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ENHANCING WELL-BEING IN YOUTH

Positive Psychology Interventions for Education in Britain

Carmel Proctor

In 2007, UNICEF published a groundbreaking study examining the lives of children and adolescents in economically advanced nations (UNICEF, 2007). Results of that initial study were shocking—children in Britain were among the unhappiest, unhealthiest, economically disadvantaged, and least educated in the developed world. During the six years that followed, however, the U.K. moved from being at the bottom of a list of 21 developed nations on five dimensions of child well-being (material, educational, family, and peer relationships, behaviors and risks, subjective well-being) to 16th out of the world's richest 29 countries (UNICEF, 2013).

Over the past 20 years, the U.K. has actively attended to national concerns with regards to the well-being of children and adolescents, which were tragically brought to the forefront by the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. In 2003, in response to Victoria's death, the U.K. government issued the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Within the *Every Child Matters* agenda is the responsibility of schools to promote students' well-being (Challen et al., 2011). Moreover, in 2004, the U.K. government amended the *Children Act* of 1989, largely a result of the Climbié inquiry. According to the *Children Act* 2004, there is a duty to "[s]afeguard children and young people, improve their life outcomes and general well-being" until they are 19.

Within the U.K., a national children's charity, The Children's Society, issues an annual report, *The Good Childhood Report* focusing exclusively on the well-being of children and adolescents. Since 2005, with support from the University of York, The Children's Society has carried out substantive research examining what improves and what diminishes well-being according to young people. Overall, the society seeks to obtain a national overview of child and adolescent well-being, by asking children themselves.

Despite the 2003 *Every Child Matters* agenda, in 2007, the UNICEF overview of child well-being (UNICEF, 2007) indicated that unacceptable levels of disadvantage, poverty, and lack of education remained. As reported in the last release of this volume, *The Good Childhood Report 2012* (The Children's Society, 2012), although most U.K. children were happy with their lives as a whole, approximately one in 11 (9%) were not—approximately half a million children between the ages of 8 and 15. Moreover, the research suggested that children's overall well-being varied little according to individual or family characteristics, that there were few differences in well-being for boys and girls, for children living in different types of households, and that well-being declines with age—with approximately 4% of children aged eight years having low well-being

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compared to 14% of adolescents aged 15 years. These findings are consistent with those reported in the literature (see Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Proctor et al., 2009 for reviews).

According to *The Good Childhood Report 2019* (The Children's Society, 2019), there has been a significant decrease in happiness with life as a whole among 10- to 17-year-old children and adolescents over the past decade. Further, there has been a significant decrease in happiness with friends and school; however, there is no significant change in happiness with family, appearance, or schoolwork.

Data presented were gathered using their *Good Childhood Index*, which includes measurement of overall well-being in 10 key areas: family, home, money and possessions, friendships, school, health, appearance, time use, choice and autonomy, and the future. The reported research findings not only shed light on the state of well-being among Britain's young people but are also in keeping with findings reported in the research literature, suggesting the generalizability of the results. In the paragraphs that follow, results from the *Good Childhood Report* 2012 and 2019 will be summarized, and examples of corresponding research literature presented.

What Effects Children's Well-Being in Britain?

As found in previous years, *The Good Childhood Report 2019* (The Children's Society, 2019) found that children are most satisfied with their relationship with their family and least happy with the school they attend. These findings are in keeping with the literature identifying children's parental relationship as the essential component of well-being, irrespective of family structure. Family structure stability is also of utmost importance (see Proctor et al., 2009 for a review). Youth who experience a change in the family structure were twice as likely to experience low well-being (cf. Brown, 2004; Laursen et al., 2019).

