# Akumal 3 Summary

General remarks, Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman

**Plenary Sessions:**

Benefits of positive affect, Dr. Ed Diener

Meaning, Dr. Laura King

Thoughts on positive anthropology, Dr. Mel Konner

Strengths and virtues, Dr. Chris Peterson

Resilience, Dr. Steve Wolin

Gratitude, Dr. Bob Emmons

Open Discussion

**Pod reports:**

Narrative pod (Drs. Laura King, Melanie Green and Jeff Singer)

Awe pod (Drs. Barbara Fredrickson, Jon Haidt, and Dacher Keltner)

Pursuit of happiness pod (Drs. David Schkade, Sonja Lyubomirsky and Ken Sheldon)

Satisficer pod (Drs. Dov Cohen, Darrin Lehman and Barry Schwartz)

Intervention pod (Drs. Shane Lopez, Corey Keyes, and Karen Reivich)

Work pod (Drs. Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane Dutton and Ms. Monia Worline)

Predicted and experienced affect pod (Drs. Jon Schooler, Tim Wilson and Dan Gilbert)

Immunology and health pod (Drs. Suzanne Segerstrom and Annette Stanton)

### Akumal III attendees

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**General remarks**

The rationale for this meeting and for the pods is to foster bold, innovative science. Thus the goals for the pods is to foster a major, scientific discovery, a book, or a funded grant request.

# Dr. Ed Diener: Benefits of positive affect

#### Background

This talk describes a study underway by Drs. Diener, Seligman, King and Lyubomirsky. Previously, happiness research has focused on the correlates of happiness. Following are the major questions to be addressed in this session:

* Happiness is often thought of as a pleasant outcome, but does it in turn have effects, and are they good or bad?
* Does positive affect (pleasant moods and emotions) have benefits? Are the benefits more than offset by the costs (e.g. depressive realism)?
* Is happiness a virtue or a vice? Is it possible to have your cake and eat it too (experience pleasant emotions and have benefits)?

The subjects in this study were the happiest 10% of 220 college students, who were identified on the basis of six different measures:online experience, global reports, peer reports, memory measures, and interviews. What really stood out about these very happy people was the high quality of their social relationships. In trying to identify necessary and sufficient conditions to be such a person, it seems that there are no sufficient conditions, but that mental health is a necessary component.

happy.

Correlates, costs, benefits to happiness.

Kinds of Evidence used in this study included:

* Correlational evidence.
* Within individuals, what is different when they are happy as opposed to not happy?
* Lab experiments (mood manipulations)
* And, an experiment that would be nice to do but is not feasible would be to try to make people happy long-term and to see the outcomes.

Areas examined in this study included:

* Sociability. (Positive affect makes people feel more social)
* Worldly success
* Health and longevity
* Self regulation
* Creativity
* Altruism
* Decision making and accuracy in judgment

Sociability: the data are good that sociability is caused by happiness.

In lab experiments, people put into a good mood want to work with others. Correlational studies show that after controlling for error, the correlational between the frequency of experience of positive affect with extraversion is .8. Within subjects, people in a happy mood feel more sociable when they are alone or with other people.

Health.

In lab experiments, people put into a good mood have better health measurements (e.g., salivary IGA, heart rate, pain resistance). Within subjects, people’s immune responses are stronger when they are in a good mood. Also, happy people live longer. In the Danner et al Nun study (forthcoming in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology), nun’s autobiography in 1920’s and 1930’s were coded for positive and negative affect. While negative affect had no predictive validity, positive affect strongly predicted longevity. If the nuns are divided into quartiles of positive affect in their early twenties and followed until late life, half of the top quartile is still alive at age 94, as compared to 14% of the bottom quartile. Being in top quartile made about a 9.4 year difference in longevity, a bigger effect than smoking 2 of packs of cigarettes per day This is a particularly compelling study because the subjects all had a similar diet and lifestyle, and also because the outcome variable (longevity) is unambiguous.

# Worldly success

Happy people are liked more. Dr. Keltner has shown that if a widow smiles as she talks about her late husband, she will recover more quickly. Also, a study on women’s smiles in yearbook photos shows that the happiness expressed in the photo predicts marriage in 20s and marital satisfaction in the 50’s.

In a different set of studies, happier college seniors were more likely to have job interviews, to get called back for reinterviews and to get job, even when controlling for extraversion. . When control extraversion still effect of pos affect.

Further, Diener and Nickerson have data showing that the cheerfulness of students entering college 20 years ago predicts income, especially if the subject’s parents were well off: the effect worked out to an income difference of $4000 per pt of happiness. However, pretty poor students might do better if they were relatively unhappy.

# Work productivity

Happy people and people with happy supervisors are more productive, though the data are mixed. But there is a strong effect of happiness on good citizenship and work (sick days, stealing, vacation time used).

# Self regulation

People in a good mood can delay gratification better.

In positive moods, people have a greater ability to persist at boring tasks after using up self-control (Baumeister study).

In creativity measures, people in a positive mood do better (for example, showing more creativity in free associations or in performance on the remote associates test). Even eminent creative people do better when they are in a positive mood. Sixty percent of their creativity seems to occur while they were in a positive mood, and only 8% while in a negative mood. Poets with manic depression seem to be more creative when in a good mood (not at the peak of mania but on the way up).

Helping and altruism

Inducing good mood leads to more altruism (but so does negative affect, sometimes). This will only work if helping will not put them in a bad mood.

Lucas studied natural variations in mood. There is a correlation between people’s helping and their positive mood, but the direction of causality in this correlation is unknown. Mark Snyder has shown that people who are happier in a trait sense persist more in volunteering more with AIDS pts, and that people who are in a positive mood about the experience are also more likely to persist.

#### Judgment and decision making

Positive affect may actually have bad effects in this domain. Examples include

* Depressive realism.
* People in a positive mood ignore argument strength whereas people in a negative mood are influenced only by strong arguments.
* Happy people stereotype more.
* Happy people are poorer at syllogistic reasoning
* Happy people are poorer at estimating how much control they have. But Aspinwall has shown that happy people don’t ignore negative information if it is very relevant to their lives.
* Happy people seem willing to use what they already think in tasks, which makes sense because happiness can be a clue that you are doing something right.

# Warnings

* There do exist negative results, some studies have opposite results.
* Negative affect is necessary for people to function – they are appropriate in many contexts.
* The happiest 10% of people all do report negative affect, though most of the day they feel positive affect. Sometimes they do have moderately low affect but \not that frequently. Most of the time they are in the 8-9 range on a 10-point scale. Why not a 10? It makes sense for evolutionary reasons that people’s moods need room to improve. Sometimes it is good to be dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction can motivate to make people change their lives in positive directions, particularly if they are not living up to potential
* Most studies were done in the West. Happiness may not be a norm in Japan, and, in China, positive and negative affect are valued equally.
* There have been few long-term studies.

# Conclusions

A theoretical model of the foregoing might be that when people are happy they know that they can use existing knowledge and freedom to learn new things, and also to fool around. Happy people might not grow if they are always satisfied and happy.

# Questions

Several interesting questions came up. One had to do with what kinds of events change mood and which change a person’s set-point? Potential areas of study include infatuation, religious conversion, epiphany, etc.

What is the difference between using short-cuts versus the exercise of strengths and virtues in cultivating happiness?

What is the optimal mix of positive and negative affect, particularly cross-culturally, as different cultures value positive and negative affect to different extents?

How does adaptation affect happiness level, and how does the meaning of an event interact with adaptation? Mr. Hovey asked an interesting question related to adaptation, which was related to the notion of recharge and recovery. What strategies can the psychological immune system use to reconstrue events and find ways of ameliorating negative affect?

