

Kate Hefferon & Ilona Boniwell

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

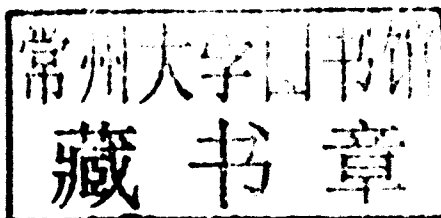
THEORY, RESEARCH  
AND APPLICATIONS



# Positive Psychology

## Theory, Research and Applications

Kate Hefferon, PhD and Ilona Boniwell, PhD



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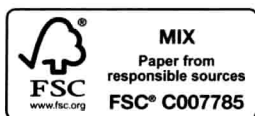
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# **Positive Psychology**

## **Theory, Research and Applications**

## Praise for this book

*“This accessible, yet comprehensive, book provides an excellent new resource in the area of positive psychology. Students, researchers and practitioners alike will benefit from the skilful and lively integration of theory, research and application. The authors are prominent members of the international positive psychology movement and as such are able to deliver a confident, practical and overarching assessment of the area, integrated into psychology more widely.”*

Angela Clow, University of Westminster, UK

*“In Positive Psychology, Hefferon and Boniwell offer a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of this new science. The topics in this book stretch from personal well-being to resilience to workplace application. The authors have wisely included features such as personal reflections, assessments, and activities that offer positive psychology students and enthusiasts a more engaged way to connect with the material. Positive Psychology is a fine read and a storehouse of information.”*

Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener, Managing Director, Positive Acorn and  
Part-time instructor, Portland State University, USA

*“This is an exceptional book that synthesizes more than a decade of positive psychology research into chapters that are engaging, accessible, and educational. Hefferon and Boniwell demonstrate a mastery of the literature through the ways in which they have marshalled the evidence from research and practice into this invaluable resource. This book will become an essential reference guide for researchers, educators and practitioners of positive psychology around the world.”*

Professor Alex Linley, Founding Director, Capp

*“This book is a valuable resource for students looking for an introduction to Positive Psychology, but also wanting to get a comprehensive and updated overview of this innovative approach to the study of human behaviour and experience. It provides a broad coverage of the most relevant theories and constructs developed within Positive Psychology, and of their relevance for intervention and application in the most diverse life domains. Hefferon and Boniwell use a rigorous though accessible and friendly style of presentation. By means of effective learning supports, they stimulate readers’ active engagement in critical reflections on each topic. The authors address the several issues and open questions which still characterize Positive Psychology as a relatively recent domain through a balanced and objective approach.”*

Antonella Delle Fave, University of Milano, Italy

*“Kate Hefferon and Ilona Boniwell have produced the first textbook which has set out purposefully to support students and teachers in higher education in the exciting new area of positive psychology. The authors have experience of teaching the lectures described in each chapter and the book is written in a way that students will find engaging and fun. Each chapter has clear learning objectives, mock essay questions, measurement tools, summaries and a guide to further resources. The content has been well researched and the early chapters cover the main concepts of positive psychology such as emotions, happiness, wellbeing, optimism, and resilience. The later chapters are more novel and cover interventions and applications all with a critical eye. Of particular note is the chapter on the body in positive psychology – a topic which is frequently omitted from the ‘thoughts and feelings’ approach of other texts in this area. I would strongly recommend this book to all students and teachers of psychology.”*

Nanette Mutrie, Professor of Exercise and Sport Psychology, Strathclyde University, UK



# Preface

## Purpose of the book

As lecturers on the only English-speaking European MSc course in positive psychology we were shocked at how little there was in the way of a proper, encompassing textbook for undergraduate students. Thus, this book represents a resource for all students, whether in psychology or other fields, to refer to. In addition, the textbook provides lecturers who are new to the area with a comprehensive and clear structure for teaching a module in positive psychology.

## Tone of the book

Our background is very different from those of you who are just starting positive psychology. Indeed, both of us were studying and researching within the topic areas before they came under the umbrella term of positive psychology. This ultimately means that we have a more critical, multidisciplinary approach to the topics within the discipline. Major differences between our book and other textbooks within positive psychology include:

- A message of balance. Kate Hefferon's work in trauma, cancer and growth has firmly solidified the perspective that positive psychology must focus on negative events in life as well as the positive. We both hold this viewpoint and it will be present throughout the text.
- Broadening of research methods. As primarily qualitative researchers we have huge issues with American researchers' preoccupation with the 'scientific method'. Indeed, it seems ironic to have a science based on human wellbeing that reduces people to simple numbers and averages. Qualitative research allows us to see a richer, deeper side to the story and should be used in conjunction with quantitative methodologies.
- Critical perspective. Europeans have traditionally been trailblazers in the psychological sciences, with their critical and unfettered perspectives. By including several exercises as well as a critical perspective throughout, we endeavour to maintain this important reputation.
- The book has a fun and engaging voice while still adhering to academic evidence. We want this to be fun, informative and educational for you, the reader, and we have taken a great deal of time to ensure that this is possible.

