

Positive Psychology 2016. Groupwork topics for starting only. V.3

Here is a list of topics, numbered for the group I am assigning it to. However:

- If any group comes up with a topic of their own, that is clearly in PosPsy, then I will probably approve that. Or you can ask to do one of the "spare" topics.
- I would particularly like a group to volunteer for the "spare" topic of mHealth, but only if they are keen.
- It is important that no two groups do the same topic. However, two topics can be close neighbours without being the same. In such cases, consult ASAP with the other group, decide how you will split the territory, and refer to each other's created page (readers who are interested in one will want to check the other one too).
- You can rename your topic in your document. My topic names are often not great, and anyway you may well modify the exact focus. However you should do so to help fellow-students understand at a glance what it is about, not to be obscure and witty for the sake of it.
- All these topics are meant to be part of PosPsy, so you often do not need the name "PosPsy" in the title of the topic: people will assume that.

I would prefer to finalise group topic choice in or around our next session (2). So discuss with your group in advance whether you want to change your topic, and if so to what.

Below are initial definitions of the topics, and often a starting point. However you may very well have to redefine them as you develop them. That's OK provided it's not about convenience but about what ideas make critical sense, or what ideas there are published evidence about.

For some of them, you will find one or more past student wikis that could get you started: in that case your job is to save what is worthwhile from the old, and bring the whole thing thoroughly up to date. For some others, the topic relates to a past one, but asks something new about it.

Google, and Wikipedia, are often good starting points: you just have to get from there to respectable academic literature.

- 1) Political views and PosPsy. See wikiP on Positive Psychology.
- 2) Youth development and PosPsy. See wikiP on Positive Psychology.
- 3) __
- 4) The meaningful life and PosPsy. See wikiP on Positive Psychology.
- 5) Strengths and virtues and PosPsy. See wikiP on Positive Psychology, but also perhaps past student wikis on this course.
- 6) Attention: What are the links between PosPsy and the pre-existing field of attention?
- 7) Earlier theories of flourishing: Maslow, Rogers, Fromm: What are the links between PosPsy and them?
- 8) Aristotle's "golden mean": It is all about balancing.: Aristotle's "golden mean".
It is all about balancing. A lot of psychology is about good and bad, healthy and unhealthy. But Aristotle thought all things were about the golden mean, a bit like modern personality dimensions where the best place is in the middle of each scale. Mindfulness and learned optimism could be thought of also as (re)balancing. Is pos Psy ALL about this?
- 9) Cross-cultural views on the nature of well-being: try google. There are differences.

- 10) Aversion to happiness: is this condition real? useful? relevant to posPsy? There's a wikiP entry on it.
- 11) Is happiness bad for you in any way?: A good critical thought. Is there any support for it? Does happiness make you lazy and complacent? Or instead, does happiness give you the resilience to be able to help yourself and others? Frederickson's theory seems relevant, but you don't have to mention it necessarily.
- 12) Kindness, caring: Some say this is one key foundation for a happy life: what is the evidence? Note that this implicitly is a social angle: you have to be kind to someone else. Pets may be good for well-being because they give you something to care for. A shallow page is here: but you have to dig to find the evidence <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/>
- 13) Relationships / intimacy / cooperative activities: Some say this is one key foundation for a happy life: what is the evidence? Note that this implicitly is a social angle: you have to be kind to someone else. Pets may be good for well-being because they give you something to care for. A shallow page is here: but you have to dig to find the evidence [http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/ swapped 13,14??](http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/)
- 14) Physical Exercise: PosPsy effects only (not physical or mental health cures). Is it true that exercise makes everybody happy, or just a few? Why doesn't everyone do it naturally then? What is needed is an update on this topic, and a willingness to tackle the hard question; and not a lazy claim about natural opioids which completely and totally fail to explain why exercise is avoided by the large majority of people. *swapped 13,14??*
- 15) Journalling.: writing and its effect on well-being.
- 16) Mindful use of Facebook: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1753613>
The idea is that whether facebook has a positive or negative effect on your well-being depends on how "mindfully" you use it. Discuss; find more recent literature.
- 17) A guide to DIY self-help interventions (PosPsy exercises): Apart from textbooks, it is not so easy to find exercises to do. Decide how to produce a brief guide that is of maximum use and interest to fellow-students, including whether instructions are available, and whether there is any evidence of benefit.
<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/positive-psychology-exercises/>
- 18) The dynamic (social) spread of happiness: This topic is a review of a paper, including any followups since it was published; and of the idea it embodies about how your well-being may benefit others who know you.
BMJ 2008; 337 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a2338>
- 19) PosPsy can improve your social relationships (rather than vice versa): i.e. if you improve your PosPsy activities then you also get better relationships. This is a recent article: how good is it, and what related literature is there?
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439760.2015.1037860>
DOI:10.1080/17439760.2015.1037860
- 20) Strengths / character applied to the education of children
xxxx
- 21) Simplify your life: This was a topic in Tal's old textbook, and your page should update the idea. Recently articles on "minimalism" seem to be a development. There was a student page on it in 2009-10. Is this topic really about, or related to, the burden of choice?

22) Burden of choice:

Discuss this old topic from a new perspective: what are its relationships to: "overchoice" VS. the blessings of choice (self-efficacy, power, freedom ...).

23) Volunteering update.: What is the evidence now? What about OAPs doing it for well-being vs. psych students 'volunteering' for their CV?24) "Positivity ratio": critique of Fredrickson: The following current paper gives a history of Fredrickson's theory, and how part of it turned out to be based on entirely wrong maths. What ideas have survived the recent critique? Give a sober assessment of what is still worth knowing in this area.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439760.2015.1037857>

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Spare topics

- What (if any) is the overlap of mHealth and PosPsy?: I'd like a critical guide to the relationship of PosPsy with what I myself call 'mHealth'. PosPsy is relevant to some interventions, but is often absent from a lot in this area: the gadgets for collecting bodily data; the medical studies on curing the diagnosed ill; and the middle area of e.g. persuading people to take more exercise which is at least aimed at the non-diagnosed. A map of the whole area, and how it relates to students who know something of PosPsy is what is wanted.
- Happiness economics: [needs an economics student?] There is a wikipedia page on happiness economics, and it is an important topic if you feel up to giving a quick guide to fellow-students.
- Social status.: Outside PosPsy there is evidence that social status makes people happier: perhaps because it gives more power and so self-efficacy.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitehall_Study
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3783543.stm>
- The current state of use of mindfulness exercises in your class today: This is actually almost a research exercise (find out from your classmates). A large proportion of students today (a big change quite recently) have had some contact with mindfulness training. On the other hand, a majority of them use it when and only when they feel stressed, which works for them but is quite different from the usage in almost all research studies: a gap. I have a maxi student working in this area whom you might like to contact and discuss it with: Hannah Lyall 20309221@student.gla.ac.uk