

**Code**

POS2003

**ECTS-credits**

7.5

**Organisational unit**

Center for European Studies

**Coordinator**

Elke Smeets

**Description**

POS2003 – Positive Psychology

Positive psychology was introduced by Martin Seligman around 2000 and can be viewed as a supplementary approach to clinical psychology. The positive psychological movement formulated three aims: (1) to focus on well-being and happiness instead of abnormal behaviour and psychopathology, (2) to be concerned with building positive qualities and strengths instead of repairing damage and (3) to prevent future problems instead of correcting past and present problems.

The course will start with a general introduction to the field of positive psychology. The main concepts will be introduced and clarified, and an overview of the results of happiness studies will be presented. In subsequent meetings, various more specific topics will be discussed by means of lectures and group discussions. There will be ample room to gain hands on experience with positive psychological techniques ranging from simple journaling exercises to mindfulness meditation. A scientific evidence-based approach will be leading. We will provide participant with the tools to be able to evaluate and design research in the area of positive psychology, but also with the skills to apply some (basic) intervention techniques.

The instructional approach will include lectures, interactive meetings, group discussions, practical workshops and student presentations. Final assessment will be by means of an individual paper on a topic of choice. On the last day of the course a student conference is held where each students presents his paper (review or research proposal) either by poster or through an oral presentation. Halfway through the course an abstract has to be handed in on the basis of which a selection of candidates for oral presentations will be made.

This intensive 3 week, 36 hour course includes cultural excursions to Brussels and Amsterdam over the weekends.

Disclaimer trips: trips and visits related to the course are conditional. E.g. Dutch travel advice should be positive regarding the region that will be visited and institutions should be

able to accept visitors. In case a proposed trip or visit cannot continue due to circumstances, alternatives may be organized.

Disclaimer ECTS: the number of ECTS credits earned after successfully concluding this course is the equivalent of 7,5 ECTS credits respectively according to Maastricht University's guidelines. Please consult with your home university if these credits will be accepted as part of your programme and, if necessary, converted to the credit system acknowledged by your home university.

### Goals

This programme is intended to familiarise students with the concepts and ideas of positive psychology; provide in depth knowledge on selected topics within the field; be able to judge and design a positive psychological research project; and to give students hands on experience with some of the positive psychology intervention techniques.

### Instruction language

EN

### Prerequisites

This Positive Psychology course is a unique international study opportunity for psychology students. Maastricht's psychology faculty is world-renowned, and you will experience not only world-class instruction but get insight into what is internationally a truly 'hot topic'.

### Recommend literature

Students are strongly encouraged to search for their own literature at the university library where they have a large number of relevant articles and books at their disposal. If you are interested in buying a textbook, we recommend one of the following (please note that it is not mandatory to buy one of these books. The books below are suggested readings):

Positive Psychology: Theory, Research And Applications by Kate Hefferon & Ilona Boniwell (2011) ISBN-10: 0335241956 | ISBN-13: 978-0335241958

Applied Positive Psychology: Improving Everyday Life, Health, Schools, Work, and Society by Stewart I. Donaldson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jeanne Nakamura (2011) ISBN-10: 0415877822 | ISBN-13: 978-0415877824

Positive Psychology in Practice by P. Alex Linley, Stephen Joseph (2004) ISBN-10: 0471459062 | ISBN-13: 978-0471459064

### Teaching methods

▪ Assignments ▪ Lectures ▪ Papers ▪ PBL ▪ Presentations ▪ Work in subgroups

### Assessment methods

▪ Assignment ▪ Final paper ▪ Presentation

# POS2003 - Positive Psychology

Course Manual



Center for European Studies  
Maastricht University  
Maastricht, The Netherlands

Center for European Studies



# Introduction

## Positive Psychology

The question "what is wrong with people" has guided the thinking of many psychologists and dominated countless scientific studies during the 20th century. It is hard to deny that this entails an important question. In our attempts to answer the question, we have gained more understanding of many illnesses and have developed effective treatments for a wide range of problems. However, as an inevitable consequence of our focus on the negative aspects of well-being and health, such as distress and disease, we developed an almost exclusive attention to pathology. Scientific psychology focused disproportionately on pathology and repair, and devoted relatively little attention to factors that "make life worth living."

As the 21st century unfolds, however, we are beginning to ask a different question: "What is right about people?" This question is at the heart of positive psychology, which is the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning. Positive psychology is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); mindfulness, flow and happiness (in the present); and hope and optimism (for the future). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, 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. Note, however, that positive psychology is not the focus of the positive at the expense of the negative. Positive psychologists recognize negative emotions, failure, problems, and other unpleasantness as natural and important aspects of life.



Research on positive psychology aims to investigate what actions lead to well-being, to positive individuals, and to thriving communities. For instance, scientific studies attempt to gain more insight in what families factors contribute to children who flourish, what work settings lead to the greatest satisfaction among workers, what policies result in the strongest civic engagement, and how people's lives can be most worth living. In addition, research in the field of positive psychology seeks to unveil factors that

contribute to the prevention of problems, such as depression, substance abuse or violence. What we have learned over 50 years is that the aforementioned pathology-based view on human functioning does not move us closer to the prevention of these serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have largely come from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not correcting weakness. We have discovered that there are human strengths, such as courage, future-mindedness, optimism, and interpersonal skill that act as buffers against mental illness. An important mission of positive psychology is therefore to understand and learn how to build these positive qualities. With this knowledge, interventions can be designed that improve people's wellbeing and help to promote the so-called "good life".



## **About the course**

In this course, you will get acquainted with the field of positive psychology. In 3 weeks, you will take part in an intensive educational program that covers the most important topics of this field.