## Structure of the book

The textbook is divided into 11 chapters, representing 11 lectures across a 12-week semester (inclusive of a reading break). Institutions that run longer semesters can separate the chapters or concentrate on one of the topics in more detail. Not only are the chapters full of information on the theories of positive psychology, they are also packed with exercises to help meld together research and the application of the discipline. The chapters finish with exercises for you to use and implement in daily life. Furthermore, each chapter provides lists of suggested reading and web resources to enable you to continue learning about its specific topic.

## Beginning of chapters

We have arranged the book so that you begin learning from the outset. We start each chapter with clear learning objectives that help orientate you to the material in the chapter. Next, we offer you three mock essay questions that we believe are appropriate for the chapter content. We would ask you to keep an eye out for the content that would be useful when answering these questions.

## Throughout the chapter

Throughout each chapter we have included several learning/interest boxes that will help you on your journey. The first box to look out for is:

### Think about it...

**T**hese boxes are peppered throughout the book to get you thinking about the concepts and theories we have just relayed to you. This is a great way to collate what you've learned and critically reflect on the subject matter.

The second type of box to look out for is:

### EXPERIMENTS

**W**e have also included sections within the textbook detailing the appropriate groundbreaking research studies that link to the theories discussed. We have chosen sharp, quirky one-liner titles to describe the studies, which you will hopefully find funny and easy to remember.

Finally, when we need to recap or refresh our knowledge of general psychology issues, look out for:

*time out*

These boxes take you on a time out to relearn topics such as epistemology, validity, reliability and the brain. You should know this general psychology information already but you may need a refresher.

### ***End of chapter***

From teaching an applied positive psychology course, we know that you need more than just being talked at, or given a book to read. The end of each chapter includes several ways for you to become active in your learning process. You will find the following sections there:

- *Chapter summary.* Just as we provide learning objectives at the start of each chapter, we also summarize all that you should now know after reading it. This way, you will have a concise overview of the information.
- *Suggested resources.* We have provided links and explain the usefulness of each one for your benefit. Have a look at them and see which will be most helpful to you in your learning.
- *Measurement tools section.* No psychological science is complete without an assortment of psychometric tools, so we have included, with the permission of the original authors, several widely used positive psychology tools at the end of each chapter for you to try out and reflect on. Make sure you take the time to complete these, as experience is very important in the learning process.

*Kate Hefferon  
Ilona Boniwell*





# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family for their support and friendship. They truly mean the world to me. I would also like to thank Ilona for her friendship, time and playful nature, which make for a wonderful collaboration (Kate).

I would like to thank Kate for her dedication to the project, for diving deep into all available studies, and for her enthusiasm and passion to create a really good piece of work (Ilona).

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Flourishing Scale

Flow Experience Questionnaire  
Life Orientation-Revised (LOT-R)  
Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)  
Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (CiOQ)  
Self-Determination Scale (SDS)  
Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic  
International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)



# Guided Tour

flow and harked to create a "protective reservoir" upon which a person can draw from during unpleasant or distressing times (more about this in Chapter 2).

The engaged life focuses on flow, engagement, absorption and wellbeing, while the meaningful life encompasses service to something higher than the self. Thus, individuals can find happiness with the pursuit of all three "lives." At present, the concept of authentic happiness is more a theory than a causal recipe for happiness (Frohne-Hagemann, 2009a). As positive psychology continues to grow and develop more longitudinal datasets, we will know more about how these three "lives" work in harmony to enhance wellbeing.

### Think about it...

**S**ullivan (2009) defines authenticity as "emotional genuineness, self-attunement and psychological depth." Humanists originally believed that you couldn't study such abstract concepts, whereas other theorists, such as Freud believed that one could never be authentic.

- 1 Do you agree or disagree with those arguments?
- 2 Can you think of a time when you have been truly authentic or inauthentic to your self?
- 3 How do you know when you are being truly authentic?

### The origins of modern-day positive psychology

**T**he person regarded as being responsible for the creation of the positive psychology movement is Martin E. P. Seligman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. After decades of experimental research and success with his learned helplessness theory, Seligman was appointed President of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998. It was during his inauguration at the

## Think about it...

These boxes are peppered throughout the book to get you thinking about the concepts and theories discussed. This is your chance to step back and critically reflect on the subject matter.

## Experiments

It's not all theory. If you want to learn about the most influential positive psychology experiments to date, watch out for these succinct boxes, which expand your knowledge through real-life examples related to the main body of the chapter.

