
Solution-Focus: Bringing Positive Psychology Into the Conversation

Paolo Terni

Briefcoachingsolutions

Abstract

Positive psychology is the study of what makes people flourish, whereas coaching is a professional relationship designed to help people flourish. Coaching practice has been primarily influenced by positive psychology via the coaches' use of positive psychology interventions, which are evidence-based exercises to enhance flourishing. Researchers, however, designed positive psychology interventions to be self-administered, self-help tools that do not necessarily need a coaching context for delivery. Therefore, the impact of positive psychology on how practitioners coach has been limited because these interventions do not fully tap the potential offered by the interactive nature of the coaching session. What is needed is a framework that would enable the coach to (a) systematically identify positive psychology constructs such as hope, strengths, or positive emotions as they spontaneously emerge in the client's communication; and (b) amplify them by using specific strategies in the interaction. In effect, solution-focused practice provides this exact framework, because it operationalizes many positive psychology constructs in the conversation, therefore making the coaching session itself a positive psychology intervention.

Keywords: positive psychology, solution-focused, coaching, positive psychology coaching

In the millennial issue of the *American Psychologist*, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) defined *positive psychology* as "a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions" (p. 5). The authors argued that since the end of World War II "psychology became a victimology" because "it concentrates on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 6). They then went on to state that "treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7). Further they called for a science that "will allow psychologists to understand and build those factors that allow individuals, communities and societies to flourish" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). This seminal paper successfully managed to achieve two important results. First, it provided an umbrella term for different strands of research on optimal functioning, ranging from self-determination theory to subjective well-being (Diener, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Second, it gave new momentum to those very same research efforts, with results quickly accumulating on topics such as gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), hope (Snyder, 2002), self-compassion (Neff, 2003), and positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), among others. In books targeted toward the general public—such as *Authentic Happiness* (Seligman, 2002), *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2008), and *Positivity*

(Fredrickson, 2009)—academics shared their insights about flourishing

In addition to readers interested in self-help, psychology constructs such as "character strengths" and "optimism" have reached a wider audience, thanks to two specific initiatives. The first is the positive education movement, which advocates for the inclusion of positive psychology into school curricula, something that has had success in schools in the United States and in Australia (Seligman, 2011; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Tough, 2012; Waters, 2011). The second initiative is the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program, a positive psychology program adopted by the U.S. Army specifically designed to enhance the resilience of the soldiers and their families (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011; Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). This article explores how positive psychology affects coaching practice, and where solution-focused practice fits within positive psychology's framework

Positive Psychology Interventions and Coaching

In his latest book aimed at the general public, Seligman (2011) invited coaches to embrace positive psychology: "Coaching is a practice in search of a backbone. Two backbones, actually: A scientific, evidence-based backbone

as well as a theoretical backbone. Positive Psychology can provide both” (p. 70). It was not the first time that Seligman urged coaches to adopt positive psychology’s framework (Seligman, 2007), nor was he alone in pointing out the potential for cross-fertilization: Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, and Parker (2010) offered a comprehensive review of the relationship between coaching and positive psychology built on the hope that “positive psychology theory and research will provide the scientific legs upon which the field of coaching can firmly stand” (Kauffman, 2006, p.221).

These appeals make sense because coaching and positive psychology evolved in parallel and for much of the same reasons. Coaching filled a gap similar to the one that positive psychology filled in scientific literature, where there was little research on what specifically makes people thrive (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2005). In the helping professions, there were few practitioners available to help clients who wanted to have a conversation on how to develop themselves without seeking a therapeutic relationship (Hamilton, 1996; O’Connor & Lages, 2007).

It is true that positive psychology informed psychotherapy conversations as well, with approaches such as positive psychotherapy (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006), hope therapy (Lopez, Floyd, Ulven, & Snyder, 2000), and quality of life therapy (Frisch, 2006). However, coaching seems to offer an immediate area of application for tools designed to enhance and maximize well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011): Whereas *therapy* is defined as “the treatment of physical or mental illness,” *coaching* is defined as the maximization of “clients’ personal and professional potential” (International Coaching Federation, n.d., para.1). While a Google search for the term “positive psychology coaching” resulted in more than 60,000 hits as of March 2015, a search for the term “positive psychology therapy” on the same date yielded just over 5,000 hits.

