



## Newsletter 5, September 2009

- **Welcome.**

- Welcome to the fifth 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 intake being September). 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, and various special interest groups (such as lawyers, dentists, yoga participants) are being targeted for participation.
- Alison Ogier-Price is researching the process of hedonic adaptation. Her PhD is through the University of Canterbury, and tentatively entitled: Thwarting hedonic adaptation. The study aims to investigate the effect of positive life changes on subjective wellbeing, and the potential for sustaining positive effects and forestalling hedonic adaptation through intervention.

- **The First World Congress of Positive Psychology: Review**

- A number of NZAPP members attended the *First World Congress of Positive Psychology* in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in June. Denise Quinlan and Beverley Burns reflect on this event:
- *Denise Quinlan* - The World Congress provided an opportunity for more than 1,800 people interested in the field of positive psychology to listen to the latest research and developments across a wide range of activity including education, organisation and leadership, mindfulness, and workplace well-being.

Highlights included Phil Zimbardo's presentation of the Lucifer Effect, which explains why good people can do bad things when placed in certain situations ("it's not about bad apples, it's about bad barrels and bad barrel-makers"). Zimbardo defended a US Reservist on trial for crimes committed at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and highlighted the role of context over individual disposition. This theme of context and situation continued through the conference with European researchers pointing to differences between Germanic and Romance countries as to what events are meaningful and most strongly associated with well-being.

The clear message from the conference was that it's now time for positive psychology as a discipline to move to the next stage. Research in the field has thus far focused on the dispositional level and has reported on 'the average person'. Now it is time to explore what the range of experience is for different people in different situations. How is well-being different in India from Italy, the UK or the USA? And what is the range of experience for individuals in each of those countries? The debate on hedonic versus eudaimonic happiness is one area that will benefit from more detailed exploration. It is one thing to describe these concepts in general terms. It will be quite another to see how meaning, engagement and pleasure are experienced on a daily level by individuals with different trait levels of these factors.

David Cooperrider, as always, inspired the congress and received a standing ovation for his talk on Appreciative Inquiry (AI). At its very core, AI is a strength-centred approach and Cooperrider showed what a strengths-focused individual looks like in action. Cooperrider clearly lives his message which is why he continues to inspire listeners with hope and win the confidence of major global corporates, religious organizations and world leaders. Anyone wanting to find out more about his work can go to: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> or <http://worldbenefit.case.edu/>.

- *Beverley Burns* - In June of this year I attended the first International Congress on Positive Psychology - 1800 people from at least 54 different countries, all interested in Positive Psychology. There were many great papers and conversations. The most exciting, exhilarating and hopeful key note address was by David Cooperrider. David is Professor of Organizational Change at Case Western University in Cleveland, and the title of his paper was "Discovering and Design of Positive Institutions". Huge numbers attended this keynote with people filling the hall, sitting on the floor, and spilling outside to listen to him speak via video feed. He presented as a quietly spoken unassuming man who described his work on an international scale. We have all heard about appreciative inquiry, the tool he has researched and

taught for years. The impact of this tool however was astounding. He said that we have two choices in how we live our lives - "one is as if nothing is a miracle, and the other is as if everything is a miracle". Here he is referring to awe; one of the character strengths. He added that "no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it, we must learn to see the world anew". The way we ask questions, the curiosity that we show can change a world. This involved asking what is the best we can be, what might be, what should be, and what will be. He then demonstrated how this was possible describing significant and hope filling change across business, politics and the world. Google him!

- **Article Review:**

- Quoidbach, J., Wood, A., & Hansenne, M. (2009). Back to the future: The effect of daily practice of mental time travel into the future on happiness and anxiety. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(5), pp. 349-355. Review by Aaron Jarden.
- This novel article outlines an exploratory study into the causal effects of deliberate Mental Time Travel (MTT) on happiness and anxiety. MTT is defined as "the faculty that allows humans to mentally project themselves backward in time to re-live, or forward to pre-live, events" (p.349). Essentially MTT is the conscious act of pre-experiencing future events involving the self located in a specific time and space. Although a small study (N = 106), and subject to various methodological criticisms (use of the STAI, large attrition rates, etc), the authors report that engaging in daily positive MTT (compared to negative MTT, neutral MTT, or a control condition) over a two week period resulted in a significant increase of happiness, and that neutral MTT significantly reduces stress. They suggest that MTT should be further investigated as an avenue for wellbeing increasing interventions.

- **New Books.**

- Baumgardner, S. R., & Crother, M. K. (2009). *Positive psychology*. NJ: Prentice Hall (academic text)
- Magyar-Moe, J. L. (2009). *Therapist's guide to positive psychological interventions*. London: Academic Press.
- Sharp, T. (2009). *100 ways to happy children: A guide for busy parents*. Sydney: Penguin.

- **Events.**

- 2010 Feb 12-13 The Second Australian Positive Psychology and Well-Being Conference, Melbourne.
- 2010 May 5-6 The Fifth Happiness and Its Causes Conference. Sydney, Australia.
- 2010 June 23-26 The Fifth European Conference on Positive Psychology. Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 2011 July The Second World Congress on Positive Psychology (IPPA). London, UK.

- **Positive Psychology Education**

- Distance Positive Psychology Education: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/commons/fpp>

- **NZAPP Website.**

- The NZAPP is now on Ning.com, which provides an avenue for members to chat with each other. Ning.com has worked well for other positive psychology organisations around the world.

- **NZAPP Membership Total.**

- 286 (up from 219 in June, 179 in Mar, and 126 in Dec 2008).

- **Lucky Member.**

- Previously we have given away 'The Happiness Training Plan', 'An Introduction to Positive Psychology', and Barbara Fredrickson's 'Positivity'. This time we have a free copy of 'Random Acts of Kindness: 365 Ways to Make the World a Nicer Place' by Danny Wallace. Dr. Alexander Mackenzie randomly chose member 204, and after members were sorted by e-mail, this was Ace Simpson – congratulations!

- **Support.**

- You can support your association by informing your networks, friends, and colleagues about the NZAPP. Contributions to these newsletters are welcomed, and may include information of interest, book or article reviews, thoughts on areas of positive psychology, general comments or questions, and progress on current research. Please E-mail the newsletter editor, Alison Ogier-Price: [editor@positivepsychology.org.nz](mailto:editor@positivepsychology.org.nz)
- We are re-branding this newsletter for subsequent editions. Can you suggest to the editor a more appropriate name? The winning suggestion will receive a positive psychology book.

- **Quote.**

- David Clark - "Treating negative mood will not automatically lead to happiness and life satisfaction in our patients. Instead the single most important message is that a new and expanded perspective is needed that directly addresses and assesses positive affect, life satisfaction and contentment"
- Clark, D.A. (2006). Foreword. In M. B. Frisch (ed.), *Quality of Life Therapy: Applying a Life Satisfaction Approach to Positive Psychology and Cognitive Therapy* (pp. xi-x). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.