



+ Well-Being & Education:  
An Introduction

South Australia  
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“Well-being is  
everyone’s  
birthright.”

Martin Seligman  
Adelaide  
Feb.2013



Why we’re here

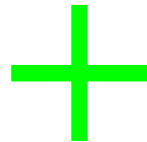


# + What do you hope for?



In 2 words or fewer, what do you most want for your children?

Now...what do schools traditionally teach?



1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_



# + What's in it for your child?



- More PERMA (certain)
- Less depression (likely)
- Less anxiety (likely)
- Better relationships (probable)
- In less trouble (possible)
- Higher grades (possible)
- More success in life (possible)
- Better physical health (possible)



# + A Positive Introduction



Think of a concrete story of that involves you at your best.

- Pair off with another member of the audience, preferably someone you don't know well.
- Person A shares their story with Person B (3 minutes).
- Person B tells Person A the strengths of character they heard in Person A's story. Discuss (2 minutes).
- Switch Roles





# Outline





What is positive psychology?

# Positive Psychology

The presence of well-being  
is **MORE THAN** than  
the absence of ill-being.





# Positive Psychology

- the **scientific study** of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive
- formally founded in 1998
- evidence-based
- growing rapidly
- studies many aspects of life across many disciplines, including
  - Psychology
  - Law
  - Health/Medicine
  - Business
  - Neuroscience
  - Humanities,
  - Coaching
  - Education

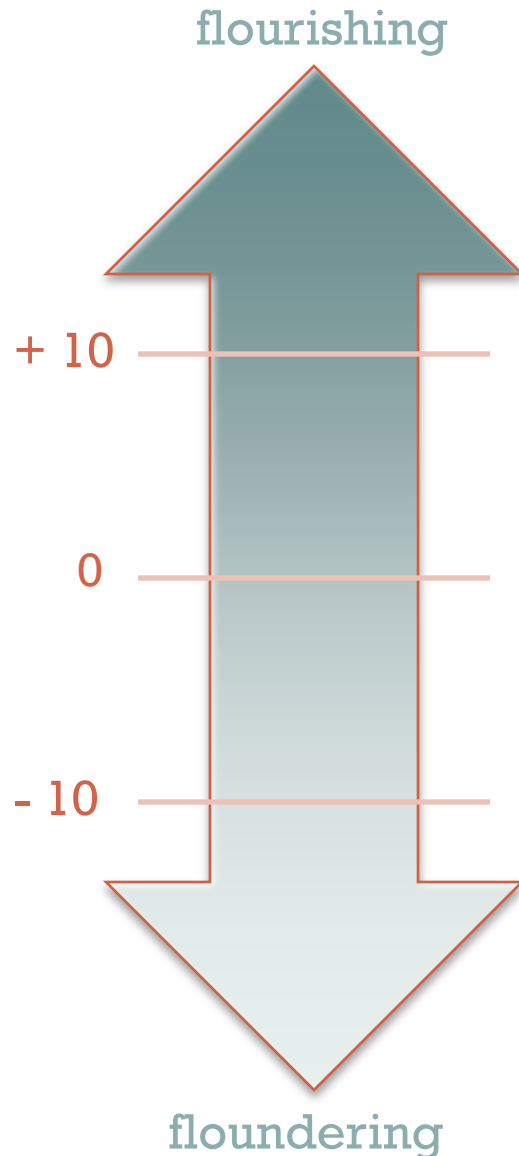


Professor Martin Seligman  
(The University of Pennsylvania)

24<sup>th</sup> Adelaide Thinker in Residence



# + Positive Psychology



How do we go beyond 0 (e.g. from +3 to +8)?

What is above the line is as important to study and be aware of, as what is below the line.

So much deficit-based psychology focused on getting people back to 0. There is a range of experience above and below neutral.



How to build well-being



# + Elements of well-being:



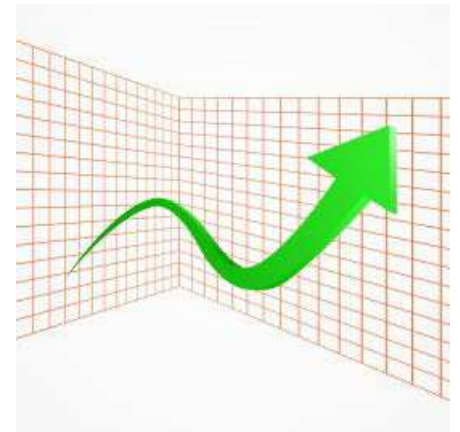
- **P**ositive Emotion
- **E**ngagement
- **R**elationships (positive)
- **M**eaning
- **A**ccomplishment