**Dr. Laura King: Meaning**

The tendency to find meaning and its benefits.

Dr. King’s talk described how people tell stories to make sense out of randomness and chaos, how people make sense of things. She studies this by asking people to tell stories about important life experiences. In one study she described, 86 parents of children with Down’s syndrome were asked to tell the story of how they found out that their child will have Down’s Syndrome. She measured as dependent variables subjective well-being, physical health, and personality development/maturity. People whose stories had foreshadowing and a happy ending had more subjective well being and meaning, and were more likely to think that they had grown through the experience, and to have a positive attitude about the relationship with the child.

In another study to explore whether the effect is best if the story goes from bad to better, people were asked to rewrite the ending of a story about a significant life trauma. Undergrads wrote 20 minutes per day for 4 days. Subjects were divided into different groups who had different writing tasks:

* People who wrote about a control topic (writing about a description of a room or of shoes),
* People who wrote only about a traumatic event,
* People who wrote about the most traumatic life event, then were asked to write about the positive in the event and to write about how the event made the subject a better person,
* And a combo group who wrote about the trauma and also wrote a happy ending. It is hard work to write happy endings, and the essays were very meaningful.

The study showed that People writing happy endings got the same health benefits as people writing only about trauma.

#### Is trauma a necessary component?

Wondering whether writing about trauma is a necessary component of these health benefits of narratives, Dr. King asked undergraduates to write about trauma, or a control topic, or to think of their life in future and everything has gone as well as it could and all their goals have been realized. Participants wrote for 20 minutes per day for four days. The results showed that people in best possible ending group were significantly happier than everyone else throughout four days of study and they felt that it was an important study. There people’s essays changed over four days from writing about superficial goals (such as cars, income) to more deep stuff (having an impact on the world). And the effects seemed to persist: after one month, people in the best possible self group were significantly higher on subjective well being and meaning of life, and had sustained health benefits similar or even better than those seen by people writing about trauma (health benefits were measured through visits with the nurse and a review of health record).

In addition to health and happiness, people also value things like maturity, a recognition of conflict, psychological complexity, seeing different answers to questions. Dr. King used Jane Levenger’s completion task, usually thought of as a measure of ego development. Participants completed stems like “women are lucky because” or “when a child will not join group activities…” or “what I like about myself is”. Then their completions are scored for complexity and a total ego development score is assigned. This task is not correlated with happiness. In the Down’s Syndrome study, people who showed accommodation in their stories (talking about their own coping, changing meaning structures) showed increased ego complexity. In addition, happy and mature people write stories with vivid descriptions, good-humored self-deprecation, and look back on themselves as having been naïve but now being wiser. Unhappy mature people had also looked back on a less than ideal version of themselves but there was no humor or positivity.

Accommodation and maturity.

In addition to trauma, awe also causes accommodation, perhaps when one falls in love. Dr. King also analyzed the coming out stories of gay men and lesbians. The data showed that happy, immature people write very simple, uncomplex stories, characterized by a lack of deep thought. In contrast, happy and mature people’s stories had elements of awe, amazement, and the need for new structures to understand oneself and world.

In all, meaningful positive emotions (such as awe and wonder), particularly unexpected, positive emotions which challenge how the world works, can facilitate accommodation, wisdom, building and broadening. The effect of the capacity to tell stories on the outcomes discussed remains after controlling for verbal ability, extraversion, and education. The capacity seems to indicate a developed self, self-examination, and the creation of meaning. It is likely, Dr. Seligman suggested, that stories about rising to the occasion would also fit into the framework of positive accommodation.

Discussion issues.

There may be an important cultural consideration. As in the culture meeting, one issue discussed had to do with the extent to which people tend to always be writing the stories of their lives as the go about life. Americans seem constantly to do doing such story telling on-line, while Japanese do not.

The possibility was raised by Dr. Schwartz that even telling other people’s stories may give health benefits, contributing to wisdom. Dr. Peterson and others suggested that this could underlie some possibilities for intervention by reading other people’s stories. Some discussion also focused on the fact that accommodation may need to be fine-tuned for different samples, or for positive versus negative experiences. Components of accommodation may include:

* A paradigmatic shift (changing one’s whole view of world)
* Exploration (struggling and searching)
* And an activity v passivity dimension (an active person may be more likely to show growth)

**Dr. Mel Konner: Thoughts on positive anthropology**

Dr. Mel Konner, one of the world’s foremost anthropologists, discussed thoughts on how one could frame a positive anthropology alongside positive psychology. It seems hard to find happy endings in literature, so ought we to despair about the possibility of positive anthropology? Dr. Konner thinks not from analyzing some very diverse cultures around the world, from the !Kung San, the Yanamamo, the Maya, the Anglo-American West, and also from the point of view of evolution.

Evolutionary perspective on positive anthropology.

From an evolutionary point of view, we might expect the basis of positive psychology because of the evolution of altruism. Further, one can take a building and broadening evolutionary perspective by looking at play in ethology and child development; play may facilitate discovery, change and learning. We also may have evolved modules for positive emotions, including love, social smiling, laughter, reactions to caloric food, lust, and orgasm. Echoing a point from the culture meeting, the possibility was raised that optimism may have evolved given how hard nature is and because we are aware of our mortality. Last, we can look at our close genetic relative, bonobos, who are equally related to us as chimpanzees, and who, in contrast to chimpanzees, do not have a violent nature, but a highly social and sexual nature.

Primitive societies perspective on positive anthropology.

Humans emerged about 100,000 years ago. If we want clues about what we were like as a species, one possibility is to look at primitive societies that might resemble our ancestors, especially hunter-gatherers. Hobbes characterized our state in nature as a war of all against all, as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Examining primitive societies though certainly supports the contention that our nature may not be all these. The !Kung San are not solitary, maybe nasty. Poverty of course is a relative term and the !Kung may only feel poor now that they have been exposed to other societies. Nevertheless, they do store obligations in relationships, have plenty of time for leisure activities, stories, games, religion, music and romance. Passages from !Kung ethnography show plenty of examples of positive experiences among individual !Kung. Such experiences included finding food, children playing at sex, first menstruation, the experience of an arranged marriage turning into love, childbirth, and sexual pleasure.

Among the Yanamamo, who have a reputation as a fierce people (one that is perhaps deserved: Yanamamo men who kill more men have more children, they describe themselves as fierce, and they sometimes fight with each other with axes), they also show a full range of positive experience and emotion.

The foregoing might be described through Dr. Konner’s symphony orchestra model of culture. Cultures have different instruments and also may have more of one kind of personality type in a culture, but they also have a full range of types. The score for a symphony directs different personalities to interact in particular dynamics, emphasizing some personalities over others – like a culture.

Positive anthropology and the Maya.

The Maya collapse, which occurred about 900 AD, is unexplained but probably had to do with war and increasing pop density. This people clearly had a lot of positive psychology and anthropology and were capable of great art and architecture. Depictions of their corn god were very serene, almost Buddha-like, and their calendars suggest they were optimistic about future.

Positive anthropology and the West.

As an example of this, Dr. Konner raises the observation that Churchill saved the free world through optimism and a never-give-up mentality. He inspired optimism in millions and made them think the war could be won. This point clearly has an intersection with the human leadership program, which Dr. Konner sees as essentially an anthropological issue of a dynamic between a leader and the rest of culture.

