



The Positive Press

Newsletter No.7, March 2010

- **Greetings**

- Here we are three months into 2010 with our seventh issue of the newsletter, which is now newly named *The Positive Press*, for the New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology (NZAPP). Our ongoing mission is to keep members informed about new developments in positive psychology in New Zealand and around the world. This month's focus is on conferences and courses.

- **Reviews: Conferences and Courses**

- **Conference: The 2nd Australian Positive Psychology and Well-Being Conference (Melbourne 2010 February 12-13) - reviewed by Aaron Jarden**

In my view, conferences are very much like weddings; usually the best things are the food, the dancing, the people, and the embarrassing speeches. This conference was like a good wedding. Firstly, the food was by far the best of any conference I've attended – surely a good start. Secondly, I've never been to a conference where hundreds and hundreds of people sang and danced together (“freedom is coming...”) on stage which was a highlight for many (even those of us who hate singing...). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it was great to meet scores of enthusiastic people who were either practitioners actually making the world a better place bit-by-bit, or researchers enthralled in understanding the components and basis of wellbeing. Lastly, most of the embarrassing “speeches” came at the fabulously hosted BBQ after day one of the conference, and after the consumption of numerous beverages.

Although there were many fantastic presentations, my favourites included those by Felicia Huppert (Cambridge University's Well-Being Institute), and Lindsay Oades (University of Wollongong). Felicia is perhaps the world's expert and trailbreaker on population-based positive assessment and change. In her presentation she made the case that a broader conception of wellbeing and flourishing is needed, more so than just life satisfaction and positive emotion. She also outlined factors associated with flourishing from a large scale European study (43,000+ people) – The European Social Survey.

Following Felicia, Lindsay Oades, a coaching, health and clinical psychologist, spoke with passion and insight about his quest for implementing positive psychology in the mental health profession. He outlined the “Collaborative Recovery Model”, a model informed by positive psychology principles, which is currently being used in mental health services to assist with change. Lindsay spoke about the need for mental health service providers to focus on emphasising autonomy, strengths, owned goals, hope and meaning. It was great to see this fantastic work going on in Australia.

In addition to these two excellent presentations, the conference had a strong focus on positive psychology in education, positive interventions, positive health, and on flourishing. All-in-all, a top conference, superbly organised, and one that should be on the positive psychology radar for the future - the 3rd Australian Positive Psychology and Well-Being conference will be in Wollongong.

Presentations from the current conference will be accessible from the Australian Positive Psychology Association website at some stage in the next month or so, at: www.positivepsychologyaustralia.org.

- **Conference: The Quality of Life Conference (AUT 2010 February 22-24) – reviewed by Kennedy McLachlan**

The 2010 Quality of Life conference of the WHOQOL Group, was recently held at the AUT Campus in Auckland. The conference stood out for the high standard of scholarly presentation. This began with Prof Suzanne Skevington providing the conference keynote address discussing

the background to the development of the WHOQOL assessment instruments. This was followed by summary of the use of the WHOQOL in Australia over the last 15 years by Prof Graeme Hawthorne. Finally Prof Rex Billington closed the first day by outlining the development of the NZ version of the WHOQOL-BREF and releasing the first tranche of supporting data. The following two and a half days were full with a range of presentations. These reflected the diverse populations that have an interest in Quality of Life with subjects including renal disease, psychometric concerns, caregiving and obesity amongst many others. There was also a wide geographic spread with an international complement that included Iran, Japan, UK and local researchers. Highlights included two panel discussion sessions exploring a range of issues in QoL measurement and research. The congenial atmosphere and a high standard of scholarly presentation made for a successful conference and I look forward to hearing more in future years!

○ **Course: Penn Foundations of Positive Psychology Course** – reviewed by Reuben Rusk

I was very fortunate last year, to attend the *Foundations of Positive Psychology* course taught by Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar through the University of Pennsylvania. This is a 12 week, web-based course, costing US\$820, with 4-6 hours of time each week.