Strengths of character provide a foundation

# + PERMA

*Each is Measurable*

*Each is Teachable*





# + PERMA

Positive Emotion

**Gratitude**

**Joy**

**Hope**

**Interest**

**Inspiration**

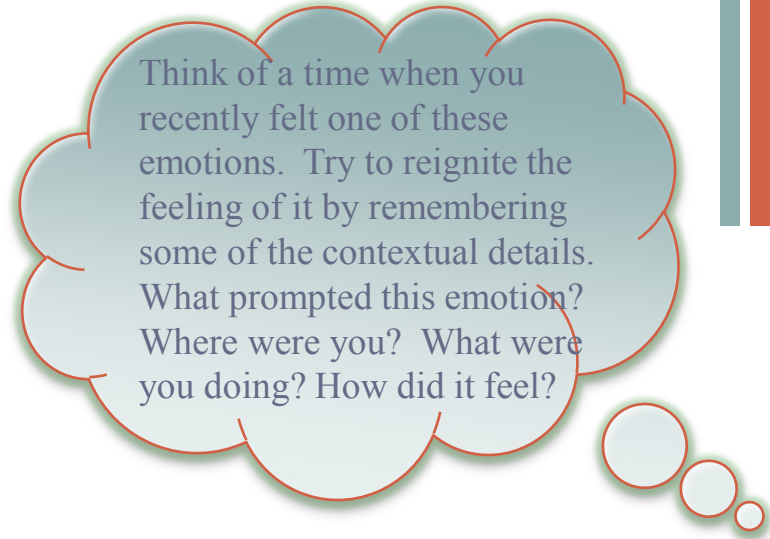
**Awe**

**Serenity**

**Love**

**Amusement**

**Pride**



Think of a time when you recently felt one of these emotions. Try to reignite the feeling of it by remembering some of the contextual details. What prompted this emotion? Where were you? What were you doing? How did it feel?



# + PERMA

## WHY Positive Emotion?

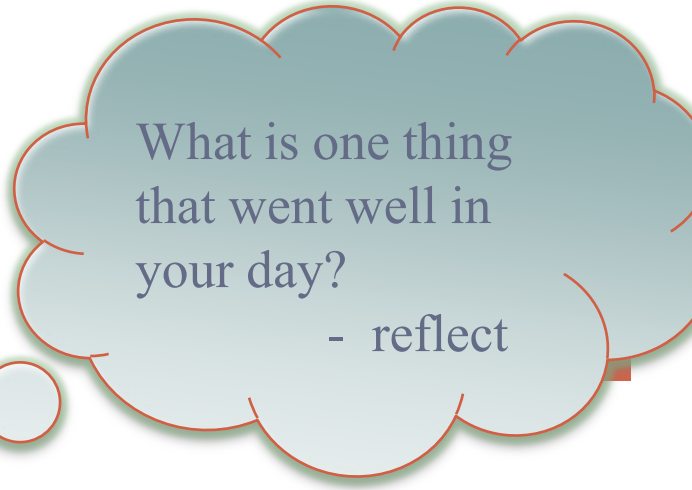
- Fight the negativity bias
  - Need to hunt and seek out what is good.
  - Learn & practise skills to increase it.
  - Focus on where we have control.
- Create 'upward spirals'
  - Broaden our awareness
  - Build resources





# + PERMA

Positive Emotion



What is one thing  
that went well in  
your day?  
- reflect

## Gratitude: Hunt the Good Stuff Exercise

What went well (today)? Think of 3 concrete things.

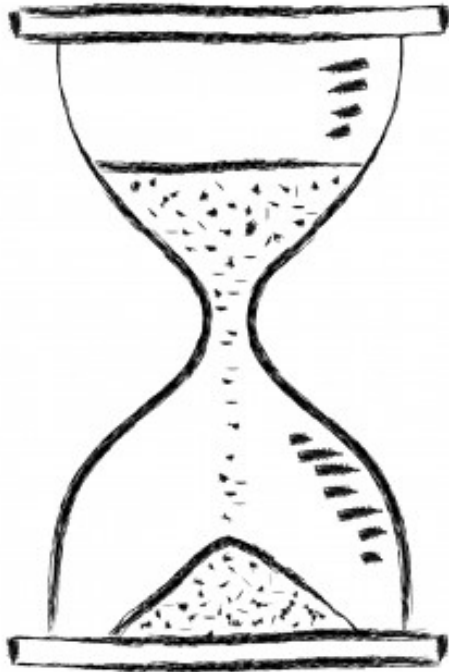
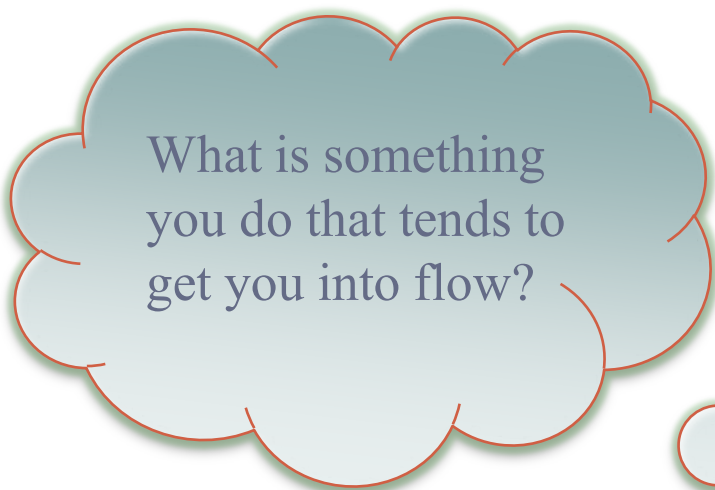
- What does that good thing mean to you?
- Why did this good thing happen?
- How can you have more of this good thing in the future?