Positive psychology is, first and foremost, a science and is principally concerned with evidence, measurement, and testing. Therefore, during this course, you will gain more insight in different theories, scientific findings, experiments and measurement tools. Interestingly, positive psychology is also an applied science, meaning that many of the scientific results lead to the creation of real-world interventions that can improve schools, businesses, governments, and other aspects of individual and social life. This practical side will also be part of the course. You will experience what it is like to participate in positive psychology interventions and learn how to apply different techniques to enhance subjective wellbeing.

## **Course structure**

### *Topics*

During the course the following topics will be addressed:

1. General introduction to positive psychology
2. Mindfulness
3. Positive Emotions
4. Resilience
5. Self-determination
6. Positive psychology and health
7. Designing and conducting research in positive psychology research
8. Applied positive psychology
9. Self-compassion
10. Happiness & wellbeing
11. Positive psychology interventions
12. Positive psychology-based coaching
13. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Perhaps, some of the above listed topics may seem "soft" or maybe even "vague" at first glance and you may wonder how they fit in mainstream scientific psychology. As you will see, positive psychology researchers are very well able to study these "soft" themes with "hard" experimental methods. In addition, although the topics of positive psychology, such as happiness, may appear to be straightforward concerns, the scientific exploration of them is far from simple. A technical understanding of positive psychology, including the ability to critically consume the research literature and create studies and interventions that are within the bounds of the field, is a critical component in this course.

We selected these topics not only because they are at the core of positive psychology, but also because they concern relatively broad research areas. Within these topics, students are free to select their own sub themes and follow their own interests. In fact, we strongly encourage students to choose their own subtopics and search for their own literature. The topics will be addressed by means of lectures, tutorial group meetings, and workshops and assignments. Moreover, at the end of the course, there will be a symposium.

### *Lectures*

There will be two lectures every week. The lectures will provide you with ideas and suggestions about how to work on your assignments. We have put great effort in preparing our lectures and hope and think that they will meet your interests.

#### **Week 1**

- Lecture 1: Introduction to positive psychology
- Lecture 2: Positive Emotions
- Lecture 3: Health and interventions + assignment 2 DKYT's

#### **Week 2**

- Lecture 4: Self-determination theory

#### **Week 3**

- Lecture 5: Optimism

### *Tutorial group meetings*

In total, there are five tutorial meetings. The meetings take 2 hours. During these meetings, you will discuss a specific problem case. In total, there are 4 cases. During the pre-discussion, you brainstorm with your fellow students and discuss the problem at hand. You come up with so-called learning goals: one or more questions regarding the problem that you would like to answer in the next meeting. During the next meeting, you will discuss the literature you have read (post-discussion), and provide answers to the previously formed learning goals.

#### **Week 1**

- Meeting 1: Pre-discussion case 1 (Positive Emotions) & research protocol
- Meeting 2: Post-discussion case 1 & pre-discussion case 2 (Who's in Charge)

#### **Week 2**

- Meeting 3: Post-discussion case 2 & pre-discussion case 3 (Resilience)
- Meeting 4: Post-discussion case 3 & pre-discussion case 4 (Applied positive psychology)

#### **Week 3**

- Meeting 5: Post-discussion case 4 & pre-discussion optimism lecture

### *Workshops*

The main goal of the workshops is to experience yourself what positive psychology research and interventions are about. The following workshops are offered.

#### **Week 1**

- Workshop 1: Character strengths & post discussion main take aways lecture  
Positive Emotions

#### **Week 2**

- Workshop 2: Self-compassion

### **Week 3**

Workshop 5: ACT



#### *Online Symposium*

At the end of the course, all students will present their research proposal at the scientific symposium in the form of an oral or poster presentation. We have tried our best to make this symposium as "professional" as possible. Also coffee and tea will be available and a professional jury will decide in consensus to which candidates the prizes of "best poster" and "best presentation" will be awarded.

#### **Class hours and credits**

This course consists of 36 contact hours divided over 3 weeks. In addition, students have pre-readings and write an extensive paper after classes are done. Students earn 7.5 ECTS credits when they obtain a passing grade.

## Objectives

Once you have completed this course, we expect you to:

- have a clear understanding of the goals and viewpoints of positive psychology
- have good overview of the different topics that are covered by the field of positive psychology
- be able to apply the knowledge that you gained during the course to “real life” situations
- have a clear overview of several practical techniques that can be used to uncover people's strengths and promote their positive functioning
- be acquainted with various research designs to test positive psychology related research questions
- Be able to critically examine scientific evidence
- Know the ins and outs of prevailing theories in the field of positive psychology
- Draw up an appropriate design in order to test a specific hypothesis
- Present your research ideas clearly, in the form of a presentation or poster.





# Assessment

## Assessment overview

You will work on a variety of assignments during this course. The assessment in this course consists of three parts:

Type of Assessment	Deadline handing in/ performing	Percentage of final grade**
1) 3x Popular scientific writing (DYKT's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DYKT1:</li><li>• DYKT2:</li><li>• DYKT3:</li></ul>	20%
2) Oral/poster presentation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handing in poster:</li><li>• Presentation:</li></ul>	30%
3) Final paper (research proposal)**		50%

\* See appendix 2 for an overview of the evaluation criteria

\*\* See appendix 1 for the evaluation criteria. Note that students can expect their final grade 3 weeks after the deadline for handing in the research proposal.

