



PRACTICING POSITIVE CBT

FROM
REDUCING
DISTRESS
TO
BUILDING
SUCCESS

FREDRIKE BANNINK

"A book to read many times."

Paul Gilbert



 WILEY-BLACKWELL

Practicing Positive CBT

From Reducing Distress to Building Success

Fredrike Bannink



 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Practicing Positive CBT

Praise for *Practicing Positive CBT*

“In reading Practicing Positive CBT there is a sense of being in the presence of a gifted, engaging, enthusiastic and inspiring therapist. The book practices what it preaches in supporting therapists to become more effective and successful, and I suspect enjoying their work along the way.”

Professor Willem Kuyken
University of Exeter, UK

“Practicing Positive CBT offers the best constructive vision to date of what CBT can look like when joined with positive psychology and solution focused brief therapy approaches. Bannink highlights positive therapy methods already embedded in CBT and offers a wealth of practical suggestions for how CBT therapists can become more positive in every aspect of therapy. Whether dipping into particular chapters for creative inspiration or studying this book cover to cover, therapists of all experience levels will find value on every page.”

Christine A. Padesky, PhD
Center for Cognitive Therapy, California, USA
Co-Author, Collaborative Case Conceptualization

“In this masterful and very accessible book Dr. Bannink captures the essential importance of building on positive feelings, motives, imagery, memories and behaviors. The psychology of ‘cultivation,’ so much a focus in Buddhist approaches to human suffering, is brought to life in new ways with extensive knowledge of the research literature. Full of fascinating insights and practical applications, this is a book to change what we focus on and how we work in helping people change. A book to read many times.”

Professor Paul Gilbert, PhD, FBPsS, OBE
Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

“This book describes Fredrike Bannink’s synthesis of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Positive Psychology and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. She names this Positive CBT. The emphasis is both on losing negative thoughts, emotions and behavior, and on enhancing positive experiences. As usual with her work, Fredrike has read very widely, including neuroscience, Appreciative Inquiry, Motivational Interviewing and many variations on the theme of CBT. In the text she demonstrates how to adapt Positive CBT to a number of the existing models and problems. The writing is clear and engaging. There are many illustrations with intriguing and apt stories about humans and other species. Case studies and exercises demonstrate how Positive CBT may be applied. Fredrike Bannink is also skilled in mediation and conflict management. Given the present ideological split between ‘traditional’ CBT, Positive Psychology and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, this book may begin an interesting rapprochement between these therapies and their practitioners.”

Dr. Alasdair J. MacDonald, MB, ChB, FRCPsych, DPM, DCH
Consultant Psychiatrist, UK

“Positive Psychology is a research-based approach. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is often focused on cognitions and behavior that don’t serve people well. Fredrike Bannink takes these two approaches, combines them with the best of solution-focused, strength-oriented clinical methods and blends them into a seamless combination that can help any therapist or coach be more effective. Like discovering the restaurant of a master chef who has invented a new fusion of different culinary traditions, Bannink’s approach will leave you excited and satisfied.”

Bill O’Hanlon
Psychotherapist and author of *Do One Thing Different* and

About the Author

Fredrike Bannink is a clinical psychologist and a child and youth psychologist. She currently has a therapy, training, coaching, and mediation practice in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. She is a trainer/supervisor with the Dutch Association for Behaviour and Cognitive therapy (VGCT) and cofounder and chair of the Association's Solution-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Section. She is a lecturer at various postgraduate institutes.

She teaches CBT, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, and Positive Psychology to psychologists and psychiatrists, and solution-focused interviewing to medical professionals. She is a trainer of the Mental Health Team of Doctors Without Borders.

In addition, she provides numerous in-company training courses in solution-focused therapy at mental health care institutions; for companies, she organizes solution-focused coaching and solution-focused leadership trajectories.

Fredrike Bannink is also a Master of Dispute Resolution and a mediator for the Amsterdam District Court. She is the author of many international publications in the fields of solution-focused therapy, solution-focused interviewing, solution-focused mediation/conflict management, solution-focused leadership, and positive psychology. Since 2005 she has been writing and presenting worldwide on the topic of bridging traditional CBT, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, and Positive Psychology. Not surprisingly her top strength (according to the VIA strengths test) is "curiosity and interest in the world."