The home environment also plays a critical role with safety, poverty, and frequent moves having an adverse impact on children's well-being (cf. Clair, 2019). Related to these findings, lack of money and possessions also adversely impacts well-being. Children living in the poorest 20% of households having significantly lower well-being than those not in income poverty or without financial strain; above average, there is little difference in levels of well-being (cf. Wilson et al., 1997). Friends also appear to play an important role in well-being, with the number and quality of relationships having an impact. For example, *The Good Childhood Report 2012* (The Children's Society, 2012) reported that 6% of children felt they did not have enough friends, which was linked to lower well-being, and those who experienced bullying were six times more likely to have low well-being than those who had not been bullied at all (cf. Asher & Hopmeyer, 1997; Diener et al., 2010; Flouri & Buchanan, 2002; Rigby, 2000). Satisfaction with school, schoolwork, and safety at school were also important aspects, with 80% reporting that doing well at school was very important and 7% reporting that they felt unsafe at school (cf. Park, 2005; Valois et al., 2006). Children's well-being is also related to their physical health, with those who rate their health as "very bad" being more likely than those who are happy with their health to be living in poor households (cf. Zullig et al., 2005). Satisfaction with appearance was also a factor that increased with age—32% of boys and 56% of girls worry about their appearance by age 15. Children who are unhappy with their appearance are also more likely to be the victims of bullying (cf. Blom-Hoffman et al., 2006; Valois et al., 2003).

In *The Good Childhood Report 2019* (The Children's Society, 2019), more than half of all children viewed seven different aspects of their future—educational grades, going to university, finding a job, having enough money, finding a place to live, and their mental and physical health—as "very important." These views were considered important irrespective of household income; however, children in more impoverished families had less expectation of going to

university than other children. Worries across the seven different future aspects increased with age, and 40% of all children were worried about broad environmental and societal issues, such as climate change and crime.

Overall, the 2019 report further highlights the importance of children's experiences on their subjective well-being and happiness (cf. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES; Felitti, 2002)). According to this report, a single experience of poverty or financial strain can relate to increased depression and low life satisfaction at age 14, with multiple disadvantages in different areas negatively impacting well-being in general. School emerged as an important focus, with scores associated with happiness with school found to be significantly lower than previously reported. Analyses of connections between poverty and financial strain and well-being suggest that improving children's subjective experience of school may be key to improving their overall subjective happiness. In keeping with the Department of Educations' *Every Child Matters* agenda, schools are, therefore, an ideal place for initiatives to improve overall well-being among children and adolescents.

Promoting Positive Well-Being in Schools

Researchers of positive psychology asked the vital question: "should well-being be taught in school?" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 294). According to Seligman et al. (2009), the answer is yes, not only because increased well-being is synergistic with better learning but also because increased well-being and happiness are outcomes that parents most want for their children. Moreover, although most young people report that they are happy, it is not necessarily the case that they are flourishing; that is, filled with positive emotion and functioning well psychologically and socially (Diener & Diener, 1996; Huebner et al., 2000). Indeed, parents want more for their children than just the avoidance of negative behaviors (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, violence, bullying, and depression), they want their children to be happy and to thrive in all domains of life (Moore & Lippman, 2005). Unfortunately, as already noted, there are a significant number of children and adolescents who are unhappy and dissatisfied with life. Healthy psychological states, such as happiness and well-being, are both the cause and consequence of diverse positive personal, behavioral, psychological, and social outcomes (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2019). Hence, it is vital to understand how to boost those who are languishing and unhappy to a more optimal state of functioning (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009) while protecting those with positive levels from diminishing.

Schools are an ideal place for well-being initiatives, especially considering that children spend the majority of their weekday in school and much of their day-to-day interactions affecting their well-being occur while at school (Seligman et al., 2009). Indeed, national education strategies, such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), have been implemented, so that emotional and personal well-being can be taught overtly through existing curriculum courses, such as Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE). Indeed, driven in part by the positive psychology movement, attention is now turning to how to make schools happy places (Noddings, 2003). Despite nation-wide efforts to promote well-being among young people over the last two decades, reports (e.g., as reviewed above) on the state of well-being within the U.K. suggest that their effectiveness may be in question.

Concerns over the effectiveness of such nation-wide efforts to promote well-being point to many of these initiatives being too prescriptive, with a focus on informing students what to do and what not to do, instead of fostering good character through practicing and modeling moral behavior (Park & Peterson, 2009). A promising alternative to increasing well-being among young people in school is through positive psychology interventions (intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviors, or cognitions; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Indeed, exploratory investigations into the teaching of well-being in school through the application of

positive psychology interventions and theory has led to significant improvements in students' well-being and life satisfaction (e.g., Proctor et al., 2011; for reviews see Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011).