### 1) *Popular scientific writing*

Every week you will write a pointy "Did-You-Know-That? (DYKT)" about a recent research study (**published after 2012**) related to Positive Psychology. You are required to write three DYKT's. The length of a DYKT is between 150 – 175 words. Your DYKT is written in comprehensible catchy language, aimed at a broad audience of non-psychologists. Your aim is to raise their interest and attention for positive psychology. You are completely free in the choice of your topic as long as it is related to positive psychology. Of course, your topic may be related to any of the weekly themes. Make sure to always end your DYKT with a catchy take home message for the reader. To give you an idea of what is expected of you, see the following example.

**Did you know that:**

**Meditation can make your brain younger?**

Most people are aware that meditation comes with health benefits, however recent research using MRI has discovered that it can also slow the rate your brain ages!

Researchers from LA and Canberra, examined the local and global cerebral gray matter of 50 long term meditators and compared it to 50 age matched non-meditators. MRI scans were used to gather data on the gray matter of the meditation group, whilst the International Consortium for Brain Mapping's database of normal adults was used for the non-meditator data. After comparison it was apparent that frequent meditators showed less decline in their cerebral gray matter when compared to the non-meditator group. The brains of meditators still demonstrated decline however the rate was much slower than non-meditators. The researchers propose that this effect may occur because intense mental activity can stimulate dendritic branching and this increase in tissue may counteract the age related decrease normally observed.

So if you want to have a healthy looking brain, meditation might just be the key!

By Amy Brown

Reference: Luders, E., Cherbuin, N., & Kurth, F. (2015). Forever young(er): Potential age-defying effects of long-term meditation on gray matter atrophy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01551

**Please email your DYKT to your tutor before Friday 5 PM (Maastricht time) each week of the course. Make sure to write your name and DYKT1,DYKT2 or DYKT3 in the file name of your word document.**

2) *Oral/poster presentation*

The research proposal entails another important aspect of the course. Besides writing the proposal, you will also get the opportunity to share your creativity with your fellow students. You will present, either by means of a poster or oral presentation, your research ideas during the scientific symposium at the end of the course. All students will be asked to indicate whether they prefer an oral or poster presentation. Based on this preference and the thematic content of the proposal (we will try to make the oral presentations as diverse as possible) the course coordinators will determine whether you will be presenting a poster or will give an oral presentation. See also appendix 1 for an overview of the evaluation criteria.

### 3) *Final paper - Research proposal*

The final assignment of this course is a research proposal. A research proposal is a description of a study that you are hypothetically going to perform in any domain of positive psychology. You are completely free in your subject choice as long as it is related to positive psychology. You can also choose any methodology that you deem appropriate for answering your question: an experiment, a longitudinal cohort study, observational study, intervention study, etc.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the first group meeting will be devoted to discuss the proposal and brainstorm about potential topics. In the second week, there will be a workshop where methodological issues can be discussed (e.g. appropriate measurement instruments, design issues).

Write your proposal as if it was intended for a review board of a funding agency. Although you are not actually going to execute the study, make sure that it is feasible in principle given enough time and money. The proposal should contain an abstract, introduction, a method section and references. In the introduction (2-4 pages) you give the theoretical background to your topic describing what is already known and what is still unknown. This should logically lead to the research question of your study.

Structure your method section like the method section of a research paper: describe the number and type of participants in your study, the measurement instruments you are going to use, the procedure (e.g. the intervention, the experimental manipulation, etc.), and how you are going to analyze your data. Formulate clear and testable hypotheses. Use at least 6 original references (or as many as appropriate).

Please follow the following rules for your final paper:

**1. Word count: minimum of 3500 words and a maximum of 4500 words**

(including explanatory footnotes, but excluding literature list). The abstract should be no longer than 250 words.

**2. Deadline: Sunday 11.59pm (GMT+1).**

**3. Submission method:** Your final paper needs to be submitted electronically via Canvas. After the plagiarism check, your CES programme coordinator will send your paper to professor

**4. Font and outlook of the paper:**

- a. Times New Roman
- b. Font size 12
- c. 1.5 line spacing
- d. Justified outlining
- e. Pages should be numbered
- f. Format: Word document
- g. Please don't forget to proofread your paper carefully for spelling and grammar.

**5. Title page:**

- a. Name
- b. Student number
- c. Title
- d. Date of handing in the paper

e. Number of words (contained in the **text** (title page and literature list are not included)

**6. Plagiarism:** (see related dedicated chapter in the CES Student Handbook) CES checks all papers for plagiarism with help of "Canvas" – please note that it is therefore not allowed to use extensive quotations in your paper and that proper reference rules must be followed at all times. In cases where (parts of) the paper clearly come from someone else's work and or the internet and are not quoted as such, sanctions will be taken. Depending on the severity of plagiarism, sanctions will go from taking a certain percentage off the final grade to full failure of the course.

**For every rule mentioned above which you don't comply with, 5% of your final grade will be taken away. An additional 5% of the final grade will be taken off for every 24-hour delay.**

For example:

John received an 8 for his paper.

However he forgot to number the pages, and handed it in three days late.

5% of his grade is 0.4.

His final grade will be  $8 - 0.4$  (rule 4e) –  $1.2$  (rule 2) = **6.4**

The grade will be given within four weeks after the submission of the paper.

### **Resit options**

When assessment is incomplete and no grade can be assigned (for example when students fail to write or hand in a DYKT, fail to make or hand in a poster or fail to write or hand in the final paper), 'No grade (NG)' will be awarded which automatically constitutes a fail for the class.

Students who receive a failing final grade (5.4 or lower OR an NG) can do a resit. In this course the final grade is made up of 3 DYKT's (20%), poster/oral presentation (30%), and a final paper (50%). A resit applies to the specific course element which is insufficient or incomplete. In other words, students are allowed to hand in a second version of a DYKT and/or final paper. If the poster presentation is insufficient, students are asked to hand in a second version of the poster. If the oral presentation is insufficient, students will be asked to hand in a poster version of their oral presentation (because there is no opportunity to assess the oral presentation for a second time).