- creating new avenues for control; or
- accepting current circumstances (Thompson, 2002).

### PLANTS

**L**anger and Rodin, both Yale Professors, argued that nursing homes are **L**abile (low involvement) for those who live there. They conducted a study that gave patients some control over small decisions in their lives. The researchers split the members of the nursing home into two groups: the responsibility-induced group (RI) and the control group. At a floor meeting, the RI residents were told they had choices on the arrangement of furniture, visiting hours, quietest hours and they were given a small plant to care for. The other group (control group) had a floor meeting where they were told that the nurses would take care of their every need, what entertainment to expect, what visiting hours were set, how room layouts are arranged and that nurses would care for their plants. They tested the floors on several pretest measures and the RI group reported better moods, reduced ailments and were more active. However, this disturbing result came 13 months after the intervention was finished. Pre-intervention, the nursing home reported a 25 per cent mortality rate in any 15 month period. This time, they found that the participants who were in the RI group had a 30 per cent lower mortality rate than the control group (35 per cent versus 30 per cent). The difference in mortality between groups as well as to previous baseline measures was believed to be the result of giving control and choice in the participants.

See Langer and Rodin (1976) for the original article.

Locus of control (LOC) was developed as a concept in 1966 by Rotter and since then has been examined by many researchers against hundreds of diverse dependent variables. People with a strong internal locus of control believe that the responsibility

"Wor" can" action helped to correlate these concepts. At present, the literature shows a strong correlation between theoretical global positive affect and extraversion (Lina and McCrea, 1980; Shirots et al., 2006).

The two most robust relationships with happiness and personality are extraversion and openness, with extraversion predicting wellbeing up to ten years later. People who are extraverted are more likely to experience positive emotions and more intense positive emotions. In addition, our attachment style in relationships may have an impact on our ability to feel positive emotions. Not surprisingly, secure attachment has been associated with higher levels of positive affect in romantic relationships versus more anxious attachment. Neuroticism, on the other hand, is consistently linked to depression and low levels of wellbeing.

### Five personality traits

According to Costa and McCrae (1992) there are five main personality traits that individuals possess to some degree or another. These include:

- 1 **Extraversion:** individuals who score high on extraversion tend to be sociable, talkative and join in when there is something collective going on. Low scorers tend to be classically combative or more reserved, quiet, shy and prone to be alone.
- 2 **Agreeableness:** individuals who score high on agreeableness tend to be pleasant, compassionate and sympathetic to others. Low scorers tend to be concealing, suspicious, critical and slightly hard-nosed.
- 3 **Conscientiousness:** individuals who score high on conscientiousness tend to have high levels of goals, meaning they are industrious, diligent, self-reliant and reliable. Low scorers tend to be inattentive, self-indulgent and somewhat unreliable.
- 4 **Neuroticism:** individuals who score high on neuroticism tend to experience high levels of anxiety, insecurity and can be emotionally volatile. Low scorers tend to be more tranquil, steady and composed.
- 5 **Openness to experience:** individuals who score high on openness to experience tend to be original and artistic. Low scorers tend to be more conformist and conservative.

Shirots et al. (2006) reviewed the correlations between seven positive emotions known to engage survival drives: joy, contentment, pride, love, compassion,

## Time Out

Stop at these boxes and take the opportunity to re-cap or refresh your knowledge on general psychology issues. These are all based on key topics, such as epistemology, validity, reliability, the brain, etc.

time out

**Further questions for you**

- 1 What type of affective style do you think you have? How do you know this?
- 2 How important do you think the one negative emotion is in the positive ratio? Why?
- 3 Do you think you have high emotional intelligence? What if an objective test showed otherwise? What would your reaction be?
- 4 Are you able to generate emotion when needed and then reason with this emotion?
- 5 What would you say to someone who rejects the importance of positive emotions?

**Personal Development Interventions**

The exercises presented below focus on identifying and enhancing your positive-to-negative emotion ratio. Both have been found to enhance wellbeing and success across life domains.

**1 Positive emotions**

We now know that positive emotions are important for our ability to thrive and flourish. We would like you to monitor your positive-to-negative ratio (aiming for 3:1) over the next two weeks using Barbara Fredrickson's free and easy-to-use website, which calculates your positivity ratio for you. It is important that you document your ratios every day as the more data you have the better; you will be able to make a judgement on how you are actually feeling across time, rather than just on the day.  
Go to [www.positivityratio.com](http://www.positivityratio.com) to access the test.

**Further Questions for You**

At the end of each chapter, further questions invite discussion of key topics. Interacting with these questions will help you meld together research and application, as your pin down your response.

**Personal Development Interventions**

These exercises explore how the principles of each chapter apply to or impact you. As you reflect on the different tasks over a number of days, you will learn how the perspectives expressed in the chapter work in the real world.