Moreover, positive psychology researchers have crafted interventions that target mechanisms of potentially great interest to coaches, such as the following: positive relationships (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006), savoring (Bryant, 2003), resilience (Reivich & Shatte, 2002), and positive emotions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Even though there is neither a common definition nor a shared theoretical framework to unify positive psychology interventions, the conceptualization of such tasks was clear enough to allow for the formulation of inclusion criteria for meta-analytic reviews of selected randomized controlled trials that showed the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions (Hone, Jarden, & Schofield, 2014; Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013). For example, Bolier et al. (2013) reviewed 39 studies for a total of 6,139 participants and found small but durable effects of positive psychology interventions on subjective and psychological well-being. Similarly, in a review that included 51 interventions and 4,266 individuals, Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) found a significant enhancement of well-being and a significant decrease of depressive symptoms.

Furthermore, positive psychology interventions share one common trait: Even though some seem to be slightly more effective if delivered within the context of a relationship with a helping professional, such as a coach, researchers designed positive psychology interventions to be self-administered (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). The different definitions of positive psychology interventions also tend to emphasize their nature as intentional and autonomous acts carried out by individuals (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004; Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012). Anyone interested in increasing his or her own well-being can find instructions on how to self-administer positive psychology interventions either online, for example at the University of Pennsylvania’s www.authentichappiness.org website, or in dedicated books, such as *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Because researchers have designed these interventions to be performed autonomously by individuals without any need for supervision, many proponents of positive psychology coaching suggest using the interventions as homework for clients. For example, Carol Kaufmann (2006) parsed positive psychology interventions into three groups, following Seligman’s theory of authentic happiness: (a) the interventions fostering the pleasant life, (b) the ones fostering the engaged life, and (c) the ones fostering the meaningful life (Seligman 2002). She then recommended that coaches assign the interventions to clients as a homework task, choosing the most appropriate ones for the client’s happiness orientation (Kauffman, 2006). For most practitioners, employing positive psychology interventions and related assessments in the coaching partnership qualifies the relationship as *positive psychology coaching* (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Kauffman, 2006; Kauffman & Scoular, 2004).

However, the solution-focused approach might offer a different way to leverage positive psychology constructs—as they emerge in the coaching conversation itself instead of as homework assignments or as formal assessments.

The Need for a Conversational Approach When Applying Positive Psychology

I am going to use the signature strengths exercise (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004) to highlight some of the limitations of positive psychology interventions as currently used in coaching practice and therefore argue for the need of a positive psychology intervention specifically designed as a tool to be utilized in a coaching conversation. I am choosing the signature strengths exercise for the following reasons: (a) character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is one of the most popular positive psychology constructs among coaches (Welch, Grossaint, Reid, & Walker, 2014); and (b) the signature strengths exercise is the positive psychology intervention that seems to present the most challenge to my argument, as explained briefly in the following paragraph.

Literature describes a three-step process for practitioners to use the signature strengths exercise with clients (Niemic, 2009; Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013). The first step consists

of clients taking a strength inventory to help them become aware of their strengths.¹ In the next step, the practitioner provides feedback and helps clients explore past examples of their strengths. In the final step, the practitioner helps clients formulate a plan on how to leverage their signature strengths to achieve their future goals. Thus, even though the signature strengths exercise was designed as a self-help tool, coaches can use it as a way to talk about clients' strengths in a session (Niemiec, 2009; Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013).

The signature strengths exercise, however, has three important limitations that illustrate key distinctions between using a positive psychology intervention within the framework of a coaching session to talk about positive psychology constructs such as strengths, and a coaching session specifically structured from start to finish to systematically detect, foster and enhance positive psychology constructs as they emerge within the conversation.

The first limitation is that the client needs to fill out a strength questionnaire outside the session, which means that an important part of the process takes place without the direct engagement of the coach, an important part of the process takes place without the direct engagement of the coach. Therefore, the coaching context is not required to discover strengths.

Furthermore, the reliance on external activities can lead to missed opportunities within the coaching conversation. For example, a client might complain at length about feeling overwhelmed, but he or she might also mention in passing that every morning he or she manages to prepare a healthy breakfast for his or her children. A solution-focused practitioner would not take the extra step of classifying strengths via a questionnaire, but would immediately seize the opportunity to open up a conversation about that client's specific strength, following up with questions such as: "How do you manage to prepare a healthy breakfast for your kids each morning, despite all that you are going through?"; "Where did you learn to take such good care of your loved ones?"; and "What else do you manage to systematically do, even though you feel overwhelmed?" If, on the other hand, a practitioner waited for an assessment report before having a conversation about strengths, he or she might listen attentively and empathically, but not act to amplify signs of strengths implicit in the client's ongoing communication.