Foreword

Cognitive-behavioral therapy has evolved to address a broad array of client presentations and an impressive body of evidence attests to its efficacy. Yet outcomes, and particularly longer-term outcomes, can leave a substantial margin for improvement. What would it take to help more clients benefit more substantively from therapy? What more can therapists do to support their clients in developing their longer-term resilience?

Many therapists are intrigued by the idea that identifying clients' strengths and explicitly working with clients' resilience might be an answer to these questions. But they feel ill equipped to work in this way. "It seems a good idea, but how do I do it in my practice?" *Practicing Positive CBT* is a wonderful addition to the CBT canon because it provides therapists with a well-structured, comprehensive, practical, and detailed manual for building their clients' strengths and resilience. Its core is the important work of assessment, engagement, case conceptualization, and treatment, but applied to strengths and resilience. *Positive CBT* provides therapists with ideas for working across the life span, with couples, with families, and in organizational settings. Dr. Bannink writes with sensitivity to issues of diversity, modeling how diversity can be framed as a strength and incorporated into treatment.

Practicing Positive CBT provides both the key background theory and the detailed clinical techniques therapists can use with clients to identify and work with client strengths and a framework for building clients' resilience. It is written in an engaging style that makes use of instructive stories, poems, and metaphors. A really potent tool in the book is the use of guided exercises that demonstrate experientially some of the key messages.

What Dr. Bannink is doing is radical, synthesizing CBT with the psychology of resilience in a grounded and pragmatic way. A key issue for the next decade will be to show that this integration enhances short and, most importantly, long-term client outcomes.

In reading *Practicing Positive CBT* there is a sense of being in the presence of a gifted, engaging, enthusiastic, and inspiring therapist. The book practices what

Foreword

it preaches in supporting therapists to become more effective and successful, and I suspect enjoying their work along the way.

Willem Kuyken
Professor of Clinical Psychology
University of Exeter
United Kingdom

Preface

Traditional CBT has been strongly influenced by the medical model of diagnosis and treatment. The structure of problem-solving – first determining the nature of the problem and then intervening – influences the content of the interaction between therapists and clients: they focus on pathology and on what is wrong with the client. I will use the term “client” instead of “patient” throughout the book, because I prefer not to use the medical model.

Traditional therapists tend to be preoccupied with client problems, limitations, and deficiencies. Client assessments by interdisciplinary teams are often negative and mention few or no client strengths and abilities. It is, however, not this negative way of thinking but the clients’ strengths, abilities, and resources that are most important in helping to bring about change. The mission of the helping professions is to empower clients to live more productive and satisfying lives and to flourish. Empowering clients indicates the intention to, and the process of, assisting individuals, groups, families, and communities to discover and expend the resources and tools within and around them.

“If we want to flourish and if we want to have well-being, we must indeed minimise our misery; but in addition, we must have positive emotion, meaning, accomplishment, and positive relationships. The skills and exercises that build these are entirely different from the skills that minimise our suffering” (Seligman, 2011, p. 53). In other words: it’s about time to shift the focus from reducing distress and merely “surviving” to building success and positively “thriving.”

You don’t have to be ill to get better

In the past 30 years there has been a development of competency-based, more collaborative approaches to working with clients. Positive Psychology and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy are amongst these approaches, which are predominantly directed toward clients’ preferred futures and strengths instead of their past problems and deficits. In this book I will explore with you how traditional CBT becomes Positive CBT.

Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. The focus of Positive CBT is no longer only on pathology, on what is wrong with the client and on repairing what is worst, but first and foremost on strengths, what is right with him and on creating what is best. The focus is no longer on merely reducing distress, but also on building success. In this quest, Positive CBT does not have to be constructed from the ground up, but it does involve a change of focus from reducing problems to a focus on building on clients' strengths and on what works. Positive CBT can be seen as being the other side of the "CBT coin." It is a competency-based model, which brings together the best elements of change-based and meaning-based psychotherapeutic approaches to offer a new perspective on psychotherapy and on traditional CBT.