# + PERMA

Engagement



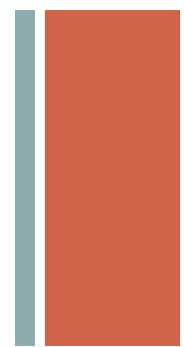
## Concept of Flow

- Ingredients for flow
  - *“Time stood still...”*
  - Completely focused motivation
  - Balance between the challenge of the task and the skill of the individual.
    - *“I was at one with the music”*
- Possible benefits
  - *“so absorbed, nothing else seemed to matter”*
  - Positive emotion
  - Reinvention
  - Improved performance
  - Further learning & skill development



# + PERMA

## Engagement



### Values in Action: Using your strengths of character

Wisdom & Knowledge	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
Creativity	Bravery	Love	Teamwork	Forgiveness	Appreciation of beauty & excellence
Curiosity	Perseverance	Kindness	Fairness	Humility	Gratitude
Judgment	Honesty	Social intelligence	Leadership	Prudence	Hope
Love of Learning	Zest			Self-regulation	Humour
Perspective					Spirituality



# + PERMA

## Positive Relationships



“Other people matter.”

- Increases resilience
- Increases feeling of autonomy, competence & relatedness (self-determination)
- Buffers against depression
- One of strongest indicators of your satisfaction with life