To summarize the first limitation, and the related distinction: Existing positive psychology interventions tend to rely on activities either before the session, (e.g., taking a questionnaire), or after the session (e.g., doing some homework to enhance character strengths or positive emotions), whereas conversational practices like the solution-focused approach are predesigned to foster strengths or positive emotions systematically within the coaching conversation itself.

The second limitation of the signature strengths exercise pertains to general constructs in the context of specific situations. Seligman (2015) himself began an article in memory of the late Chris Peterson with the following words:

[He] had two major strengths that do not appear in the Character Strengths and Virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) because they are local and not universal. The first was "getting it out the door," turning an idea into an article or a book and doing so without shilly-shallying. The second was doing what he said he would do, usually doing more. (p. 1)

Any individual might have strengths that are not mapped in any classification because they are not universal. Some strengths might be cultural, for example, the Middle Eastern value of hospitality, which some authors would like to add to the classification (Biswas-Diener, 2013). Some strengths might be organizational (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006); and some others might be unique to the individual, as in Peterson's case. The VIA Institute classification of strengths² only included strengths that experts deemed to be universal across cultures, nations, and belief systems (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Niemiec, 2009; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This implies that the VIA strength classification is comprehensive at the universal level but not at the individual level, a fact which has flown under the radar of the coaching industry. A coach who sees clients only through the lenses of the 24 strengths included in the VIA classification misses out on all the other cultural or idiosyncratic strengths his or her clients bring to the session. A solution-focused practitioner, on the other hand, systematically builds on clients' strengths as they naturally emerge during the conversation (De Jong & Berg, 2012), regardless of classification.

Wittgenstein (1953) said, "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (p. 116). Similarly, solution-focused work can bring the construct of character strength back to its everyday use, where strengths are discovered in the meaning-making process that unfolds in a conversation between two people.

The third limitation of the signature strengths exercise that distinguishes between a positive psychology intervention that can be *used* in a coaching session and a coaching session that is *in itself* a positive psychology intervention is the following: A coach who uses the signature strengths exercise introduces the clients' strengths in the form of results from a questionnaire, with the risks associated with labeling. Clients might construe the situation as a diagnosis and therefore interpret character strengths as a fixed trait-like construct (Biswas-Diener,

¹ The active ingredient of the exercise is not the labeling of strengths but rather the activity of putting strengths into action: Participants who just identified their strengths did not get any more benefits than a control group (Seligman et al., 2005).

² Additional limitations can be noted in Clifton's Strengthsfinder (Gallup, 1999), although of a different nature: Researchers formulated the items of the instrument based on what seemed to be empirically most descriptive of the highest achievers across a number of careers (Schreiner, 2006). Notice therefore the limited scope of the assessment, focused on the work context and on finding areas of high achievement. Furthermore, notice that in Seligman's theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011), achievement is just one of the many possible paths to well-being.

Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011; Louis, 2011). Dweck (2006) conducted several studies showing that a fixed mindset about the self and its attributes, as opposed to a growth mindset, leads individuals to underperform: For example, students praised for their intelligence after completing an IQ test were less motivated to work on additional puzzles than students praised for their effort. Moreover, students in the trait-praising condition performed worse than students in the effort-praising condition (Dweck, 2002; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). It is thus evident that labeling someone can have drawbacks, even when the labeling occurs in the context of praising. Dweck's body of work does not specifically address strengths, yet similar effects would likely be found for any self-theory that can be framed in terms of a fixed versus a growth mindset (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Solution-focused practice avoids these potential problems of labeling by structuring the session around the tenet that the client is the expert: The coach merely helps clients notice their strengths as they naturally emerge during the conversation (De Jong & Berg, 2012; de Shazer et al., 2007).

To summarize, researchers created effective self-administered positive psychology interventions that practitioners can use during a coaching session. However, even the intervention most used in a coaching context has the following limitations: (a) clients perform key activities, "the active ingredients" of the intervention, outside the session; (b) coaches introduce a normative universal framework into a one-on-one conversation, potentially missing opportunities afforded by the fact that they are engaged in conversation with a unique individual in a process of co-creation that is unfolding in the moment; and (c) coaches might inadvertently imply a fixed mindset about clients' abilities, again missing the opportunities for dynamic development afforded by the conversation.

The solution-focused practice model might be a way to overcome these limitations and to craft a coaching session that truly exploits the possibilities afforded by having a conversation while simultaneously putting to work positive psychology constructs such as character strengths, positive emotions, and hope. In other words, the solution-focused practice model can be seen as a conversational frame made up of a coach's communication stance and a specific set of questions that make the coaching conversation itself the active ingredient of a positive psychology intervention.