Positive CBT is a new approach to the practice of CBT and this is the first book ever written on the subject. Mindfulness, ACT, and EMDR are considered to be the third wave in CBT, whereas Positive CBT may well become its fourth wave and will increase the repertoire of available interpretation schemes and create a broader range of therapeutic options when intervening with clients and their families. By increasing the intrinsic motivation of clients, a positive focus allows the practice of CBT to become shorter in time. It also generates more autonomy for clients, as well as more light-hearted conversations, which may in turn result in less stress, depression, and burnout among therapists.

This book is aimed at all professionals who would like to adopt a (more) positive approach to psychotherapy and CBT, or who would simply like to increase the range of techniques available to them. Cognitive behavioral therapists will discover a new approach to (or may become better at) significantly increasing client motivation, co-creating preferred outcomes and pathways to achieve them with their clients. Therapists trained in Positive Psychology and/or Solution-Focused Brief Therapy will find useful information on how to combine elements of CBT with their own therapeutic approach. The book is not intended for therapists who are satisfied with the current concepts and models in psychotherapy and CBT, but is meant for those therapists who reflect seriously enough on their profession and its possibilities to be dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. And it is meant for therapists who are interested in examining where the concept of Positive CBT may lead.

Are you curious to know how an elephant, a squid, a mule, dogs, monkeys, geese, a dragon, and a swarm of birds all contribute to Positive CBT? The answer will be revealed to you whilst reading this book. The format of the book has something of a workshop-like quality: 68 exercises, 41 cases (including 20 FAQ and answers), and 31 stories are introduced throughout the book to give you the opportunity to integrate the Positive CBT approach through action learning. Robert Frost (1874–1963) wrote a beautiful poem entitled "The Road Not Taken" in his collection *Mountain Interval* (1920) in which two roads diverged in a wood and he took the one less traveled by, which to him has made all the difference. Hopefully you have the courage and curiosity to take "the road less traveled"; it may make "all the difference" for your clients and for yourself! I invite you to share your comments via email at solutions@fredrikebannink.com.

Story: The Hundredth Monkey

The Japanese monkey Macaca fuscata had been observed in the wild for a period of 30 years. In 1952, on the island of Koshima, scientists were providing monkeys with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys liked the taste of the raw sweet potatoes, but they found the dirt unpleasant. A young female found she could solve the problem by washing the potatoes in a nearby stream. She taught this trick to her mother. Her playmates also learned this new way and they taught their mothers too.

In a couple of years all the young monkeys learned to wash the sandy potatoes to make them more palatable. Only the adults who imitated their children learned this social improvement . . . other adults kept eating the dirty sweet potatoes.

Then something startling took place. In the autumn of 1958 a certain number of monkeys were washing potatoes – the exact number is not known. When the sun rose one morning there were 99 monkeys on Koshima Island who had learned to wash their potatoes. Suppose that later that evening the hundredth monkey learned to wash potatoes . . . by that evening almost everyone in the tribe was washing sweet potatoes before eating them. The added energy of this hundredth monkey somehow created an ideological breakthrough!

A surprising thing observed by the scientists was that the habit of washing sweet potatoes then jumped over the sea – colonies of monkeys on other islands and the mainland began washing their sweet potatoes. Thus, when a certain number achieves awareness, this new awareness may be communicated from mind to mind. Although the exact number may vary, the “Hundredth Monkey phenomenon” means that when a limited number of people know of a new way, it may remain the conscious property of just those people. But there is a point at which if only one more person tunes in to a new awareness, a field is strengthened so that this awareness is picked up by almost everyone!

Source: Unknown

How many monkeys do you think it will take before Positive CBT will flourish?

Acknowledgments

An author never writes a book alone. It is always a product of many people who work together and ultimately ensure that the name of the author appears on the cover.

I thank my husband, Hidde, and my daughters, Eva and Eline, for giving me the opportunity and encouragement to write my books. I thank my friends, colleagues, students, and above all my clients at home and abroad who have helped me discover, apply, and improve my work over the years.

I also thank my publisher Darren, who kindly invited me to write this book, my dear friends and translators Paula and Steve, and everyone else who has contributed to the realization of this book. Grazie also to my Italian cats for keeping me company during many pleasant hours of thinking and writing.

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Part I

Theory