The remainder of this chapter reviews school-based positive psychology interventions in Britain, which are outside of the context of national well-being strategies implemented by the U.K. government and are not typically associated with positive psychology. Reviewed in the section that follows are nine examples of curriculum-based programs implemented in Britain, including examples of interventions in Scotland and Ireland.

School-Based Positive Psychology Interventions

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) have been successfully applied in educational settings and resulted in positive behavioral, social, psychological, and academic outcomes among adolescent students. Such interventions and strategies come in various diverse forms and include a wide array of activities. In general, however, PPI interventions can be conceptualized as either single-component PPIs that focus on one key strength, such as gratitude, or multicomponent PPIs that integrate several positive psychology concepts (Green & Norrish, 2013).

Examples of Curriculum-Based Single Component PPIs

Making Listening Special

Making Listening Special is a project at the Milestone School in Gloucestershire. This project is part of the Listening to Young Children Strategy, which is committed to hearing the voices of young children and enabling these voices to shape services. Milestone School is a special school for children aged 2–16 who have a mixture of special needs. The project uses teaching approaches adapted from *Gentle Teaching* (McGee & Menolascino, 1991), an approach to helping those with special needs that have an explicit focus on well-being (Fox Eades et al., 2013). The project recognizes that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of secure relationships and that for children with autism and complex learning difficulties, creating a safe and secure environment is an essential prerequisite to their learning (Thompson, 2009). The class group that took part included six kindergarten children with autism and severe learning difficulties and involved three staff supporting the children at any one time. The project aimed to achieve the following outcomes for the children:

- to feel happy and safe within their new classroom environment—increasing confidence and self-esteem;
- to feel a valued member of the class group—wanting to be with others and feeling relaxed in interactions with others;
- to feel a good sense of self-worth—increasing confidence in participation and cooperation;
- to understand they are special and valued through the response of adults to their individual needs—feeling a sense of companionship, having a close circle of friends and respecting others and being respected by others;
- to feel inner contentment—feeling inner harmony, free from traumatic experiences.
- to have meaningful daily activities—enjoying daily life and having daily activities which incorporate their individual special needs and interests; and
- to begin to experience daily structure—having daily routines and having their individual beliefs and rituals respected by others.

The staff skillfully put the individual strengths and abilities of the students at the heart of student learning and created a personalized curriculum; rather than making the students fit into an imposed curriculum. Assessment of the project involved using a variety of methods, including photographs, observations, discussions with staff and parents, and school assessment procedures. Results indicated that teaching by teacher development enhanced teaching of the following abilities:

- be engaged or "fully present" in all interactions with the children—being there for the children with clarity of mind and fully focused attention;
- be unconditionally accepting—value the children for who they are, which involves giving them space to be themselves;
- "let go"—of assumptions and being open to listening by allocating equal worth to the children and listening with the intent to understand;
- teach not only with mind but also with heart—teaching with love, kindness, and compassion;
- foster a sense of belonging—enabling the children to achieve inner states of harmony and ease;
- provide serenity of approach—giving time for reflection and being sensitive to the inner world of individual children's special needs; and
- believing in the children—grounded in respects and understanding.

To effectively achieve these outcomes in the classroom, the staff recognize the importance of the students as "experts" in their lives and focus on individual preferred activities to increase positive emotions and improve learning (Fox Eades et al., 2013). Areas of difficulty were approached by drawing on individual strengths and by giving students choices. Overall outcomes included positive changes to both the individual classroom and the general school environment.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an intentional self-regulated state of attention on the present moment involving an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004). Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that involves acknowledgment and observation of continually changing internal and external stimuli as they arise, thereby allowing one to relate opening with their experience (Bishop et al., 2004). Huppert and Johnson (2010) examined the results of mindfulness training in a classroom setting among adolescent boys from two English private boys' schools. Religious education teachers in both schools were long-standing mindfulness practitioners and keen to participate in the research. Students in the intervention group participated as part of their religious instruction classes and completed four mindfulness lessons over four weeks (Waters, 2011). The intervention group was taught by the teachers who were already long-standing mindfulness practitioners and the control group was made up of classes normally taught by other teachers. Comparison of groups on measures of mindfulness, resilience, and psychological well-being was undertaken. Although differences between the two groups failed to reach significance, among the mindfulness group, there was a significant positive association between outside the classroom individual mindfulness practice and improvements in psychological well-being and mindfulness (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). Overall, most students reported that they enjoyed and benefited from the training, and 74% indicated that they would like to continue to practice mindfulness in the future.

