

World Wide Wellbeing: Positive psychology online

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A mini WWW tour

- Tetris effect and the Masai
- Who's online?
- Combining positive psychology & technology
- Do online wellbeing programs work?
- What do they look like?



Background

- Management
 - Communications, development & performance (sport industry)
- Clinical psychology
 - Depression, anxiety disorders, trauma
 - www.anxietyonline.org.au
- PhD in promoting wellbeing online
- MindSetGo
 - Individual and group client work
 - Teaching (University & professional workshops)
 - Research & intervention development



Two areas of interest

Positive psychology

- The science of wellbeing and optimal performance

Technology

- As a tool to help promote health and wellbeing



Masai Mara, Kenya



Melbourne, Australia



- Africa accounts for 14.3% of the world's population.
- Mobile telephone access grew three times as fast as the world's average in 2004-07.
- 5% of the African population are internet connected (8% in Kenya).
- Global internet usage 24%

<http://mumbrella.com.au/melbournians-warned-of-skateboarding-rhinos-47484>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyZwZ2-6-U>

International Telecommunications Unit: World Internet Users. ITU.
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/>. Retrieved 1/08/2011.



Number of Internet Subscribers by Country

| Rank | Country | Users (thousands) | % of total pop |
|------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 55 | Norway | 4,431 | 94.40% |
| 36 | Sweden | 8,398 | 92.40% |
| 31 | Netherlands | 14,872 | 88.30% |
| 50 | Denmark | 4,751 | 85.90% |
| 53 | Finland | 4,481 | 85.20% |
| 121 | Luxembourg | 425 | 84.30% |
| 65 | New Zealand | 3,600 | 83.90% |
| 8 | United Kingdom | 51,442 | 82.00% |
| 12 | South Korea | 39,440 | 80.90% |
| 43 | Switzerland | 5,739 | 80.50% |
| 6 | Germany | 65,124 | 79.90% |
| 20 | Canada | 26,225 | 79.20% |
| 4 | Japan | 99,144 | 78.40% |
| 27 | Australia | 17,034 | 78.30% |
| 2 | United States | 245,000 | 78.20% |
| 37 | Belgium | 8,113 | 77.80% |
| 63 | Singapore | 3,658 | 77.20% |
| 100 | Estonia | 970 | 75.70% |
| 42 | Austria | 6,144 | 74.80% |
| 58 | Slovakia | 4,064 | 74.20% |

International Telecommunications Unit: World Internet Users. ITU. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>. Retrieved 1/08/2011.



NZ Internet Statistics, 2009

NZ Household internet access

- 75% internet access (up from 37% in 2001)
- 63% broadband access
- 1 in 2 rural homes had broadband

NZ individual internet access (age 15 plus)

- 80% had used the Internet in the last 12 months.
- >40% made at least one online purchase in the last 12 months (most likely to purchase = 25-44 year age group).
- The largest increase in Internet usage was for the 65-74 year age group (up 15% since 2006).

International Telecommunications Unit: World Internet Users. ITU. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>. Retrieved 1/08/2011.



The internet plays a central role in the work, study and personal lives of the majority of people (WS, 2009).



Mental Health Promotion Opportunity



Mental Health Promotion

MHP focuses on the population as a whole and seeks to address the underlying social and economic determinants of illness *as well as* promote positive mental health in individuals and communities.

(WHO, 2001a, 2004)



Mental Health Promotion



- Focus on the alleviation of illness, not the enhancement of wellness



Mass Media Campaigns

1. Young peoples mental health, UK
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ji5d3rW4k1o&feature=related>
2. Men don't get depressed, Australia
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xf68X32e5Yw&feature=related>
3. Mental health stigma, New Zealand
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQk8a3-QYKU>
1. Lucky got Kaki, Singapore
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnNcYenEKns&NR=1>



Mental Health Promotion

- Focus on the alleviation of illness, not the enhancement of wellness
- Accessibility



Mental Health Promotion

- Focus on the alleviation of illness, not the enhancement of wellness
- Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Efficacy & Effectiveness - limited or poor quality data
- Focus on general determinants of health *but* behaviour change is more likely to occur if targeted at individual level (de Vries & Brug, 1999)



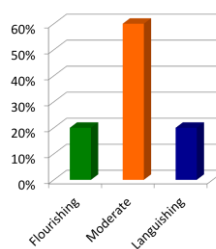
Positive psychology & internet technology

Has the potential to address these issues:

- Focus on enhancement of wellness



WELLBEING



- The absence of mental illness does NOT equate to the presence of wellbeing.
- Wellbeing levels vary.
- Languishing has equivalently poor psychosocial outcomes as having a mental illness.