Discussion

Dr. Seligman wondered about the place of strengths and virtues in positive anthropology. Using Katherine Dahlsgaard’s qualifying exam on virtues among Eastern and Western philosophies and religions, Dr. Seligman asserted there are six virtues that every religion and philosophy agree on: wisdom, humanity, justice, courage, temperance and spirituality. Dr. Konner allowed that these may be universals but there is a limited data set at present, though it would still be interesting even if these virtues apply only in large-scale societies.

Using a question from Dr. Sheldon on negative biases in anthropology as a jumping off point, Dr. Konner pointed out a bias that is prevalent in post-modern anthropology which can make it difficult to apply some of the issues discussed; this bias is against reifying societies, simplifying them, speaking for other cultures and this can make it hard to speak at all about similarities or differences between cultures. We can distinguish between cultural relativism and ethical relativism, and Dr. Konner argues that some practices are not ethical even if they are understood in a cultural context (e.g. clitorectomy).

Dr. Rozin reiterated his point from his talk during Culture Akumal about studying domains and studying not just what goes on inside people’s heads, but how culture affects people by structuring environments in certain ways.

**Dr. Chris Peterson:** Strengths and virtues.

Introduction

Drs. Peterson and Seligman provided some background for this effort to develop a classification of human strengths and virtues. The Mayerson Foundation, which wanted to support positive psychology, helped come to the conclusion that the science of positive psychology cannot begin until a classification of positive psychology has been created.

There are currently two strands to the effort:

* classification of virtues and strengths including developmentof assessment strategies. The long term goal is a manual that describes strengths and virtues and assessment strategies, an Un-DSM
* coordinating with youth development programs with the hope that the classification assessment package will be used to identify programs that successfully encourage strengths, discover features of programs, and design more efficient programs.

Other possible strands include:

* During school curriculum (doesn’t have to be fun like youth development does).
* Workplace
* Family life
* People interested in social relations
* Recreation
* How to books (know your strengths)
* Clinicians should be as interested in strengths as in weaknesses.

The current overarching issue is what virtues and strengths to include. The current lists were developed through a lot of brainstorming and reading, the Wellsprings self report questionnaire (developed with Gallup), and the Glasbern meeting.

#### Why a classification system and not a taxonomy?

A taxonomy is not just a classification but one with a deep theory and at this point there is no theory behind the classification. This is thus an aspirational classification, which aspires to exhaustiveness, mutual exclusivity, but disavows any deep theory. One goal is to be able to discuss strengths and virtues in biological and cultural terms.

Considerations for the classification system.

* Language. One must be attentive to the connotations of the words being used. A virtue describes superordinate categories of moral excellence and the strategy is to look at the common threads through the various strengths in a category to avoid particular problems with particular terms.
* Any list is culturally specific.
* How to define strengths. A family resemblance approach has been taken within categories to capture the essence of the strengths. Strengths are to be
  + Trait-like and measurable. There is to be a degree of generality across situations and stability across time.
  + Contribute to various fulfillments that comprise the good life.
  + Each strength is valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious benefits (Aristotle). Actions undertaken for external reasons are not virtues.
  + Strengths need to be valued across most cultural groups in the modern world through there is not a claim for universality.
  + Strengths are celebrated in their own right when present.
  + The display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people in the vicinity. The display of a strength is not zero-sum in nature, and maybe elevates others. Some strengths have counterparts in animal cousins which may suggest that cultural relativism will be less of a problem. Examples of such strengths may include curiosity, perseverance, nurturance, self-control, leadership, and authenticity – only humans have capacity not to be authentic.
  + Linguistic considerations in strengths. If a term does not work in a sentence like “I ought to do something \_\_ly) the term probably doesn’t work as a strength. And, if the term’s antonym is desirable, the term is not a virtue.
  + Does the larger society provide associated rituals and institutions for the cultivation of a virtue?
  + What does the culture provide to us in terms of role models, maxims, parables, popular music related to the strength? These can be true, apocryphal or mythic.
  + Borrowed from Gardner, if there are prodigies with respect to strengths and virtues, this suggests that the strength or virtue may be a natural category
  + Defining the perimeter of strengths and virtues.
    - Talents and abilities need to be distinguished from strengths and virtues. Strengths and virtues are different because talents and abilities seem more innate, immutable and less voluntary. Strengths can be cultivated. Positive psych cannot function without notion of choice and free will. Talents and abilities (beauty, strength, more kinds of intelligence) are valued for consequences (acclaim and wealth). They are not valued, as strengths and virtues are, for their own sake. Strengths cannot be squandered.
    - Some settings and situations can bring out strengths and virtues. Educational and vocational opportunities, political stability, safe schools, mentors, role models, supportive peers. Enabling conditions don’t equally enable all strengths and virtues.
    - Strengths and virtues need to be distinguished from outcomes. Strengths and virtues can transform individuals and society for the better and yet virtuous action does not always lead to desirable outcomes.
  + How can these be measured? There is a role for structured clinical interviews, self-report questionnaires. There are of course potential measurement issues related to social desirability but the questions remain whether people can distinguish their strengths and virtues and whether this a problem. Will people disavow any strengths? Maybe we can trust what people say about their good characteristics. One could follow the Gallup approach and score within people (relative patterns), not across people (a person is higher than another person in some strength). Some strengths and virtues are more rise-to-the-occasion and others not (tonic versus phasic strengths and virtues). Maybe one could ask subjects about critical incident in which there was an opportunity to display a strength. Currently the Wellsprings Two questionnaire is being piloting in the goal of doing an item analysis.
  + Where is the theory? Right now one is not wanted, but the field as a whole will want one.

The Values in Action

There are about 20 strengths nested in 6 virtues.

* Virtues and nested strengths:
* Wisdom and knowledge: curiosity/interest, love of learning, judgment/critical thinking, originality/ingenuity/practical intelligence, personal intelligence, perspective
* Courage: valor, industry/perseverance, integrity/honesty
* Humanity: kindness/generosity/nurturance, capacity to love and be loved
* Justice: citizenship/duty/loyalty/teamwork, equity/fairness, leadership
* Temperance: self-control/self-regulation, prudence/caution/even-handedness
* Transcendence: appreciation of beauty and excellence/awe/beauty/wonder, gratitude, hope/optimism/future-mindedness/future orientation, spirituality/sense of purpose/faith/religiousness

There were two turning points in developing the classification. One was Katherine Dahlsgaard’s qualifying exam, “a short history of virtue”. For this she read as widely as she could on what different philosophers and religions had to say about virtues. There were 6 core virtues (“prom queens”) that showed up in all systems: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence. Others showed up in many systems but not all (“:miss congenialities”): celibacy, modesty, silence, thrift, excess, detachment, etc. Dr. Peterson suggests that humor might be a virtue but it was left out of the list as it is a value-added virtue. Humor is virtuous when added to other virtues (kindly and fun), whereas humor can be unkind as well.

The second turning point was a meeting with Dr. Seligman and with Marcus Buckingham of Gallup at which similarities between the Gallup strength finder themes approaches and the current project. Both projects are interested in good outcomes and how to measure, but the differences between the approaches clarified the current project. Gallup’s project is designed exclusively for workplace setting and there is no universality or exhaustivity claim. Gallup’s approach is to identify themes – very specific habits lead people to manifest given strengths in given situations.

#### What comes next?

Drs. Peterson and Seligman are working on a manual , asking experts to give them a jumpstart by writing preliminary literature reviews, but they really want to emphasize that this is not an edited book and they will work on the literature reviews and make them polished and coherent. Looking for gender and cohort differences will also be started. Continuing to develop measures.

#### Discussion

An interesting concern from Dr. Schwartz is the idea of telling people how to live a good life. Response from Dr. Peterson focused on the multiple paths to a good life.