Examples of Curriculum-Based Multicomponent PPIs

Wellington College

Since 2006, Wellington College in Berkshire has been implementing a happiness and well-being course for their fourth and fifth Form students. The course aims to promote flourishing and excellence among young people by educating them on how to capitalize upon their strengths and potentialities (Wellington College, 2012). Six elements of the course serve to promote well-being:

- Physical Health—foundations of well-being and physical health;
- Positive Relationships—relationships with other people;
- Perspective—building resilience and developing thinking skills to overcome adversity;
- Strengths—identifying character strengths and abilities and applying them in daily life;
- World—living sustainably and considering our place in the world; and
- Meaning and Purpose—exploring meaning-making and our response to the questions life asks of us.

Each strand contains examples of dispositions that can be explicitly taught and also reflected across the whole school community (Morris, 2013). During the first three years of school, students receive one hour every other week of well-being instruction. These lessons involve teaching the students skills and cognitive methods they can use to enhance their well-being in life. The students also benefit from a series of lectures from inspiring speakers designed to help them reflect on making the most of their lives. Moreover, mindfulness has been an integral part of the well-being program at Wellington since it began, and short meditations form part of the well-being lessons. Overall, the approach to teaching well-being at Wellington is one of activity or habituation, an approach most closely associated with Aristotle—that is, that happiness arises from doing things well by striving for personal excellence. At Wellington, the staff believe that schools should "educate for happiness"; that is, the formal curriculum should enable children to acquire, develop, and exercise their strengths and talents and foster their decision-making skills, so that they can experience what makes them happy (see Morris, 2014 for a review).

Celebrating Strengths

At the primary school level, *Celebrating Strengths* (Fox Eades, 2008) is an approach that takes a holistic school view of well-being. This approach builds upon the belief that a flourishing classroom requires a flourishing teacher to create the conditions in which students will flourish. This program links the VIA Classification (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) of character strengths and virtues to specific festivals and events throughout the school calendar. It incorporates activities such as the strengths-based classroom (recognizing the strengths of all class members), victory logs (record books noting students' achievements), and celebrations (of "what went well") into the curriculum. The program structure includes three threads: strengths, festivals, and stories, and works at three levels: individual, class, and the whole school. The teaching principles within *Celebrating Strengths* include: using the environment to reinforce and highlight strengths and concepts, linking abstract concepts such as hope to durable traditions, exploring abstract concepts through philosophy for children, directly reinforcing strengths and concepts through exercises, and indirectly reinforcing strengths and concepts through stories. To fully imbed all aspects of the program takes approximately three years. An evaluation of this program has indicated several positive outcomes, including increases in children's self-confidence and motivation to achieve, improved behavior at home and school, and an overall positive impact on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development (Govindji & Linley, 2008, August).

Strengths Gym

At the middle and secondary school levels, *Strengths Gym* (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2019) is an approach constructed around the character strengths included in the VIA Classification (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The approach aims to combine a focus on the individual (e.g., through specific strengths-based activities) with a focus on the institution (e.g., by providing classroom lesson plans and applications across the curriculum; Fox Eades et al., 2013). The program involves students completing age-appropriate strengths-based exercises on each of the 24 VIA Classification of character strengths and virtues across a three-level learning process.

