

Positive Psychology Exercises



The aim of this resource is to explore five brief and quick exercises that research has found to increase wellbeing and life satisfaction (Bolier, 2013).

1) Expressing Gratitude

Expressing gratitude daily or as a one off has shown to increase wellbeing, there are a few ways to show gratitude.

Here are two different exercises to express gratitude:

- Write a letter and send it to someone that you are grateful to, or who has made a difference to your life. Think about writing to thank someone who you have not thanked previously.
- Write a daily gratitude diary and list the things that you are grateful for that day. These could be big or small things that you are grateful for. For example, you may be grateful for the sun shining on your desk, that your coffee was relaxing and enjoyable or that you have submitted a paper.

Research has found that expressing gratitude is very beneficial for wellbeing.

2) Kindness Journal

This exercise allows you to think about what is good in the world and your life. Kindness reflection can help to increase happiness and wellbeing.

Write a kindness journal daily of the kind acts or gestures that you have witnessed or done personally in the day. This could be something small, such as you held the door open for someone or someone asked how you were.

Research has found that acts of kindness is also beneficial for wellbeing.

3) Three Positive Things

Write down and reflect on three positive things that have happened each day over the course of a week. These positive things could be small or large, such as “there wasn’t a lot of traffic on the roads on the way to university”, “I wrote a paragraph today on my thesis”, or “I submitted my thesis”.

	Day 1
1	
2	
3	
	Day 2
1	
2	
3	
	Day 3
1	
2	
3	
	Day 4
1	
2	
3	
	Day 5
1	
2	
3	
	Day 6
1	
2	
3	
	Day 7
1	
2	
3	

4) Finding Your Character Strengths

This exercise explores your character strengths using a 25-minute questionnaire. Positive psychology states that everyone has character strengths, and that these are built up of six different virtues; **wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence**. Everyone has different amounts of these virtues, some greater and some lesser (Seligman, 2011). This questionnaire explores the six different virtues of your character and your strengths. Please visit the “Positive Psychology Center” website to access the questionnaire.

5) Best Possible Self Exercise

This exercise can be completed daily by imagining yourself in the future achieving your best possible outcome. Imagine your career goals, your personal goals or skills that you would like to develop. What is the best possible thing you could imagine happening to you in your life?

The exercise only takes 10 minutes to complete each day. If it would be helpful to you to revisit your thoughts, you could also consider writing down your best possible self in a diary.

Example:

Imagine that you have completed your PGR studies and you have become doctor. Imagine handing in your thesis. Collecting the doctorate award. Imagine how you would feel. What you would do next? What career would that allow you to do?

The purpose of this exercise is to imagine the future and the different possibilities you could have (Peters, 2013).

Research and References

Expressing Gratitude

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