



HAPPINESS COACH CERTIFICATION COURSE
MODULE 1

Module 1:

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY (SESSION 1 = SUMMARY AND RAISING AWARENESS)

This module will teach you about the basics of positive psychology. For those who already have an awareness of this practice, the tools we will put in place here will provide an opportunity to enhance your skills.

Each module is a lesson on a particular subject of positive psychology that you should approach with your clients. We recommend that you follow the sessions in their set order and space them out by at least a week.

We also recommend you practice this program on yourself and your daily life. This is essential to understand how the principles work and then apply them in your work with others. Knowing your positive psychology profile, confronting your sense of 'self,' and trying out the exercises on your own are all equally essential concepts for developing your skills as a Positive Psychology practitioner.

At the end of this module, we will give you an example of a typical session that you should go through with your client. Please feel free to modify this in line with your preferences, methods, and the profile of the person you are coaching. Being adaptable in your approach is an essential strength for any positive psychology practitioner.

Positive psychology allows people to live happier lives and feel more comfortable in their own skin. Taking steps toward self-improvement requires true work on oneself; however, progress will be noticeable daily, and you will enjoy seeing this become embedded in your life before teaching these skills and helping others.

We hope you have a great coaching experience, and we thank you for choosing us!

Introduction

You will very likely have heard about positive psychology before. Over the last 10 or 15 years, the subject has become a very fashionable topic.

Searching for “positive psychology” on Google delivers over 4,720,000,000 hits (no, there is no extra zero added to this figure!). However, this growing popularity has ended up causing great confusion on the subject.

This means that now more than ever, it is critical to understand what positive psychology is, and what it is not. In the section below, we will define positive psychology in clear terms.

What is positive psychology?

Positive psychology studies what gives **meaning to our life**. It empowers us to make our lives purposeful, happy, and well-rounded on a daily basis. **Positive psychology** is a discipline of **psychology** that was officially founded in 1998 (upon the annual congress of the **American Association of Psychology**) by its president at the time, Martin E. P. Seligman.

This is a **science** that studies what makes life more satisfying. Like every science, the approach requires the testing of theories to draw scientific evidence and conclusions.

This means it is not a secret, mysterious discipline that cannot be explained or leaves much room for ambiguity. Positive psychology is based on measurable results observed through various studies that

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have been carried out over the last 20 years. It uses numerous tools and questionnaires to analyze the different pillars that comprise it.

NB: This notion must be clearly communicated to your clients. You must insist that this is a science-backed up by measurable statistics and countless studies conducted by professionals in their field.

Overall, positive psychology aims **to improve daily well-being**, which, according to Seligman, is expressed in terms of the following five pillars:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Interpersonal relationships
- The meaning and purpose of life
- Accomplishments

In no way does this science aim to ask questions like:

- “What’s the matter with you?”
- “What’s causing you a problem and making you unhappy?”
- “What life factors are preventing you from being a well-rounded person?”

The initial aim is to make your client's daily life happier and more purposeful. Therefore, the following question is key to positive psychology:

“What’s going well for you?”

This question perfectly summarizes positive psychology, and you must convey this to your client. Seligman's following quote perfectly illustrates this philosophy: “There are two complementary strategies to improve the human condition. One is to ease someone’s situation, to help them let go of what’s not working. The other is to reinforce the positives.”

This is how positive psychology complements classical psychology. The latter mainly focuses on the first strategy (easing). On the other hand, positive psychology focuses on the second strategy (reinforcing the positives).

For decades, classical psychology has strongly revolved around removing suffering without really taking an interest in harnessing positive emotions. Seligman’s aim is not to substitute classical psychology with positive psychology but rather, alongside the classical approach, to build a more complete representation of human experience.

This means being able to take a break from activities and listen to your own thoughts. It means taking time to say “stop” and to take account of one’s feelings and emotions.

Putting this into practice – Recognition and awareness

Start by completing this exercise yourself, then, ask your client to put it into practice during this first session. Afterward, ask them to do this exercise every day before your next meeting.