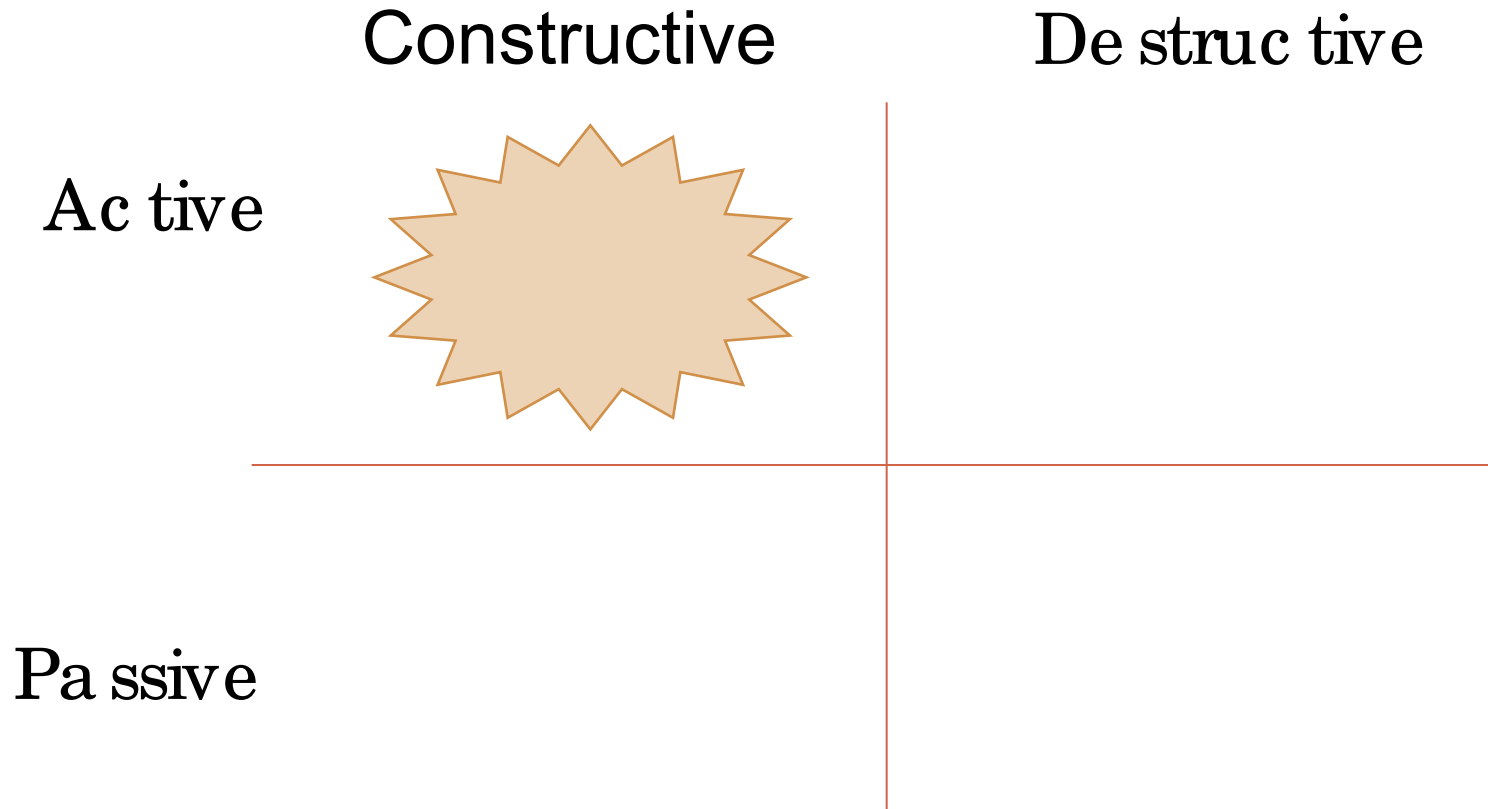


# + PERMA

## Positive Relationships

Think of the people closest to you. How often do you respond to them in each of these styles?

### Active-Constructive Responding to Good News





# + PERMA

Meaning



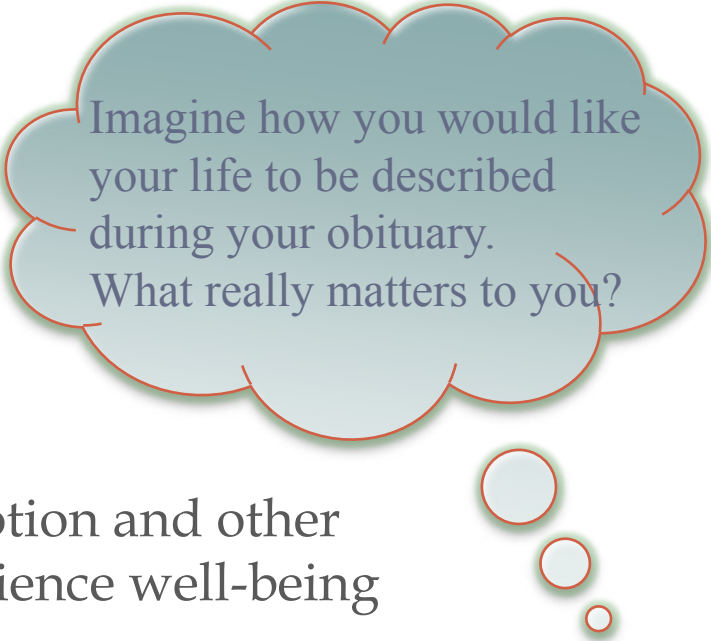
**The belief or feeling we belong to and serve something bigger than ourselves.**

**It is the sense we make of our lives.**



# + PERMA

## Meaning & Purpose



Imagine how you would like your life to be described during your obituary.  
What really matters to you?

Even in the absence of positive emotion and other elements of PERMA, one can experience well-being based on meaning and virtue.

Meaning:

- is a direct contributor to well-being,
- has protective & preventative factors,
- builds grounds for hope.



+ PERMA

Accomplishment



**Success, Winning, Achievement, Mastery**

- can build our confidence and belief in what we can do in the future



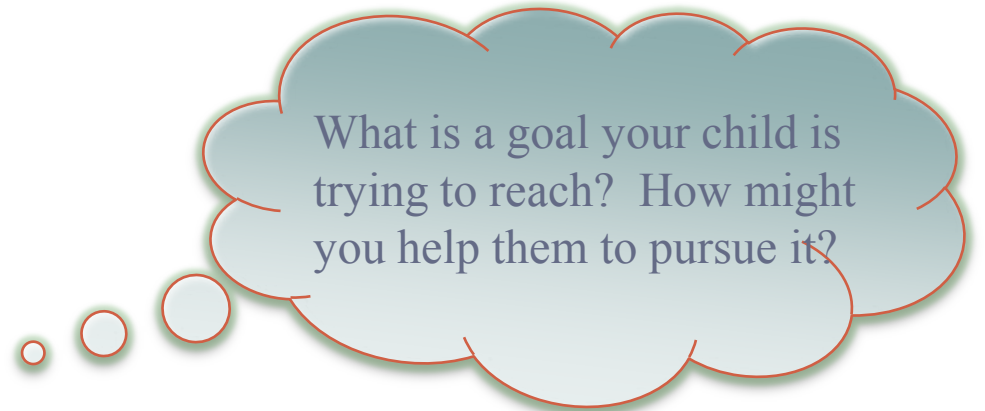
# + PERMA

## Accomplishment



One pathway is grit.

