Welcome!

Engagement and Positive Psychology*

*a sampler plate

Artwork: Bill Watterson

Lori Tuominen, Mark Tuominen, Nanoscience Summer Institute for Science Teachers, UMass Amherst, 7/16/2015
What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play. Emphasis on the scientific study of what is right, rather than what is wrong, with people.

- Positive Psychology Center, UPenn
What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is the **scientific study** of the **strengths** and **virtues** that enable individuals and communities to **thrive**. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead **meaningful** and **fulfilling** lives, to **cultivate** what is **best** within themselves, and to **enhance** their experiences of **love**, **work**, and **play**. Emphasis on the scientific study of **what is right**, rather than **what is wrong**, with people.

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Engagement

When I am deeply engaged I feel....

When I am deeply engaged I am doing ...
This is how you responded:

When I am deeply engaged I feel....

- Happy
- At peace
- In a flow state – I lose my sense of self-awareness
- Sense of accomplishment

When I am deeply engaged I am doing ...

- Something fun
- Something of my own choice
- Reading; reading in the garden
- Being with family and people
- Creating something; painting; sculpting
- Running
- Something I love; Something engaging ;)

Lori Tuominen, Mark Tuominen, Nanoscience Summer Institute for Science Teachers, UMass Amherst, 7/16/2015
How many geometric shapes?

Geometric Shapes Exercise from Stavros and Torres: “We see what we look for and we miss much of what we are not looking for, even though it is there... Our experience of the world is heavily influenced by where we place our attention.”

Another example of what we focus on is this video clip on selective attention:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo
What we focus on

When we appreciate the good, the good appreciates

Tal Ben-Shahar
Photo: Johannes Stötter
The Art of Observation

Observation Activity

**Objective of activity:** To strengthen one’s ability to observe deeply through articulation. Observation is an essential skill for scientific, creative, social and emotional intelligences. (Demonstrate this activity to the participants before they do it themselves.)

**Instructions:** Each person has a paper bag with a mystery item inside. Form pairs. One person in the pair—the “listener”—closes their eyes. Listeners are instructed to remain silent, until asked to speak at the very end. The other person—the “describer”—is instructed to take the mystery item out of the bag and describe it for **one full minute**. In doing so, they should observe and describe the physical characteristics of the object (color, texture, shape, etc), but they **should not** identify the object or its purpose or give it any context whatsoever. Simply describe the characteristics thoroughly. Just for fun, at the end of the description period, the listener (eyes still closed) is asked guess the identity the object. (This is a secondary aspect of the activity; observation is the primary purpose.)

**Mystery items could be anything you have on hand, but we used these items:**
A nickel, post-it note pad, plastic magnifying glass, pinecone, acorn, 1-inch groom figurine, 1-inch bride figurine, paper clip, paper clip with sides that fold, plastic covering for top of key, book of matches, elastic hair tie, lid for canning jar, clothes pin, ballpoint pen, pencil, bubble wrap, guitar pick, AA battery, eyeglass case, rock, sewing bobbin, guitar capo, lapel button (straight pin), eye mask, ear plugs, cotton cushion from gift box, small scissors, birch bark, small pack of kleenex.
Definition of Mindfulness:

*Mindfulness is simply *noticing new things.*

- **Puts you in the present**
- **Makes you aware of context and perspective**
- **Reveals that you don’t know that thing as well as you thought you did.**

Ellen Langer, Harvard University
Definition of Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises by paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

It’s about living your life as if it really mattered, moment by moment by moment by moment.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, UMass Medical School
Creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
“Breathing exercises can reduce stress, improve mood, and help you feel energized. If you do only one thing for your health, have it be learning to breathe.”

- Dr. Andrew Weil
Strengths

Let the Rabbit Run

From book *Soar with Your Strengths*, by Donald Clifton
Mindset

Discussions on fixed vs growth mindset from the book “Mindset” by Carol Dweck
Video: Kahn Academy’s *You Can Learn Anything*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC82ll2cjQA
Learn to fail or fail to learn

Tal Ben-Shahar

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Neuroplasticity

Photo: Like paths in the snow
Lori’s 30-Day Challenge: Learning to Juggle 5 minutes a day

Number of throws

Day

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The Power of YET
I have a lot of excitement in my life. I used to call it tension, but I feel much better now that I call it excitement.

Madeleine Costigan
Flow

“A dynamic state that characterizes consciousness when experience is attended to for its own sake.”

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Claremont Graduate University
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Summing up the Growth Mindset

“This is hard. This is fun.”

- Carol Dweck
Engagement Activity

What can you do to engage your students 5% more?
This is how you responded:

What can you do to engage your students 5% more?

• Be more personal
• Make connection
• Make learning valuable
• Be mysterious
• Spark curiosity
• Take my power back in my classroom with fun, creativity, enjoyment
• Give kids choices about which media to use
• Use tic tac toe strategy
• Design/develop opportunities for oral communication
• Citizen science projects – scaffold possibilities
• Help students realize “I matter”
• Help students feel seen, heard and valued
• Bring in fun
• Be flexible
• Showcase strengths
• Give up control more
Introducing a New Theory of Well-Being

PERMA

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Positive Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment

- Positive Psychology Center, UPenn
Positive Psychology:
The Science of Happiness, Creativity and Accomplishment

A course for first-year undergraduates at UMass Amherst

- Introduction to positive psychology
- Gratitude and benefit finding: what we focus on, asking the right questions
- Appreciative Inquiry; Meaning, pleasure, and strengths
- Grit, resilience, and self-efficacy
- Mindset (fixed versus growth)
- Play and flow
- Strengths and VIA Survey
- Mindfulness, observation, and listening
- Creativity
- Positivity boosters and wellbeing
- Motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic)
- Resourcefulness, design thinking, and collaboration
- Leadership and course reflection