



## Newsletter 4, June 2009

- **Welcome.**

- Welcome to the fourth 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.**

- The International Wellbeing Study ([www.wellbeingstudy.com](http://www.wellbeingstudy.com)) began in the month of March with the first of five planned intakes (the next being this month of June). This is a broad study of wellbeing over time, and members are encouraged to participate, promote the study to others, and opt-in to try out some cutting edge positive psychology applications. The study is also now available in Chinese, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, and German.

- **Areas of Positive Psychology.**

Posttraumatic growth: An introduction – by Aaron Jarden.

- What do you know of the positive impacts and benefits of traumatic experiences? Maybe you have heard in passing about the concept of “posttraumatic growth”? Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is defined as “the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1). Although research is in its infancy, the list of conditions growth researchers have studied include cancer, heart disease, HIV, rape, assault, combat, paralysis, infertility, bereavement, house fires, plane crashes and earthquakes. The literature is building a picture illustrating that most people benefit in three ways from trauma, and these ways go beyond the traditional self-efficacy and internal locus of control notions (which could better be described as three dimensions of growth). The first dimension is that rising to a challenge reveals abilities, which changes a person’s self-concept and inoculates against future stress. The second dimension is that the trauma strengthens important relationships. The last dimension is that the trauma induces changes in priorities and philosophies towards the present and others.
- Below are three articles to begin your adventure into the realm of PTG.
  - Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(1), 1-18.
  - Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (2006). Growth following adversity: Theoretical perspectives and implications for clinical practice. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26, 1041-1053.
  - Peterson, C., Park, N., Pole, N., D'Andrea, W., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2008). Strengths of character and posttraumatic growth. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 21(2), 214-217.

- **Positive Psychology in NZ practice.**

Positive Psychology in the Workplace – by Mandy Lacy ([www.starpotential.co.nz](http://www.starpotential.co.nz))

- More and more in workplaces, teams, organisations and within ourselves we are expanding to work with strengths, creativity and positive emotions. This change in practice is transformational and commences with increased awareness of ourselves first, and an understanding that change is a continual journey.

Napper (2009) discusses the work of Snyder & Lopez (2005, 2007) who researched the amount of positivity needed to counterbalance negativity using video observations of interactions. Their results showed that high-performing teams had the highest ratio of positivity to negativity, and the broadest range of inquiry to advocacy. This research points to the importance of positivity in the workplace. The value of positive emotions cannot be overlooked, as over-whelming research evidence tells us that an overall balance of positive to negative emotions has been shown to contribute to people’s subjective wellbeing and optimal functioning.

Naef (2009) reported findings of clinical research that focused on behaviour, communication, motivation and conflict-solving in occupational (work) situations, which allowed for detection of early warning signals that indicated when someone was diverting from being co-operative and supportive, into becoming a problem to themselves, others and the organisation. This research demonstrated clearly that by applying positive interventions, people can be engaged and motivated to return to safe, productive and friendly working modes. However, it is important firstly to look at our own balance of positive and negative internal and external communication.

- References:
  - Naef, W. (2009). *Safety in Action: Learning Process Model and Techniques - for safety education, training, teaching*. Kahler Communications, Oceania.
  - Napper, R. (2009). Positive Psychology and Transactional Analysis. *TAJ Vol 39, No 1*, January.
  - Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, S. J. (Eds.). (2005) *Handbook of positive psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
  - Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, S. J. (2007). *Positive Psychology: The scientific and practical explorations of human strengths*. London: Sage.

- **New Books.**

- Kashdan, T. (2009). *Curious?: Discover the missing ingredient to a fulfilling life*. New York: William Morrow. - reviewed on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
- Leimon, A., & McMahon, G. (2009). *Positive psychology for dummies*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- **Events.**

- The First Australian Positive Psychology in Education Symposium was held at the University of Sydney on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May and was a resounding success. Two New Zealanders attended this event - Aaron Jarden and Denise Quinlan. This symposium was ground-breaking in that it showcased world first positive psychology applications with children in particular (an area of positive psychology yet to be fully developed). Of note, Dr Matthew White (Head of Positive Education at Geelong Grammar) outlined the infusion of positive psychology across a whole school, and Richard Eckersley discussed population based approaches to positive change. In all, 5 keynote speakers and 16 presentations highlighted the advances and talent in positive psychology in Australia. These PowerPoint's are available at: [www.positivepsychologyaustralia.org](http://www.positivepsychologyaustralia.org)
- June 18th to 21st: First World Congress on Positive Psychology. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. This is the big, and highly anticipated, event on the positive psychology stage this year. The conferences objectives are that participants will understand, discuss, and critique theoretical perspectives in positive psychology, integrate findings from the latest basic research in positive psychology into ongoing research and practice, and use positive interventions effectively in personal and professional settings. For more information, go to <http://www.ippanetwork.org> (International Positive Psychology Association website).
- The Second Australian Positive Psychology and Well-Being Conference will be in Melbourne, February 12-13, 2010.

- **NZAPP Website.**

- The NZAPP is now on facebook (search for New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology), which provides an avenue for members to chat with each other while allowing control over their privacy restrictions. This allows members to see who is attending which events.
- The website now has a list of 'ten empirical findings from Positive Psychology research' ('Learn more' tab from home page).

- **NZAPP Membership Total.**

- 231 (up from 179 in Mar, and 126 in Dec 2008).

- **Lucky Member.**

- Previously we have given away a copy of 'The Happiness Training Plan' and 'An Introduction to Positive Psychology'. This time we have a free copy of Barbara Fredrickson's book 'Positivity' which was featured in the last newsletter. Alison Ogier-Price randomly chose a number between 1-231, which was 23, and after members were sorted by e-mail, member 23 was Annette Henricksen – congratulations!

- **Support.**

- You can support your association by informing your networks, friends, and colleagues about the NZAPP, or by contributing to the next newsletter (i.e., book review, article review, general comment/question, or write about an area of positive psychology).

- **Quote.**

- Barbara L. Fredrickson (The Huffington Post, May 5, 2009) - "We need positivity, the complex web of causes and consequences of positive emotions, now more than ever. Not just to sugarcoat bitter news or distract us from gloom. We need positivity because we're different people when we're under its influence. Pleasant emotions like hope, inspiration, joy, and well-earned pride literally open us.... Science suggests that when we experience genuine, heartfelt positive emotions in a 3-to-1 ratio with negative emotions, we cross a psychological tipping point on the other side of which we function at our very best... That's because positive emotions... fundamentally change our biochemistry and our worldviews. In time, they can even change who we are - helping us become better versions of ourselves".