★ The objective to communicate to your client

This initial exercise aims to familiarize you with internal listening. Being able to tune in with your emotional state in the present moment is the basis of positive psychology. You should aim to repeat this exercise regularly.

★ Instructions for your client

Without being analytical or judgmental, take a pen and piece of paper and write down how you feel right now. Write down a few words or phrases about your feelings, sensations, and emotions, allowing yourself to go into detail on the physical and mental aspects of your experience. This could be, for example: “I feel relaxed, I’ve had a good day, I’m enjoying the time I’m spending on this learning exercise and coaching. I’m keen on learning new things and putting them into practice so I can live as happy a life as possible. I feel energetic, and I know I’m making progress.”

The keys of theory and research

Since its inception, positive psychology has been built around numerous research subjects: **happiness, optimism, self-esteem, well-being, motivation, the sense of “flow,” character traits and virtues, hope, resilience and meditation, awareness, and positive thinking.**

This theory focuses on three timeframes:

- The past (**well-being and satisfaction**),
- The present (**happiness and the sense of “flow”**),
- The future (**hope and optimism**).

These fields of research form the basis for our actions that aim to improve happiness and well-being. These actions will apply to different areas of our daily life, including education, human resources, functional organization, health, therapy, and professional direction.

Putting this into practice – Becoming familiar with the concept of time

Complete this exercise yourself, so it becomes ingrained in you. Additionally, ask your client to complete the exercise from home every day before you meet with them.

★ Answer the three following questions

➤ Over the last few days, think of the situations that gave you the most satisfaction and sense of well-being. For example, this could be the satisfaction you felt after your last run/jog or yoga session.

➤ Right now, how do you feel? Happy? Stressed? Tired? Anxious? Invigorated? Use adjectives to simply describe how you feel here and now in the present moment.

➤ What action, activity or event do you have coming up that you are already feeling happy and enthusiastic about simply when thinking about it? For example: a meal arranged with your best friend or plans to go to the cinema with your partner.

The authentic theory of happiness

Seligman was interested in the theory of happiness and discussed it at length as part of the basis of positive psychology. He believed that happiness is connected to 3 types of experiences:

- A nice, pleasant life
- An engaged life
- An interesting life, full of meaning

We will now take a look at these concepts in detail:

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★ A nice, pleasant life

This is all about feeling positive and pleasant emotions frequently in daily life. For example, the enjoyment experienced through eating hand-made ice cream or surfing a large wave at the beach. Improving your happiness through these types of activities takes the least amount of effort out of the three concepts.

★ An engaged life

Engagement is characterized by the sense of “flow”. This theory sets out that people are happiest when they live in a state known as the “flow” or having an *optimal experience, being entirely immersed in an activity*. This state is characterized by a feeling of energetic concentration, full of involvement and pleasure.

This is a bit like the feeling experienced by artists who “get lost” in their work and who are so immersed in their activity that they may even forget to eat, drink or sleep. When you are in this state, there are no thoughts at all. We can achieve this feeling while doing activities such as work, dance, playing, running, or gardening.

For this sense of “flow” to arise, we need to use our strengths of character to set challenges for ourselves. Logically, activities with a precise aim and a clear means of observing progress create even more of a sense of “flow” as we see them through to their completion.

Contrary to a nice, pleasant life, this type of happiness requires more effort but also brings more satisfaction overall.

★ An interesting life, full of meaning

Activities leading to an intense sense of “flow” can sometimes feel mindless or repetitive. The individual can even feel a void after having spent a lot of time in this state. For example, after having been absorbed in a difficult problem for several hours, we might have the feeling that we have totally wasted our time. To maintain a sense of meaning, people need to be engaged in something with a goal that is bigger than themselves. Some examples of this are religion, politics or a charitable cause that seeks to help others.

Putting this into practice – Raising awareness about positive psychology

This exercise allows you to take stock of the previous concepts we have discussed. We advise you to ask your client these 3 questions and to note them down on a piece of paper.

