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# My interest in positive psychology....

## **As a clinical psychologist:**

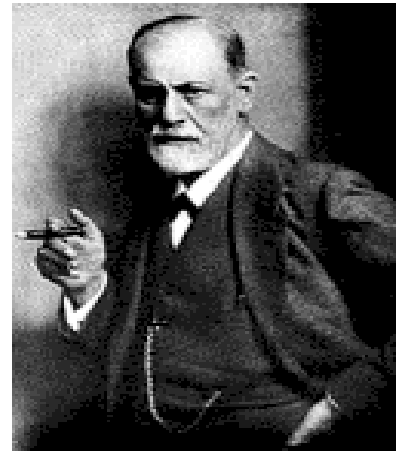
acute awareness of high rates of depression, anxiety & stress in the community and stigma associated with help seeking...

- **As a coaching psychologist:** mental health prevention & promotion

# Traditional psychology

- For those that broken, in pain or a state of angst...
- Suffered a "nervous breakdown" ...
- Learn "life skills" when need help.
- Focus on reducing negative emotions ie depression, anxiety, anger.
- Even today....referral to psychologist when have a "diagnosable disorder"

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# A long history....

- Rogers (1951) The fully functioning person
- Jahoda (1958) Mental Health
- Allport (1961) Mature Individuality
- Erikson (1963) Stages of Development
- Maslow (1954-1971) Self Actualisation
- Vaillant (1977) Positive Defenses & Exceptional Performance
- Deci & Ryan (1985) Self Determination Theory
- Csikszentmihalyi (1990) Flow – Optimal Experience
- Ryff & Singer (1996) Psychological Well-Being
- Seligman (1991-2006) Learned Helplessness, Optimism, Authentic Happiness

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# Relevance to practicing psychologists?

- Professional practicing psychologists have a role to play not just in providing treatment but also for prevention of mental illness and mental health promotion.
- Applied positive psychology will enable you to enhance your own & others personal & professional lives.



# Tonight's aim...

- To provide an introduction to Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology and highlight relevance in psychological practice generally
- To stimulate your thinking around opportunities!



# What is coaching psychology?



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# What is coaching psychology?

- Coaching Psychology involves the application of the research, theory and practice of the behavioural science of psychology to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and personal growth of normal (ie non-clinical) populations
- *Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney*





# What is coaching psychology?

- Executive & Leadership Coaching
- Workplace Coaching
- Life/Personal Coaching
- Career Coaching
- Health Coaching
- Retirement Coaching
- Relationship Coaching
- + more....

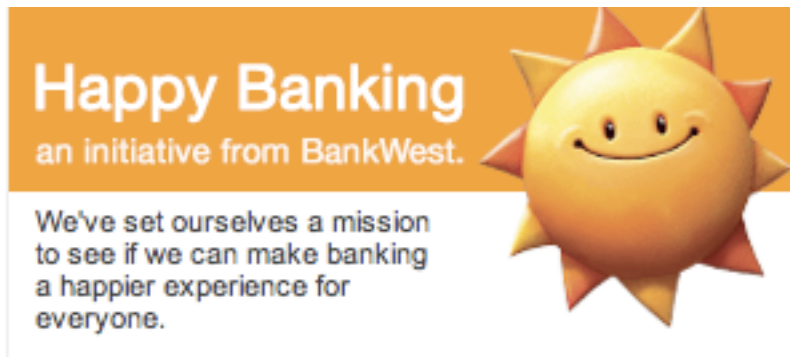
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# What is positive psychology?



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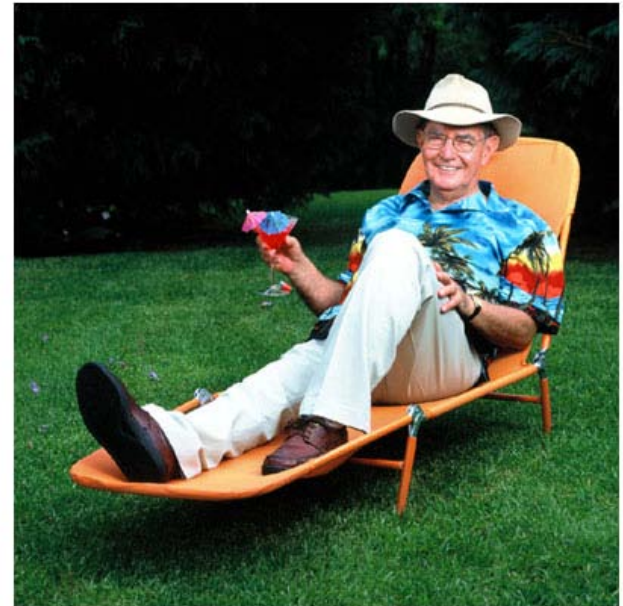
I'll have what she's having!