Again the happyology versus positive psychology distinction was discussed, the contrast between living a happy life the moment life or a good, meaningful life.

Dr. Emmons raised the possibility of gratitude as universal as no society fails to recognize a lack of gratitude as pathological.

**Dr. Steve Wolin: Resilience**

## Introduction

Dr. Wolin focused on three issues

* + - how resilience is doing as a field in research and practice
    - a description of attempts to apply positive psychology to youth development
    - and descriptions of a resiliency based curriculum

## Resilience and a field in research and practice

Dr. Wolin contended that those people who do not fall victim to pathology despite risk factors) can teach us about basic human responses to hardship. Lately there has been an increased interest in resilience as opposed to disease model. One problem with resilience as a field is that popular culture often portrays resilience as invulnerability, not resilience.

Key questions for resilience as a field include ones related to definitions and methods.

##### Definitional issues

* + - Is resilience a global construct or is it context specific?
    - Can resilience be distinguished from general health, or an absence of pathology?
    - Is resilience a single strength or a combination of strengths?
    - Is resilience a process in individuals or an interaction between individuals and the environment?
    - Is resilience a composite of several characteristics (e.g. prosocial skills, likeability, humor, IQ, passion to excel, etc) or something else?
    - Does resilience vary with age, development, culture, SES, sex?
    - Can resilience only be determined in retrospect or can it be observed in the moment?
    - What is the relation between resilience and other positive concepts like hardiness, optimism or sense of coherence?

##### Methodological issues

* + - * Who is it appropriate to sample? Individuals from high-risk groups who do well?
        + Individuals who recover from traumatic incident?
        + Individuals who adapt to stress?
      * Are these criteria to be objectively or subjectively determined, and by whose standards?
      * Does resiliency mediate or moderate relationships?
      * Which research designs should be used?
        + Longitudinal, cross-sectional, multiple-informants?
      * Ought qualitative or quantitative analysis to be used?

Most reviewers say that resiliency has research and pragmatic value. For recent reviews see: Sonia Luthar and Ann Maston in Child Development, who focus on factors in resiliency of individual children and adolescents across diverse settings. On the practical side see Rolf and Johnston, who claim that there is sufficient data to predict and explain how a focused skill or knowledge-building intervention produces desired changes in groups of youth and how protective processes which are linked to resiliency indicators can be enhanced as part of an integrated intervention package.

Youth development

The focus of this field is to try to apply a vocabulary of strengths and virtues to youth development departing from a damage or deficit model and embracing a strengths perspective.

Strength based orientation and practice assumptions are:

* All youth are capable of healthy development given good environments.
* Disadvantaged youth may show difficulties but are no less capable to healthy development.
* The best method for ensuring healthy development is to give them the same advantages as other youth.

The major thrust so far is to design and implement programs that give youth a purpose, opportunities for growth, to develop skills and to make connections. This has been attempted for example through mentoring programs, arts programs, leadership building programs. One example, [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org) (the giraffe heroes programs) identifies heroes of all ages and races and tells their stories to youth. This is used in over 1500 classrooms nationwide and the goal is to teach youth to take risks, be visionary.

Some hard lessons have been learned from this program.

* We encounter skepticism when talking about individual characteristics because people interpret this as blaming the individual for problems that are a result of external inequities.
* People don’t see the point of funding programs that build strengths as opposed to deal with damage.
* The current interest in strengths is not an interest in internal strengths but in protective factors.

In project resilience they are dealing with those hesitations, although in some sense they share these hesitations and recognize that strengths interact with protective factors and they must acknowledge context. In addition, by strengths based, they don’t mean strengths only. Hardship results in damage and vulnerability on one hand, but also can produce great strengths.

#### Curriculum

One example of a piece of the curriculum comes from a story, “How I made peace with the past” from True Stories from Teens about Overcoming Tough Times. In this story, a girl named Paula is angry with her mother for abandoning the children and for giving aids to the youngest child. Nevertheless, while Paula’s mother is dying, Paula visits her in this hospital and uses the time to rebuild their relationships. Paula’s mother apologizes and acknowledged mistakes. Before Paula’s mother dies, Paula says that she loves her mother and forgives her, and promises to hold the family together and make something of herself.

Using stories such as this one, the program advises kids in similar situations to express feelings to people who have hurt them so when they pass on you won’t feel cheated. The program wants kids to identify with Paula and her moral strength and the fact that Paula’s great strength is finding balance between pos and neg. The resiliency program is thus very consistent with positive psychology as it emphasizes the struggle and the exercise of strengths.

Another main goal of the program is to teach a vocabulary of strengths that make sense when talking to disadvantaged youths: there are 7 resiliencies primarily taught in workshops to adults who work with youth. All of them are behaviors, not abstract concepts. These are taught through processes which can demonstrate a struggle which allows trouble to exist at same time as there is strength. Each is discussed in different terms in different developmental states in workshops. Following are the resiliencies, associated behaviors, and the function of the resiliencies

## Resiliency Behavior Function

Insight asking tough questions and giving honest answers clarity

Independence putting distance between self and destructive influences safety

in life

Relationships making ties to other people connection

Initiative taking charge of problems; taking action competence

Creativity expressing self in art forms beauty

Humor laughing at yourself and your pain liveliness

Morality acting on your conscience goodness

#### Discussion

Dr. Dutton raised the questions of whether resiliencies covary, and Dr. Wolin said that they do but he is not certain how.

Responding to Dr. Wolin’s emphasis on context, Dr. Seligman made a parallel between the resiliency approach and the DSM, acknowledging that the DSM is abstract but the casebook puts the pathologies in a concrete context.

Quite a lot of discussion by Drs. Lehman, Schwartz and Seligman, as well as others, focused on the issue of whether strengths only appear in response to adversity. On one level, this is simply a grammatical question: In order to have an answer (strength), we have to have a question (adversity). But on another level, we can consider that people find strengths in all sorts of kinds of circumstances, not all of which we would call adversity. Dr. Schwartz pointed out that this message might be a hard sell, that adversities are a necessary component in developing strengths.

**Dr. Bob Emmons:** Gratitude.

#### Goals

Dr. Emmons’ goals are to develop methods to cultivate gratefulness in daily life, to develop measure to assess dispositional gratefulness, and to design experimental studies to distinguish causes and consequences of gratitude and indebtedness.

#### Definitions

Gratitude has been defined as the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience (Bertocci & Miller, 1963) and as an estimate of gain coupled with the judgment that someone else is responsible for that gain (Solomon, 1977). Cosmic/religious gratitude consists of vast thankfulness that cannot be expressed to any human being.

An in press Psychological Bulletin paper by McCullough et al proposes three moral functions of gratitude

* + as moral barometer
  + as moral motive
  + as moral reinforcer

From an evolutionary biological perspective, gratitude may be seen as an emotional mechanism that oils the wheels of reciprocity; gratitude calibrates the desire to reciprocate according to costs and benefits of the original act. (Pinker, Sober & Wilson). De Waal stated that there could be examples of gratitude motivated reciprocity of favors in chimps and capuchins.

People have also proposed gratitude as a strategy for cultivating well being. Maslow claimed that it is vital for people to count their blessings, to appreciate what they have without losing it. Chesterton stated that gratitude has produced the most joyful moments known to man. Frijda claimed that adaptation can be countered by reminding oneself of how fortunate one is.