- 2 What values do you relate to and why do they influence your daily life and the decisions you make?
- 3 Are you time-poor? Do you constantly find that you run out of time to finish papers, study or socialize? What are the reasons for this? Where might you be able to save time?

**Personal Development Interventions**

**1 Values**

Integrity has been associated with increased levels of happiness (Branden, 1994). Values and behaviour need to match for happiness. Make a list of the activities that you find most pleasurable and meaningful – that make you happy. Place beside it how much time you spend per week/month engaging in those activities. Does the maths reflect harmony between your values and your behaviour? Take a look in the mirror – are you living your life the way you really want to?

**2 Intrinsic motivation**

For the next week, we would like you to try to increase your intrinsic motivation, when it comes to studying for exams. Make sure you give yourself as many choices as possible (for example, where to study and for how long to study). Once you've made these choices, reflect on how you feel about them. Do they differ from how other people choose to study? By increasing your choice selection, you will enhance your level of autonomy, thereby hopefully moving towards the self-determined end of the SDT continuum.

**Measurement Tools**

**Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)**

(Diener et al., 1985)

**Directions**

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your reasoning.

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Slightly disagree
- 4 = Neither agree or disagree
- 5 = Slightly agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly agree

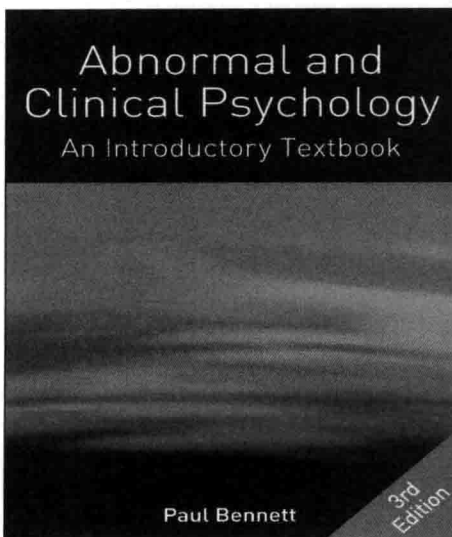
- \_\_\_ 1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- \_\_\_ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
- \_\_\_ 3. I am satisfied with life.
- \_\_\_ 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- \_\_\_ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

**Scoring**

Simply add your scores to attain one final score.

**Measurement Tools**

Handily, we have included an assortment of psychometric tools, including well-used measuring tools that are essential for collecting data for your positive psychology studies. As you measure your responses with the scales provided, you can put into action the analysis skills you are learning. Each section also teaches you the main benefits and limitations of measuring data with its specific tool.



## **ABNORMAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

An Introductory Textbook  
Third Edition

Paul Bennett

9780335237463 (Paperback)  
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eBook also available

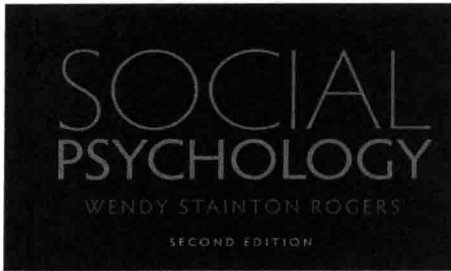
Extensively updated, this popular textbook includes the latest research and therapeutic approaches, including CBT, as well as developments in clinical practice. The book introduces and evaluates the conceptual models of mental health problems and their treatment, and provides valuable analyses of various disorders, such as schizophrenia and paedophilia.

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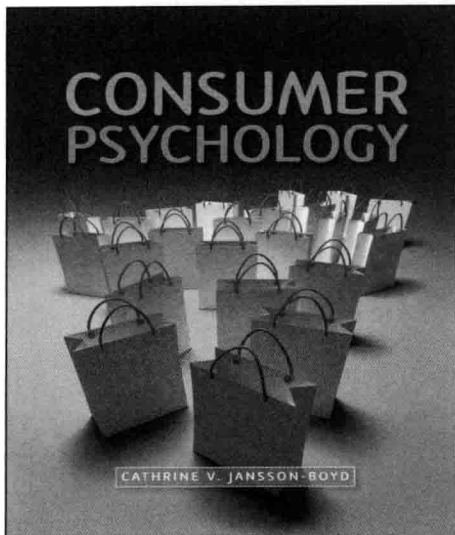
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Cathrine V. Jansson-Boyd

9780335229284 (Paperback)  
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Informed by psychological theory and supported by research, this book provides an overall understanding of consumer behaviour and underlying thought processes. Psychology is central to an effective understanding of consumer behaviour and this book shows how it can be used to explain why people choose certain products and services, and how this affects their behaviour and psychological well-being.

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# QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN PSYCHOLOGY

COMBINING CORE APPROACHES



Nollaig Frost

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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