

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is often described as a *first cousin* of AI.

We draw significantly on its material in our work on wellbeing, resilience, and journaling.

Martin Seligman is the inventor of Positive Psychology and his books *Flourish* and *Authentic Happiness* are the source books for this approach. His view is that a happier society requires us to attend much more to the quality of our inner life and to proven methods for improving life. That is what positive psychology is about- it goes beyond the treatment of depression and anxiety to ways in which we could all live more rewarding lives. The exercises and approach that Positive Psychology offers teach resilience and optimism and include:

- ❖ Systematic practise of kindness
- ❖ Gratitude to others
- ❖ Counting your blessings
- ❖ And exploiting your strengths rather than attacking your weaknesses

Positive Psychology is not Positive thinking

Positive Psychology is not Pollyanna thinking - it is about how you construct your own reality by developing the positive side of your nature.

It is important to distinguish positive thinking from positive psychology. The main difference is that positive psychology is subject to the rigours of scientific experimentation and endorsement, suggesting the phenomena discovered are reliable and repeatable. Positive thinking deals more with the realm of anecdote and exhortation.

Positive Psychology literature can also be distinguished from positive thinking literature as it accommodates the reality of and necessity of negativity: it not only accommodates the reality of negative event, emotions and behaviours but also recognises their importance to human well being. Negative emotions and outcomes are recognised and accommodated by positive psychology in at least three ways:

- ❖ There is a recognition that bad things happen to people through no fault of their own; there is such a thing as randomness;
- ❖ Negative emotions can serve a useful purpose. Fear, anger anxiety, sadness, stress etc are essential in alerting threats to wellbeing so that something can be done about it;
- ❖ It is clear that on occasions that well intended behaviour can have adverse outcomes due to the basic inability people have to fully understand the causal relationships they operate within. In other words everyone is susceptible to making mistakes with unforeseen negative consequences.

Another key player in the Positive Psychology movement is Barbara Frederickson. We have found her *Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions* to be very helpful in developing the resilience work and in developing the programme for support of residents of homeless hostels. In summary Positive emotions *broaden* the thought-action repertoire, and expand understanding and behaviours. These broadened mindsets *build* an individual's physical, intellectual, and social resources AND introduce the possibility of 'different' conversations - both internally and externally

PIE - A Psychologically Informed Environment

This is an example of how we have used a combination of Positive Psychology and AI to develop a support package for homeless hostels which meets a range of requirements. The concept of a "psychologically informed environment", or PIE, describes the outcome of any attempt to identify, adapt and consciously use those features of the managed environment which would allow the resources and functioning of the service to be focused on addressing the psychological needs and emotional issues thrown up by the residents.

How Appreciative Inquiry helps a hostel become a PIE - A PIE aims to use the potential for change that resides in all human beings in the pursuit of some wider or future goal, whether it is the reduction of re-offending, a positive attitude to learning, or engagement with treatment and therapy. It is the changes in day-to-day running of a hostel, derived from reflective practice and discussion, that mark the development of the PIE.