#### Studies

College student subjects were asked to record once per week either 5 things they were grateful for, 5 hassles or complaints, 5 good or bad events or 5 downward social comparisons (in second study). A second study asked participants to do this on a daily basis. Logs were kept for 14 days. Affect (30 different affects/moods) and health (exercise, sleep, alcohol and caffeine consumption). Participants also evaluated their lives as a whole (on the delighted-terrible scale), and asked whether they expect the best or expect the worse?

Examples of hassles provided by the subjects included hard to find parking, finances depleting quickly, rude customers. Examples of things people were grateful for included waking up in morning, warmth of family, to the lord for another day.

The results showed that the people in the gratitude group reported other positive feelings – joy, enthusiasm, happiness, being interested, proud, etc. There was no difference in negative affect. In addition, people in the grateful group were happier with life as a whole, were more hopeful about upcoming week, had fewer physical symptoms, and had engaged in more hours of exercise than people in the hassles group.

In a second study, people in the gratitude condition felt more attentive, determined, energetic, afraid, enthusiastic, excited, interested. Overall, the gratitude manipulation appeared to affect high engagement, positive emotions, while happiness did not show an effect. In this study, there was no effect of the manipulation on exercise, or on expectations for the coming week.

Discussion followed on how to improve on the intervention, and possibilities include focusing on the giver behind a gift, to elaborate on benefits, to encourage expression of gratitude, to increase the range of gratitudes, and to examine long term outcomes (e.g. remediation of depression)

Measuring grateful dispositions.

The following six items, part of the GQ-6 questionnaire, assess facets of the grateful disposition.

* I have so much in life to be thankful for
* If I had a list of everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list
* When I look at the world I don’t see much to be grateful for
* I am grateful to a wide variety of people
* As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events and situations that have been part of my life history.
* Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

Another instrument, the GQ-peer, has peers rate a person on 12 items.

#### What good is gratitude?

The ability to savor everyday experiences is a human strength. A grateful focus is a coping resource. Gratitude may motivate health behaviors. There appears to be a direct like to cardiovascular functioning. Gratitude leads to prosocial behavior.

People high in gratitude are more satisfied with life, have more vitality, more happiness, more optimism, hope, positive affect, lower psychological symptoms, more prosocial behaviors, and are higher on empathy. There is, it should be noted, a modest correlation between gratitude and social desirability. Gratitude also correlates with religiosity variables modestly, and it correlates negatively with materialism and envy. 20-25% of variance in gratitude can be accounted for with Big Five variables. It correlates positively with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion, and negatively with neuroticism. Gratitude is not correlated with openness.

There are few studies on gratitude and physical health.

* Mccraty et al 1995 examined cardiovascular effects of appreciation and anger. More relaxation and less stress were correlated with gratitude.
* Mccraty et al 1998 showed that lower salivary cortisol and higher DHEA followed an intervention to increase emotional self-control, and a higher-order state of warm-heartedness.
* Mirishita 2000 presented a case study of an anorexic Japanese patient. Improvement was shown after Naikan therapy which tries to get patients to meditate over self-reproach and self-reflection.
* Harris and Dew 1996 in an APA presentation showed that after heart transplant thankfulness and appreciation increased perceived physical and mental health, increased compliance with medication, and reduced difficulties with diet and education.
* Danner et al, 2001 in press. Gratitude was one of the positive emotions coded in the nun study, along with contentment, happiness, hope and love.

Dr. Emmons next discussed possibilities for how to deal with challenges to

developing gratitude. People may need a compelling reason to develop gratitude; it may be self-defeating if people do it to become happy. One possibility is a religious emphasis or longevity. Another possibility having to do with the self is to cultivate repeating sayings or maxims to ourselves. Last, others might help to hold us accountable for gratitude.

#### Discussion

Dr. Stanton pointed out that gratitude is easier following serious adversity perhaps because of a downward comparison to your previous state.

Dr. Wilson suggested that gratitude might undo adaptation.

Dr. Seligman made a critical comment that gratitude is double edged in that gratitude may erode a person’s sense of agency, and it is important to feel a sense of control over one’s life.

**Open discussion**

#### Support

There are 3 more years of explicit support for positive psych. The overriding end must be scientific discovery and good science. Opportunities available now or soon include Templeton-funded, Positive Psychology Young Scholars Grants program and a summer institute for advanced graduate students and assistant professors in Sea Ranch.

Templeton also has awards for science and religion courses.

American Psychological foundation has a 3 million dollar untouched fund for genius in children. This summer, a new program is being launched in which 8 of the brightest kids in different fields across the country will be paired with a world-class mentor for the rest of their high-school careers. They will meet this summer in Tanglewood. We hope this will attract other funding.

#### Use of the world-wide-web

Many suggestions were made as to how to use the world-wide-web for positive psychology, including the collection of narratives to be content analyzed, and for the collection of questionnaire data.

#### Upcoming positive psychology conferences

Upcoming conferences include a Gallup summit October 6-8 in Washington. Dr. Diener should be contacted re travel scholarships. There will also be a combined European-American positive psychology conference in Budapest for Labor Day weekend in 2002.

#### Video

A video for the teaching of positive psychology perhaps with blurbs from different researchers was discussed. NIMH has half-million dollar grants for teaching.

Books

Textbooks are beginning to be developed. Drs. Seligman and Fredrickson are working on trade books and Dr. Schwartz is writing something on the field of choice.

#### Akumal IV

The fourth meeting will be pods. Maybe plenary speeches should come from pod members. Meeting will be smaller and less expensive and be shorter. It will occur around January 5-9, 2002.

#### Final note

I know all Akumal III attendees join me in thanking Peter, Carrissa, Pamela and Terry for all their help in making the conference run so smoothly.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Cohen

**Narrative pod report: Drs. Laura King, Melanie Green and Jeff Singer**

Importance of stories has been the theme of the pod, how important stories are in people’s making identities. This pod focused on coming up with a plan of action for research and then for reaching the broader public.

The research to be developed focuses on narratives involving rising to an occasion. Two phases of research are proposed.

Have people provide stories, coming from general samples or specific types of samples – e.g. occupations which require frequently rising to occasion. Particular stories could be tied to particular virtues , e.g. through vocations people have selected. In area of justice, for example, if people involved in human rights activism might have rising to the occasion stories related to justice or leadership. The design would consist of people generating stories and maybe filling out a questionnaire related to stress related growth, subjective well being, coping, adjustment, transportation, etc. Focus would be on whether the event was central in the person’s life, the ways in which the event colors how they handle events now, what function the memory serves, how it inspires or motivates.

Some issues guiding this phase of research would be:

* Looking at the different strengths mentioned in narratives.
* Do people realize they have a strength that they didn’t know? What strengths, virtues are represented?
* Are some strengths mentioned more than others?
* What makes a good story for the person telling the story?
* Is this related to identity formation?
* Signs of growth, accommodation?
* What makes a good story for the reader?
* Can such stories help the reader?
* Can the characteristics that make a good story for the teller help reader?
* Does it matter whether stories are true or not?

The second phase of the research would take a subset of stories and present them to readers and see what the effects of reading the stories might be on different groups of readers, who could come from general samples or from samples of people facing similar challenges to the story writer. The stories can be varied in different ways (e.g., presented as truth or fiction, in whether the story includes accommodation, the extent of transportation, etc.). Dependent measures would include, for example, whether people are better able to handle challenges, are in a better mood, if they behave in altruistic way after reading a story about humanity. Also, they might explore whether a person who read such stories would be able to generate better narratives themselves.

This pod could eventually see a nonfiction book for a general audience coming from this project: Until that Moment: Stories about how people have tapped Greatest Strengths.

