
Workplace Positive Psychology Activities

October 2020



Manager Instructions & Tips

Hi Managers,

Welcome to your October positive psychology program. We've included some instructions for you below to help things run as smoothly as possible.

Firstly, you'll find an overview of positive psychology as well as some rationale for the importance of focusing on well-being in the workplace. This is to help you get buy-in from your staff members. Then we have outlined a before, during, and after team positive psychology checklist to make things as seamless as possible.

Positive Psychology Overview & Program Rationale

This program is about learning about the theory of positive psychology and applying evidenced based activities in order to enhance your team's wellbeing. Positive psychology is the study of optimal human functioning and the conditions that lead to this in individuals, groups, and organisations. It's commonly known as the Science of Happiness.

Before commencing the program with your team (i.e., during the first meeting) it can be helpful to provide some rationale behind why a positive psychology program is important for team well-being. The why behind it all!

For instance, you may say something in line with the following when first introducing the program....

Before we get started I want to share some information with you about some of the reasons why we are learning about positive psychology and focusing on wellbeing together as a team. This is partly because we know there is a cost on your wellbeing when the boundaries between work and home get blurred and we are seeing that happen more and more. While another reason is because the research shows us that when we focus on building our well-being we feel better, function more effectively, and enjoy life more. Just as we work together on meeting targets, now more than ever it's important for us also to focus on developing our individual and team level well-being.



Team Positive Psychology Meetings Checklist

Before

- ☐ Read over and familiarise yourself with the task for the week
- ☐ Advertise/inform your team what the topic for the week will be and where and how the meeting will be conducted
- ☐ Consider the appropriate location and book a time and involve staff who might work remotely

During

- ☐ Get team buy-in and explain the reasons why you're focusing on positive psychology (particularly in the first session) and the specific positive psychology construct/intervention by reading through the topic overviews
- ☐ Build a safe space for employees to contribute and share in the group. Set expectations that things won't be turned into a joke and that discussions will be treated confidentially
- ☐ Remind employees to switch off phones or minimise distractions and interruptions (especially if on a video call)
- ☐ Set the homework for the activity, preferably by getting everyone to schedule the time in their diary to do their activities during the week

After

- ☐ Follow up and check in to see if activities were completed. Congratulate people for actions taken. Don't criticise if actions aren't taken but instead ask about barriers and things that got in the way of action
- ☐ Ask for feedback regarding how they found the activities, what benefits they noticed, and whether they may consider continuing some variation of the activity in their own time





Week One

Values & Pleasant Activity Scheduling Worksheet



Week One

Values & Pleasant Activity Scheduling Worksheet

Overview

Values are thought of as personally relevant principles that guide actions and facilitate decision making. Ultimately, they are a motivating force and source of well-being. They guide our thoughts and behaviours, influence our belief system and give meaning and purpose to our actions and to our lives. Living a life that is congruent with our values (i.e., when our actions match our values) results in increased happiness, autonomy, and well-being. Conversely, when we behave in ways that are not in line with our values we tend to feel out of sync, uncomfortable, and dissatisfied.

Time taken

Team Meeting (30 minutes) Individual Commitment (30 minutes)

Steps

- 1. Define your personal values**
Each person can identify their own personal values from the provided list, or they can choose their own.
- 2. Importance (significance) of personal values**
Each person can rate how important each of their values is, relative to the others.
- 3. Identify how you have practiced each value in the past**
Each person can self-evaluate situations in their own life where their actions re-enforced the value as important to them.
- 4. Determine how consistent current actions are with their values**
Each person can self-evaluate how consistent their actions are with their values. Has it changed recently? What factors influenced the change? (e.g., COVID, new priorities, less time).



5. Choose a short-term action or goal that is consistent with your values

Each person can set a personal goal consistent with their values and schedule an action to meet this goal into their week.

Examples:

Values	Goal	Action
Family	Spend more time with family	go to the park for 1 hour on Saturday
Helping others	Support someone in need	Ask a junior worker if they need advice or support / offer support to someone in need)

These acts could include:

- A pleasurable activity carried out alone (i.e., reading or listening to music)
- A pleasurable activity completed with others (i.e., playing cards or meeting for lunch)
- A meaningful or important act (i.e., visiting or phoning an isolated relative)

Desired outcomes

- Each person will schedule in an activity or action that aligns with their identified values into their calendar or diary.
- It is hoped that through identifying valued activities employees will gain greater clarity on what is important to them.
- Through scheduling time to engage in said activities, it is hoped that employees will report enjoyment of the task, and experience a greater sense of well-being.



