

Session 5A:
Mindfulness

Putting it all together

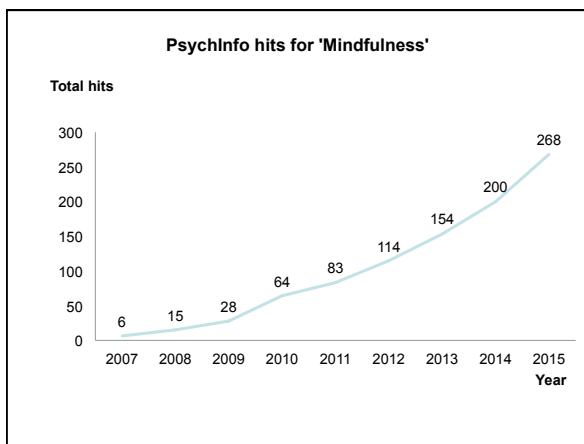
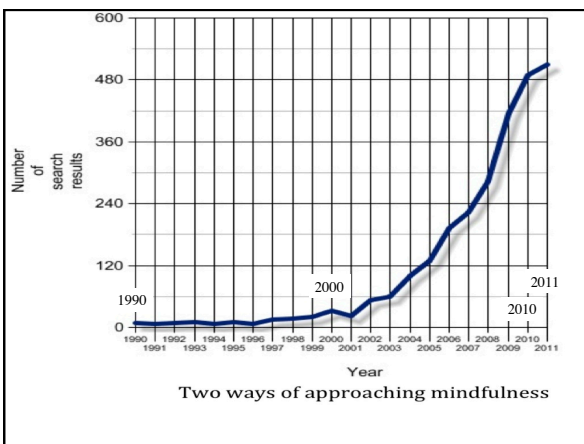
L4 Positive psychology
Steve Draper

11 Feb 2016

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/posl4.html> 1

Mindfulness training

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Two ways of approaching Mindfulness

The scientific	The poetic
Western academic	The way people usually learn mindfulness
Objective	Subjective
Modern empirical methods	Experiential
The aim is to understand how mindfulness works at various levels	The aim is to practise mindfulness

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Experimental

MBSR - Mindfulness-based stress reduction
MBCT - Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy

Baer (2003)	Grossman et al. (2004)	Piet & Houtgaard (2011)
21 mindfulness studies	20 studies of MBSR	6 Randomized controlled trials of MBCT
Over 1,200 participants	Over 1,600 participants	593 participants
post-treatment: (Cohen's d = .74) up to three years follow-up: (Cohen's d = .59)	MBSR displayed a "consistent and relatively strong level of effect sizes" (p.39)	Reduced the rate of relapse of major depression by 34% from 58% to 38%.
wide range of outcomes including physical pain, depression, and stress	wide range of outcomes including depression, anxiety and quality of life.	major depression

How does mindfulness work?

1. reduction in negative thoughts and emotions
2. enhancement of positive emotions
3. improvements in self-control

Mindfulness: other meanings

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Various meanings of "mindful"

There really seem to be two aspects to its benefits.

A) To do with achieving better control of one's Attention (and monitoring).
 N.B. flow is the sweet spot where your attention is filled, but not over-filled. Where you are mindful but only for the present moment.

B) Reflection: processing events and issues:
 (adequate rational attention and processing; the C in CBT?)
 N.B. Personal sensors can allow you to be mindful of things you otherwise can't really see [e.g. of electricity consumption]


B. Mindfulness as processing, or prayer

This aspect is the issue one of coming to process all outstanding issues in your life, so that you have some settled view of them (rather than them causing anxiety by remaining important but unattended to?)

Meditation
 Contemplation
 The examined life
 "An unexamined life is not worth living" Plato's *Apology*, attributed to Socrates]
 Prayer (Sister Wendy Beckett)
 Reflection
 Thinking
 Seligman's ABCDE Learned Optimism exercise

Rohan Gunatillake

- Author of widely used app "Buddhify": link on course page.
- His new book "This is happening": Ref. on course web page
- New career: as a father.