* The first chapter would be a discussion of strengths and virtues as ingredients of a positive life, the challenges people face.
* The next chapter could focus on the importance that stories play in people’s lives, how stories can be used for motivation and inspiration.
* Then perhaps a description of the project, how it involves growth and accommodation, transportation and transformation.
* Then the book could move to the relationship between stories and specific virtues. Possible connections to vocations relying on specific strengths could be emphasized. For example,
  + - Wisdom and knowledge - Scientists
    - Courage - Athletes, rescue workers
    - Humanity - Mothers, fathers
    - Justice – judges, mediators, senators, human rights activists
    - Temperance - people in recovery, people with chronic illness
    - Transcendence – clergy, artists, poets
* The book’s final chapter might be some of the enabling conditions for rising to the occasion so that the reader might be able to make that happen in her own life.

The pod also discussed the possibility of using a website asking people to share stories of rising to occasions as a means of collecting and disseminating rising to the occasion stories.

**Awe pod report:** Drs. Barbara Fredrickson, Jon Haidt, and Dacher Keltner.

This pod is going to focus its efforts on writing a review paper to disentangle the different emotions in this area. The pod generated lots of ideas for studies. Then they will apply for a grant to make this an ongoing project, at first small grants and then a large grant down the road, maybe from the Templeton foundation.

Although awe and transcendence are some of the most cherished memories people have, and people had strong emotional experiences at the time, science contributes almost nothing right now to these topics. One reason may be that a lot of emotion work starts with facial expressions and they have not been characterized for these emotions. Second, there may be no animal models for these experiences as they may be uniquely human. Also, the emotions are hand to disentangle as positive emotions less distinct than negatives. Awe, ecstasy, wonder, oceanic feeling, love, infatuation, etc. are a few related examples, and it is hard to give nonoverlapping definitions. So this pod is taking more of a family resemblance approach for these self-transcendent emotions, all of which make you get more out of yourself – focus away from self.

There seem to be 3 common components of experience of these emotions, related to the elicitors, phenomenology, and changes in thought/action repertoire.

* The elicitors are broad. Major classes –of them seem to be nature, art and music, and other people – celebrities, displays of skill, and displays of virtue.
* Phenomenologically, the emotions make one feel small and humble, a feeling of interconnection, design in universe, a sense of beauty or freshness, a feeling of being overwhelmed or confused, or feeling a sense of power. The emotions can make a person feel small and big at the same time.
* Changes in the thought/action repertoire can include confusion or paralysis, openness to new ideas or values, changes in identities, generosity of spirit, being more grateful, more forgiving, increased warmth, increased helping, emotional support to others; a lot of these relate to being less involved in the self and more out in the world.
* These emotions have consequences for the self and society. For the self, consequences can include joy and happiness, sometimes tinged with fear. For the society, consequences can be more prosocial behavior, less anime, less despair.

There seem to be so many variants of the experiences that it is hard to specify any individual experience; this provides an opportunity for study what shifts from one variant to another. There may be small number of switches that can change the experience. These switches will be the core of the review paper. Switches can include

* Accommodation in a Piagetian sense which can be associated with a feeling of confusion, growth.
* Size of hugeness. Big things have an effect on us.
* Power which can make us feel fear, threat, weakness feelings.
* Implications for collectivity – about group memberships.
* Elevation. Does the act reveal something about a virtue of humanity? Supernatural. Does it look like God is at work here?

This pod had several ideas for studies.

One study would analyze song lyrics for accounts of awe experiences because these songs can be intended to elicit awe in others. Songs could be analyzed for the presence of the switches, for the phenomenology described etc.

The main study would be a trait-state study with three parts.

* First, they will find individuals who are prone to awe experiences, perhaps using the Wellsprings 2 questionnaire. They will then bring in the top and bottom percentiles into the lab and give them personality scales. Candidates to distinguish high awe people from low are people are: Big 5, empathy, disgust scale (elevation is opposite of disgust in some senses), social dominance scales, narcissism, temperament, depressiveness. They will also use open-ended tests to see how these people differently talk about their lives and challenges.
* The second part would consist of behavioral tests focusing both on people varying in trait are and trying to elicit emotional states to see how people deal with problems, and how they think. One approach could be to attempt to trigger an emotion and try to increase forgiveness, altruism, etc. Questions could revolve around how responsive are people to beauty? Maybe high awe people see more beauty. Are high awe people more open to other people? Do high awe people show more gratitude, forgiveness?
* The last stage of the study would be to bring in normals to the lab and try to manipulate them into having awe experiences and then to see the effects on forgiveness, gratitude, grandeur, meaning in life, etc. Awe could be manipulated by showing awe inspiring videos, taking advantage of beauty in world (perhaps interviewing people near the grand canyon, etc), and by having people keep an awe journal listing good things they saw (beauty, kindness)

**Pursuit of happiness pod report: Drs. David Schkade, Sonja Lyubomirsky and Ken Sheldon**

The working title for this pod is the architecture of sustainable happiness. This pod report summarizes the motivation for the study of the topic, the conceptual model developed, studies to be run, issues of measurement, and the goals of the pod, which are a review or theory paper and a grant proposal.

#### Motivation

The pursuit of happiness has an honored place in American society starting with the Declaration of Independence. And the commonality of self help books testify to the important place of happiness in American society, as do ads for products whose goal is to make us happy. Such books and products are based on little science and there is little evidence that the work. Moreover, the existing literature might cause one to be pessimistic about the pursuit of happiness particularly regarding the possibility of an increase in people’s tonic state of happiness. This is so because there is a substantial genetic contribution to our general happiness level (30-70% of the variance) and because of the idea of the hedonic treadmill or adaptation.

###### Conceptual model

This pod’s focus is on whether it is possible to create and sustain a level of happiness which differs from the genetic set point and to specify the architecture of the process. Chronic Happiness consists of three influences.

* A genetic set point which is constant.
* Circumstances such as where we live, and our demographic status. These have small effects on happiness and we have little control over these circumstances.

Volitional factors. These are actions that effort and change one’s level of happiness. An example might be counting your blessings every day, which could induce a sustainable change in one’s chronic level of happiness through ongoing effort. Based on this, the basic scheme of the pod is to identify strategies through which one can push around one’s level of happiness in a sustainable way. The list of strengths and virtues might play a role. The approach is going to be from a phenomenological perspective (so one cannot be happy and not know it).

###### Studies

Sample strategies for studies are outlined here. For a study to induce happiness level changes through gratitude, they might do a longitudinal study with 4 assessments 6 months apart over 2 years. They might select people already high in a gratitude strategy and measure overall happiness at each time period along with the participants’ use of gratitude. Or, the researches could induce gratitude through some manipulation at some time point or over time (e.g. through a narrative). And they might have booster treatments - doing the manipulation at subsequent time points.

#### Issues

One measurement relates to the ceiling effect. If people start out high in happiness, how can a sustained increase be seen? A solution to this could like in using a ratio scale or asking if they are happier than they were before.

#### Discussion

Dr. Schwartz pointed out that trying to be happier is often self-defeating. Dr. Seligman thinks this self-defeating aspect may break down depending on time course and strategy and may not be a problem.

With respect to the ceiling effect, Dr. Green proposed that not only happiness level could be measured but also qualities of it, importance of it, strength of it, and that physiological measures also be of interest.

**Satisficer pod report: Drs. Dov Cohen, Darrin Lehman and Barry Schwartz**

This pod focused on how people respond to choice. If we have many options, and particularly if we cannot opt out of making a choice, we can have significant psychological and practical problems in that it can be hard to get the information we need to make good choices and we may derive less satisfaction from our choices. The more we have, the harder it is to interpret a bad choice as anything but the chooser’s fault.

