

Positive Psychology and the School Counsellor

Introduction

Typically the School Counsellor is the only school staff member with training and expertise in Psychology. With regard to Positive Psychology, we see two roles for the School Counsellor:

- 1) Work with individual students (integrate Positive Psychology into our individual counselling sessions)
- 2) Work with whole school (introduce teachers and executive staff to Positive Psychology, assist them to integrate Positive Psychology into teaching and learning activities and school culture)

Today's focus: Savouring (a key concept in Positive Psychology)

What is savouring? (Bryant, 2007)

- Savouring is the capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences in one's life.
- Compare savouring with coping – coping is about moderating the quality of negative experiences, savouring is about moderating the quality of positive experiences.
- Three temporal forms of savouring:
 - Anticipation
 - Being in the moment
 - Reminiscing

Why savouring?

Research has demonstrated that individuals who habitually savour have greater life satisfaction, are more optimistic and less depressed than individuals who do not habitually savour.

An example of savouring

During the last night, I savour once more the intimate relationship we have established with our planet. Shivering in the pilot's seat, I have the feeling I have left the capsule to fly under the stars that have swallowed our balloon. I feel so privileged that I want to enjoy every second of this air world. During our three weeks of flight, protected by our high-tech cocoon, we have flown over millions of people suffering on this earth... why are we so lucky?... very shortly after daybreak, [our balloon] will land in the Egyptian sand, Brian and I will be lifted away from the desert by helicopter, and we will immediately need to find words to satisfy the public's curiosity. But right now, muffled in my down jacket, I let the cold bit of the night remind me that I have not yet landed, that I am still living one of the most beautiful moments of my life. The only way I can make this instant last will be to share it with others... (Bertrand Piccard's diary entry written on the final evening of his record breaking trip around the world in a hot air balloon, 1999, p. 44).

For more information, read Bryant and Veroff's (2007) wonderful book "Savoring: A new model of Positive Experience"

Savouring in schools

- 1) **3 good things** (a savouring enhancing technique)
- 2) **Brainstorm & discussion. Question:** How might schools assist students to develop the capacity to savour?

Savouring Activity – 3 Good Things

This task was used in conjunction with a solution focused goal based program for High School students.

Students, parents, and staff listed their top 10 goals that they would like to work towards during the program all in relation to the student. Goals were then aligned and a hierarchy set. For example if homework or student / parent / teacher interaction had been of near or equivalent place within the goals set by each party then that was placed as the primary goal.

The 3 good things task was one method used to provide positive feedback to the stakeholders on the progress towards the goal. Each party was asked to do the following:

1. Each person was asked to focus their attention on a good thing that happened and name this good thing
2. They had to write what the good thing meant to them
3. Asked what they could do tomorrow to enable more of the good thing
4. What they learned from taking the time to name this good thing
5. What ways they or others contributed to this good thing

Midway through the program – each person reflected on what they had noticed.

This is just one example of the use of the strategy. In a wait list activity for year 5 students, the class has begun writing journal entries using the same format. This activity is acting as a prelude to a gratitude letter that is written during a resilience program that the students will participate in during the latter half of the year. Feedback from the activities is pending.

Contact Details:

Molly Nicholson
School Counsellor, NSW DET
molly.nicholson@det.nsw.edu.au
Phone: 0412 974 167

Dean Grimshaw
School Counsellor, NSW DET
dean.grimshaw@det.nsw.edu.au
Phone: (02) 9718 2884 or 0422 914 498