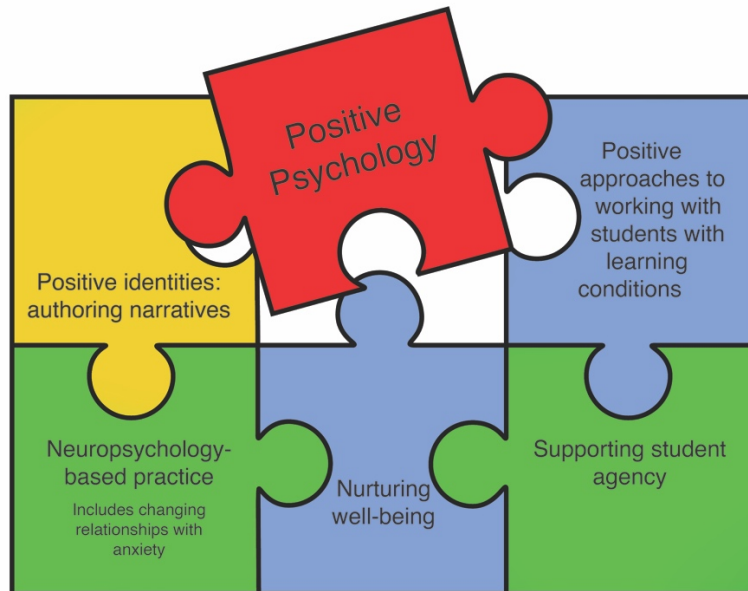


POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: FOUNDATION LEARNING 2020



Introduction

Positive Psychology allows children and teachers to flourish in classrooms characterised by regular and consistent positive interaction. A pivotal factor in the creation of positive classroom cultures is teachers' understanding of social and emotional learning and the development of practices that occasion positive discourse (Talvio & Lonka, 2019). The Positive Psychology Foundation Learning workshops are designed to support teachers to enhance their understandings of positive psychology and its social and emotional underpinnings. The sessions underscore the short and long term outcomes of taking positive approaches to supporting learning and well-being. We know that students who find their time at school to be positive are most likely to achieve well and are later more likely to enjoy strong physical and mental health (see Reynoud & Ou, 2010). Through shared exploration of *what is good* and *what is possible*, students and teachers can actively search beyond problem-saturated stories, focusing on the positive events in their lives and building on their unique strengths.

Positively Psychology Foundation Learning workshops cover a range of knowledge domains, each topic relating to positive experience and growth. At introductory workshops, topics are presented and briefly discussed. Once the topics have been introduced, participants may choose to delve more deeply on particular areas. Follow-up sessions in regions and schools are delivered as workshops and facilitated, interactive sessions designed to take positive theory to practice. The topics are listed below with a description of the content delivered in the introductory sessions followed by an outline of follow-up activity for topics selected for deeper professional learning.

1. Positive psychology

Introductory session

In the introductory workshop we explain that Positive Psychology focuses on what is good about the world and what makes life worth living (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive Psychology is described as practice that focuses on what is going well, not simply what is going wrong. When we engage in positive practice we ask, "What do we want?", and, "Of what do we want more?". It helps us to focus on capabilities and capacity rather than taking deficit perspectives that keep us caught in catch-up mode.

Follow-up sessions

Participants in the follow-up Positive Psychology workshops learn about the powerful role of repeated positive experience on learning and well-being. They discuss ways of creating positive school and classroom climates in which students can develop positive self-belief, optimism, strong sense of agency, resilience, trust in others and confidence in the world around them. In the follow-up workshops, teachers consider the value of balancing supports and challenges, of seeking success rather than avoiding failure. They discover ways to identify students' core strengths and social supports that serve as foundations for growing positive qualities and mindsets. Workshop participants work together to understand the influence of students' dynamic cultural contexts of development and the implications of these understandings for practice.

