditating military group had decreased working memory capacity over time, whereas working memory capacity among nonmeditating civilians was stable across time. Within the meditating military group, however, working memory capacity increased with meditation practice. In addition, meditation practice was directly related to self-reported positive affect and inversely related to self-reported negative affect.

Focus. Another study examined how mindfulness meditation affected participants' ability to focus attention and suppress distracting information. The researchers compared a group of experienced mindfulness meditators with a control group that had no meditation experience. They found that the meditation group had significantly better performance on all measures of attention and had higher self-reported mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation practice and self-reported mindfulness were correlated directly with cognitive flexibility and attentional functioning (Moore and Malinowski, 2009).

Less emotional reactivity. Research also supports the notion that mindfulness meditation decreases emotional reactivity. In a study of people who had anywhere from one month to 29 years of mindfulness meditation practice, researchers found that mindfulness meditation practice helped people disengage from emotionally upsetting pictures and enabled them to focus better on a cognitive task as compared with people who saw the pictures but did not meditate (Ortner et al., 2007).

More cognitive flexibility. Another line of research suggests that in addition to helping people become less reactive, mindfulness meditation may also give them greater cognitive flexibility. One study found that people who practice mindfulness meditation appear to develop the skill of self-observation, which neurologically disengages the automatic pathways that were created by prior learning and enables present-moment input to be integrated in a new way (Siegel, 2007a). Meditation also activates the brain region associated with more adaptive responses to stressful or negative situations (Cahn & Polich, 2006; Davidson et al., 2003). Activation of this region corresponds with faster recovery to baseline after being negatively provoked (Davidson, 2000; Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000).

Relationship satisfaction. Several studies find that a person's ability to be mindful can help predict relationship satisfaction — the ability to respond well to relationship stress and the skill in communicating one's emotions to a partner. Empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness protects against the emotionally stressful effects of relationship conflict (Barnes et al., 2007), is positively associated with the ability to express oneself in various social situations (Dekeyser et al., 2008) and predicts relationship satisfaction (Barnes et al., 2007; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).



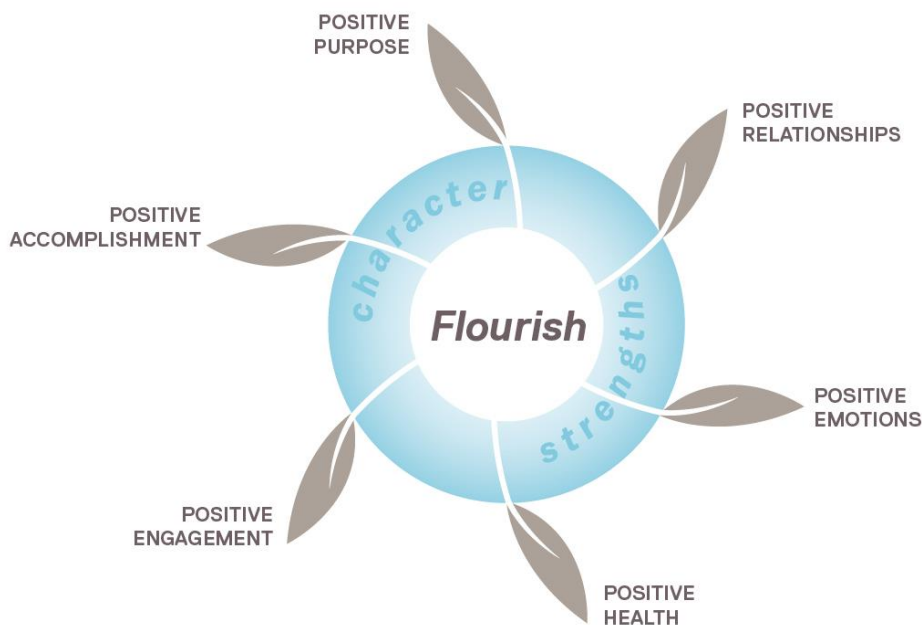
Other benefits. Mindfulness has been shown to enhance self-insight, morality, intuition and fear modulation, all functions associated with the brain's middle prefrontal lobe area. Evidence also suggests that mindfulness meditation has numerous health benefits, including increased

immune functioning (Davidson et al., 2003; see Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004 for a review of physical health benefits), improvement to well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008) and reduction in psychological distress (Coffey & Hartman, 2008; Ostafin et al., 2006). In addition, mindfulness meditation practice appears to increase information processing speed (Moore & Malinowski, 2009), as well as decrease task effort and having thoughts that are unrelated to the task at hand (Lutz et al., 2009). Last, mindfulness cultivates also empathy, compassion and contribute to better quality of life.