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Session 5B:

Mindfulness

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Plan: Course evaluation

During this session, I'm going to ask you about what you personally thought was good and bad about this course. I plan to do this in 4 phases, time permitting.

1. Now: OMP (one minute paper), anonymously writing down what was for you the best and worst aspects of this course; setting it aside for now.

2. A class-wide plenary discussion, drawing on either what you wrote or other points you care to bring up.
3. Return to (OMP) and edit it.
4. Fill in a short course evaluation questionnaire

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OMP (one minute paper) about this course

Don't put your name on it.

Phase 1: Take a piece of paper, and spend a minute writing down the thing you felt was best; the thing you thought was worst; and the thing you would most like changed. Don't put your name on it. Put it to one side.

- What is the best thing about it for you?
- What is the worst thing about it for you?
- What could be improved?

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The wiki coursework: The wider learning objectives

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Learning objectives for the wiki exercise

- It "covers" the course topics without needing the class time and work by me to do so.
- Produces work of real value to others (peers): self-efficacy
- Requires respectful valuing of peers when you use their work (Aronson's jigsaw effect)
- Maintain peer contact and interaction in level 4
- Experience of collaboration and division of labour (employability)
- Learn by teaching (the teacher always learns more)
- Learning a different kind of writing
- Gain some wiki technology experience

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Round Robin of the topics**One sentence each**

http://www.classtools.net/random-name-picker/65_8SWQBb

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Interactive fruit machine (23)

http://www.classtools.net/random-name-picker/65_8SWQBb

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Social status and well-being. | 13 Relationships |
| 2 Youth development | 14 Physical Exercise |
| 4 IQ, happiness | 15 Self-reflection methods |
| 5 Strengths and virtues | 16 Changes in happiness |
| 6 Attention, and its links to PosPsy | 17 A guide to DIY PosPsy |
| 7 Earlier theories of flourishing | 18 The social spread of happiness |
| 8 Aristotle's "golden mean". | 19 PosPsy improves relationships |
| 9 Cross cultural views | 20 Strengths / character & children |
| 10 Aversion to happiness | 21 Simplify your life. Minimalism. |
| 11 Is happiness bad for you? | 22 Choice: burden VS. blessing. |
| 12 Kindness, caring | 23 Volunteering update. |
| | 24 Critique of Frederickson |

Coursework issues 1: freezing

The course may be frozen for a bit from midnight next Thursday, and a copy of the wikis will be taken for marking purposes.

The wikis and forums should then re-open until the exams.

If you choose to add to them further and continue the collaborative effort of this class, just email me the updated file and I will post it. The value of learning by teaching still applies to this.

What do you feel about opening the wikis for reading to the wider world? Want to keep them private to this class, or may I open them for others to use?

Issues (2): Division of labour

For marking purposes only, a copy of the wikis will be taken at midnight next Thursday.

Division of labour within a group.

Before then, please post in your group's forum a clear statement about the division of labour amongst you. If someone dropped out of your group, state this and their name to remind me.

You may either:

- Post a single joint message you have all agreed about this
- Or each post a personal message about your contribution

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Issues (3): word vs. pdf docs

This is a new request.

I think the PDF format is probably best for readers of your wiki:

Moodle displays them from a single click at top level in most browsers.

However for future-proofing, it would be good if you also uploaded a word format (.docx) version. That would allow me in future to edit them which I occasionally want to do for future readers e.g. next year. Just select the PDF for "Set main file" in your area.

So my request is: from now on, please always upload both .pdf and .docx versions to your "wiki" in moodle. If sending my an update after the deadline out of the goodness of your heart, just email me the update as an attachment. (If you only send the .docx or .odt [the google docs file format] then I could generate the PDF myself.)