- Angela Duckworth, PhD believes grit is essential to high achievement.
- More than IQ → Who never gives up?
- Grit = passion & perseverance for long-term goals (stick-to-it-ness)







# VIA Character Strengths



- Character strengths are “the psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define the virtues,”
  - Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman,  
*Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Classification.*
- “The classification reflects the world’s major religious writings, including the Bible, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita, as well as studies of major philosophies.”
  - VIA Institute on Character
- VIA Character Strengths survey ([www.authentichappines.org](http://www.authentichappines.org)) measures Values In Action.
- Focusing on your ‘signature strengths’ doesn't mean ignoring your lower strengths or weak areas.

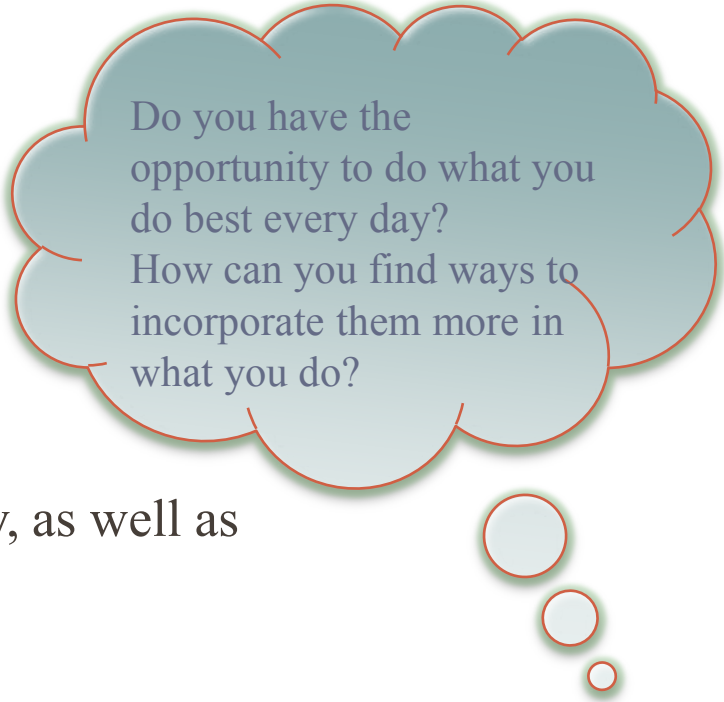


# + Character Strengths



Using your signature strengths typically:

- Builds positive emotion.
- Feels energising and satisfying.
- Fosters a sense of ownership and authenticity, as well as greater vitality and self-esteem.
- Increases the rate of learning something new.
- Increases happiness and decreases depression (at home and at work).



Do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?  
How can you find ways to incorporate them more in what you do?



# *Schools*

**“Positive education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness.”**

- From Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions by Martin E.P. Seligman, Randal M. Ernst, Jane Gillham, Karen Reivich, and Mark Linkins





# + PERMA:

## Measurable & Teachable



- There are different approaches being taken by some schools & school systems around the world.
- Studies from some programs demonstrate that teaching well-being and resilience:
  - promotes (realistic) optimism
  - builds character strengths, relationships and meaning
  - raises positive emotion and reduce negative emotion,
  - prevents depression, anxiety and conduct problems



# Evidence-based practice:

## e.g. PRP (Penn Resiliency Program)

Basic findings over 20 years and more than 21 studies:

- reduces and prevents symptoms of depression.
- reduces hopelessness.
- prevents clinical levels of depression and anxiety.
- reduces and prevents anxiety.
- reduces conduct problems.
- works equally well for children of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- improves health-related behaviors (fewer symptoms of physical illness, fewer illness doctor visits, better diet and more exercise).