Please note that the resit can *only* take place after the final grade has been established.

In the end, the highest final grade counts and will be put on the transcript. For example, if a student obtained a 5.3 as original final grade and then received a 4.7 for the resit,

the transcript will list 5.3 as final grade for the course. If a student obtained an NG and then a numerical grade, the numerical grade will be listed on the transcript.



Dr. Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology and Director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania meets the Dalai Lama  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/martin\\_seligman\\_on\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_psychology.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html)



# Attendance rules

## Course specific attendance rules

100% Attendance is required: students who are more than 15 minutes late or leave before the end of the class are considered absent. Students who expect to be absent should inform their CES coordinator and the professor *before* the start of the class.

CES courses may include field trips. Field trips may contribute to the overall grade of a course and are always mandatory. Please note that often field trips count as two meetings (4 hours).

The professor notes attendance at the start of each meeting. In order to be registered as 'present' students need to be on time and participate in an active manner. Students who are more than 15 minutes late or who leave before the meeting has officially ended will be registered as absent.

In case of absence due to illness or other personal circumstances, students are required to email the professor and programme coordinator before the start of the meeting. The written notification should include the students name and a brief description of the reason or cause and the expected duration of the absence.

In case of longer absence, the programme coordinator may require additional proof of the cause of the absence, for example a doctor's note. When the student returns, he/she must report to the programme coordinator during the first day he/she has returned. CES cannot be held responsible if a student fails a course due to long term absence, even if this absence is due to illness or other exceptional personal circumstances.

### *Make up assignment*

Students who miss a class or who have missed a field trip will not have met the attendance requirements of a CES course and can apply for a make-up assignment to comply with the CES attendance requirements. Students who miss a class and do not complete a make-up assignment will automatically fail the course.

The student is required to submit a written request to [ces-educationoffice@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:ces-educationoffice@maastrichtuniversity.nl) within 3 days after the missed meeting. The CES Board of Examiners will decide upon the validity of the reasons given. **Please note that travelling is not a valid reason for missing a class.** The CES professor determines the nature and volume of the assignment, which will be proportional to the number of missed meetings and the topics discussed. Make up assignments related to missed field trips may require students to do the excursion independently and at their own expense. The assignment must be completed and submitted to the CES professor via email within 10 working days.

The responsible CES professor will grade the make-up assignment with a pass or fail. Only students who receive a pass for the make-up assignment will have met the attendance requirement. No final grade can be awarded for courses in which students

have not met the attendance requirement. This will result in a 'No Grade (NG)' on the transcript. An NG automatically constitutes a fail and no credit is awarded.

*Electronic devices*

Laptops, iPads, cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed in class unless allowed by the teacher. Students need to ask permission with the teacher.

# Literature

## Literature

This course will address a wide range of topics. Within these topics, students are free to select their own sub themes and follow their own interests. This means that you are free (in fact we strongly encourage you) to search for your own literature. The references that belong to each of the problems and workshops can best be perceived as suggested readings. They may function as a nice starting point, but they are by no means mandatory or considered as the only available options. Since you will have access to the (online) library of Maastricht University, you will have a very large amount of articles and books at your disposal.

## Recommended websites

Your one stop positive psychology resource:

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/>

Find out your strengths and fill out the Values in Action Scale:

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>

The world's pioneering researcher in self-compassion Dr. Kristin Neff's website, meditations and research articles can be found here:

<https://self-compassion.org/>

The center for Mindful Self-Compassion for more meditations and info:

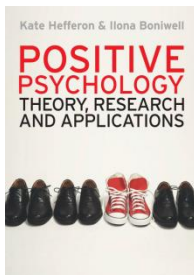
<https://centerformsc.org/>

Australian Acceptance and Commitment Therapist Russ Harris:

<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/>

## Textbooks (not mandatory)

There are a lot of books on positive psychology available. If you are interested in buying a textbook, we recommend one of the following (please note that is **not** mandatory to buy one of these books. The books below are suggested readings.

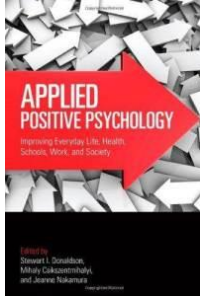


Positive Psychology: Theory, Research And Applications

Kate Hefferon, Ilona Boniwell

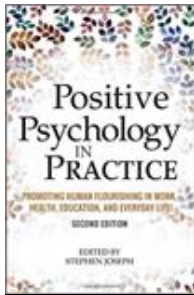
Publication Date: June 1, 2011

ISBN-10: 0335241956 | ISBN-13: 978-0335241958

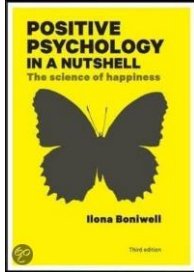


Applied Positive Psychology: Improving Everyday Life, Health, Schools, Work, and Society  
Stewart I. Donaldson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jeanne Nakamura.  
Publication Date: February 19, 2011  
ISBN-10: 0415877822 | ISBN-13: 978-0415877824

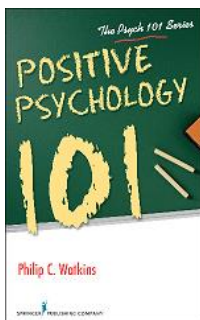
- CES has a couple of copies of this book available for you to borrow -



Positive Psychology in Practice, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.  
Stephen Joseph  
Publication Date: May 2015  
ISBN 978-1-118-75693-5



Positive psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)  
Ilona Boniwell  
Publication Date: 2012  
ISBN/EAN 978-0-335-24720-2



Positive Psychology 101  
Philip C. Watkins  
Publication: November 2015  
ISBN/EAN 978-0-826-12697-9

# Overview of Classes

## **Problem-based learning guidelines**

### *Discussion guidelines ("seven jump")*

Step 1	Clarification of terms
Step 2	Problem definition
Step 3	Problem analysis
Step 4	Systematic inventory
Step 5	Formulate learning objectives
Step 6	Self study
Step 7	Report and synthesize

### *Roles in the tutorial group*

The tutor (professor)	monitors the process and the content.
The discussion leader	leads the discussion/process: summarizes, activates, asks questions, takes care of the participation.
The group members	participate and prepare.