The Operationalization of Positive Psychology Constructs in Conversation

My intent is to show parallels between positive psychology and the solution-focused practice, allowing me to describe the solution-focused practice as operationalizing some well-researched positive psychology constructs, such as character strengths, hope, gratitude, prospection, positive emotions, and the ratio of positive to negative emotions. For different views on the epistemological relationship between positive psychology and solution-focused practice, there are quite a few articles I recommend, for example, Bannink and

Jackson (2011), Grant (2007), McKergow (2013), McKergow and Korman (2009), Tomori and Bavelas (2007), and Warner (2013).

Character Strengths

The solution-focused approach offers specific strategies to enable practitioners to engage in a strengths-based conversation with their clients. One strategy is expressed by the tenet that practitioners should address clients in their resources first (De Jong & Berg, 2012), in this case their strengths. A second strategy is the deployment of the evidence-based conversational tools developed in solution-focused practices over the years, such as the following: asking clients for what works for them rather than for problem analysis; asking clients to identify times when a problem was expected to occur but it did not, or it occurred in milder forms, and to identify what they did differently to obtain a more desirable outcome; inviting clients to do more of what works for them instead of the practitioner prescribing solutions; being curious about clients' capabilities, accomplishments, and behavioral strategies; complimenting clients throughout the session; and using positive feedback exclusively, which entails noticing the smallest signs of potential (Bannink, 2010; Berg & Szabó, 2005; De Jong & Berg, 2012; Iveson, George, & Ratner, 2012; Jackson & McKergow, 2002; Macdonald, 2007).

Hope

Hope as a psychological construct refers to the belief of individuals that (a) they are capable of setting clearly conceptualized goals, (b) they are capable of formulating strategies to reach those goals, and (c) they are capable of initiating and maintaining behaviors aimed at implementing those strategies (Lopez et al., 2004). De Jong and Berg (2012) hold that the solution-focused process is centered on two key activities: the development of well-formed goals within the client's system of reference, and the development of solutions based on exceptions. These two activities correspond to the first two tenets of hope theory, respectively. More specifically, solution-focused practitioners help the client set goals that are "well-formed" by virtue of having the following characteristics: they are important to the client; they include situational features (when and where the client wants things to be different); they are formulated mentioning the presence of desirable behaviors rather than in terms of the absence of problems; they are formulated in measurable, concrete and specific terms; and the client recognizes a role for himself or herself in achieving these goals (De Jong & Berg, 2012). Additionally, the solution-focused practice of helping clients develop solutions based on more favorable times when things were a little better is a way of helping clients craft strategies (pathways) to reach their desired goals (Blundo, Bolton, & Hall, 2014).

The third element of hope theory, fostering a sense of agency, pervades solution-focused practice (Dolan, 2004). The solution-focused coach fosters a sense of agency in the client by, among other things, doing the following: (a) adhering to the solution-focused tenet that clients are the

experts on their own lives, (b) making sure that clients see an active role for themselves in achieving their goals, (c) complimenting clients on what they are doing that is useful to them (d) using the client's language and worldview, and (e) empowering clients while keeping them accountable for their decisions and actions (De Jong & Berg, 2012; de Shazer et al., 2007).

Gratitude

Expressing gratitude has positive effects on several outcome measures, such as subjective well-being, positive affect, and health behaviors (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Nelson & Lyubomirsky, in press; Seligman, et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Moreover, expressing gratitude can counteract *hedonic adaptation* (Bao & Lyubomirsky, in press; Sheldon, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2012), the human tendency to quickly adapt to new circumstances (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978; Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999; Kahneman, 1999) with the effect of discounting one's achievements (Lyubomirsky, 2013). The first step to expressing gratitude is to notice and re-appreciate the good things in one's life (Emmons & Shelton, 2002); and solution-focused practitioners prompt clients to perform this kind of re-appraisal by asking questions such as "How did you manage to do that?" or "What would you not want to change in your life?" Furthermore, solution-focused practitioners consistently compliment clients on skills or achievements that the clients themselves may take for granted (Bannink, 2010; Bannink & Jackson, 2011; De Jong & Berg, 2012).