2. Nurturing well-being

Introductory session

Workshop participants are introduced to a 'Sphere of Well-being' (Annan, 2019) that can serve as a framework for understanding and supporting the well-being of students and adults. The Sphere of Well-being comprises core aspects of well-being, the experiences that support optimal growth and the meaning that young people and adults ascribe to their lives, relationships with others, the world and beyond. The Sphere framework can support teachers to focus their energies on aspects of well-being that can make a difference.

Follow-up sessions

In the follow-up sessions, participants learn more about each of the seven dimensions of the Sphere of Well-being and principles that can guide their practice in schools, classrooms or other settings where young people learning and grow. Participants will work with colleagues to consider the ways in which the principles can be applied in their everyday practice with students.

3. Neuropsychology-based practice

Includes changing relationships with anxiety

Introductory session

The introductory session provides an overview of the brain structure, its functioning and relationship with the mind and body. Participants learn about the way our knowledge of the way the brain learns and changes has grown significantly in recent times and how this has challenges some long-held assumptions. Of particular importance for learning and well-being is the notion of neuroplasticity and its relationship to events that are experienced as positive and negative. Participants will take a glimpse of the content of the first follow-up session, which focuses on the protective brain, its purpose and its propensity to overprotect.

First follow-up session

The first follow-up session will go into more detail about the functioning of the smart, protective and survival parts of the brain. In particular, participants will find out about the brain's response to stimuli it perceives as threatening. Time will be allowed for participants to discuss their observations of responses.

Second follow-up session

In the second follow-up session, participants will consider ways of supporting whole-brain functioning. They will discuss ways that neuroscience knowledge can be integrated into teaching and leading practices to circumvent fear-based approaches and guide students' and adults' energies to their learning activities. In addition to the workshops, this professional development opportunity may include in-depth work with small groups of teachers who wish to explore the application of neuroscience-based practices further.

4. Supporting student agency

Introductory Session

The first Student Agency session introduces an interactive notion of agency in which all those involved in learning and teaching are active. Teachers learn about the ways they can support students to exercise agency and the environmental conditions under which agency is possible. The concept of student agency is presented as multifaceted and contextually dependent. Participants can discuss the various ways in which agency can be observed and understood.

Follow-up session

Participants will review the interactive concept of agency, the conditions necessary for agency to occur and the teaching practices that have been found to support agency. The session will be largely interactive with participants exchanging ideas about ways that agency can be enhanced in classrooms and other educational environments.

5. Positive identities: authoring narratives

Introductory session

Narrative psychology is based on the premise that people live their lives in the stories that they and others hold about them and that their actions are closely aligned with these narratives. Teachers can have a significant influence on the way students view themselves as learners and participants in social environments. The self-stories that students develop through their experience with the world contribute to the way they approach their learning activity and their interactions with others. Recent neuroscience research has strongly supported narrative psychology and its positive, re-storying approaches to supporting young people.

Follow-up sessions

Workshops are available for teachers and school leaders to learn about the principles and practice of narrative psychology in schools. Teachers taking the re-storying workshops learn about accessing children's narratives using a range of methods to learn about their views of themselves as learners, their places in the world and their connections with others. Participants learn how to use these stories to support students along positive learning pathways, considering the journeys of individual students and their alliances with other students and adults. Teachers also consider how to simultaneously create nurturing, consistent learning environments that support students to approach learning activity with stories of optimism and purpose. Narrative workshops can be supplemented by support for teachers in the implementation of the approach.

6. Positive approaches to working with students with learning conditions

Introductory sessions

The introductory session considers various neurodevelopmental disorders, focusing on those most commonly encountered in schools. This interactive session allows participants to find out about the characteristic of each condition, its diagnosis and ways to support students with the conditions. Participants will consider the role of neuroplasticity and positive experience in supporting students.

Follow-up sessions

Participants will select particular disorders that affect the learning and well-being of children. During the sessions, participants will learn about the principles that guide them to create environments that positively support students affected by the selected conditions.

References

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