Suggested subsections

The suggested subsections on your wiki pages for each PosPsy topics are:

- *Title (reconsider whether the allocated name is best)
- [Is this topic interesting?, and in what way?](#)
- Key experimental results: best single starter reference
- A very short critique of whether there is a gap between the announced theory, and the empirical result
- An example of wild uncritical claims in this area
- One or more practical exercises an individual could carry out.
- An old cultural connection. E.g. for gratitude, thanksgiving prayers in church being admired.
- If you were only going to read, say, 3 things: which would they be.
- *History of the topic
- *Clinical applications
- An annotated longer reference list of other possibly relevant papers

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Towards exam strategies:

Underlying themes in PosPsy

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Underlying cross-topic themes

A] Attributions. The attributions (of good / bad/ meaning) which we make to events (people, ...)

Single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression. Realism, not pessimism or daft optimism.

Acceptance of one's feelings, but not mistaking them for accurate perceptions.

[Learned optimism, gratitude, positive emotions, bad drives out good, mindfulness,]

B] Satisfaction depends on something other than surface measures. Something to do with meaning.

B] Well-being

A basic idea is that happiness isn't just pleasure; Nor joy (the name of the transient emotional reaction to an unexpectedly favourable event)

But involves "meaning" i.e. goals beyond the material and personal

However "well-being" seems to emphasise a less conscious balance than "happiness", both in body and mind.

The recent finding that exercise is as effective as the best anti-depressants, seems to show that people generally are not aware of well-being and what supports it.

A cross-topic theme could be: how does each topic in posPsy relate to well-being? Do any fail to relate?

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B] (cont.) Definitions?

How would you define, or (in a critical exam essay) debate, alternative definitions of:

Pleasure

Joy

Happiness

Well-being

Conscious or unconscious?

Positive psychology?

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Underlying cross-topic themes (cont.)

A third possible theme [C] is what is common to:

- Flow
- Strengths approach
- Burden of choice
- Simplify your life / time affluence

They are related by ?

1. Reduce choice / thought during action
2. Consider what processes you intrinsically enjoy (not just what effects/products you want)

What might we call this theme?

(Cross-topic) Themes list

- A. Attributions
(Re-)Interpreting meanings (e.g. of events)
- B. The nature of happiness & well-being.
- C. Decisions, choice, how these affect well-being.
- D. Rebranding.
Which part of non-Positive-psych might topic X be part of?
- E. Evidence: strong / weak / non-existent
- F. Connections with religion and cultural practices
- G. Self-help / DIY
- H. Solo vs. social perspectives.
- I. Types of awareness or consciousness: (and promoting preferred ones)
- J. Focus on and favour the processes you most enjoy

Revision and exam approaches

Exam questions will mostly be or assume:

"Take 2 or more topics in positive psychology and discuss the issue in the question, illustrating both sides of it (i.e. for and against any claim) with examples from those topics".

Topics: mindfulness, Good drives out bad, volunteering,

Question types:

- 1) Any "theme" makes a good question
 - 2) General questions: what is best/worst supported empirically?; what illuminates something general about the human mind?
- In some years, wiki topics were PosPsy topics, in some they were themes.

This year's wiki topics are topics, but often relatively novel rather than core topics.

Revision approaches

See my web document "A note on exams and this course"

Basically: pick a few basic topics that contrast with each other in as many ways (themes) as possible.

Practise!

Example exam questions

For each of the following questions:

- a) Write down the theme(s) if any, which the question addresses
- b) Sketch an answer i.e. come up with the topics you might use in it.
- c) Plenary discussion of ideas for answers

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Exam questions; answer sketches 1.

To what extent is positive psychology just a translation / relabelling of ancient religious and cultural practices?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 1.

To what extent is positive psychology just a translation / relabelling of ancient religious and cultural practices?

Theme: religion and cultural practices

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Exam questions; answer sketches 2.

One idea is to "be in the moment", aware of your actions and the present reality of the external world. Another idea is about reflecting upon or "working through" past events and feelings. What does Positive Psychology have to say about each of these apparently opposed ideas, and is there a contradiction here?