Prospection

Gilbert and Wilson (2007) defined *prospection* as the unique human ability to mentally represent possible future states. Recently, prospection has garnered attention because of its hypothesized role as a causal determinant in human behavior, specifically the idea that behavior is predominantly driven by the future rather than determined by the past (Seligman, Railton, Baumeister, & Sripada, 2013; Spreng, Mar, & Kim, 2009). Solution-focused practice seems to share this assumption because the distinctive feature of a solution-focused conversation is the absence of problem analysis to find causes of current problems in the past; and instead, the clients' exploration of desired futures is prioritized (Bannink, 2010; De Jong & Berg, 2012; de Shazer et al., 2007; Jackson & McKergow, 2002). This approach requires discipline: De Jong and Berg (2012) described how students training for the helping professions sometimes instinctively ask clients about what went wrong and why. Solution-focused conversations instead unfold within the perspective of the preferred future scenario and, through this lens, clients can more easily spot hints of possibilities in the present or in the past (Terni, 2009). The prospected ideal future increases the salience and relevance of events in memory useful for a specific pursuit because of the increased activation potential of the information related to it—a cognitive mechanism well studied in psychology as the *availability bias* (Ariely, 2008;

Bargh & Pietromonaco, 1982; Gigerenzer, 2008; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Wilson, 2002; Wilson & Brekke, 1994).

Positive Emotions

Negative emotions such as fear or anger restrict the perceptual and cognitive field to enable people to effectively deal with threats (Fredrickson, 1998; Lazarus, 1991). Positive emotions, on the other hand, broaden the scope of attention and build psychological resources, for example, the emotions of joy, interest, and inspiration are conducive to learning and exploring (Fredrickson, 1998). Glass (2009) analyzed how solution-focused questions relate to Fredrickson's theory and she noted the following: Some questions, such as "How will you know this meeting has been useful?" and "How will you know the problem was solved?" often directly broaden the perspective of the client. Other questions, such as "How did you manage to go through these difficult times?" and "Where did you learn to do that?" often elicit a range of positive emotions, such as interest and pride. Furthermore, solution-focused practitioners foster clients' positive emotions indirectly by holding a "not-knowing" stance animated by genuine curiosity (De Jong & Berg, 2012). Additionally, the absence of judgment constitutes a validation of clients' perceptions and provides a powerful signal of acceptance (De Jong & Berg, 2012; de Shazer et al., 2007). It implicitly conveys to clients that the session can be a place of exploration and experiential learning, which in turn are activities associated with positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2009).

Ratio of Positive to Negative Emotions

In psychology, the *negativity bias* is defined as the human tendency to give more weight to negative events, emotions, and perceptions than to positive ones (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Rozin & Rozyman, 2001). Moreover, Fredrickson (2009) found that a ratio of positive to negative emotions of 3 to 1 or more leads to flourishing, a finding that still holds despite recent criticism (Brown, Sokal, & Friedman, 2013; Fredrickson, 2013). Therefore, an active effort to counteract the negativity bias by amplifying positive emotions can be beneficial (Keyes, 2002; Layous, Sheldon, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). The solution-focused practitioner prompts clients to search their experience for times when things went better, thereby enhancing self-efficacy, which in turn increases positive emotions (De Jong & Berg, 2012; Gingerich & Peterson, 2013; Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2005). The reverse is also true: Positive emotions have a positive impact on self-efficacy (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Therefore, the solution-focused practice does not directly manipulate emotions and yet manages to increase the ratio of positive to negative emotions by directing clients' attention to what is working (De Jong & Berg, 2012).

Conclusions

If “coaching is a practice in search of a backbone” (Seligman, 2011, p. 70), then positive psychology is a theory in search of a conversational practice to bring positive psychology’s insights back into the unpredictable and opportunity-filled flow that characterizes the coaching conversation.

My intent is to invite positive psychology practitioners to learn more about solution-focused practice, and for solution-focused practitioners to share their approach in positive psychology venues or endeavors, such as journals, conferences and research projects. Solution-focused practice and positive psychology might be rooted in different epistemic worldviews, with the former more aligned with a constructivist, interactional perspective (Dierolf, 2011; Korman, Bavelas, & De Jong, 2013; McKergow & Korman, 2009; Tomori & Bavelas, 2007) and the latter with a traditional, objectivist stance (Peterson, 2006). Both fields of inquiry, however, would benefit to see each other as fellow travelers in a quest to serve clients better. Both the solution-focused model, as described by Miller and de Shazer (1991), and positive psychology, as described by Seligman et al. (2006), share the common assumption that enhancing the salience and relevance of positive factors makes the negative factors seem less important and more manageable. Solution-focused practice brings this assumption to life in the unfolding give-and-take of a professional coaching conversation.