The course is essentially similar to the very popular, and academically-based Harvard course taught by Tal several years ago. It covers the most important topics within the field of positive psychology, including the distinguishing foundational principles and ways of thinking, and how it can be applied. The content is presented in twenty five 90-minute video lectures, with each lecture leaning heavily on scientific research, with stories and examples to illustrate the ideas.

I found the course website particularly useful, providing a wealth of extra resources, as well as access to weekly recommended articles. Participants have their own blog-space in which to record 'time-ins' (breaks during each lecture designed to help reflect on the material and its application), and each week to upload personal 'reflection pieces' on that week's topic. The course website forums also provide the ability to read posts and discuss topics with other participants, ask questions, and get comments and ideas from course facilitators.

The good:

- An excellent, highly-regarded and up-to-date introductory course in positive psychology
- The content is broadly applicable, including personal and work life, and relevant and beneficial to a range of people including psychologists and engineers
- There are great opportunities to network and discuss ideas with other positive psychology teachers and students
- You can do it online, at whatever times and days suit you, as long as you complete it in 12 weeks.

The not so good:

- It's long. You really need to set aside time each week for it.
- You can download the slides, but there aren't any lecture notes.
- The course had a great deal of excellent information, but lacked a clear overview and structure.
- The lectures don't go into much detail of how to apply the content in professional contexts. However, if you wish, you can discuss those questions in the forum.

Overall, I believe this to be an excellent course for anyone who wants to gain a broader understanding of what positive psychology research can teach us. The next course is scheduled for June 7 - August 27, 2010. For more information, visit:

http://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/online/non_credit/fpp.

• **NZ Research**

○ **Researchers and Research**

- We would really like to stay informed (and inform the membership) of current Positive Psychology researchers and projects. Please send a brief description of any project you are involved in, with project contact details and location, and current status, to editor@positivepsychology.org.nz. Please also indicate if you are happy for this information to be put on the NZAPP website.

• **Stay Informed**

- **Courses:** A list of some of the courses that can be found in Positive Psychology around the world, including Australia, USA, Mexico, UK and South Africa. <http://adjix.com/6sim>.
- **Journals:**
 - The Journal of Positive Psychology (<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t724921263>)
 - Journal of Happiness Studies (<http://www.springerlink.com/content/104910/?p=a25dfb9585fa4e7294aa3caf4c1078ea&pi=0>)
- **Events**
 - 2010 May 5-6 The 5th Happiness and Its Causes Conference. Sydney, Australia.
 - 2010 June 23-26 The 5th European Conference on Positive Psychology. Copenhagen, Denmark.
 - 2010 July 28-31 10th ISQOLS (Internat. Soc for Quality-of-Life Studies) Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.
 - 2011 July The Second World Congress on Positive Psychology (IPPA). London, UK.
- **NZAPP News**
 - **Membership Total:** 375 (up from 320 in December).
 - **Book Prize to a Lucky Member:** With each previous newsletter, we have given away a positive psychology-related book to a randomly-drawn member. The winner of a book prize in this issue is Rosie Hancock who wins a copy of Pat Armistead's (<http://www.joyology.co.nz/>) book *Humour Works* - kindly donated by Pat. *Humour Works* is an amusing read with a serious message which gives context to the part humour plays in our leisure and work lives. Pat talks about humour as expanding perceptions, creativity and productivity. Pat has a particularly effective way of phrasing aspects of positive psychology to make the information easily understandable, such as her description of Seligman's take on optimism as being that 'optimism prompts us to chance it and pessimism bids us to take cover' (p.63).
- **Support**
 - Please would you consider providing a book or article review for the next newsletter, and/or make suggestions as to what you would like included. Contributions to these newsletters are welcomed, and may include information of interest, thoughts on an area of positive psychology, general comments or questions, and progress on current research.
 - You can further support your association by informing your networks, friends, and colleagues about the NZAPP.
- **Quote**
 - "I believe that happiness can be achieved through training the mind" - His Holiness the Dalai Lama (The Art of Happiness: A handbook for living. 1998, p.14).

New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology

Certificate of Membership

Is available on request, by emailing info@nzapp.co.nz.

