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## Activities to help you be happy

Applying positive psychology

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## What is positive psychology ?

Rather than seeing wellness as the absence of illness (like depression, anxiety)


Why not focus on fostering happiness?

How can we help all people to flourish?

How can we increase life satisfaction?

Increase resilience?

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).



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## Positive psychology interventions

Lyubomirsky, Sheldo, and Schkade (2005) argue that there are three major contributors to happiness;


- a genetically determined set-point;
- circumstantial factors (e.g., income or education);
- activities and practices that relate to happiness.

We can target (c) to find ways of increasing people's happiness

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## Some activities



**Gratitude**

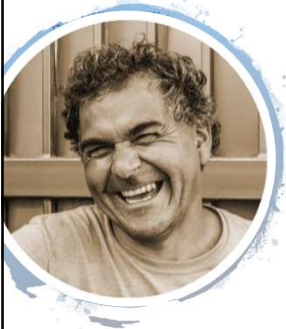
Expressing gratitude encourages us to savour positive experiences, people and things and stops us from taking them for granted, (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

**Activities**

*The gratitude visit*- write and then deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had been especially kind to them but had never been properly thanked. You can adapt this to an email.

*3 good things*- Each night write down three good things that happened that day. Think about what caused that good thing to happen- write that down too

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## More activities

*3 funny things*-

Proyer, Gander, Wellenzohn & Ruch (2014) adapted the '3 good things' task. They asked their sample to think of three funny things that have happened each day

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## Activities continued...

**Signature strengths** (Peterson and Seligman, 2004)

Consider what are your top 5 strengths from the list below? Try to use your signature strengths in a new way every day for a week.

creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, innovation  
bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality, zest  
love, kindness, social intelligence  
citizenship, fairness, leadership  
forgiveness and mercy, humility, prudence, self control  
appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality

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### Different activities may work better on different age groups

Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) (adult sample, mostly aged between 34-54). Found the 'gratitude visit', '3 good things' and 'signature strengths in a new way' all increased happiness for at least a month afterwards.

Proyer, et al (2014) studied older participants (50-79), they included the 3 funny things intervention and found it reduced depression, 3 good things and signature things increased happiness. They did not find the gratitude visit to be effective on their sample.

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### Positive drawing activities for children

Once a week draw...


**Something you are grateful for**  
"Think about your day. What is something that you are thankful for that happened today? Please draw a picture of that."

**Best possible selves**  
"Imagine the future where you are the best you can possibly be. Imagine yourself in a way that you're both happy and interested. Draw a picture of that."

Owen & Patterson (2014) compared gratitude intervention with best possible selves intervention on children aged 5-11 years adapted for children using drawing exercises. The gratitude exercise did not effect participants but the 'best possible selves' activity boosted self esteem.

Consider the age group and the adaptation to drawing.


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### Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

We need to feel a sense of autonomy, relatedness and competence in what we are doing. This increases motivation to do the activity, the satisfaction we get from it and mental wellbeing.

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### Difficult to flourish during COVID 19? Processing events

Lyubomirsky, Sousa, and Dickerhoof (2006) looked at how we process events and how this effects our wellbeing.

Writing, thinking and talking about life events.

For negative events, writing and talking about them increased life satisfaction compared to thinking about the negative event

Not the same for positive events! Here, best outcomes for thinking rather than talking or writing about them?

**Activity: If you are finding the lockdown challenging, write about it.**

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