References

- Achor, S. (2011). *The happiness advantage: The seven principles of positive psychology that fuel success and performance at work*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Ariely, D. (2008). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Bannink, F. (2010). *1001 solution-focused questions*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Bannink, F., & Jackson, P. Z. (2011). Positive psychology and solution focus—looking at similarities and differences. *InterAction* 3(1), 8–20. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sfct/inter>
- Bao, K. J., & Lyubomirsky, S. (in press). Making happiness last: Using the hedonic adaptation model to extend the success of positive interventions. In Parks A. (Ed.), *The handbook of positive interventions*. New York, NY: Wiley-Interscience.
- Bargh, J. A., & Pietromonaco, P. (1982). Automatic information processing and social perception: The influence of trait information presented outside of conscious awareness on impression formation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43, 437–449. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.43.3.437>
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology*, 5, 323–370. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.4.323>
- Berg, I. K., & Szabó, P. (2005). *Brief coaching for lasting solutions*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Biswas-Diener, R. (2013). In J. Arden, M. M. O. Bruna, E. Lahti, & Y. Zhao (Eds.), *Positive psychologists on positive psychology* (pp. 6–17). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Biswas-Diener, R., & Dean, B. (2007). *Positive psychology coaching: Putting the science of happiness to work with your clients*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T. B., & Minhas, G. (2011). A dynamic approach to psychological strength development and intervention. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 106–118. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2010.545429>
- Blundo, R., Bolton, K. W., & Hall, J. C. (2014). Hope: Research and theory in relation to solution-focused practice and training. *International Journal of Solution-Focused Practices*, 2, 52–62. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-006-9010-4>
- Bolier, L., Haverman, M., Westerhof, G. J., Riper, H., Smit, F., & Bohlmeijer, E. (2013). Positive psychology interventions: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies. *BMC Public Health*, 13, 119–139. <http://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-119>
- Brickman, P., Coates, D., & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1978). Lottery winners and accident victims: Is happiness relative? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36, 917–927. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.36.8.917>
- Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. D., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). The complex dynamics of wishful thinking: The critical positivity ratio. *American Psychologist*, 68, 801–813. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0032850>
- Bryant, F. (2003). Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI): A scale for measuring beliefs about savoring. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12, 175–196. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0963823031000103489>
- Cooperrider, D. L., & Sekerka, L. E. (2006). Toward a theory of positive organizational change. *Organization development: A Jossey-Bass reader* (pp. 223–238). San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Cornum, R., Matthews, M. D., & Seligman, M. E. (2011). Comprehensive soldier fitness: Building resilience in a challenging institutional context. *American Psychologist*, 66, 4–9. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0021420>
- Dahlsgaard, K., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Shared virtue: The convergence of valued human strengths across culture and history. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 203–213. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.3.203>
- De Jong, P., & Berg, I. K. (2012). *Interviewing for solutions* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- de Shazer, S., Dolan, Y., Korman, H., Trepper, T., McCollum, E., & Berg, I. K. (2007). *More than miracles: The state of the art of solution-focused brief therapy*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55, 34–43. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.34>