Adapted from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner.aspx>

Positive education

Positive education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness. The high prevalence worldwide of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in school. There is substantial evidence from well controlled studies that skills that increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning can be taught to schoolchildren.⁹



Positive education emphasises the importance of training the heart as well as the mind in education. Education has always focused on academics and fostering positive character

⁹ Seligman, (2009)

strength development. The goal of positive education is to help reveal and develop the child's ability to effectively engage their combination of character strengths (Linkins et al., 2015).¹⁰ Positive education is an education both for well-being and academic accomplishment. Its approaches don't see academic and well-being goals as mutually exclusive.

To establish a well-being strategy that will lead to a flourishing school, Mathew A White argues for the following six steps¹¹:

- Leadership and vision: a clear vision of what well-being means for each school. This is not a cookie-cutter approach; this needs to be developed by the senior leadership of a school.
- Strategy and management: a clear structure, with defined roles and responsibilities, to manage a well-being goal within a school's strategy with oversight of positive education programs.
- Community partnerships: The most influential schools develop partnerships with families and key experts in the field. They become beacons of hope in their communities.
- Measurement: If you treasure it, you will measure it! Developing effective well-being measures that align with whole school strategy provide schools with the tools to make informed decisions and track group trends over time.
- Evidence-based interventions: Schools should consult well-being literature to choose programs that clearly align with their definition of well-being and are consistent with the other defined goals and core values of their school culture.
- Communication: Schools should work well in advance to develop clear, consistent answers to the why, what, and how of well-being to bring the community along with them.

So, positive education is an education for well-being and academic accomplishment. It is systematic, challenging, creative, reflective, and intellectually demanding. It is an approach that encourages students to be self-aware and to develop self-regulation, optimism, strength of character, and connections with their peers.

¹⁰ <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-positive-education/>

¹¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positive-education/201511/where-is-the-education-in-positive-education>

Practices for strengthening the mental health of youth

Volunteering

Description

Volunteering is the act of a person who offers himself or herself for a service without taking any credit for it. You offer your services and your skills to the community, or to the world because you want it. You have that desire in your heart for helping anybody who need help and you offer it selflessness. Volunteering is a happy action, which you gain nothing else except respect and love.



Positive affirmations to others

Description

Positive affirmations are a powerful way to bring positive energy into your life and can result in life-changing results in any area of your life. They are an important aspect of positive thinking and are critical to the development of a positive mental attitude. To give affirmation is to positively assert approval of someone or something. A positive affirmation is a statement of something positive about another person, said with utmost conviction, belief and emotion. Our affirmation can be given in recognition of a person's skills, personality, or actions. The problem is that a lot of times we assume that others know how much we appreciate them. Then we fall

into the trap of expressing nothing meaningful about the value they add to our life. But it shouldn't be that way!

Yoga

Description

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Among the most well-known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and Rāja yoga.

Yoga Asanas Dos and Donts for Beginners



Improvisation theatre

Description

Improvisational theatre, often called improv or impro, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers. In its purest form, the dialogue, action, story, and characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds in present time, without use of an already prepared, written script.

Improvisational theatre exists in performance as a range of styles of improvisational comedy as well as some non-comedic theatrical performances. It is sometimes used in film and television, both to develop characters and scripts and occasionally as part of the final product.

Improvisational theatre often allows an interactive relationship with the audience. Improv groups frequently solicit suggestions from the audience as a source of inspiration, a way of getting the audience involved, and as a means of proving that the performance is not scripted.

Listening to music and singing

Description

Music is a big part of human nature. Whether it is signing, listening to music or playing an instrument, the engagement with music has tremendous benefits on our health. Check them out below.

Listening to music is an act very connected with the daily life. Whether it is at work, at home, when exercising or driving, our favourite music keeps us always a good company. But did you know that simply by listening to music you can improve your overall well being? In fact, there is strong evidence that listening to music can help you in the following:

1. Music Makes You Happier
2. Music Enhances Running Performance
3. Music Lowers Stress and Improves Health
4. Music Helps You Sleep Better
5. Music Reduces Depression
6. Music Helps You Eat Less
7. Music Elevates Your Mood While Driving
8. Music Strengthens Learning and Memory
9. Music Relaxes Patients Before/After Surgery
10. Music Reduces Pain
11. Music Helps Alzheimer's Patients Remember
12. Music Improves Recovery in Stroke Patients
13. Music Increases Verbal Intelligence
14. Music Raises IQ and Academic Performance
15. Music Keeps Your Brain Healthy in Old Age



Creative arts

Description

Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts (artworks), expressing the author's imaginative or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power. In their most general form these activities include the

production of works of art, the criticism of art, the study of the history of art, and the aesthetic dissemination of art.

The most recent sense of the word art is as an abbreviation for creative art or fine art which emerged in the early 17th century. Creative or fine art refers to a skill used to express the artist's creativity, or to engage the audience's aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of more refined or finer work of art.

Land art

Description

Land Art is creative and fun and can be done by anyone.

It involves making art and sculptures using materials you find in nature, such as leaves, twigs, pebbles, rocks, sand and shells.

You can make animals, patterns, circles, spirals, even life size outlines of you and your friends.