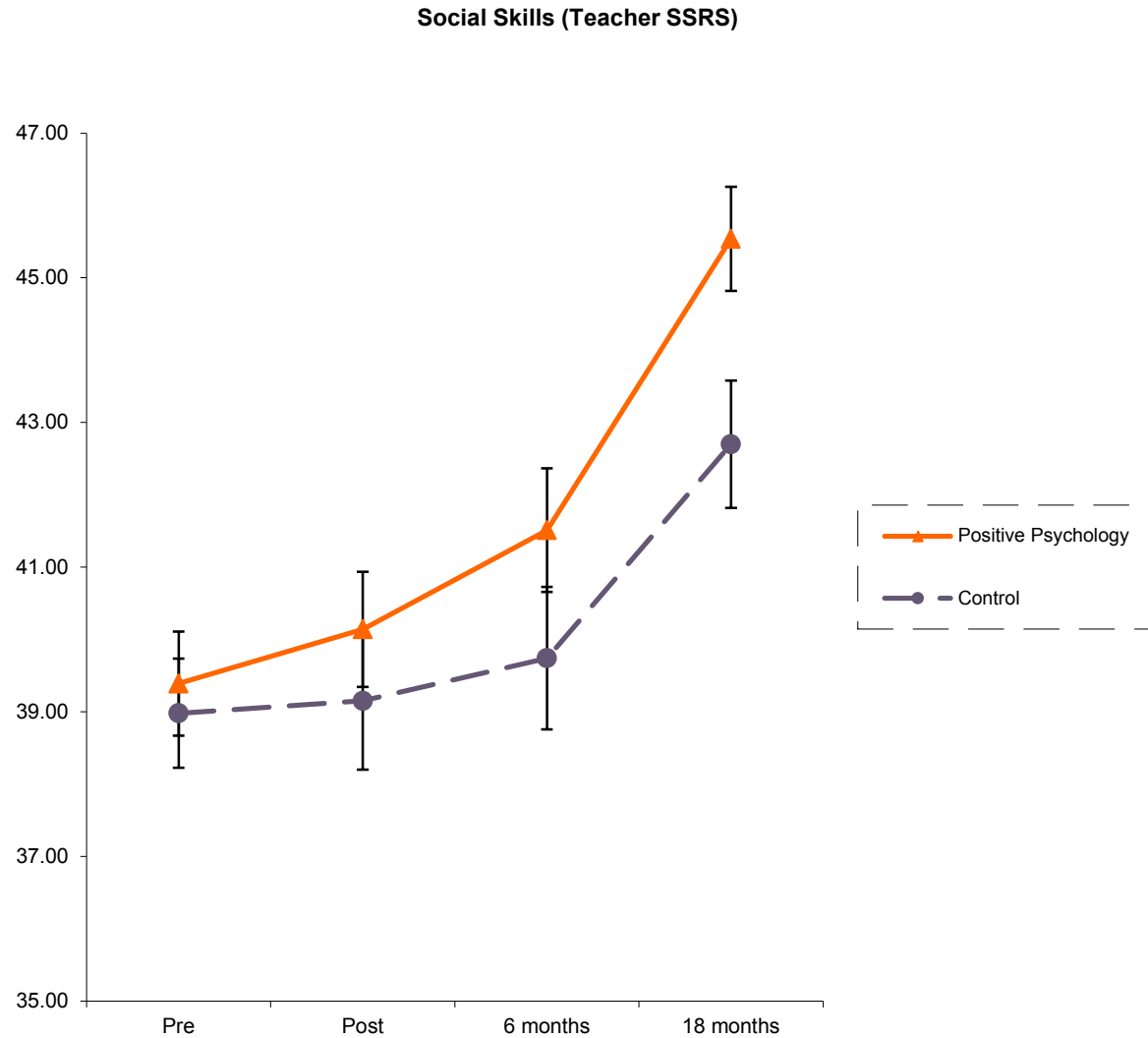


# Social Skills Rating Scale



## Measures:

- Teacher's report of students behaviors related to social skills, including cooperation, assertiveness, and self-control.