## Lecture 1 Introduction to Positive Psychology

### Meeting 1 Positive Emotions & Introduction to research proposal

Hour 1: Positive Emotions - Learning goals problem case 1 "Cheer up!"

Hour 2: Introduction to research proposal

#### Problem case 1 Cheer up!

Susan and Jane are meeting after class.

*Susan:* So what did you get for Christmas? I got this cool book on positive thinking. You should really read this.

*Jane:* All this positivity, I think it is overrated. It begins to feel like tyranny to be happy. I think people who are cheerful and happy all the time are just being ignorant and shallow. Look around you, what is there to be happy about?

*Susan:* Come on, don't you think it is much nicer to feel good? Don't we all want to be happy?



*Jane:* There is no purpose in being happy. Positive people only think about themselves and don't contribute to society. It is an egocentric, small-minded western way of thinking. Besides, don't you know that depression is the key to creative genius? Look at all those great writers with a depression: Virginia Woolf, Hemmingway, to just name two. They would never have reached such profoundness in their work had they indulged in their happiness.

*Susan:* I don't agree! Positive emotions make you more broad-minded and let you reach out to people. All this negativity is what destroys our world. The anger, the hate, people who fear others with a different color or religion. You'd better ask: what good are negative emotions, we could do without them.

*Jane:* Huh! You think so? If you had paid attention during class you'd know that negative emotions serve a function. Fear focuses our attention on danger and urges to fight or flight. In an evolutionary perspective they are very important. Mankind would not have survived without negative emotions. But positive emotions are useless.

*Susan:* Ah....I won't argue with you anymore. You must be born with bad temper genes – no use in trying to cheer you up!

*Please turn the page for suggested readings.*

## Suggested readings

- Bartels, M. (2015). Genetics of Wellbeing and Its Components Satisfaction with Life, Happiness, and Quality of Life: A review and Meta-analysis of Heritability Studies. *Behavioral Genetics*, 45:137-156.
- Berridge, K.C., Kringelbach, M.L. (2008). Affective neuroscience of pleasure: reward in humans and animals. *Psychopharmacology*, 199, 457-80.
- Frederickson, B.L. & Kurtz, L.E. (2011). Cultivating Positive Emotions to Enhance Human Flourishing. *Applied Positive Psychology - Improving Everyday Life, Health, Schools, Work, and Society* (Chapter 3).
- Fredrickson, B.L., Tugade M.M., Waugh, C.E., Larkin, G.R. (2003). What Good Are Positive Emotions in Crises? A Prospective Study of Resilience and Emotions Following the Terrorist Attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 365–376.
- Garland, E.L., Fredrickson, B., Kring A.M., Johnson D.P., Meyer P.S., Penn D.L. (2010) Upward spirals of positive emotions counter downward spirals of negativity: Insights from the broaden-and-build theory and affective neuroscience on the treatment of emotion dysfunctions and deficits in psychopathology. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30, 849–864.
- Gruber, J., Mauss, I.B., Tamir, M. A. (2011). Dark Side of Happiness? How, When, and Why Happiness Is Not Always Good. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6: 222.
- Lyubomirsky S., Sheldon K.M., Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111–131.
- Sprangers, M.A.G., Bartels, M., Veenhoven, R., Baas, F., Martin, N.G., Mosing, M., Movsas, B., Ropka, M.E., Shinozaki, G., Swaab, D. (2010). Which patient will feel down, which will be happy? The need to study the genetic disposition of emotional states. *Quality of Life Research*, 19, 1429–1437.

## Workshop 1

## Discover your character strengths

Positive psychology has produced a number of types of interventions that, taken together, form a scientific toolbox that coaches can add to their existing practices.

Positive psychology also provides new assessments of which coaches can avail themselves. There are well-validated surveys of character strengths, optimism, life satisfaction, and many other topics that are directly relevant to coaching.

In this workshop you will discover your character strengths and find ways to use them more frequently.



### Suggested readings

- Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). Education to Empowerment: An Introduction to Applying Positive Psychology Coaching. In: Biswas-Diener, R. *Practicing Positive Psychology Coaching: Assessment, Diagnosis, and Intervention*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Linley, P.A. & Burns, G.W. (2009) Strengthspotting: Finding and Developing Client Resources in the Management of Intense Anger. In: Burns, G.W.. (ed.) *Happiness, Healing, Enhancement. Your Casebook Collection for Applying Positive Psychology in Therapy*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). Using Strengths-Based Interventions in Coaching and Therapy. In: Burns, G.W.. (ed.) *Happiness, Healing, Enhancement. Your Casebook Collection for Applying Positive Psychology in Therapy*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Magyar-Moe, J.L. (2009). The Intersection of Positive Psychology and the Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy. In: Magyar-Moe, J.L. *Therapist's guide to positive psychological interventions*. New York: Academic Press
- Proyer, R.T., Ruch, W., Buschor, C. Testing Strengths-Based Interventions: A Preliminary Study on the Effectiveness of a Program Targeting Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, and Zest for Enhancing Life Satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2013; 14:275–292

**Lecture 2                    Positive Emotions**

**Workshop 2A                Research proposal**

In a plenary lecture the do's and don'ts of writing a research proposal will be explained. There is also room for questions.