★ Answer the following 3 questions

Name an activity that you like to do and that gives you really positive feelings:

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Name an activity or pastime that gives you the sense of "flow":

Name an activity where you feel engaged and have a sense of purpose:

The theory of well-being

Unlike the previous theory, this theory encourages the pursuit of a long-term sense of overall well-being instead of a pursuit of short-term gratification. After all, there are many worthwhile pursuits in life that do not necessarily bring happiness right away. The perfect example of this is the birth of a child. Parents sometimes describe stages when they experience little happiness, while they can still say that overall, their general feelings of well-being have become markedly increased over time.

Therefore, departing from this observation, Seligman described **five factors that influence well-being**:

- **Positive emotions:** joy, fun, gratitude, hope, interest, inspiration, pride, serenity, wonder.
- **Engagement:** with a spouse or a loved one, within your family, as part of a club or community, etc.
- **Positive human relationships**
- **A meaning to life and a sense of purpose:** having goals, objectives and projects that serve a higher purpose than yourself.
- **Accomplishment:** reaching your objectives, seeing your projects through to the end...

In contrast to the theory of happiness stated above, where character strengths and qualities are only needed when there is a sense of "flow", here they are essential to improve the five factors that influence well-being. Thanks to your character strengths, you will be able to influence these five factors and take control of the levels of satisfaction that you feel in your life.

The state of ultimate well-being ultimately leads an individual to a state of profound fulfillment. This state can be described as a feeling of strength, vitality, and prosperity. You love the life you lead, and it brings you satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment.

★ Activity

Take time to explain this theory to your client. You can use the following example for inspiration:

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“Sandra, your well-being depends on five factors overall. The first relates to your positive emotions. This could be the happiness that you felt when your husband brought you flowers when coming home from work or the gratitude you felt towards your best friend when they helped you move into a new home.

All these emotions contribute to your overall sense of well-being. The second is your overall engagement with your surroundings. The third includes your relationships with the people around you. The fourth is the meaning of your life (your projects, your goals...), the fact that you feel purposeful and are contributing to others’ happiness. The last is achieving your objectives.

All our work together involves working on these five points. Is that clear? Now, we’re going to carry out an exercise to illustrate these different concepts. To do this, I’m going to ask you to answer the following questions.”

Putting this into practice – Raising awareness about positive emotions

Circle the three positive emotions that you believe bring you the most happiness:

- Joy
- Recognition/gratitude
- Serenity
- Interest/Curiosity
- Hope
- Pride
- Fun
- Inspiration
- Admiration
- Love

Think about the people who make up your close circle of friends and family. Write down the names of three people who bring you the most happiness and feelings of joy. Next to their name, write down three words or adjectives that describe your relationship with these people.

★ For example

Sarah: Love, Serenity, Joy.

_____ : _____
_____ : _____
_____ : _____

Now, note down a long-term objective that motivates you on a daily basis:

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★ For example

Being able to run 10 kilometers without stopping by the end of the month.

Character strengths and virtues

Character strengths and virtues are the building blocks that allow you to build your sense of “flow”, happiness, and well-being. There are six universal virtues (as we call them) and each virtue breaks down into different character strengths. These are what characterize you and define your personality. Each strength corresponds to a predisposition to think, feel, and act in an authentic and energizing way. It is important to note that **we have 100 times more to gain by building on our strengths than correcting our weaknesses.**

Positive psychology does not set out to conceal unpleasant or unwanted emotions. The idea is to build on the positives and use them to our maximum benefit rather than focusing on our weaknesses. All the energy that we would normally use to correct our weaknesses is now being channeled to highlight our best qualities.

We will come back to this in more detail in the next module.

20 positive and inspiring quotations

At the end of the session, we recommend that you print out these quotations and give them to your clients so they can read them whenever they need inspiration.

“Life isn’t about waiting until the storms pass, but about learning to dance in the rain.” Vivian Greene

“Accept the present, let go of the past, have confidence in the future.” Buddha

“If there’s a problem, there’s a solution. If there’s no solution, then there’s no problem.”

“If you can dream it, you can do it.” Walt Disney

“The happiest people don’t have the best. They simply make the best of what they have.”