Whether you are at school, on holiday or just getting out and about Land Art can be done anywhere.

By spending the time making Land Art you will use your imagination, be creative, get some fresh air and learn all about nature and natural places.

You can learn about trees and leaves; pebbles and sea creatures; the seasons, cycles of life and so much more!

There is no better activity that combines creativity and learning; fun and exercise and opportunities to play and explore. Our world is full of wonderful natural places and Land Art will

help your children discover all about nature whilst expressing themselves and stimulating their minds in fantastic ways.

Soul poetry

Description

Each person has within, an artistic part which can play with images, words, feelings, senses. Most of us are unaware of this inner resource which can create through words powerful symphonies of dreams, hopes, love, sorrow, grief, joy and mystery. The notes that compose the symphonies are pieces from our depths, which are called by some, our SOUL.

Soul poetry is a simple way of accessing our profound thoughts, deep feelings, powerful visions. It is a way of being vulnerable and honest, grounded and open, simple and wise. It is a way of letting ourselves overwhelmed by the revelations of life. Soul poetry shouldn't be perceived as the mastery of specialized poets, but rather as a playground through which we can experience the beautiful realms of life. Thus, Soul poetry is for each and every one of us.

Journaling

Description

What does journaling entail? It's an amalgamation of personal, rational fact-based reporting along with an exploration of your sometimes-irrational, always-important inner feelings. There are some weeks where I'll journal every day and then there will be some stretches where I go a month without writing a single word. The thing about expressive writing and other types of journaling is that it's not just the act of processing your thoughts—something you could simply



do by thinking about them—that brings about these massive benefits. It's the act of writing itself that seems to produce these results.

Journaling can profoundly improve your well-being. The practice has very real physical health benefits for the people who do it. According to Dr. James Pennebaker, journaling strengthens immune cells called T-lymphocytes and has been shown to be associated with drops in depression, anxiety, and increases in positive mood, social engagement, and quality of close relationships.

Do something new

Description

You don't always need to partake in massive life altering experiences, around the world adventures or make drastic lifestyle changes to your routine to make a significant difference to your life. Although I'll never say no to an adventure, I'd like to think that long term change comes from your outlook on life. It's not necessarily where you are, but what you do with your time there. Change yourself from the inside first.

What I like about the whole 30 day challenge project is that you can make a massive difference to your life without having to spend loads of money, relocate or wait until the time is right. The majority of the 30 day challenge ideas I've listed here can be done anywhere — some of them for as little as five minutes a day.

Positive affirmations to yourself

Description

Do you get down on yourself easily, sometimes feel like you're not good enough, and just generally have a negative self image? Most of us tend to be really hard on ourselves and blow things out of proportion, unfortunately this negative thinking becomes habitual and will cause you to automatically block out everything positive.

Positive affirmations help you learn to love yourself. They train your mind to stop over-focusing on the negative and instead start seeing all the wonderful things that make you a beautiful and valuable human being.

**I am becoming more confident every
day**

[Go to a children's museum or an amusement park](#)

Description

Children's museums are institutions that provide exhibits and programs to stimulate informal learning experiences for children. In contrast with traditional museums that typically have a hands-off policy regarding exhibits, children's museums feature interactive exhibits that are designed to be manipulated by children. The theory behind such exhibits is that activity can be as educational as instruction, especially in early childhood. Most children's museums are nonprofit organizations, and many are run by volunteers or by very small professional staffs.

Centering

Description

Centering is one of the simplest and most common forms of contemplative practice. The "center" refers to a relaxed yet focused state of mind. Centering practice is especially helpful in the midst of strong emotional states such as excitement or anxiety, and is often used by athletes, public speakers, actors, and anyone who wants to feel stable and prepared before a potentially stressful event.

Anything that helps you feel tranquil and aware can become your centering practice.

Meditation

Description

Meditation is a practice where an individual operates or trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or for the mind to simply acknowledge its content without becoming identified with that content, or as an end in itself.

The term meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy or life force (qi, ki, prana, etc.) and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity, and forgiveness. A particularly ambitious form of



meditation aims at effortlessly sustained single-pointed concentration meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity.

Meditation often involves an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way. Meditation is often used to clear the mind and ease many health concerns, such as high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety. It may be done sitting, or in an active way—for instance, Buddhist monks involve awareness in their day-to-day activities as a form of mind-training. Prayer beads or other ritual objects are commonly used during meditation in order to keep track of or remind the practitioner about some aspect of that training.

THANK YOU FOR EXPLORING THIS SHORT BOOKLET.

**WE HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED IT AND YOU HAVE FOUND IT USEFUL FOR YOUR WORK
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.**

WE WISH YOU THE BEST IN YOUR WORK AND TO HAVE A GOOD MENTAL HEALTH.

Use it

FOR FREE

Distribute it

FOR FREE

Promote it

FOR FREE

Make the world better

FOR FREE

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