

“Give it a Go!” – Personal Development Activities

Overview:

Within RECL 1213: Applied Positive Strategies in Therapeutic Recreation, students are exposed to a variety of theories and practices that help promote well-being. As a part of this course, students are expected to demonstrate evidence-based strategies in positive psychology and apply them to TR practice. Empirically tested positive interventions have been shown to help promote various pillars of well-being such as positive emotions, engagement, and meaning.

Personal Development Activities or “Give it a Go’s!” are evidence-based, positive interventions that are offered to students each week as an opportunity to put into practice the weekly topic. The “Give it a Go!” is not evaluated and students are not required to complete them. They are offered as an opportunity for students to explore for either their personal wellness and/or use as a prospective intervention when working in the field.

Weekly “Give it a Go!”

The table below lists the weekly Personal Development Activity (Give it a Go!), a brief description of the intervention, and research to validate its use.

Week	Personal Development Activity	Description	Evidence that it works
Week 1	“Three Good Things”	Students are asked to write down three good things that happened to them at the end of the day. The ‘things’ do not have to be monumental (like winning the lottery). While difficult to start, eventually the practice helps students see and appreciate the smaller things in life that add up over time (i.e.: no line at the Tim Hortons, grabbed a good parking spot, favourite song came on the radio). Students are encouraged to use the Gratitude scale (GQ-6) located in their text to monitor their progress.	Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 60(5), 410.
Week 2	“Finding Silver Linings”	Students are asked to list five things that make them feel like their life is enjoyable, enriching, or worthwhile at this moment. These things can be as general as “being in good health” or as specific as “drinking a delicious cup of coffee this morning.” The purpose of this first step is to help shift into a positive state of mind about life in general.	Sergeant, S., & Mongrain, M. (2014). An online optimism intervention reduces depression in pessimistic individuals . <i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical</i>

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		<p>Next, think about the most recent time when something didn't go their way, or when they felt frustrated, irritated, or upset.</p> <p>In a few sentences, briefly describe the situation in writing.</p> <p>Then, list three things that can help them see the bright side of this situation. For example, perhaps they missed their bus this morning. Three ways to look on the bright side of this situation might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though you missed the bus, you got some good exercise when you were running to catch it. • You're fortunate to live in a city where there was another bus just 10 minutes later, or where buses run reliably at all. • Ten years from now, you likely won't remember what happened this morning. 	<p><i>Psychology</i>, 82(2), 263-274.</p>
Week 3	"Use Your Strengths"	<p>Students are asked to think about one of their personal strengths. Consider how they could use this strength today in a new and different way. For example, if they choose the personal strength of perseverance, they might make a list of tasks that they have found challenging recently, then try to tackle each one of them.</p> <p>Next, they describe in writing the personal strength they plan to use today and how they are going to use it. Then, they are asked to do it—act on their strength as frequently as possible throughout the day.</p> <p>Repeat the steps above every day for a week. They may use the same personal strength across multiple days, or try using a new personal strength each day.</p> <p>At the end of the week, they are instructed to write about the personal strengths that they focused on during the week and how they used them. Write in detail about what they did, how they felt, and what they learned from the experience.</p>	<p>Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 60(5), 410-421.</p>
Week 4	"Positive Emotions"	<p>Students are asked to monitor their positive to negative ration (aiming for 3:1) over the next two weeks via Barbara Frederickson's free website that calculates their positivity ration. They are encouraged to document their rations every day for two weeks. It is important that they do this every day as the more data they have, the better they will be able to make a judgement on how they are actually feeling across time, rather than just on the day.</p>	<p>Fredrickson, B. (2009). <i>Positivity</i>. Harmony.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positivity Ratio Calculator 	
Week 5	“Happiness Strategies”	<p>Students are encouraged to try one of the happiness strategies developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing Gratitude and Positive Thinking • Investing in Social Connections • Managing Stress, Hardship and Trauma • Living in the Present • Committing to Goals • Taking care of Body and Soul 	Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). <i>The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want</i> . Penguin.
Week 6	“Best Possible Selves”	<p>Students are asked to think about their life in the future. Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could. They have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of their life goals. They are to think of this as the realization of all of their life dreams.</p> <p>Then they write about what they imagined. Then they reflect on their future goals and then list several ways that they could achieve them. These larger goals can be broken down into smaller, more achievable sub goals. They are encouraged to keep motivating themselves to pursue their goals and reframe any obstacles they meet as challenges to be overcome</p>	Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves . <i>Journal of Positive Psychology</i> , 1(2), 73-82.
Week 8	“Mindful Breathing”	<p>Students visit the website below for a recording of a guided meditation: https://Mindful Breathing Exercise They are told to follow the instructions listed on the website for the meditation.</p> <p>Mindfulness gives people distance from their thoughts and feelings, which can help them tolerate and work through unpleasant feelings rather than becoming overwhelmed by them. Mindful breathing in particular is helpful because it gives people an anchor—their breath—on which they can focus when they find themselves carried away by a stressful thought. Mindful breathing also helps people stay “present” in the moment, rather than being distracted by regrets in the past or worries about the future.</p>	Arch, J. J., & Craske, M. G. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness: Emotion regulation following a focused breathing induction . <i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i> , 44(12), 1849-1858.
Week 9	“Loving-Kindness Meditation”	<p>Students are asked to visit Loving Kindness Meditation and follow the directions for completing the meditation. There is a pre-recorded meditation for them to follow in the instructions</p>	Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2013). <i>Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions</i> ,