- Dierolf, M. A. (2011). SF practice as an application of discursive psychology—discursive psychology as a theoretical backdrop of SF practice. *InterAction*, 3(1), 34–45. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sfct/inter>
- Dolan, Y. (2004). *How conversations about hope create the future: An interview with Yvonne M. Dolan* [DVD]. Los Angeles, CA: Andrews & Clark Explorations, Master's Works Productions.
- Duckworth, A. L., Steen, T. A., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Positive Psychology in clinical practice. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1, 629–651. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.144154>
- Dweck, C. S. (2002). Messages that motivate: How praise molds students' beliefs, motivation, and performance (in surprising ways). In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement* (pp. 37–60). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377–390. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>
- Emmons, R. A., & Shelton, C. M. (2002). Gratitude and the science of positive psychology. In C. R. Synder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 459–471). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Frederick, S., & Loewenstein, G. (1999). Hedonic adaptation. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 302–329). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (1998). What good are positive emotions? *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 300–319. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.300>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218–226. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.300>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2009). *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist*, 68, 814–822. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0033584>
- Frisch, M. B. (2006). *Quality of life therapy*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006). Will you be there for me when things go right? Supportive responses to positive event disclosures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 904–917. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.5.904>
- Gable, S. L., & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and why) is positive psychology? *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 103–110. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.103>
- Gallup. (1999). *Clifton StrengthsFinder* [Web resource]. Retrieved from <http://www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx>
- Gigerenzer, G. (2008). *Rationality for mortals: How people cope with uncertainty*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Gilbert, D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2007). Prospection: Experiencing the future. *Science*, 317, 1351–1354. <http://doi.org/10.1126/science.1144161>
- Gingerich, W. J., & Peterson, L. T. (2013). Effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy: A systematic qualitative review of controlled outcome studies. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 23, 266–283. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1049731512470859>
- Glass, C. (2009). Exploring what works: Is SF the best way of harnessing the impact of positive psychology in the workplace? *InterAction*, 1(1), 26–41. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sfct/inter>
- Grant, A. M. (2007). Past, present and future: The evolution of professional coaching and coaching psychology. In S. Palmer & A. Whybrow (Eds.), *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners* (pp. 23–39). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Grant, A. M., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M. J., & Parker, H. M. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 25, 125–167. <http://doi.org/10.1002/9780470661628>
- Hamilton, K. (1996, February 5). Need a life? Get a coach. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/>
- Hone, L. C., Jarden, A., & Schofield, G. M. (2014). An evaluation of positive psychology intervention effectiveness trials using the re-aim framework: A practice-friendly review. *Journal of Positive Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.965267>
- International Coach Federation. (n.d.). Coaching FAQs. Retrieved from <http://coachfederation.org/need/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=978>
- Iverson, C., George, E., & Ratner, H. (2012). *Brief coaching: A solution focused approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jackson, P. Z., McKergow, M. (2002). *The solution focus: The simple way to positive change*. London, United Kingdom: Brealey.
- Kahneman, D. (1999). Objective happiness. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 3–25). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kauffman, C. (2006). Positive psychology: The science at the heart of coaching. In D. R. Stober & A. M. Grant (Eds.), *Evidence based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients* (pp. 219–253). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Kauffman, C., & Scoular, A. (2004). Toward a positive psychology of executive coaching. In P. A. Linley & S.

- Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 287–302). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43, 207–222. <http://doi.org/10.2307/3090197>
- Korman, H., Bavelas, J. B., & De Jong, P. (2013). Microanalysis of formulations in solution-focused brief therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and motivational interviewing. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 32(3), 31–45. <http://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2013.32.3.31>
- Layous, K., Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). The prospects, practices, and prescriptions for the pursuit of happiness. In Joseph, S. (Ed.), *Positive psychology in practice* (2nd ed., pp. 185–205). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lopez, S. J., Floyd, R. K., Ulven, J. C., & Snyder, C. R. (2000). Hope therapy: Helping clients build a house of hope. In C. R. Snyder (Ed.), *Handbook of hope: Theory, measures and applications* (pp. 123–150). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lopez, S. J., Snyder, C. R., Magyar-Moe, J. L., Edwards, L., Pedrotti, J. T., Janowski, K., . . . Pressgrove, C. (2004). Strategies for accentuating hope. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 388–404). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Louis, M. (2011). Strengths interventions in higher education: Effects on implicit self-theory. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 204–215. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2011.570366>
- Luszczynska, A., Gutiérrez-Doña, B., & Schwarzer, R. (2005). General self-efficacy in various domains of human functioning: Evidence from five countries. *International Journal of Psychology*, 40, 80–89. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00207590440000041>
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). *The myths of happiness: What should make you happy, but doesn't, what shouldn't make you happy, but does*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803–855. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803.803>
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 57–62. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412469809>
- Macdonald, A. J. (2007). *Solution-focused therapy: Theory, research and practice*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- McKergow, M. (2013). Fifty years of the interactional view: An interview with Janet Bavelas. *InterAction*, 5(2) 92–116. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sfct/inter>
- McKergow, M., & Korman, H. (2009). Inbetween—neither inside nor outside: The radical simplicity of solution-focused brief therapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 28(2), 34–49. <http://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2009.28.2.34>
- Miller, G., & de Shazer, S. (1991). Beyond complaints: A foundation for brief therapy. In Steiner, L. & C. Ahlers, (Eds.), *Systemic thinking and therapeutic process* (pp. 117–135). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Mueller, C. M., & Dweck, C. S. (1998). Praise for intelligence can undermine motivation and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 33–52. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.1.33>
- Neff, K. D. (2003). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223–250. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309027>
- Nelson, S. K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (in press). Gratitude. In H. S. Friedman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of mental health*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Elsevier.
- Niemiec, R. M. (2013, December 20). Ok, now what? Taking action with strength. Retrieved from: <http://www.viacharacter.org/resources/ok-now-what-taking-action-with-strength-by-ryan-m-niemiec-psy-d/>
- O'Connor, J., & Lages, A. (2007). *How coaching works: The essential guide to the history and practice of effective coaching*. London, United Kingdom: A&C Black.
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 603–619. <http://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.628.50749>
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2006). Character strengths in fifty-four nations and the fifty US states. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 118–129. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760600619567>
- Parks, A. C., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2013). Positive interventions: Past, present and future. In T. Kashdan & J. Ciarrochi (Eds.), *Bridging acceptance and commitment therapy and positive psychology: A practitioner's guide to a unifying framework* (pp. 140–165). Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.
- Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Reivich, K. J., Seligman, M. E., & McBride, S. (2011). Master resilience training in the US Army. *American Psychologist*, 66, 25–34. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0021897>
- Reivich, K. & Shatte, A. (2002). *The resilience factor: 7 Essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
- Rozin, P., & Rozyman, E. B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 296–320. http://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0504_2
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68–78. <http://doi.org/10.1037/10003-066X.55.1.68>