The program aims to encourage students to build their strengths, learn new strengths, and to recognize strengths in others. The course is designed for use with children aged 11–14; however, it is adaptable across the student and age range. Student worksheets corresponding to which level and strength students are working on are provided. The student activities begin with a self-identification of each individual's top five strengths. Students are encouraged to create a work-booklet in order to collate and record their work. Each of the three levels of the program include 24 lessons, one for each of the 24 VIA character strengths. Each lesson contains a definition of the character strength and two "Strengths Builder" and one "Strengths Challenge" exercise. The exercises at each level are unique but designed to be equivalent and age-appropriate. The program involves a three-stage learning process: (a) general understanding of strengths and development of a strengths vocabulary, (b) identification of own use of strengths, and (c) recognition and identification of the use of strengths by others. The conclusion of each level provides students with the opportunity to list any strengths they found difficult but persisted in learning. There is space to write about things they are proud of accomplishing, and an opportunity to reevaluate their top five strengths after they have had a chance to learn about all 24 strengths (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2019). The program includes a comprehensive teacher's manual (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2019) containing flexible lesson plans enabling teachers to choose activities that suit the mood and the needs of their class. The manual is designed to provide teachers with as much flexibility as possible and enough material and options to cover all three levels of the course. Each strengths session in the manual contains the following elements: key features, definition, benefits, famous quotes, (philosophical) thinking questions, closing activities, display suggestions, strengths story, and applications across the curriculum. Results of a preliminary research study examining the impact of the program among 319 adolescent students aged 12–14 years by Proctor et al. (2011) revealed that students who participated in the program experienced significantly increased life satisfaction compared with adolescents who did not participate in the program.

The U.K. Resilience Program

The U.K. Resilience Program (UKRP) is the U.K. implementation of the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP). A three-year study of the UKRP began in 2007, led by the London School of Economics. During 2007, members of the PRP research team trained approximately 90 teachers to deliver an adapted version of the PRP curriculum to groups of students in three local authorities (South Tyneside, Hertfordshire, and Manchester; UPenn, 2007). The PRP is an 18-lesson curriculum designed to prevent depression in young people. The primary goal of the PRP curriculum is to increase students' ability to handle daily stressors and adolescent problems (Seligman et al., 2009). The PRP promotes optimism through realistic and flexible thinking techniques and teaches students assertiveness, creative brainstorming, decision-making, relaxation, and coping and problem-solving skills (Seligman et al., 2009). In general, the program is a cognitive-behavioral program developed within the positive psychology framework that helps students understand their thinking styles and how it impacts on how they feel and what they do.

A central element to PRP is Albert Ellis's Activating-Belief-Consequences model—that beliefs (B) about an activating (A) influence the consequent (C) feelings (Challen et al., 2011). Overall, the program aims to provide young people with the skills to be more resilient in dealing with situations in and out of school.

The UKRP was pilot tested with Year 7 students in 22 schools, to build resilience and promote well-being. Teachers attended a five- to eight-day training course on how to teach the program to young people. The nature of the curriculum is such that cognitive behavior therapy skills appropriate for use with adults are required. Thus, during the training, teachers develop resilience skills, appropriate for themselves and other adults, before learning how to teach the program to students. A large-scale evaluation of the program conducted by Challen and colleagues (2011) appears in a report of the findings commissioned by the U.K. Government. The research consisted of both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative results indicated significant improvements in depression and anxiety scores, attendance rates, and attainment in English and math. Overall, the impact varied by student characteristics with a larger impact for students: (a) entitled to free school meals, (b) who had not attained the national targets at key stage 2, and (c) who had worse initial symptoms of depression or anxiety.

The qualitative results indicated that teachers were extremely positive about the ideas underlying the program and the training they had received, with most reporting that they used the skills themselves. The students were positive about the program and interviews for the First Interim Report suggested that students had applied PRP skills in real-life situations, with some interviewees showing a good understanding of elements of the program. Also, return visits to nine of the case study schools in autumn of 2009 revealed that seven of the nine schools were continuing to deliver the UKRP to all Year 7 students.

Overall, the key findings of the UKRP evaluations included: (a) significant short-term improvements in depression symptom scores, school attendance rates, and academic attainment in English; (b) larger improvements with increased participation (e.g., weekly more than biweekly); (c) impacts lasting only as long as participation, with effects fading after one year, and with no impacts at two years; (d) no impacts of workshops on behavior scores or life satisfaction scores; and (e) students reporting generally positive appraisal of the program and that they were using skills in real-life circumstances (L. Bailey, personal communication, November 22, 2012). These findings are similar to those of the PRP, which has been demonstrated to reduce and prevent symptoms of depression in young people (cf. Challeng et al., 2014).

Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College

Through a unique partnership with the University of East London, the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation, principally sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, has developed its well-being curriculum devised for Years 1–13 based on the research and theory of positive psychology. This program was implemented at Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College in London. The aim in developing this program was to create a comprehensive positive psychology-based well-being curriculum that targets all of the significant predictors and correlates of well-being, using individually tested interventions to enhance learning. In Years 1–9, the emphasis is on positive interventions intended to foster happiness, positive emotions, flow, resilience, achievement, positive relationships, and meaning. In Years 10–11, the emphasis is on positive education, such as enabling young people to reflect upon and make choices about their well-being and development.

The program spans across five different blocks of years (or key stages) of the national curriculum with different outcomes and focuses for each year group. The weekly well-being lessons take the form of informal discussions, group work, practical exercises, and roleplay grounded in the latest positive psychological theory. Examples of the topics covered in Years 1–3 during the

primary phase of the program include: happiness, recognizing emotions, joy, just for fun, interest/curiosity, love, being calm and patient, sadness, anger, flow, good memories, savoring, celebrating, play, noticing good things and being thankful, hope, and mood-boosting.

In Years 7–9, students participate in one well-being class per week, which is delivered by the tutor of their year group. Some of the topics covered in this lower secondary phase of the program include essential skills of well-being, measuring happiness, the effects of happiness, optimizing well-being, positive and negative emotions, managing feelings through minimizing negative emotions, enhancing positive emotions, getting on with others, resolving conflict, positive reminiscence, learning to breathe, mindfulness, meditation basics, the power of exercise, nutrition, sleep, and being in charge.

In Years 10–11, students also participate in one well-being class per week delivered by the tutor of their year group. Some of the topics covered in this upper secondary phase of the program include self-awareness and acceptance, personal change, self-evaluation (respect and esteem), feelings, emotions and moods, reasoning, creative thinking, beliefs, courage, and confidence, worrying, security, aliveness, pleasure, learning, and death.

Program effectiveness has been evaluated with standardized questionnaires administered at the beginning and end of each year. These measures assess: self-actualization, global and multidimensional life satisfaction, and affect. A control school where no well-being intervention took place served as a comparison of the initial results. Results from data gathered during the first year of implementation (2008–2009) indicated significant increases in positive affect; satisfaction with friends, self, and family; self-actualization; and global life satisfaction (Popovic, 2017; P. A. Koureas, personal communication, November 28, 2012). There were significant decreases in negative affect in comparison with students who did not receive the program.

Examples of Interventions in Scotland and Ireland

Bounce Back

Bounce Back (N. Miguni, personal communication, November 24, 2012) is an Australian well-being and resilience program sponsored by The Young Foundation that was introduced in 16 schools in Scotland. Bounce Back is based on the following acronyms:

- **B**ad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.
- **O**ther people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.
- **U**nhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.
- **N**obody is perfect—not you and not others.
- **C**oncentrate on the positives, no matter how small, and use laughter.
- **E**verybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection, and setbacks sometimes, not just you.
- **B**lame fairly—how much was due to you, to others, and to bad luck?
- **A**ccept the things you can't change, but try to change what you can first.
- **C**atastrophizing exaggerates your worries—don't believe the worst possible picture.
- **K**eep things in perspective—it's only one part of your life.

The program includes nine units (i.e., core values, people bouncing back, courage, looking on the bright side, emotions, relationships, humor, no bullying, and success), which repeat in each book (Kindergarten to Grade 8) with age-appropriate activities. It uses children's literature and literacy activities, and integrates the content across subject areas. Activities include circle time, cooperative learning, and educational games. The program is integrated with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and incorporates both positive psychology and cognitive behavioral therapy techniques. The

integrated teaching strategies include literacy activities and games, thinking tools and activities, cooperative strategies, drama, multimedia and art, and numeracy activities. For example, a "blame fairly" activity can utilize the "attribution wheel," whereby students explore their attributional style (i.e., how they explain the bad events in their lives) and learn to improve optimistic thinking.