**Meeting 2                    Positive Emotions & Self-determination theory**

Hour 1: Positive Emotions - Report problem case 1 "Cheer up!"

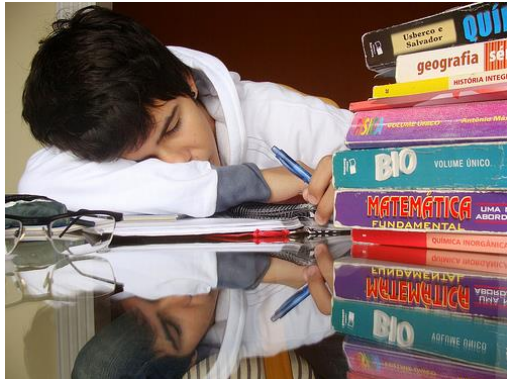
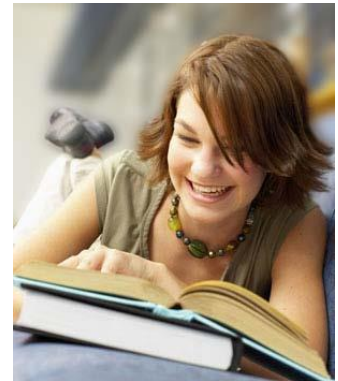
Hour 2: Self-determination theory - Learning goals problem case 2 "Who's in charge?"

*Please turn the page to see the problem case 2 description.*

## Problem case 2 Who's in Charge?

John and Sandy are both students at the faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience in Maastricht. But they are different:

Sandy is having a great time. Waking up is no problem, because the mere thought of meeting her fellow students as well as reading and talking about psychology gives her enough energy to start a new day. Time flies, completing the first year was done in the blink of an eye.



John is having a lot of trouble. The very thought of getting up in the morning and having to attend the group meetings, reading the literature, and talk about psychology makes him want to stay in bed for the rest of the day. If only these four years were over, life could finally start.

### Suggested readings

- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Fostering healthy self-regulation from within and without: A self-determination theory perspective. In A. P. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 105-124). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 49, 182.
- Hammershøj Olesen, M., Kirkegaard Thomsen, D., & Skytte O'Toole, M. (2015). Subjective well-being: Above neuroticism and extraversion, autonomy motivation matters. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 77, 45-49.
- Miquelon, P., Vallerand, R. J., Grouzet, F. M., & Cardinal, G. (2005). Perfectionism, academic motivation, and psychological adjustment: An integrative model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37, 913-924.
- Patrick, H., Knee, C. R., Canevello, A., & Lonsbary, C. (2007). The role of need fulfillment in relationship functioning and well-being: A self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 434-457.
- Reis, H. T., Sheldon, K. M., Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 419-435.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need-satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 482-497.
- Sheldon, K.M. & Houser-Marko, L. (2001). Self-concordance, goal- attainment, and the pursuit of happiness: Can there be an upward spiral? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 152-165.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Krieger, L. (2014). Walking the talk: Value importance, value enactment, and well-being. *Motivation and Emotion*, 38, 609-619.



Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R. M., & Reis, H. T. (1996). What makes for a good day? competence and autonomy in the day and in the person. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 1270-1279.

### **Workshop 3      Positive Emotions**



According to Seligman, positive feelings and experiences contribute to the so-called pleasant life, one of the three pillars of authentic happiness. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that small interventions can help to increase the experience of positive emotions. In this workshop we will discuss and practice several techniques that have been found to enhance the experience of positive emotions. Topics include music, spending time in nature, benefit finding, gratitude, optimism and forgiveness.

#### **Suggested readings**

Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). Using Strengths-Based Interventions in Coaching and Therapy. In: *Burns, G.W.* (ed.) *Happiness, Healing, Enhancement. Your Casebook Collection for Applying Positive Psychology in Therapy*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Layous, K., Nelson, S.K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). What is the optimal way to deliver a positive activity intervention? The case of writing about one's best possible selves. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14, 635-654.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 57-62.

### **Lecture 3      Self-determination theory**

## Meeting 3 Self-determination theory & Resilience

Hour 1: Self-determination theory - Report problem case 2 "Who's in charge?"

Hour 2: Resilience - Learning goals problem case 3 "John and Mary"

### Problem case 3 Jake and Mary

Jake, 34 years old, married and father of 2 children, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2007. Marge, 36 years old, divorced and single, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008. After 1 year of intensive chemotherapy and radiation therapy both John and Marge were diagnosed as being "cured". However, John had a hard time resuming his work, picking up his hobbies, and he could no longer enjoy his family life to the same extent as before. He suffered from ongoing anxiety, lethargy, ruminative thoughts and minor illnesses. 8 Months after being diagnosed as "cured" John was enrolled into a treatment program for depression.



During her illness, Mary did not stop working at all, she tried to maintain her hobbies, and she even managed to enjoy the presence of her friends and family every once in a while. After being diagnosed "cancer free" she felt happier than ever, she picked up playing the piano again, was more energetic than ever before, and attracted many new friends.