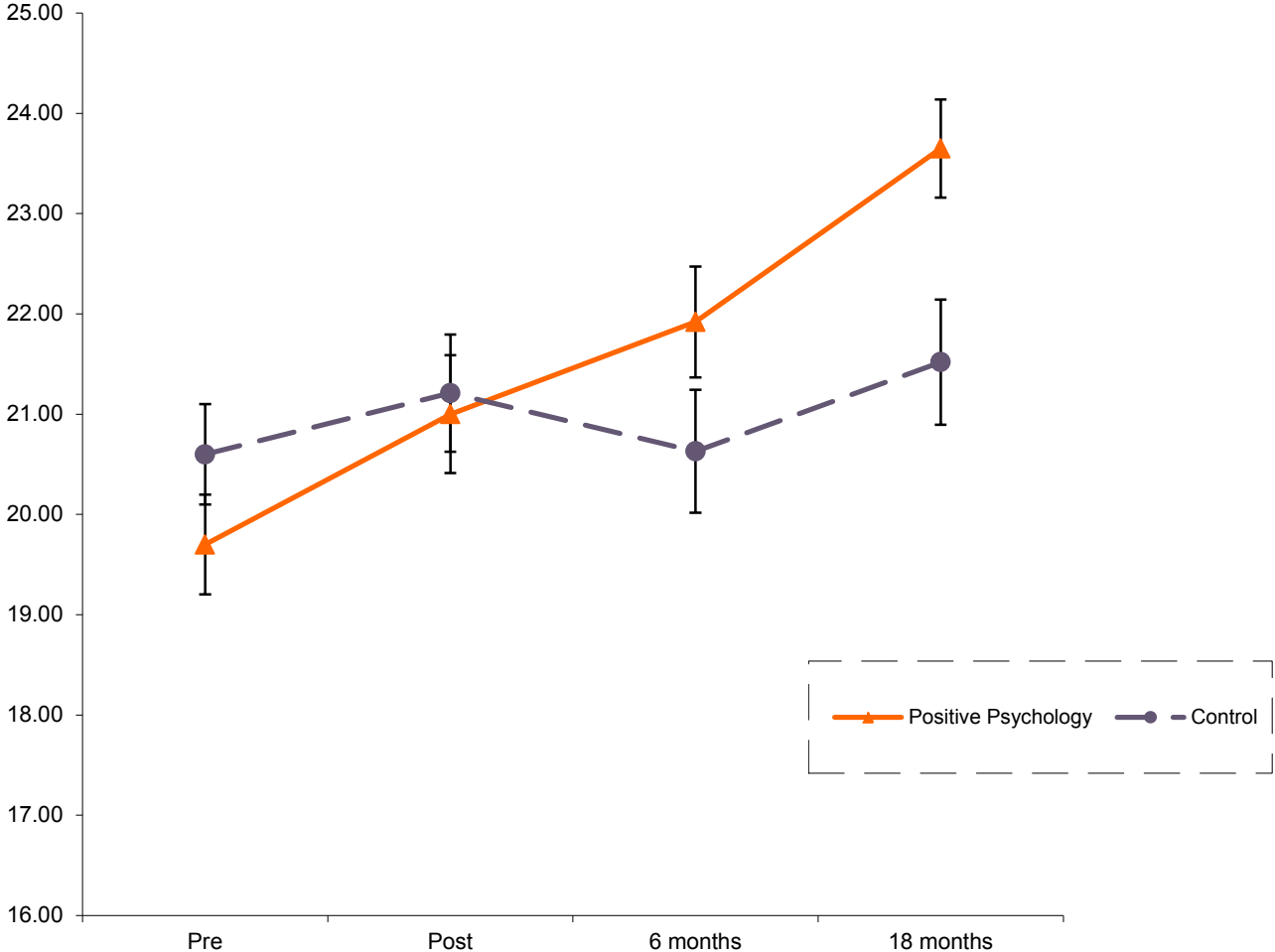


# Teacher Observation of Strengths Scale (Learning Strengths Scale)

Learning Strengths (OSS)

Measures:

- Teacher's report of students behaviors related to engagement in learning (e.g. curiosity, love of learning, creativity, zest).



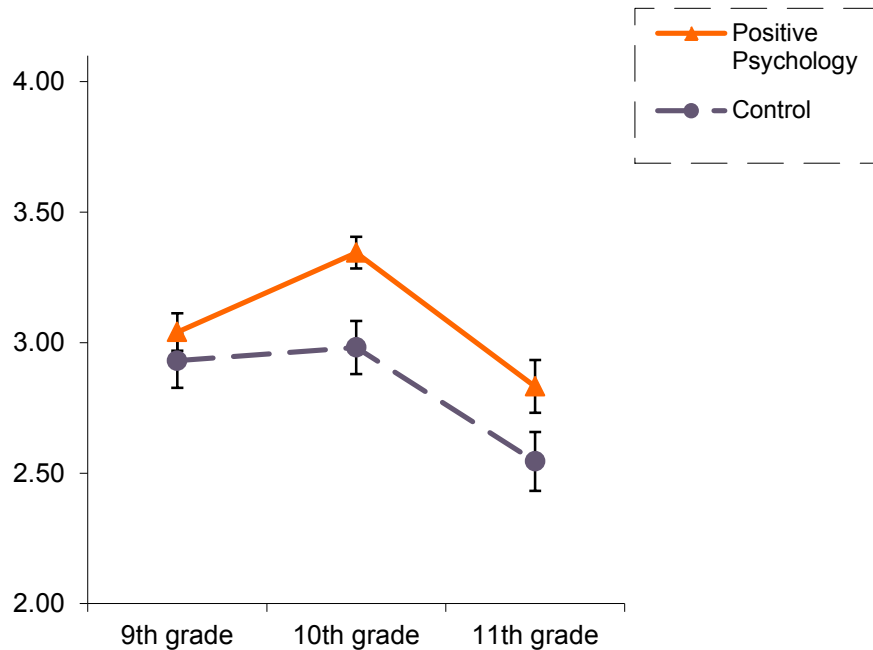


# Language Arts (English) Grades by 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Level

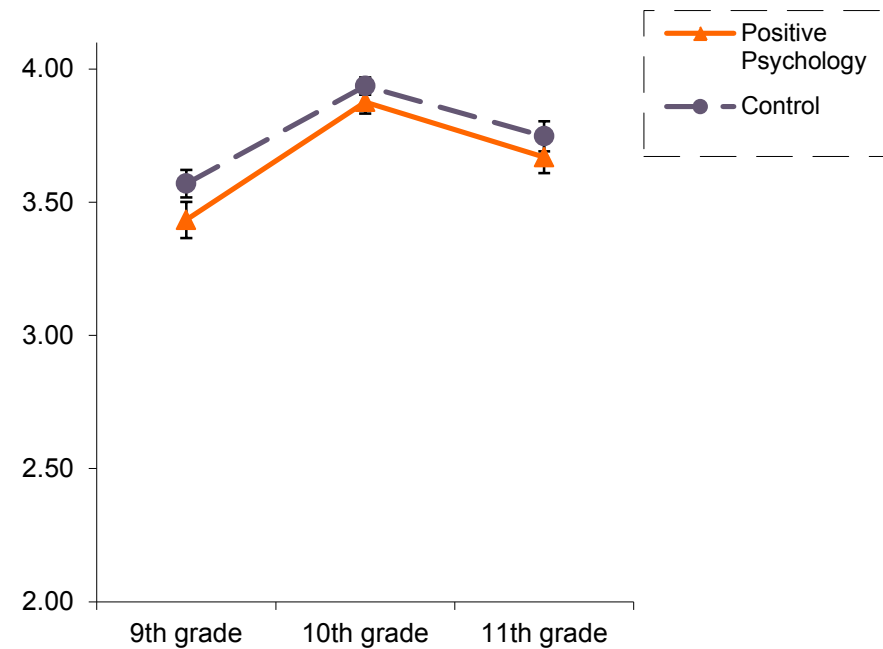
Measures:

■ Grade point average

**CP: English GPA**



**Honors: English GPA**







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# What's the point of measuring well-being?

## Invisible Hand Argument



We measure what we value.

We value what we measure.



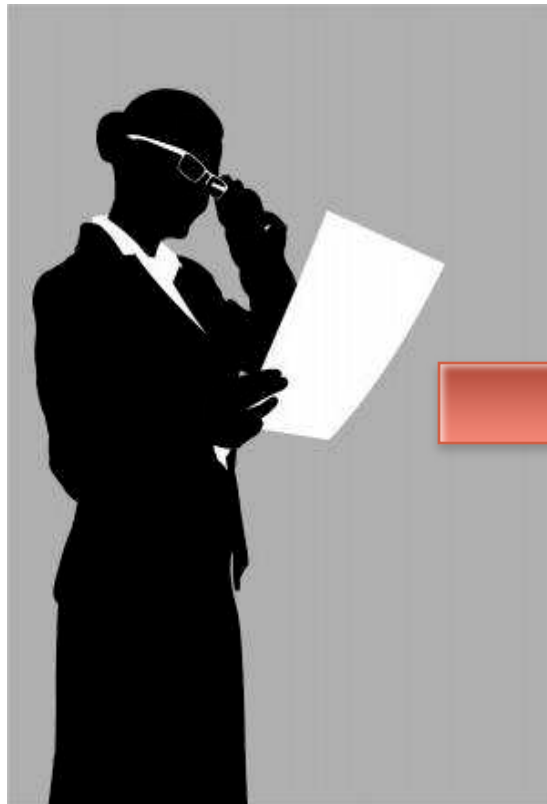
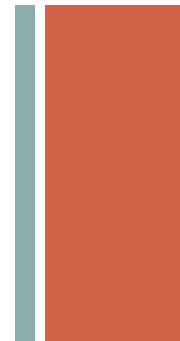
We take action to reach the target.



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# What's the point of measuring well-being?

## Invisible Hand Argument



Target	Possible Actions
<b>P</b> Positive Emotion	?
<b>E</b> Engagement	?
<b>R</b> Relationships	?
<b>M</b> Meaning	?
<b>A</b> Accomplishment	?

Principal announces that students' well-being will be a marker of staff/teacher success. PERMA will be measured weekly.

Staff and teachers think of ways to to build PERMA in their classrooms and around the school. They will find a way to do it.



# + What can you do?

What if you set yourself a daily exercise to increase your PERMA?

Target	Possible Actions
<p><b>P</b> Positive Emotion</p>	<p><i>Listen to music that brings this out in me.</i> <i>Seek certain people out.</i> <i>Go to art gallery.</i> <i>Walk in nature.</i></p>
<p><b>E</b> Engagement</p>	<p><i>Go to bookstore to find latest good novel.</i> <i>Play bridge.</i> <i>Enroll in a class.</i></p>
<p><b>R</b> Relationships</p>	<p><i>Share photos from recent trip with friend(s).</i> <i>Celebrate a loved one's success with them.</i> <i>Plan a 'strengths date'.</i></p>
<p><b>M</b> Meaning</p>	<p><i>Garden.</i> <i>Help my nephew with his homework.</i> <i>Play with my kids.</i> <i>Find ways my job connects to my core values.</i></p>
<p><b>A</b> Accomplishment</p>	<p><i>Create a display/portfolio of my certificates.</i> <i>Set a SMART goal. Visualise pathways to reach it.</i> <i>Practice the guitar piece I have been learning.</i></p>



# + Positive Education



[www.courier.net.au](http://www.courier.net.au)

“The time has come for a new prosperity, one that takes flourishing seriously as the goal of education and of parenting. Learning to value and to attain flourishing must start early—in the formative years of schooling—and it is this new prosperity, kindled by positive education, that the world can now choose.”

- Martin Seligman, Flourish



For more information...



# + Main Teaching References



For didactic material:

- Seligman, Martin. Flourish (2011).
- Seligman, Martin. The Optimistic Child (1996).

For more exercises:

- Peterson, Christopher. A Primer of Positive Psychology (2009)

For surveys:

- [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org)