“Where your talents and the world’s needs cross, there is your calling.” Aristotle

“Don’t search for happiness but look to create it.”

“Believe in your dreams and they may come true. Believe in yourself and they will come true.” Martin Luther King

“Life is like a bicycle; to keep your balance, you need to keep moving.” Albert Einstein

“We always have a choice. We are even the sum of our choices.” Joseph O’Connor

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“The man who’s the master of himself is more powerful than the man who’s the master of the world.” Buddha

“There are two ways of thinking. One is believing that miracles do not happen. The other is believing that everything is a miracle.” Albert Einstein

“A journey to thousands of places always starts with a first step.” Lao Tseu

“When getting up in the morning, remind yourself how precious it is to have the privilege of being alive, breathing and being happy.” Marcus Aurelius

“Don’t worry about failure. Ask yourself what you’d lose if you didn’t even try.” Jack Canfield

“If I had nine hours to cut down a tree, I’d spend six hours sharpening my axe.” Abraham Lincoln.

“Don’t wait to be happy until you smile. Rather, smile so that you’re happy.”

“What we really are is the result of our thoughts.” Buddha.

“When life gives you reasons to cry, show life that you have 1000 reasons to smile.”

“When you dare to do something, you may often be mistaken. When you do not even dare, you are always mistaken.” Romain Rolland.

“When you look in the right direction, you can only move forward.” Buddhist proverb.

General practical exercise – Create your client’s profile

Here is a form that will help you to build your client’s profile. We advise that you choose between two options:

- 1) Ask your client direct questions during your first session. If you do not feel comfortable with this, we advise you to take option two.*
- 2) Send your client these questions by email. You can ask them to reply and send you this form back on the same day or the following day.*

Who are you? What are the qualities and characteristics that define you? Note down at least five characteristics (*this question allows you to define self-esteem*).

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Which activities or situations make you feel the most positive emotions? Note down at least three examples.

Do you like learning new things? Here, write down a list of areas that interest you that you would like to learn more about (*engagement, interest*).

What is your happiness rating? Write down a number between 0-10, with 0 being a state of depression and profound sadness and 10 being a state of the most profound happiness you can imagine (*positive emotions*).

Do you think you are more of an optimist? Note down at least three challenges that you have encountered in your life and have succeeded in overcoming (*optimism and self-determination*).

Do you think you have true friends you can count on? List the people in your circle who you think are part of this category (*positive relationships*).

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Are you someone who takes care of yourself and considers yourself a healthy person? (*vitality*)

Answering these questions will help you to build an initial profile. It will bring out the positive ideas that your client has about their own life. Collecting this information now will help you in your later sessions. At the end of this module, your client should be more familiar with positive psychology, what it comprises and what it takes to live a happy and well-rounded life. You will also be able to take time to ask yourself these very same questions.

In conclusion, for this lesson, here is the work to give your client in the weeks to come. The goal is to teach them to focus on the positives in their life and to become accustomed to the daily practice of positive psychology.

Putting this into practice: The little notebook of pleasures and happiness

Here are some tips to give your client:

Buy a notebook and write down what gives you pleasure every day. As soon as something in your day gives you pleasure, write it down in your notebook. Do this freely without harboring any reticence or passing judgment on yourself.

Example - Day 1:

Taking pleasure in my shower this morning,

My friend made me coffee when I came into the kitchen,

A beam of sunlight warmed my face when I opened the front door,

I really enjoyed the piece of chocolate cake that I had this morning.

Completing the debriefing session:

We suggest you approach the first session as follows:

- Gather your client's personal information to create their personal profile.
- Ask your client three questions: "Why have you come for a consultation today? What's your aim? What are your objectives?"
- Repeat their answers back to them so they know you have understood and listened to them.
- Explain to them (as we've explained to you here) the basics of positive psychology.

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- Complete the exercises with them, explaining that their first objective is really to understand the definition of Positive Psychology and what comprises it.
- Give them the exercises to complete before your next session.
- Ask them to concentrate on the positives in their life as much as possible instead of trying to correct the negatives.