Engaging with Positive Psychology: Possibilities for sports coaches and coach developers

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Aim: using selected concepts to illustrate how PP may be valuable for coaches & coach developers

What is ‘Positive Psychology’ (PP)?

- An umbrella term - study of positive emotions, positive characteristics and enabling institutions
- Research and theory in PP are intended to supplement, not to replace, what is known about human suffering, weakness and disorder.

‘A complete science and a complete practice of psychology should include an understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their interaction, and validated interventions that both relieve suffering and increase happiness - two separable endeavours’.

(Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson, 2005:410)

The purpose of positive psychology

‘to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities’

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deficit</th>
<th>Abundance</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotions</td>
<td>Positive emotions</td>
<td>14:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>20:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>28:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Virtue</td>
<td>13:1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Deficit and Abundance concepts in psychology publications 1887-2000 (adapted from Myers, 2001)
Conceptual boundaries in the functional location of clinical psychology and positive psychology

Optimal functioning
Neutral function
Severe dysfunction

Aim: Review the prevalence of abundance and deficit concepts in sport psychology publications

Abundance concepts refer to experiences, qualities or behaviours that are considered worthy of increasing, optimising, maintaining and/or promoting.

Deficit concepts refer to experiences, qualities or behaviours that are considered worthy of reducing, minimising, managing and/or avoiding.

Table 1. Citation frequency data for deficit and abundance concepts in sport psychology using the SPORTDiscus, socINDEX, psycARTICLES, and psycINFO databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Frequency of citation per time period</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1980-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundance concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relivation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballastian</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental toughness</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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<td>Happiness</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handness</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effortment</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficit concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorder</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satiety</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developments in Positive Psychology

Empirical research  Theory development
Methodology  Funding  Publications
Associations  Conferences  Education

New knowledge landscape
Examples of positive psychology topics and applications (Boyd & Gauvreau Chaves, in press)

Desirable conditions and SWB

Teri McKeever: Gratitude & Strengths

St Mary's University Twickenham London
School of Sport, Health & Applied Science

Coach well-being is a multidimensional, positive and sustainable state that allows the coach to thrive and flourish

 Territories

Transform

Personal resources support growth & elicit positive emotions

Build

Physical psychological and social resources

Broaden

Expands thought-action repertoire

Positive emotions

Excitement, joy, love, awe, calm, energised

Antecedents via which affective well-being impacts on performance directly and indirectly

High PA short & long term

Creativity & problem-solving

Buffers stress & supports coping

Superior conflict resolution skills

Physical health benefits

Healthy behaviours

Prosocial behaviour

Sociability & activity

Positive construal of self & others

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Teri McKeever
Head Coach
UC Berkeley Women’s Swimming Team

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Activities

Character Strengths

Gratitude

Applications

• Positive psychological capital and strengths-based leadership in NGOs (USA Football)

• Appreciative Inquiry/Reflection British Triathlon & UKCC Level 4 coaches (Rowing & Equestrian)

Benefits of engaging with PP in coaching / coach development

• Rebalances problem-focus on development
• Supports holistic/human approach
• Relates to positive experiences close to the heart of why people engage in sport, coaching, coach dev.
• Well-being is increasingly recognised as significant for learning, development and performance
• Broadens view and extends vocabulary with which to think about supporting people’s development

5 Ways to Well-Being (NEF, 2008)

In addition to those listed, identify 3 different activities you enjoy and then for each activity tick which of the 5 ways the activity contributes to your well-being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Coach Development Session</th>
<th>Walk in Nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be Active</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Notice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>