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141–166. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>
- Schreiner, L. A. (2006). *A technical report on the Clifton StrengthsFinder with college students*. Retrieved from http://www.strengthsquest.com/content/File/144020/StrengthsQuest_Technical_Report.pdf
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2007). Coaching and positive psychology. *Australian Psychologist*, 42, 266–267. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00050060701648233>
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and wellbeing*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2015). Chris Peterson's unfinished masterwork: The real mental illnesses. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10, 1–4. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.888582>
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5–14. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Seligman, M. E. P., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35, 293–311. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03054980902934563>
- Seligman, M. E. P., Parks, A. C. & Steen, T. (2005). A balanced psychology and a full life. In F. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (Eds.), *The science of well-being* (pp. 275–283). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P., Rashid, T., & Parks, A. C. (2006). Positive psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 61, 774–788. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.61.8.774>
- Seligman, M. E. P., Railton, P., Baumeister, R. F., & Sripada, C. (2013). Navigating into the future or driven by the past. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8, 119–141. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612474317>
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410–421. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.3.203>
- Sheldon, K. M., Boehm, J. K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2012). Variety is the spice of happiness: The hedonic adaptation prevention (HAP) model. In I. Boniwell & S. David (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of happiness* (pp. 901–914). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2004). Achieving sustainable new happiness: Prospects, practices, and prescriptions. In A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 127–145). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 73–82. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17439760500510676>
- Sin, N. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: A practice-friendly meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session*, 65, 467–487. <http://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20593>
- Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, 249–275. http://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1304_01
- Spreng, R. N., Mar, R. A., & Kim, A. S. (2009). The common neural basis of autobiographical memory, prospection, navigation, theory of mind, and the default mode: A quantitative meta-analysis. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 21, 489–510. <http://doi.org/10.1162/jocn.2008.21029>
- Terni, P. (2009). SF interviewing protocols as evolutionary algorithms. *InterAction*, 1(2), 41–60. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/sfct/inter>
- Tomasulo, D. J., & Pawelski, J. O. (2012). Happily ever after: The use of stories to promote positive interventions. *Psychology*, 3, 1189–1195. <http://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2012.312A176>
- Tomori, C., & Bavelas, J. B. (2007). Using microanalysis of communication to compare solution-focused and client-centered therapies. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 18(3), 25–43. http://doi.org/10.1300/J085v18n03_03
- Tough, P. (2012). *How children succeed*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1973). Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability. *Cognitive Psychology*, 5, 207–232. [http://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285\(73\)90033-9](http://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(73)90033-9)
- Warner, R. A. (2013). *Solution-focused interviewing. Applying positive psychology: A manual for practitioners*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Waters, L. (2011). A review of school-based positive psychology interventions. *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 28, 75–90. <http://doi.org/10.1375/aedp.28.2.75>
- Welch, D., Grossaint, K., Reid, K., & Walker, C. (2014). Strengths-based leadership development: Insights from expert coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 66, 20–37. <http://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000002>
- Wilson, T. D. (2002). *Strangers to ourselves: Discovering the adaptive unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, T. D., & Brekke, N. (1994). Mental contamination and mental correction: Unwanted influences on judgments and evaluations. *Psychological Bulletin*, 116, 117–142. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.116.1.117>
- Wittgenstein, L. W. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. New York, NY: Macmillan.