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Themes: consciousness and reinterpreting the meaning of events

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Exam questions; answer sketches 3.

Pick two or more specific topics in positive psychology. In what ways do they qualify as belonging to positive psychology, and in what ways might they be seen as belonging to other areas in psychology?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 3.

Pick two or more specific topics in positive psychology. In what ways do they qualify as belonging to positive psychology, and in what ways might they be seen as belonging to other areas in psychology?

Theme: Rebranding

Other wording: Evaluate the following claim: "Positive psychology adds nothing new".

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Exam questions; answer sketches 4.

Discuss critically the best and worst established areas of PosPsy that you know of, in terms of empirical results

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Exam questions; answer sketches 4.

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Theme: Evidence strength

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Exam questions; answer sketches 5.

What have clinical approaches got to learn from positive psychology?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 5.

What have clinical approaches got to learn from positive psychology?

"Theme" / approach: Simple CR of pospsy clinical results

But perhaps better:

Look at interventions that are not part of standard clinical repertoire (drugs, surgery, ...), are featured in PosPsy e.g. Exercise, mindfulness.

I.e. this is a theme-like question, but not one I explicitly listed.

Exam questions; answer sketches 6.

Should Positive psychology be about rebalancing, or about pushing towards the more "positive"? Is there never any merit in reminding ourselves of those who don't have enough to eat, did not grow up in a loving family? Why is this not recommended and practised? Should we push ourselves and others always towards more positive emotions, more exercise, etc. without limit? Should this be warned against?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 6.

Should Positive psychology be about rebalancing, or about pushing towards the more "positive"? Is there never any merit in reminding ourselves of those who don't have enough to eat, did not grow up in a loving family? Why is this not recommended and practised? Should we push ourselves and others always towards more positive emotions, more exercise, etc. without limit? Should this be warned against?

Theme: The golden mean Is it about balance, or about getting as "positive" as possible with more always being better?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 7.

Discuss whether there are any validated self-help exercises in positive psychology, and how strong the evidence of benefits is. Mention at least one example where the evidence is relatively strong, and at least one where it is absent or weak.

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Exam questions; answer sketches 7.

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Theme: Self-help / DIY

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Exam questions; answer sketches 8.

How much of PosPsy is related to the single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 8.

How much of PosPsy is related to the single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression?

Theme: Re-interpretation

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Exam questions; answer sketches 9.

What is the most impressive finding so far in PosPsy (and why might a sceptic be forced to agree with you)?

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Exam questions; answer sketches 9.

What is the most impressive finding so far in PosPsy (and why might a sceptic be forced to agree with you)?

Theme: -- (possibly evidence strength; but novelty or something else might count)

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Exam questions; answer sketches 10.

Are the three topics of Flow, the burden of choice, and the hedonic treadmill really all the same single topic of how people like some choice but not too much?

Theme: relates to themes but isn't directly about one: consciousness, processes.

However this question names not 1 but 3 specific topics, and so is not my usual qu. style.

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**Course evaluation
Part 2**

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A) OMP

Phase 1: Take a piece of paper, and spend a minute writing down the thing you felt was best, the thing you thought was worst; and the thing you would most like changed. Don't put your name on it. Put it to one side.

- What is the best thing about this course for you?
- What is the worst thing about it for you?
- What could be improved?

Phase 2: Discuss your comments with others

Phase 3: Take the same piece of paper. Edit and/or add to it.

Finally: do either or both of:

- a) Hand it in (no names, anonymously) at the front before you leave.
- b) Keep the paper, use it to guide your comments in the Evasys online survey.

B) A few other questions

Please take a second sheet of paper.
Don't put your name on it.

1. Do you think you will find other groups' wikis useful to you?
2. Was the wiki creation exercise good in itself?
3. Was your group collaboration good for you, or would it have been better for you doing it alone?

Hand it in (no names, anonymously) at the front before you leave.

A place to stop

For the slides, handout etc. see:

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/posl4.html>

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