Evaluation of the program in Scotland included comparing quantitative and qualitative data collected before implementation of the program and at 18-month follow-up. Conclusions from the evaluation are that students:

- reported feeling more connected to their school,
- perceived school as a happier and kinder place where fewer students felt lonely or left out, and more students were now accepted,
- perceived that they had more control over their feelings and actions, and
- felt it increased their sense of confidence and their social skills.

Conclusions from the evaluation are that teachers:

- observed more positive relationships and interactions between students;
- felt more resilient and confident;
- reported more effective skills for dealing with challenging situations in their professional and personal lives, and
- had higher levels of overall well-being.

Overall, results to date are encouraging with the program having a positive impact on both students and teachers (N. Miguni, personal communication, November 24, 2012).

Blackrock College

In Ireland in 2012, an all-boys school, Blackrock College in Dublin, introduced a Leadership Values and Behavior Policy as part of its future strategic development. An integral part of this strategy was a training program in positive psychology for the 72 House Captains (school prefects from second to sixth year inclusive, aged between 13 and 18, approximately). The objective of this Positive Leadership and Well-Being Program was to facilitate a basic understanding and to promote the creation of the necessary skills for positive leadership. Specifically including: self-awareness, character strengths, personal values and virtues, growth mindset, love of learning, true grit and drive, courage and compassion, goals for growth, willpower and intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, self-control, effective decision-making and routine. Skills that aid the creation of authentic self-esteem and healthy confidence necessary for quality leadership.

The aim was optimum engagement through active participation and energetic fun and was both task and team-oriented, involving games and play designed to be challenging and promote creativity. Short videos and illustrations that represent learning through visual senses and humor were utilized to facilitate visual thinking. Forum theatre or roleplay to replicate real school life scenarios were also utilized to ensure ongoing engagement through variety and novelty. A popular session of guest speakers also complemented these scenarios, with fun topics such as "creative problem solving games."

The learning from these multivaried sessions was concretely reinforced by debriefings and both small and full group discussions. In addition, all participants were given preparatory tasks, and ongoing assignments were reviewed and discussed in the next session/workshop. Preparatory tasks included online completion of the VIA-Youth (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and an assessment of personal meaning. Assignments included prescribing book reviews and listing of

top lessons. Positive active interventions were also included, such as: expressing gratitude, cultivation of optimism, committing to your goals, practicing random acts of kindness, learning to forgive, and savoring life's joys. Storyboard posters were also created, displaying particular leadership events within the college, which were displayed on the college campus to enhance leadership awareness.

In sum, the Positive Leadership and Well-being Program is an individual strengths-based and positive culture approach to enhancing leadership and personal potential. Its design enhances the environment and culture where "strength and truth," "fearless and bold," and a "creed of caring" are nurtured and allowed to flourish. Overall, feedback on the program has been positive and encouraging and a solid start for future development at Blackrock College (D. Hevey, personal communication, December 9, 2012).

Applying Positive Psychology Interventions in Schools: Considerations

In considering the application of positive psychology interventions in schools, several points are noteworthy for those wishing to implement or develop well-being programs. Firstly, it is essential to have the support of the headteacher of the school. Headteachers are the most senior teacher of a school and are responsible for leading and implementing learning and managing the school overall.

Secondly, consultants and others working with teachers and schools need to provide them with "positive psychoeducation"; that is, teachers require genuine insight into the techniques they will be implementing in order to maximize success. As noted in Waters' (2011) review of positive education interventions, teachers implement most PPIs, and thus positive education training needs to be delivered to teachers. Indeed, teachers need to understand the positive psychology approach and value it in order to apply it. For example, research on the success of the PRP program indicated that training was essential, with the level of training and supervision that group leaders received being related to variability in effectiveness (Gillham et al., 2007; Seligman et al., 2009).

One of the major stumbling blocks to providing adequate positive psychoeducation, however, is the lack of funding and resources by the majority of schools who need these programs the most (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2017). Indeed, impressive positive outcomes of whole school applications appear in the literature (e.g., Morris, 2013; White, 2013); however, schools considered are often privately funded and thus have the ability and resources to implement school-wide programs (e.g., PRP and Strath Haven Positive Psychology Program). Therefore, materials supplied to teachers designed to enable them to implement positive psychology programs where training is not possible need to be informative and user friendly. Furthermore, the job of educational consultants is not to teach teachers how to teach, but to provide them with the tools to implement positive psychology techniques into their teaching. Those working with schools need to consider what they can give that can be applied once they leave. In the school context, very little is "pure" manualized positive psychology—learning is adapted to suit the needs of the institution. Successful application in the school context involves adding positive psychology to existing techniques. For example, art teachers will respond well to creativity applications. Overall, the key is the infusion of positive psychology skills into established school subjects.