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		<p>Loving-kindness meditation increases happiness in part by making people feel more connected to others—to loved ones, acquaintances, and even strangers. Research suggests that when people practice loving-kindness meditation regularly, they start automatically reacting more positively to others—and their social interactions and close relationships become more satisfying. Loving-kindness meditation can also reduce people’s focus on themselves—which can, in turn, lower symptoms of anxiety and depression.</p>	<p>induced through loving kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 95 , 1045-1062.</p>
Week 10	“Awe Video”	<p>Students are asked to set aside four minutes to watch the video below. It is encouraged to put the video in full screen mode and offer their full attention. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/awe_video#</p> <p>In three experiments, participants were induced to feel awe—such as by watching an awe-inspiring video—as well as other emotions. People who experienced awe felt that they had more time available to themselves, were less impatient, were more willing to volunteer their time to help others, preferred having positive experiences over material products, and reported greater life satisfaction.</p>	<p>Rudd, M., Vohs, K.D., and Aaker, J. (2012). Awe expands people's perception of time, alters decision making, and enhances well-being. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 23(10), 1130-1136</p>
Week 12	“Savoring Walk”	<p>Students are asked to set aside 20 minutes to take a walk outside alone every day for a week. As they walk, try to notice as many positive things around them as they can. These can be sights, sounds, smells, or other sensations. For example, they could focus on the breathtaking height of a tree they never really noticed before, the intricate architecture of a building on their block, the dance of sunshine off a window or puddle, the smell of grass or flowers, or the way other people look out for each other as they navigate crowded streets.</p> <p>As they notice each of these positive things, they are asked to acknowledge each one in their mind—don’t just let them slip past. They are asked to try to identify what it is about that thing that makes it pleasurable to them.</p>	<p>Bryant, F. & Veroff, J. (2007). <i>Savoring: A new model of positive experience</i>. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.</p>

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		<p>Try to walk a different route each day so they don't become too accustomed to any of these things and start to take them for granted.</p>	
Week 13	"Give it up"	<p>Students are asked to Select something that they enjoy doing on a regular basis and that they have unlimited or nearly unlimited access to. A good choice may be a particular food or beverage that they enjoy, such as chocolate or beer.</p> <p>On day one, they are allowed to indulge as they normally would in this activity. Scarf down a chocolate bar. Pour yourself a glass of wine. Veg out in front of the TV.</p> <p>Then, for one week, they are not allowed to permit themselves to indulge in this pleasure at all.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the end of the week, they are permitted to indulge again. As they do so, they are asked to pay attention to how they feel. Are they noticing certain physical sensations (e.g., taste and texture of the chocolate) more than usual? How pleasurable is the experience? What kind of mood are they in? 	<p>Quoidbach, J., & Dunn., E. W. (2013). Give it up: A strategy for combating hedonic adaptation. <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 5, 511-516.</p>