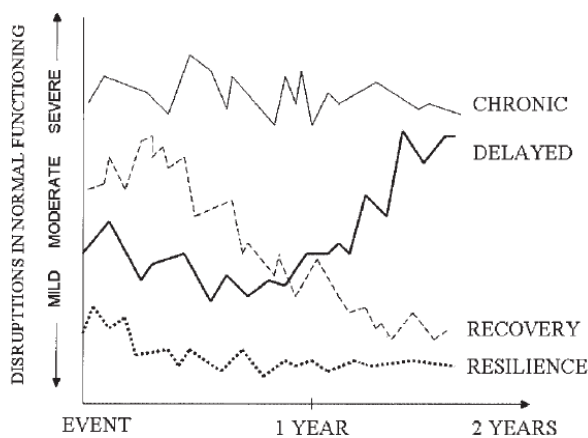


Figure 1. Prototypical Patterns of Disruption in Normal Functioning Across Time Following Interpersonal Loss or Potentially Traumatic Events.

*Please turn the page for suggested readings.*

### *Suggested readings*

Handbook of Adult Resilience

Taylor – Ch5. How Psychosocial Resources Enhance Well-Being

- Almedon, A. M., Glandon, D. (2007). Resilience is not the absence of PTSD any more than health is the absence of disease. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 12*, 127-143.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2008). Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, Vol. 5, No. 1*, 101-113
- Bonanno, G. A., Mancini, A.D. (2008). The Human Capacity to Thrive in the Face of Potential Trauma. *Pediatrics, 121*, 369-375.
- Davydov, D.M., Stewart R., Ritchie K., Chaudieu, I. (2010). Resilience and mental health. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*, 479-495.
- DiCorcia, J .A., Tronick, E. (2011). Quotidian resilience: Exploring mechanisms that drive resilience from a perspective of everyday stress and coping. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 35*, 1593-1602.
- Kalisch, R. Müller, M.B., Tüscher, O. (2015). A conceptual framework for the neurobiological study of resilience. *Behavioural Brain Science, 38*:1-79
- Linley, P. A., Joseph, S. (2011). Meaning in life and posttraumatic growth. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 16*(2), 150-159.
- Mancini, A.D., Bonanno, G. A., (2006). Resilience in the Face of Potential Trauma: Clinical Practices and Illustrations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 62*, 971-985.
- Sapiente, J. K., Masten, A.S. (2011). Understanding and promoting resilience in children and youth. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 24*, 267-273.
- Williams, P. G., Suchy, Y., Rau, H. K. (2009). Individual differences in executive functioning: Implications for stress regulation. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 37*, 126-140.
- Westphal, M., Bonanno, G.A. (2007). Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience to Trauma: Different Sides of the Same Coin or Different Coins? *Applied Psychology: an international review, 56*, 417-427

## Workshop 4      Self-compassion

When we are confronted with failures, or with things we don't like about ourselves we often beat ourselves up. And whereas we would be kind and understanding towards a friend who is having a difficult time, we are harsh and critical towards ourselves.

Recently, self-compassion has been identified as a promising way to cope with life's difficulties. It entails self-kindness (expressing kindness and understanding towards one's own suffering), common humanity (realizing that imperfection and failures are part of the shared human experience), and mindfulness (keeping a balanced and open awareness on one's difficult emotions). Recent research has shown that self-compassion is related to enhanced emotional well-being, and reduced anxiety and depression.

This workshop will provide you essential tools for treating yourself in a kind, respectful, and compassionate way whenever you fail, suffer, or feel inadequate. Theory and core skills of the Mindful Self-Compassion program will be discussed and practiced.



### *Suggested readings*

- Leary, M. R., Tate, E. B., Adams, C. E., Allen, A. B., & Hancock, J. (2007). Self-compassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*, 887-904.
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity, 2*, 85-102.
- Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the mindful self-compassion program. *Journal Of Clinical Psychology, 6*, 28-44.
- Neff, K. D. & McGeehee, P. (2010). Self-compassion and psychological resilience among adolescents and young adults. *Self and Identity, 9*, 225-240.
- Neff, K. D., & Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. *Journal of Research in Personality, 41*, 908-916.

## **Lecture 4                    Positive Psychology and Health**

**Workshop 2B            Research proposal (meeting in tutorial groups)**  
Students discuss their ideas for the research proposal in small groups. A teacher is present to answer any questions and will circulate between groups for giving advice.

## **Meeting 4                    Resilience & Applied Positive Psychology**

Hour 1: Report problem case 3 "John & Mary"  
Hour 2: Applied Positive Psychology - Learning goals problem case 4 "What would you advise?"

### **Problem case 4    What would you advise?**

During the past few weeks, you learned the ins and outs of different theories that address optimal human functioning. These theories not only provide more insight in the processes that underlie subjective wellbeing, they can also be translated into practical guidelines. In other words, many of the findings of research on positive psychology can be used to help people.

Take a look at the stories displayed on the following pages:

## **CONTEXT : CLINICAL**



My life is a mess. I am 25 years old, I see many people around me, being happy, being involved in a relationship and knowing exactly what they want. None of these things apply to me. First of all, I am not happy. If I had to describe how I feel, I would say "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time. The problem is, this is not something I can seem to just pull myself out of. This is not the life I wanted. I often compare myself to others, which makes me feel even worse. I feel drained, mentally exhausted. I live in constant worry. I worry that I am unable to complete my work in time. I worry that I may never find somebody to love. I worry that I will never find a purpose in life. Let's be honest. I am 25 years old, I am still single and I am not sure what I want to do for the rest of my life. My job is ok. It pays the bills, but that's about it. I feel like my boss is constantly watching my back, and I can't stop thinking about work when I am at home. I don't have any hobbies, besides watching netflix. In sum, I am a complete failure.