Maybe more choice is bad.

The main question this pod focused on is whether there are individual differences in people’s goals with respect to choices.

“maximizers” have the goal of making the best possible choice.

“satisficers” have the goal of making an acceptable choice.

Drs. Cohen, Lehman and Schwartz described a 20 item maximizing scale they had administered and shown that people differ in this respect. The scale correlated with regret .6, with happiness -.3 to -.5, with optimism, -.4, with subjective well being-.5, and with the Beck Depression Inventory .4-.5. The upper quartile of maximizers had a mean BDI of over 8.

This pod wondered if it matters to behavior if you are a maximizer. Questions to be explored are

* do maximizers experience more regret with actual choices
* do maximizers experience more regret if there more choices
* do maximizers and satisficers differ in hedonic scaling
* do maximizers and satisficers differ in sensitivity to opportunity costs
* do maximizers engage in more social comparison
* there are effects of being a maximizer on the psychological immune system
* is the maximizer-satisficer difference bigger in forced-choice situations?
* And, do people prefer decisions that can be reversed even though they won’t do it?

Issue of causality were explored also.

* Is being a maximizer a marker of some kind of dysphoric state, rather than a cause of it?
* Does regret mediate between maximizing and dissatisfaction?
* In attempting to unpack the relationship between maximizing and depression, the pod wondered whether rumination is more frequent among maximizers and whether there are attributional style differences between maximizers and satisficers.

The pod also spent some time attempting to unpack the concept of maximizing, wondering if

* Maximizers might have higher standards of acceptability across the board
* or whether everyone is going to maximize in some domains. Maybe maximizing is good in some domains (in action and achievement as opposed to purchase and consumption).
* Could maximizing/satisficing relate to certainty orientation v uncertainty orientation
* Maybe maximizers and satisficers differ in a focus on primary and secondary control – whether they prefer to be effective by changing the environment or by changing their responses.
* What is the nature of the motivation inspiring choice in maximizers and satisficers. What are they trying to maximize?
* Are choices more involving of the self for maximizers than satisficers?
* Perhaps the difference relates to a difference in inclination to avoid choosing less than the best (preventing disasters) while others try to choose good enough or the best (promoting something good).

There are also developmental questions to be explored, such as when do people start being maximizers? Adolescents could be recruited through the Penn Resiliency Project samples and questions to be addressed could include.

* Do high risk for depression adolescents look like maximizers?
* Do their parents?
* Do the parents think that the kids look like maximizers?
* What kinds of interventions are appropriate?
* Can one be so much of a satisficer that it’s pathological – just wanting to get things over with.

#### Discussion

Several interesting issues came up in discussion. For example, the possibility of whether maximizers like choice or feel trapped by it was brought up.

Also, the correlations between maximizing and negative affect could have come about because of similarity of items.

**Intervention pod report: Drs. Shane Lopez, Corey Keyes, and Karen Reivich**

This pod was devoted to the development of an intervention program to build strengths in children, combining the best aspects of the Penn Resiliency Project and the Making Hope Happen programs.

#### Background work

Dr. Reivich reviewed the foundation of prevention science. She described her 12 week program based on techniques adapted from cognitive therapy and made appropriate for middle school students. The outcome variable she uses now is a children’s depression inventory. Her best results were that half of the number of kids that go through her program report clinically significant depression, compared to controls.: kids randomized to no intervention or their program, and they have long lasting changes in explanatory style. Currently, her work is being viewed as a life skills program and her program is attempting to help kids at low depression risk to deal with daily struggles in being an adolescent and she is also targeting other groups (minorities).

Dr. Keyes next presented his focus on flourishing and languishing: languishing people are without pathology but are at 0 on well being. Such people look the same as depressed people in lost work, alcoholism, cardiac disease, etc.

Dr. Lopez briefly described his Making Hope Happen program which consists of 5 46-minute session designed to make people more hopeful.

#### The Cultivating Strengths Program

The program under development will take the best of the best programs, change the philosophy a bit, and pare them down to 10 sessions focused on prevention, intervention and enhancement.

A 7 yr project was proposed. The first year would be devoted to program development, piloting, and grant seeking. Next would be a year devoted to piloting, training, and starting the program. The remaining 5 years would be devoted to an intervention study.

The intervention would be called the Cultivating Strengths Program and would consist of 10 sessions geared toward engagement, teaching skills, and giving a lot of practice to ensure skills transfer. Each session would be 90 minutes long and each might incorporate a story writing methodology to foster positive affect. Dr. Wolin’s resiliencies vocabulary might also be built in. Following is an outline of the sessions:

1. Introduction to the cognitive model, introduction to the hope model, rapport building, focus on emotion, behavior and cognitions
2. Introduction to explanatory style: me, always, everything = internal, stable, global. How to think flexibly about problems. Use characters to embody flexibility and demonstrate thinking style.
3. Using explanatory style dimensions to generate alternatives, using accuracy and evidence to confirm and disconfirm explanations. Practicing skills with a worksheet.
4. Hot seat game – taking essence of generating alternatives and looking for evidence in real time. This game is about kids thinking about causes for positive and negative events. Someone throws out a criticism and the kid’s task is to generate internal self talk to dispute criticism with evidence. This session would also contain a transition to future thinking by reading hope stories and they will learn the hope model by identifying thoughts from story.
5. Winner game. In this session they will practice generating goals, identifying pathways, how to make them happen.
6. This will be the last of the hope sessions and will focus on hope talk. Kids will be given a challenging worksheet where given recent newspaper quotes about how people projected themselves into future. Kids are to rewrite the quotes so they are more hopeful. Also on the worksheet are word jumbles which the kids have to straighten out so it’s a hopeful statement. Kids will also have to complete vignettes in a hopeful way.
7. This session will focus on building behavior/skills, including assertiveness. They will identify what beliefs are interfering with their desire to be assertive – like gender roles. The focus will be on cognitive aspects of skills like assertiveness.
8. This session will be similar, but will focus on decision making - what’s getting in the way of making the best decisions possible.

9 – not decided yet.

10 – not decided yet.

#### Bridges

Bridges or boosters will be a prominent part of the program. These will be ways to encourage kids to apply the skills in everyday life. One might be, for example, a friend bridge in which students are paired with a best friend (or someone else). Students will be presented with challenges like drugs, academic success, and have kids working together. This will occur over 5 sessions.

Also there will be 5 sessions with parents and kids. An abbreviated version of CSP will be taught and these sessions will encourage skill application through role playing or reporting back how the sessions worked.

Another bridge will be the civic engagement bridge designed to increase feelings of responsibility, competence, sense of agency. Kids may work in a soup kitchen, work with elderly – the essence here will be challenging things that force them to apply skills and derive something positive.

#### Study

A study will be designed in CSP where added value and cost effectiveness are important concerns. There will be 5 conditions in this multisite (Atlanta, Lawrence, Philadelphia) study with 1000 subjects:

* CSP alone.
* CSP plus parent condition.
* CSP plus best friend.
* CSP plus civic engagement
* No intervention control.

The sessions will encourage kids to use skills in contexts out of school which are important in development. Assessment will be performed before during and after the sessions to measure subjective well being, depression, anxiety, physical health, preventative health behaviors, level of exercise, sexual behavior, smoking, alcohol consumption, languishing and flourishing, and strengths. Analysis will be interested in mediators of change.

Melanie – doesn’t have to be best friend. May not have, may change. Could bring in anyone.