(Corey Keyes, 2005)



Wellbeing benefits

Meta analysis by Lyubomirsky, King & Diener (2005)



Social



Work



Personal



Positive Psychology & Internet technology

Has the potential to address these issues:

- Focus on enhancement of wellness
- Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Tailor interventions and target individual behaviour change
- Efficacy & effectiveness



Mental Health Online Interventions

| Illness Treatment & Prevention | Health Behaviours | Wellbeing Promotion |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anxiety • depression • panic disorder • PTSD • phobias • OCD • eating disorders • tinnitus • headaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical activity • nutrition / diet • smoking cessation • alcohol use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude • Personal strengths • Optimism • Mindfulness • Positive psychotherapy • Resilience Online |

OVER 100 STUDIES

6 RCTs

Mitchell, Vella-Broderick & Klein (2010), Positive Psychology & the Internet, eJournal of Applied Psychology, 6(2): 30-41.



Wellbeing Online RCTs

| RCT Study | Adult Population | Well-being measure | Follow-up |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Seligman et al., 2005 | Mild depression | SHI | Post, 1, 3 & 6-months |
| Mitchell et al., 2009 | General community | PWI-A | Post, 3-months |
| Abbot et al., 2009 | Sales managers | AHI (updated SHI) | Post only |
| Parks, 2009 | Mild depression | SWLS, PANAS | Post, 1 & 3-months |
| Shapira & Mongrain, 2010 | Mild depression | SHI | Post, 1, 3 & 6-months |
| Mitchell et al., in review | General community | SWLS, PWI-A, MHC-SF, mDES, PWB | Post, 1 & 3-months |

Mitchell, Vella-Broderick & Klein (2010), Positive Psychology & the Internet, eJournal of Applied Psychology, 6(2): 30-41.

Wellbeing Online Interventions

| RCT Study | Intervention | Intervention Length |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Seligman et al., 2005 | Three good things; Using strengths; Gratitude visit | 1 week |
| Mitchell et al., 2009 | Using strengths | 3 week |
| Abbot et al., 2009 | Resilience online* | 10 week* |
| Parks, 2009 | Positive psychotherapy* | 6 week* |
| Shapira & Mongrain, 2010 | Self-compassion; Optimism | 1 week |
| Mitchell et al., in review | Strengths; Mindfulness | 3 week |

Mitchell, Vella-Broderick & Klein (2010), Positive Psychology & the Internet, eJournal of Applied Psychology, 6(2): 30-41.

Results

| RCT Study | Intervention | Increased Wellbeing |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Seligman et al., 2005 | Three good things; Using strengths; Gratitude visit | Yes |
| Mitchell et al., 2009 | Using strengths | Yes |
| Abbot et al., 2009 | Resilience online | No |
| Parks, 2009 | Positive psychotherapy | No |
| Shapira & Mongrain, 2010 | Self-compassion; Optimism | Yes |
| Mitchell et al., in review | Strengths; Mindfulness | Yes |

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Do online wellbeing interventions work?

Yes (with caveats) & wellbeing effects lasting 1-6 months

- Small body of quality research (more needed)
- No evidence for longer term, multi-component programs (e.g. Resilience Online & Positive Psychotherapy)
- Variety of one-off interventions (e.g., gratitude, using strengths, mindfulness, self-compassion & optimism).
- Some interventions also reduce symptoms of depression and (in one study) anxiety.



Limitations or issues of research



Generalizing the findings

- Female, mid-late 30s, tertiary educated, employed.

High attrition

- Managed statistically

Website development

- Initial cost
- Website design (tunnel design, education based)



What do these online interventions look like?



1. Strengths*

<http://www.wellbeingonline.org/development/program.php>



2. Mindfulness*

3. Tuesday Program

<http://www.thetuesdayprogram.com/>



4. Gratitude App

<http://www.happytapper.com/>

* Tested in a randomized controlled trial (RCT)



A comment about online interventions

One size does not fit all!

- Part of a stepped approach to health and wellbeing

Give people choice (back to self-determination theory)

- E.g., self-guided or assisted
- E.g., different learning styles (audio, text, image, interactive, passive)



Why consider online wellbeing interventions



Thank you

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“Happiness consists more in the small conveniences or pleasures that occur everyday, than in great pieces of good fortune that happen but seldom.”

Benjamin Franklin