## CONTEXT : SPORTS



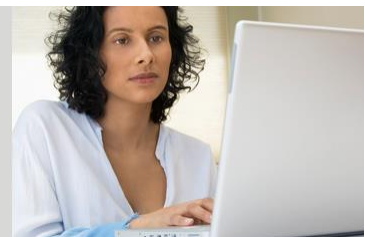
Two years ago, I received a sports scholarship. I was recruited by a university coach who considered me to be a “talented athlete”. Of course, I was really happy with this opportunity. Now, being a tennis player at Princeton University for two years, I have to admit that it is hard. Maybe the hardest part is not the sport itself, but dealing with setbacks. I made a great start. During the first year, I won a lot of matches, but this success was not built to last. In the second year, I started to lose some matches. In the meantime, I also started to lose confidence in my abilities. Often, I hear myself talking “I am just not good enough” and sometimes I even think that I am a total clod at sports. The pressure is killing me. Sometimes even a week before the start of a new match, I am getting caught by feelings of anxiety. During the match I am having trouble concentrating. I get distracted really easily. At this point I am seriously considering to quit sports. Although I love playing tennis, I am really having a hard time staying committed. It’s not about wanting to reach my goals, it’s about believing, I guess.

## CONTEXT : WORK



Being the CEO of a big telecom company, I have been facing some serious problems during the last two years. First of all, there is a strong increase in absence through illness. In addition (probably related to this), productivity rates are decreasing. Although I do not spent much time talking to my employees, I hear some rumors that many of them suffer from stress. I hear that some of them complain about a misbalance between work and family. At the same time, others seem to experience a lack of both challenge and commitment. Since these two stories are quite dissimilar and alarming at the same time, I think something needs to change. However, I am not a psychologist, I am a leader. Consequently, I am not sure how to deal with this.

## CONTEXT : COACHING



I am 28 years old and I am quite happy with my life. I have a nice boyfriend, I meet my friends often and I am passionate about playing guitar. Although I am aware that

there is not much to complain, I do feel that I am struggling for a couple of years now. I am pretty sure this has to do with my current job. I am a researcher at the University of Manchester. Six years ago, when I started with my PhD research, I was a completely different person at my work than I am now. I thought I could make a difference, I truly believed that my job would contribute to the overall wellbeing of people on this globe. However, I soon noticed that my impact was limited. I spent lots of hours behind my computer, writing articles that, in the end only few people seemed to read. Those who have access to my articles are not the ones who translate my knowledge into practice. I barely receive any comments on all the work I do. I feel like contributing a tiny little bit to a massive puzzle. In addition, because of the financial crisis, many of my colleagues have lost their jobs. Consequently, fear and competition seem to rule at our faculty. I could definitely need some personal advice.

Imagine that you are either a clinician or coach who strongly relies on positive psychological interventions to help his/her clients. Choose one of the four above displayed problems. For the next meeting, try to answer the following question: What kind of advice would you give?

You can use the basic text book, or search for new literature and may use both the theories and findings presented during this course as well. Good luck!

## **Lecture 5**

## **Positive psychology interventions**

## **Meeting 5**                    **Applied positive psychology & Advice on research proposal**

Hour 1: Report problem 4 "What would you advise?"  
Hour 2: Advice on research protocol

## **Lecture 6**                    **Happiness and well-being**

## **Workshop 5**                    **Getting unstuck: from fear to freedom**

We are creatures of habit and change is often hard. Remember all those well intended New Year's resolutions that were never really actualized? Often times we think "if only I had more confidence" it would all be so much easier. But is it really the case that we can only act once we have the right amount of confidence? In this workshop you will be introduced to an



interesting approach to step outside of your comfort zone with greater ease. You will explore some of the greatest blocks to behavioral change and will learn about state-of-the-art Acceptance and Commitment therapy techniques to help you unhook from unwanted thoughts, make room for difficult feelings and live more in line with your personal values.

### **Suggested readings**

Harris, R. (2006). Embracing your demons: An overview of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 12, 1-8.

Hayes, S. C., Masuda, A., & De Mey, H. (in press). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and the third wave of behavior therapy. *Gedragstherapie*

### **Book tip**

The confidence gap by Russ Harris

**Symposium (4hrs) and closing ceremony**



## **Appendix 1                      Evaluation criteria research proposal**

### **Research question**

Originality  
Interest  
Rational (following from introduction)  
Clear and testable hypotheses

### **Scientific content**

Appropriate theoretical background  
Correct and clear description of prior research  
Appropriate use of - and reference to - literature sources  
Sufficient depth  
Logically valid reasoning

### **Methodology**

Appropriate design to test the research question  
Motivation of number and type of participants  
Clear and correct description of procedures/intervention etc.  
Appropriate outcome variables / assessment instruments  
Proper data analytic procedures

### **Form**

Readability / story line  
Appropriate section headings  
Proper use of references in text and in reference list (e.g. APA style)

## **Appendix 2**

## **Evaluation criteria Poster/Oral presentation**

*Both oral and poster presentation:*

### **Presentation Content**

Simplicity appropriate for audience  
Research problem clearly stated  
Context and importance of research demonstrated  
Results easily and clearly interpreted  
Conclusions to point, corresponding to problem

### **Visual aids**

Clear slides/poster, not overcrowded  
Contribution of colors to understanding, not distracting  
Font (size, style, quality)  
Legible figures conveying results effectively

### **General**

Organization of information: clear structure  
Clear 'take home message'  
Ability to answer questions

*Oral presentation only:*

### **Performance**

Smooth transition from issue to issue  
Audience contact, eye contact  
Voice and pacing, Articulation  
Engagement, enthusiasm  
Body language, gestures  
Adherence to time limit