**Work pod report: Drs. Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane Dutton and Ms. Monia Worline.**

This pod might also be called the positive psychology of organizations pod. It focused in the social side of issues and had a social systems focus. This pod contends that positive psychology may be limited if it does not account for the social context of positive experience, how positive experiences affect the social context.

This focus can enlarge positive psychology in two ways

* it can theorize about how features of organizations can enable individual strengths
* and it can study how different strengths operate as social processes at the group level.

This pod developed a program of research in 3 areas.

* Compassion as a spontaneous social process in organizations in response to human trauma. The pod proposed that organizations vary in the quality and speed of social response to trauma. They will use an event focused case study method to study compassionate organizing.
* How caring acts in organizations create a context in which others thrive. Analyzing hospital cleaners’ accounts of work, it has been found that people who sought out opportunities to care for others saw two effects: an effect on how people narrate themselves as part of an organization and how they narrate the organization, and also it has effects on the work of the organization.
* Revision of courage as a social process. The pod will collect stories about courage in others to help people act with more courage and strengths in life. The pod focuses on courage as a product of group interaction rather than as an individual strength.

This pod proposed questions or issues that are related to the positive psychology of organizations:

* Leadership questions: how do leaders with different strengths affect organizations?
* Entrepreneurship: do founders’ strengths affect organizations differently?
* Cultural questions
* Team questions
* Design questions: how does structure of units affect diff strength developments?
* Spillover questions – how does strength in an organization affect other parts of life
* Quality of life questions – how do organizations differ in their capacity to develop well being?
* How does the expression and use of strengths contribute to organize learning, innovation, change, and effectiveness?

The pod sees several steps they will take.

* Empirical and theory papers.
* Convene organizational people to build bridges to disciplines.
* Develop a bibliography of positive psychology of organizations.
* Build a social community of scholars to serve as a force for the study of positive psychology of organizations.

# Predicted and experienced affect pod report: Drs. Jon Schooler, Tim Wilson and Dan Gilbert.

Humans may be the only animal that thinks about the future. Almost all of the increase in brain size of humans over h. habilis is in the frontal lobes, and this may be what allows us to imagine the future. But one limitations on this adaptation is that people overestimate the duration of hedonic reactions to events, particularly negative events. This “durability bias” has been shown to operate in the domains of tenure, relationships, elections, sports, personal tragedies, and job interviews.

Two explanations for this bias have to do with focalism and immune neglect.

* Focalism: people generate a mental image of actual event. No one tries to simulate intervening life.
* Immune neglect: people tend to fail to consider internal events, and to underestimate their resilience, for example, how they will reconstrue events to regulate affect upward.

One problem with these data could relate to the roughness of the affect measures. Are these verbal reports of our experiences valid? Is our self-knowledge accurate? There is thus an important distinction between one’s ongoing exp and one’s explicit awareness of experience (meta-awareness). Dissociations can come from not having meta-awareness at all or by meta-awareness misreading experience. The focus of this pod therefore is to research how this distinction maps onto affective forecasting. The long-term goal is to come up with some measure of experienced hedonics that is independent from self-reported hedonics. Perhaps a combination of physiological responses (startle reflex, heart blood flow, eeg, etc) can be used to develop this latent construct.

Short-term goals are to examine how self-reports relate to other measures. To do this, they could force quick judgments, look at behaviors, look at facial expressions, and look at ways that meta-awareness might be changed (perhaps by having people focus carefully on their internal states).

This pod sees a future grant proposal to fund research in this area.

#### Discussion

Dr. King suggested that in order to tell if people are in a worse mood than they realize, one could look for mood effects on tasks.

Dr. Schwartz proposed that as one cannot consider either meta-awareness or awareness to be the real thing, one approach could be just to figure out what different predictions or utilities lie in using each one.

Drs. Keyes and Seligman emphasized the relevance of this pod to positive psychology in that this research could help people make better choices and correct misallocations of time, energy and investments.

Dr. Seligman also pointed out that for him, one behavioral measure of how much he likes a person (whether he knows it or not) is how he reacts when that person interrupts him. As a candidate for an effect on liking that works below the level of consciousness, Dr. Seligman suggested Zajonc’s mere exposure effect. Dr. Seligman also offered one more source of misprediction which is about whether one will rise to the occasion.

**Immunology and health pod report: Drs. Suzanne Segerstrom and Annette Stanton**

#### Introduction

The fields of immunology and health are focused very much on stress and stress reduction, not about individual differences. This may be because the immune system can detect a virus or bacterium but not things like bereavement. The immune system responds to such things because of people’s reactions to events which affect physiology.

Repetitive thought is an important process of internal generation of internal representations and processing. This pod is concerned with the content of positive repetitive thoughts. They defined repetitive thought as conscious and attentive thought that is either frequent or prolonged. At the dispositional level, positive repetitive thought may have health benefits. Optimists recover from coronary surgery, less likely to have second heart attack. Optimistic law students have better health. Women with breast cancer who are hopeful and express emotions have better psychological adjust and less morbidity.

This pod is particularly interested in the following issue: What do hopeful and optimistic people actually do to promote health benefits? Current measures of repetitive thoughts focus on negative such thoughts, and ignore positive forms of repetitive thought. We seem to lack a theoretical framework and language for the analysis of positive repetitive thought. This failure has implications for intervention; it may be more effective to substitute positive repetitive thoughts for negative ones rather than simply trying to get people just to stop negative repetitive thoughts.

Research plan.

A multidimensional scaling of repetitive thoughts measures along with theoretically important traits was performed on data from 1000 undergraduates. A 2 –dimensional solution emerged which accounted for 96% of the variance in correlations between measures. Dimension 1 had to do with positive or negative content. Dimension 2 had to do with searching for a new perspective versus planning, trying to get things resolved, certainty. Repetitive thought measures were all clustered at the negative content end of dimension 1, leading to the question of whether positive repetitive thoughts exists at all, or whether there simply are no measures of it since there has not been an interest in it.

In a second study, people were asked to describe their frequent or long-lasting thoughts and naïve judges sorted the thoughts. The results replicated the dimensions found in the first study and it was found that positive repetitive thought was about half as frequent as negative repetitive thought, and that it exists both as searching and as solving. Examples of positive searching repetitive thoughts included thoughts about moving and developing independence. An example of a positive repetitive searching thought was a subject thinking about planning a trip to Europe.

#### Future plans

The next step being planned is to use breast cancer narratives to see if the previous results depend on the particular samples used. Also, the pod is going to look at the consequences and malleability of repetitive pos thought. They are going to study what are effective positive repetitive thoughts and negative repetitive thoughts, and what the consequences for health are of these different types of repetitive thought. Another topic to be studies is whether it is possible to change pos repetitive thought experimentally by asking people to write about naturally occurring topics in particular ways, with a focus on searching and solving. Health might be examined through self-reported health, physiology and arousal during writing, (searching may enable more arousal, solving may inhibit arousal), and latent virus antibody titers more antibody means that the cellular branch of the immune system is not doing its job).

Also to be examined in upcoming research is construct and measurement development. The pod raised the possibility that there might also be a controllability dimension, which may not have emerged before as it may be confounded with negativity.

The pod is also planning to integrate this program of research into already funded research on Alzheimers care giving and on cancer and infertility. They are also planning ecological momentary assessment studies, which will be more process-oriented. The pod also hopes to plan a small meeting of interested researchers and to pursue a special issue of a journal or a book to try to understand the framework underlying positive repetitive thought. Information gained should be useful for clinicians, and for intervention.

The pod also gave credit to Dr. Wolin for his efforts to try to substitute positive repetitive thought for negative repetitive thought.