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# What is positive psychology?

- The study of what we're doing when we're not frittering our lives away..."
- Peterson (2006)



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# What is positive psychology?

Positive Psychology works to promote optimal functioning across the full range of human functioning, from disorder and distress to health and fulfilment.


- (Linley & Joseph, 2004)



# What is positive psychology?

- The purpose of Positive Psychology is to understand and promote the human strengths that enable individuals & communities to thrive.
- Founded on the belief that individuals want to lead meaningful & fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within ourselves & to enhance our experiences of love and work.





# What is applied positive psychology?

- Applied positive psychology, which includes coaching, is the application of positive psychology research to the facilitation of optimal functioning.
- *Linley & Joseph, 2004*



# Positive psychology constructs

- Character Strengths
- Positive Emotions, Happiness & Well-Being
- Forgiveness
- Courage
- Creativity
- Elevation
- Wisdom
- Hope
- & many others.....



# Strengths-based psychology

*"I do not believe that you should devote overly much effort to correcting your weaknesses. Rather, I believe that the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction comes from building and using your signature strengths."*

Martin Seligman



# A positive introduction...

- Tell a story to the person next to you about an event in your life that showed YOU at your very BEST! Take turns.
- Don't allow modesty to stifle the truth!
- As a listener, listen appreciatively.
- Respond in a way that builds on what has been said.



# Strengths assessment

- Within positive psychology, strengths assessment is a key area of research.
- Since the publication of the VIA in 2004, further research conducted.
- See [www.viastrengths.org](http://www.viastrengths.org) or [www.authentic happiness.org](http://www.authentic happiness.org)



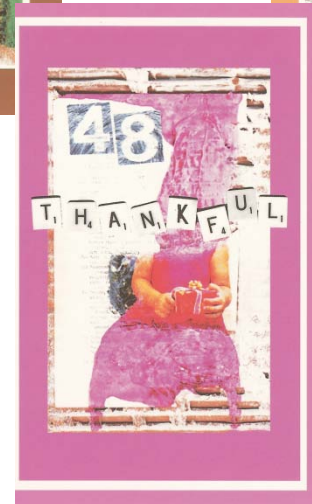
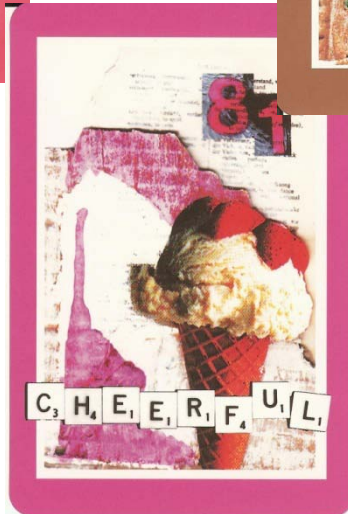
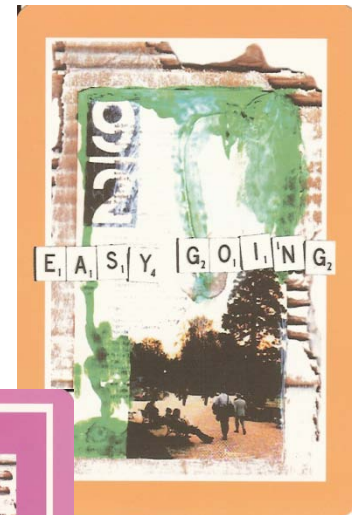
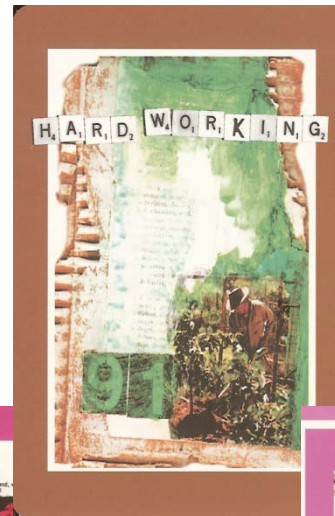
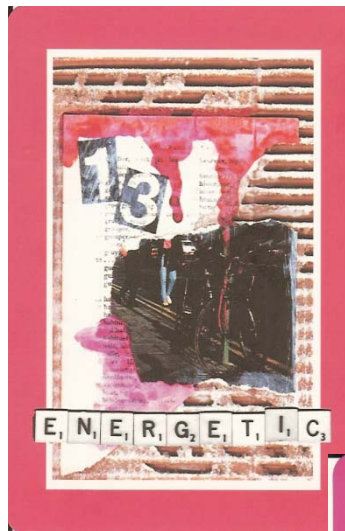
# Character strengths

- Character Strengths & Virtues
- (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
- 6 virtues, 24 strengths.
- VIA Strengths Inventory
- Top 5 signature strengths.
- Drawing on these strengths and using them in novel ways!