Values List

(Adapted from Russ Harris 2010)

Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life

Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences

Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want

Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself

Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc

Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc

Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve

Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering

Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others

Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others

Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations

Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others

Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty

Creativity: to be creative or innovative

Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover



Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others

Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa

Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling

Fairness: to be fair to myself or others

Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing

Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances

Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise

Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others

Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others

Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities

Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others

Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life

Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others

Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life

Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves

Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things

Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically -- in my close personal relationships



Justice: to uphold justice and fairness

Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others

Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others

Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience

Order: to be orderly and organized

Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.

Patience: to wait calmly for what I want

Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.

Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others

Power: to strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing

Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking

Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard

Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions

Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection

Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others

Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions

Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met



Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience.

Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals

Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses

Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality

Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself

Skilfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them

Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others

Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable





Week Two

Gratitude



Week Two

Gratitude

Overview

Gratitude is a key positive psychology principle which has been described as the habit of noticing and appreciating that which is good in one's life.

Research has indicated that those which take note of the positive things that have taken place from day to day fare better than those which focus on daily hassles or neutral moments. Gratitude is positively associated with greater satisfaction in life, enhanced physical and mental well-being, greater resilience, and increased prosocial behaviour.

Objectives

The following intervention was adapted from Martin Seligmans 'three good things' exercise. Please see his brief video introduction here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOGAp9dw8Ac>

Employees will be asked to consider the various things in their job/work that they are grateful for. These can be small or large factors and may include things such as quality working relationships, a supportive work environment, thankfulness related to certain opportunities, or perhaps simply having a job. Employees should attempt to be creative and think of factors that they may not regularly consider.

Time taken

Team Meeting (30 minutes) Individual Commitment (30 minutes)

Steps

1. Watch introduction video (above)
2. Employees are to record three work related things they are grateful for or three things that went well at work each work day (i.e., Mon-Fri for full time employees)



3. Employees may like to rate their mood out of 10 (where 1 equates to not feeling great, and 10 equates to feeling awesome) before and after the activity.

Desired outcomes

- It is hoped that employees will become more aware of the positive elements of their roles, and work, and will experience a greater sense of well-being through engaging in this intervention.
- It is also hoped that through tracking their mood they may see first hand the emotional benefits of practising gratitude.





Week Three

Connection



Week Three

Connection

Overview

Professor Christopher Peterson sums up the entire field of positive psychology as “Other People Matter”.

In line with this, the Harvard Grant study has been researching a group of men for almost 80 years (there are only 19 participants still alive, all in their mid-90’s) and results from the study indicate that the most important component of a long and happy life is having good positive relationships.

Close connections provide support, encourage us, and make our life more meaningful, whereas having a larger group of friends or acquaintances can help us feel connected, and a sense of self-worth in the community. It can be beneficial to give time and space to both strengthen & broaden social networks both in and outside of the workplace. Strengthening our workplace relationships leads to a more positive work environment, greater team cohesion, and performance as well as a greater sense of well-being and belonging at work.

Objectives

Employees will be asked to spend time increasing and strengthening their social connection with their colleagues.

Employees will be asked to choose three of the below strategies (or to make up their own) over the week. Employees can choose the day/s of the week they’d like to engage in this task and are able to do the same strategy for each of the three occasions or choose a new one every time.

Time taken

Team Meeting (30 minutes) Individual Commitment (30 minutes)



Steps

1. Choose three of the below example strategies or create your own
 - Rather than emailing or slacking a colleague give them a call or meet with them face to face (if possible) instead to discuss the topic
 - Plan something social outside of work hours, if social distancing is in place in your location this may be something social over the phone or internet
 - Chat with a coworker who you do not normally interact with. This could be work or non-work related.
 - Send a colleague a quick email or leave them a note with a work related complement.
2. Allocate time over the week to engage in the three actions
3. Note down how you felt after each action was completed

Desired outcomes

- Increased communication with colleagues
- Greater sense of connection and overall well-being





Week Four

Mindful Music



Week Four

Mindful Music

Overview

Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society describes mindfulness as paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. Being mindful of our moment-to-moment experiences involves a specific stance or attitude and research has indicated that it is positively associated with greater levels of well-being. Being mindful also lends to enhanced productivity, insight, and connection.

