

NZAPP Newsletter 2

December 2008

- **Welcome.**

- Welcome to the second newsletter for the New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology (NZAPP). The purpose of an occasional and brief newsletter such as this is to keep members informed about new developments in positive psychology both generally and around New Zealand.

- **NZ Research.**

- Currently a few NZAPP members and academics at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, Victoria, Massey, and Canterbury universities are planning a large scale positive psychology longitudinal assessment and intervention study set to begin in March 2009. The main aim of this study is to gather NZ norms for popular and common positive psychology assessment measures, and to assess in more depth the nation's well-being. A number of intervention studies will be aligned with this main assessment study. This project is lead by Aaron Jarden (lecturer in psychology, and president of the NZAPP), and if you would like to know more or be involved in developing this research project, e-mail: aaron.jarden@openpolytechnic.ac.nz This study will be open to the general population to participate in, and more information will follow in the next newsletter (March 2009).

- **Areas of Positive Psychology.**

What is Savouring? – by Erica Chadwick.

- Savouring pleasant events is the positive counterpart to coping with difficult events. Imagine people as boats and life as the sea, savouring can be thought of as what we do at the top of a wave, while coping is what we do at the bottom. The capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences in life is considered the capacity to savour, while the processes underlying these capacities is termed savouring. There must be an overall conscious awareness in the present moment in order to savour, although aspects of the savouring process may occur unconsciously. One way to facilitate focussing on the present moment is to practise noticing and labelling one's positive mood, and as with any cognitive-behavioural skill, the more one practises, the better one gets. People are thought to savour in four domains: thanksgiving (expressing gratitude), marvelling (losing oneself in wonder and awe), basking (receiving praise), and luxuriating (indulging one's senses). Ten characteristic ways of savouring have been illuminated by Bryant and Veroff (2007) that vary over development and by culture. Savouring by sharing with others is prominent in adolescents, when savouring is seen to first fully emerge, whereas time perspective (e.g. thinking the moment is transient) features for older adults. Western cultures tend to implement styles that prolong or amplify enjoyment (e.g. self-congratulation), while Eastern cultures tend to endorse strategies that dampen or curtail enjoyment (e.g. thinking a good experience was not deserved). An individual's ability to experience happiness has been argued to have a set point, meaning that a person may feel happier momentarily, but will always return to a baseline that ultimately cannot be improved. More recent research and discussion, however, supports a set-range. Regulating and enhancing one's positive emotions within this "range" is the essence of savouring.
- The decisive text on Savoring is:
 - Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savoring: A new model of positive experience*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- For a review of happiness set-points and set-ranges see:
 - Diener, E., Luca, R. E., & Scollon, C. N. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill. *American Psychologist*, 61(4), 305-314.

- **Positive Psychology in NZ practice.**

Talent and Strengths in Selection and Development – by Tracey Bond.

- From my experience, the best managers recognize, understand, value and play to the talents and strengths of their team. The result? → increased productivity, reduced attrition, and more engaged employees. The empirical research also supports this conclusion. Let me explain... The ongoing challenge for many organizations is hiring right and developing both the organization and employees for continued success. In doing this, the focus is predominantly on matching skills, knowledge and experience to the relevant roles. Often overlooked is the individuals' inherent talent, which when combined with skills, knowledge and experience, becomes a strength (often with visible passion). Leveraging strengths can make the difference between competence or truly excelling. From the employee's perspective, it can be the difference between doing a job, and having a great job. This distinction directly impacts retention and productivity. Some organizations are now actively hiring for

strengths, knowing that people tend to be most successful when utilizing their strengths (what they are good at). This is accomplished in a range of ways, from interviews, to various selection tools and measures. The bottom line is that an understanding of strengths adds much value to both the employee and employer. In terms of development, success is observed when managers focus on the positive – leveraging strengths and talents to support their team members in achieving excellence. A strengths based coaching approach facilitates this. For example, we work with a client who equips their managers with strengths based tools and trains them to utilize a coaching approach in understanding and developing their strengths. A core of internal people trained as strengths coaches supplement this. Again, the result? → increased productivity, reduced attrition, and engaged employees.

- *Editors note:* You can measure your strengths at: <http://www.viastrengths.org/>

- **Article Review.**

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226 - reviewed by Carla Crespo. (Available at: <http://www.unc.edu/peplab/publications/role.pdf>)

- This article introduces Fredrickson's "Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions". This theory's main statement is that positive emotions (such as joy, love or contentment) broaden people's thought-action repertoires, and allow the building of psychological resources which can be used later on. Although the idea that a wider pool of choices for thought and action promotes overall wellbeing is not new in psychology, this theory focuses specifically on the potential of positive emotions. The theory's main strengths include that it: a) provides a clear and compelling framework, b) identifies specific propositions (e.g., positive emotions fuel resilience, or, positive emotions can undo negative emotions), and c) shows possible pathways for their empirical examination. The article is simultaneously clear and ambitious and, certainly, as the author hopes, "inspiring" for future research. Since its publication, it has been regarded as a landmark article in the field of positive psychology, particularly positive emotion.

- **Events.**

- The big event on the positive psychology stage next year will be the First World Congress on Positive Psychology. This will be held in Philadelphia, USA, from June 18th to 21st. More details about this conference can be found by clicking through to the International Positive Psychology Association website: <http://www.ippanetwork.org/>

- **NZAPP Website.**

- The website continues to be updated with members' feedback. For example, there is now a page with positive psychology conferences (under the 'resources' tab).

- **Members Questions.**

- Q: What is the association working on next?
- A: We are working on how to connect our members, and how to fund the association over the long term.
- Q: Is there anywhere I can study a diploma or degree in positive psychology in New Zealand?
- A: No, unfortunately not at this stage. Your closest option is the University of Sydney (www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach) or an American or European online distance education provider.

- **NZAPP Membership Total.**

- 126 (up from 87, Sep 2008).

- **Lucky Member.**

- The association was given a free copy of The Happiness Training Plan (www.happinesstrainingplan.com). Denise Quinlan randomly chose a number between 1-126, which was 60, and after members were sorted by e-mail address, member 60 was Mei Williams – congratulations!

- **Support.**

- You can support your association by:
 - Informing your networks, friends, and colleagues about the NZAPP.
 - Contributing to the next newsletter (i.e., book review, article review, general comment/question, write about an area of positive psychology).
 - Making a suggestion for the association.