Third, school-wide approaches ensure that positive psychology becomes part of the wider school culture (Waters, 2011). In order to achieve this, teachers need to know how to implement the techniques across the curriculum and be provided with ideas and suggestions on how to do this. Moreover, the implementation of programs needs to extend throughout the whole school year. Research has indicated that longer interventions produce greater gains in well-being (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Unfortunately, however, many look to positive psychology for quick-fix

remedies. Schools need to be reminded that PPI programs are a way of being and doing, not a quick remedy for unhappiness. Thus, interventions need to be built into the whole school curriculum throughout the year. Structure and consistency are also necessary for integration and learning to occur among both staff and students.

Finally, research has indicated that a scattered approach, in which individuals practice multiple and varied PPI activities, are more effective than single approaches (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2019; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Therefore, where possible, schools need programs that include multiple activities and techniques for application across the curriculum. Indeed, a variety of PPIs have been found effective in increasing well-being and could be developed into individual programs. For example, counting blessings and participating in self-guided gratitude exercises (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2008), counting one's acts of kindness for one week (Otak et al., 2006), keeping a gratitude journal (Froh et al., 2008), writing down three good things that went well each day and using strengths in a new way every day for one week (Seligman et al., 2005), mindfulness training (Huppert & Johnson, 2010), and meditation (Nidich et al., 2011) to name but a few. Teachers are best placed to adapt these and many more applications into their classrooms.

Conclusion

Within the U.K., there is ongoing concern about the well-being of children and adolescents. Recent reports indicate that despite national strategies to increase well-being among Britain's young people, there has been a significant decrease in life satisfaction and well-being over the last decade (The Children's Society, 2012). A major priority in addressing low levels of well-being among young people is through high-quality education, positive relationships with teachers, and fostering children's ability to have positive views of themselves. Recently, positive psychology interventions are proving to be beneficial in aiding these endeavors, through both independent application and application through existing strategies and curriculum courses. Applied techniques reviewed in this chapter include:

- allowing those with special needs to become experts in their own lives, thereby enabling them to engage in preferred activities to increase positive emotions;
- increasing psychological well-being through mindfulness training and meditation;
- promoting flourishing and excellence through whole school techniques and a community environment that focuses on teaching students how to capitalize on their strengths and potentialities;
- creating the conditions in which young students will flourish by linking personal strengths to festivals and celebrations throughout the year;
- providing lesson plans and activities that enable students to explore and identify with their strengths and learn how to apply these skills in their own lives to increase happiness;
- promoting optimism through realistic and flexible thinking techniques that focus on enabling students to handle daily stressors and problems;
- implementing positive education across the whole school, thereby enabling young people to reflect upon and make choices about their well-being and development; and
- using cognitive and dialectical behavior therapy techniques alongside positive psychology application to facilitate resilience and applying positive leadership to facilitate and promote well-being.

Overall, these applications and interventions provide encouraging support for the continued development and application of positive psychology interventions in education.

Chapter Summary

- Children's perception of their relationship with parents is the most important component of well-being, irrespective of family structure.
- Consistency and stability of family structure is vital to well-being.
- A safe and stable home environment is related to increased well-being.
- Cultivating good friendships along with spending quality time with both friends and family is associated with increased well-being.
- A major priority in addressing low levels of well-being among young people is through high quality education, positive relationships with teachers, and fostering children's ability to have positive views of themselves.
- Teachers need to understand the positive psychology approach to apply it successfully.
- Successful application in the school context involves adding positive psychology to existing techniques.
- School-wide approaches are required in order that positive psychology becomes part of the ethos of the school.
- Interventions need to be applied throughout the whole school year in order for habituation to occur.
- Application of multiple and varied activities and techniques appear to be more effective than focusing on single activities.

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Reference Notes

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