# Strengths in a box..

[www.hollyhoxpositiveresources.com](http://www.hollyhoxpositiveresources.com)



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# Evidence-based coaching: Applied positive psychology

There is considerable evidence that a critical factor influencing transfer of training is the extent to which the trainee receives the opportunity for practice and constructive feedback....

Research has shown that training plus follow-up coaching leads to increased productivity...

Olivero, G et al., "Executive Training as Transfer of Training Tool: Effects on Productivity in a Public Agency", *Public Personnel Management*, 26 (4), 1997, p461-469.

# Why positive psychology?



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# Why positive psychology?

- Mental health prevention & promotion
- Building positive emotions as a buffer against negative emotions
- Evidence-based strategies to enhance psychological resilience
- Mental health immunisations!



# Creating flourishing lives...

"To live is the rarest thing in the world.  
Most people exist, that is all"

*Oscar Wilde*

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# Languishing

- Defined as a state in which an individual is devoid of positive emotion toward life, is not functioning well psychologically or socially, and has not been depressed during the past year.
- A life of quiet despair.



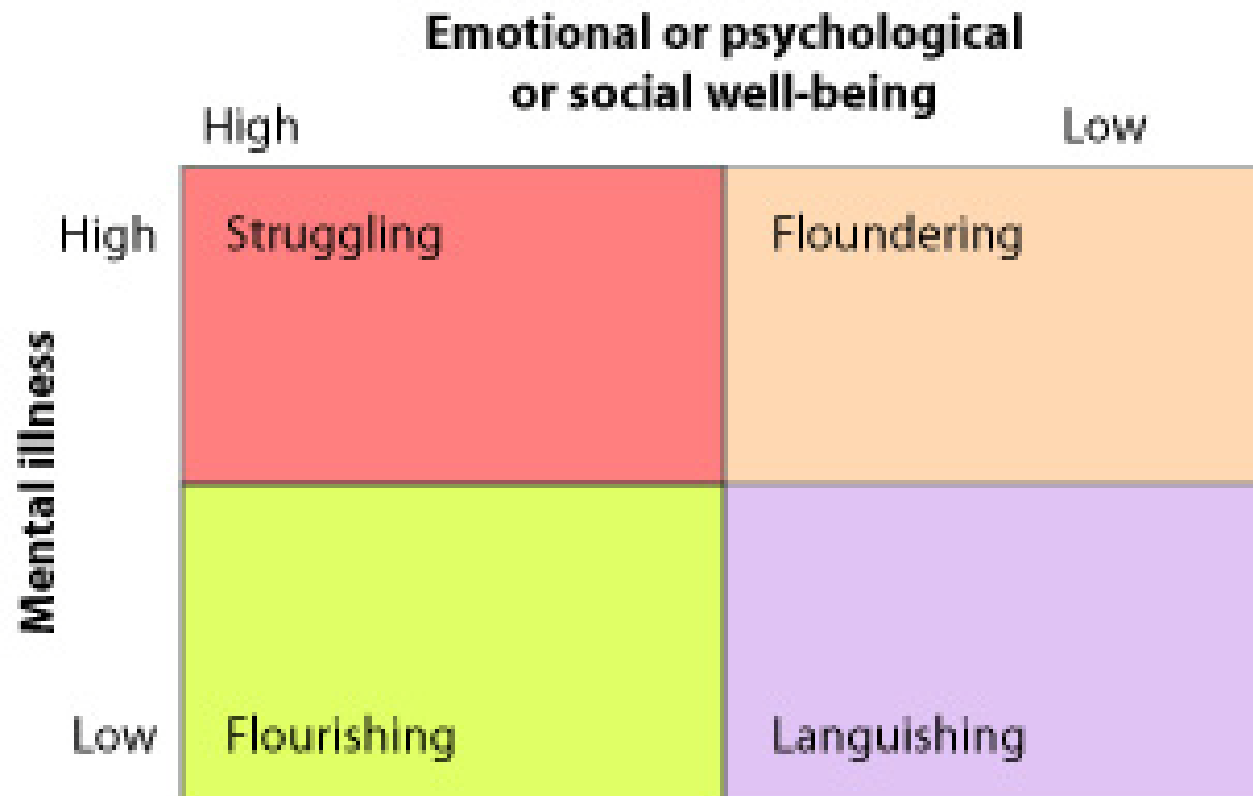


# Flourishing

- Defined as a state in which an individual feels positive emotion toward life and is functioning well psychologically and socially.
- Flourishers have excellent emotional health, miss fewer days off work and have fewer physical limitations in their daily lives.

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# Languishing or Flourishing?