Objectives

Employees will be asked to participate in a mindfulness of music activity facilitated by their managers. During the activity employees will be encouraged to consider the following six components of the activity.

1. **Observe:** Focus on noticing the experience. Be alert to everything that comes into your awareness, noticing the details and what comes through your five senses.
2. **Describe:** Put words to your experience and label what you observe: label thoughts as just thoughts and feelings as just feelings. Do this without opinions and judgements and focus on the who, what, when and where?
3. **Participate:** “Be” in the present moment whole-mindedly and go with the flow from moment-to-moment. Even if your mind is wandering, just notice.
4. **Non-judgmental:** All experiences are seen as equal because we don't judge. This is the challenging part of being mindful because as humans it's within our nature to judge our experience. This is okay, notice when judgement occurs and recognise this as wandering from mindfulness, and bring yourself back to mindful practice again. Do not judge yourself for your judgements, try to notice the judgements, acknowledge and understand them with compassion – and re-focus.



5. **One-Mindful:** This is the opposite of multitasking. By engaging in tasks with one-mindfulness, it strengthens our ability to engage in one practice at a time. This can be practised daily by completing a task without pausing to check emails, answer the phone, or worry about other pending tasks.
2. **Effective:** To be effective means that we progress as we move along. Effectiveness through mindfulness means that we have more capacity to act skillfully in challenging situations. By remaining focused in the present moment we try to be able to stay goal-focused and do what is needed for the situation we are in.

Time taken

Team Meeting (30 minutes) Individual Commitment (30 minutes)

Steps

1. Set up the video or audio using a computer or phone. Press pause before the music starts playing.
2. Read through the initial discussion questions and instructions provided below.
3. You can choose any section of the song to play, you can play from the beginning or from somewhere in the middle. Play a couple minutes of the song (1 to 2 minutes).
4. After 1-2 minutes of the song has played, pause the song and facilitate discussion using the follow-up questions.
5. There are generally no right or wrong answers.



Transcript for Mindful Music

Based on the musical piece: **"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"** an Original Walt Disney Records soundtrack by Paul Dukas for Fantasia (2000). Performed by The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by James Levine. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzBNdssqrEA&ab_channel=MovieConAnimation

Alternatively, **"Game of Thrones - Main Theme"** Main Title (From Game Of Thrones: Season 8), Artist: Ramin Djawadi. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdQ3JDLImPI&ab_channel=CaglarTekin

Who here enjoys music? Typically when we listen to music we are rarely aware of what goes into a musical piece; the layers, the depth, unless we have a background in musical composition or are attuned to the piece of music. So now we are going to practice mindful listening to music. We will soon listen to a song with no words.

I'll ask everybody to sit in a comfortable position with your feet grounded firmly to the floor. Feel the ground beneath your feet. You may close your eyes if that helps, or lower your gaze to the centre of the room. Take a deep breathe in, hold, and exhale.

While you listen to the song that is about play, you might have thought about the day or about your life that comes into your head, or other noises in the room or outside might be distracting. Just notice what you are thinking or hearing and try to bring your focus back to the music.

Be aware of anything you notice or think without judgment or self-criticism. While the song is playing, notice the pace of the music. Notice when it changes from slow to fast, or becomes softer or louder. Notice the instruments that are playing and which instruments go together to make unique sounds.

Notice if any feelings or memories come up. Let these thoughts come and go as you bring your focus back to the sounds of the music.

When the music stops, bring your attention back to the room.

— Play Song —



Follow Up Questions

- How did you feel before listening to the music? While listening to the music?
- How do you feel now?
- Which instruments did you hear? (Fantasia instruments involved: Flutes, piccolo, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, trombones, timpani, glockenspiel, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, harp, strings)
- What did you notice about the change of pace and volume?
- Have you ever listened to music that intently before?
- Next time you hear music playing, try letting yourself experience it by mindfully listening.

Desired outcomes

- Improved sense of calmness and awareness
- Connection with peers through a shared experience
- Employees will hopefully be more likely to act mindfully throughout the day and focus their attention on the present moment.

