

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY



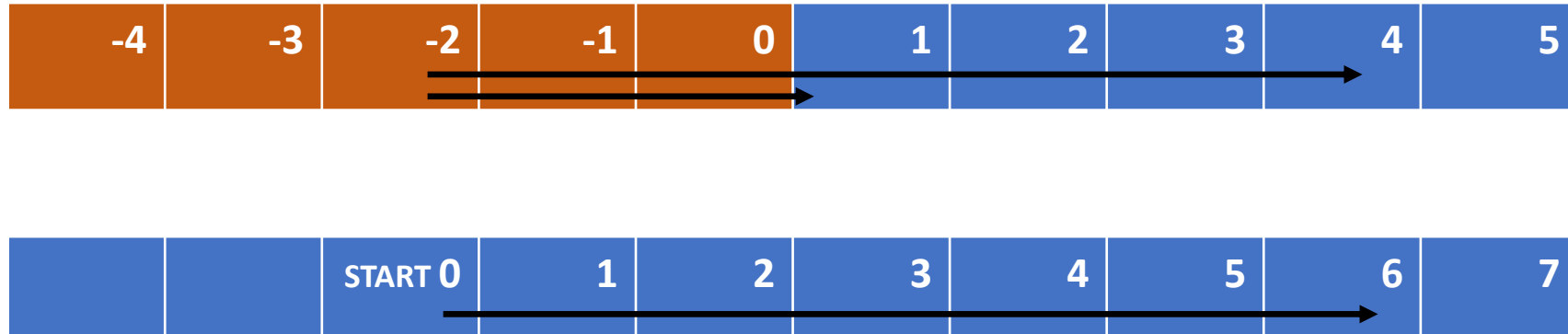
Introduction

What is positive psychology?

Positive Psychology is about what makes life rewarding and worth living.

- Casts light on what is going well, not simply what is going wrong
- Emphasises capabilities and capacity rather than deficits and catch-up
- Positive practice means persistently viewing events from a positive perspective.





Appreciative vs Deficit focus

- Negative or positive views of starting points and directions
- Focusing on what is valued, what is working, what are we passionate about, what we *do* want.
- Building on foundations of strength rather than focusing on and remediating deficiencies.

Benefits of positive experiences

- Positive neural pathways
- Repeated, positive experience increases trust and optimism
- Increased self-esteem
- Strong sense of self and other
- Opportunities to develop empathy
- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Increased academic performance
- Reduced anxiety and depression





Positive attributes

- Optimism/positive vision/hope
- Gratitude
- Trust
- Empathy, kindness and goodwill
- Flow – engagement
- Resilience
- Sense of accomplishment

Positive Schools

1. **Visualisation** - positive futures
2. **Focus** on positive aspects. Reducing negative responses is an *indirect* outcome.
3. **Integration** of positive approaches blended into everyday practice.
4. **Persistence** with positive approaches – even when behaviours spontaneously reoccur.
5. **Community** engagement with broad dynamic context. Positive, meaningful experiences for students, teachers and family/whanau.

Focusing on positive events

- Schools grow in the direction in which they focus.
- A focus on only reducing or avoiding problems places us in a vacuum with nowhere to go
- Ask, "What do we want?", "What do we want more of?", "What is our foundation of strength?"
- Narrative approaches build on the positive, 'sparkling' moments that are often departures from dominantly negative stories.



Context, subjectivity and positive experience

- What is positive for each individual?
- What is positive for the wider group/greater good?
- What are the various notions of positive experience held by interested parties?
- Need to understand social and cultural variations about what is valued as positive
- Positive experience is related to past, present and future.



Step one ...

Listen to and acknowledge current stories.

Overwhelming research support

Three of hundreds of examples:

Waters (2011), Australia, reviewed 12 school-based programmes

- Improvements in students' well-being, relationships and academic performance

Marquest, Lopez & Pais-Ribiero (2009), Portugal

- Gains in hope, life-satisfaction, self-worth after a short intervention were found to be sustained 18 months later.

Shoshan & Steinmetz (2013), Israel, 2 year programme, 537 adolescents

- Decreases in stress, anxiety, depression and sensitivity symptoms
- Increases in self-esteem, self-efficacy and optimism
- Control group, increases in general distress , anxiety and depression

Video – What is positive psychology

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qJvS8v0TTI>