Keyes, 2003

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# Three roads to the “good life”

<b><i>The Pleasurable Life</i></b>	Enhanced Positive Emotions
<b><i>The Engaged Life</i></b>	Enhanced Flow & Mindfulness
<b><i>The Meaningful Life</i></b>	Enhanced Meaning & Purpose in Life

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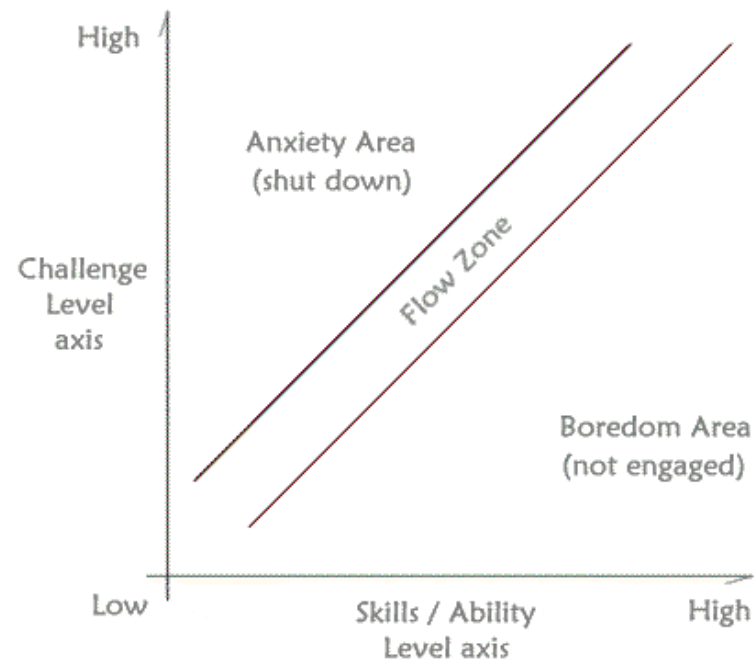
# Increasing positive emotions

- 3:1 Ratio of a flourishing individual (Keyes)
- Broaden & Build theory (Fredrickson, 1998)
- Normalise all emotions
- Managing “negative” emotions
- Enhancing “positive” emotions eg gratitude, positive reminiscing, taking care of your body, nurturing relationships, increasing optimism

# Increasing engagement

- Increasing “Flow” (Csikszentmihalyi)
- Increasing levels of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, Linehan etc)

Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi)



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# Increasing meaning

- Work as a job, career or calling (Wrszniewski)
- An “authentic vocation”
- Life purpose
- Setting and striving for self-concordant goals
- Living authentically





# A flourishing example!

- “Jane” - a 36 yo married woman, no children, small business owner.
- *Issues:* Health, Career, Relationship
- *Pre-coaching:* dissatisfied on SWLS.
- *Goal:* To develop a strategic life plan designed to enhance life satisfaction (period: 3 months).

# A flourishing example!

**Strategies Used:** Values Identification (Life & Work), VIA (strengths assessment), Letter from the Future (best possible self); authentic goal-setting; development of an ideal week; health & fitness regime implemented (dietitian consulted), count your blessings (husband commenced also); random act of kindness (increased mindfulness); forgiveness (mother & sister); strengths coaching; C-B coaching; narrative coaching (hope enhancement).

# A flourishing example!

## Outcomes

- ◆ Post-coaching - satisfied on SWLS.
- ◆ Enhanced relationship with mother & sister;
- ◆ Sense of abundance - rather than deprivation;
- ◆ Increased intrinsic motivation for work/life (health in particular);
- ◆ Increased physical outcomes - wt loss & increased vitality;
- ◆ Clarity re career development
- ◆ Clarity re relationship - shared vision & enhanced relationship satisfaction.

# What can you do now?

- Focus on solutions and strengths
- Undertake the VIA Strengths Inventory - [www.authenticappiness.org](http://www.authenticappiness.org)
- Use with clients!
- Increase your knowledge of PP & EBC!
- Broaden your practice to work with the full range of human functioning!
- PP in Clinical, Counselling & Coaching Practice



# Final comments...

- Consider positive psychology as a foundation for creating a flourishing life for yourself, your clients and your practice!
- Consider what you're already doing that can be considered PP eg strength based & solution focused approaches
- Consider further training in PP and EBC
- Create a journal club (or utilise group supervision) to assist in embracing positive psychology!

# Resources

- [www.drsuzy.com.au](http://www.drsuzy.com.au)
- [www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu](http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu)
- [www.centreforconfidence.co.uk](http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk)
- [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org)
- [www.reflectivehappiness.org](http://www.reflectivehappiness.org)
- [www.cappeu.org](http://www.cappeu.org)



# Thank you...

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