

Positive Psychology Strategies to **Reduce Depression** in Teens

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Justin JC Coulson PhD

Schools and Mental Health

The Sydney Morning Herald
New South Wales

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We don't have time for mental health: teachers

May 4, 2015

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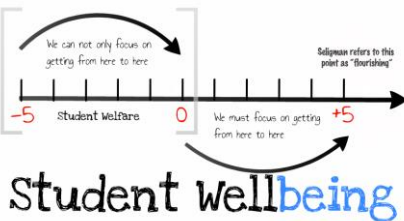
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What is Positive Psychology?

Unifying term that encompasses:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Virtuous personal characteristics
- Paths to fulfilment and meaning in life
- Quest for satisfaction and purpose



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Strengths

- What is a 'strength'?
 - Pre-existing
 - Energising
 - Optimal performance
 - Authentic
- Describe your strengths to a partner (in 30 seconds)



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What You Can Do

- Practice 'strength spotting'
- Utilise youth strengths
- www.viame.org
- What are your strengths?
"I don't know. No one has ever asked me that question."

• 13 year-old girl

Ideation Developer Futuristic Restorative
Individualization Positivity Arranger Empathy
Harmony Significance Responsibility
Input Learner
Achiever Context Focus Belief
Includer Maximizer Strategic Relator
Adaptability Consistency Command
Activator Connectedness

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Gratitude

- Energy
- Optimism
- Social connection
- Happiness
- Less depression
- Less alcoholism
- Less greed/envy
- More income
- Better sleep
- More exercise
- Healthier
- Less materialistic
- Better grades/work outcomes
- Less headaches/viruses/stomach
- Happier with friends
- Happier with family
- Happier with workplace

WE TEND TO FORGET THAT
HAPPINESS
DOESN'T COME
AS A RESULT
OF GETTING SOMETHING
WE DON'T HAVE
BUT RATHER OF
**RECOGNIZING &
APPRECIATING WHAT WE
DO HAVE.**



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What You Can Do

- Be grateful – model it
- Say thanks (for pos. and neg.)
- Invite grateful reflection (assignment)
- Grateful things box

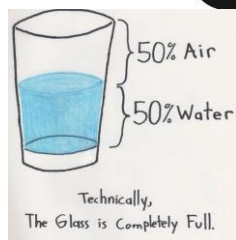


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Hope/Optimism

1. Goals
 - What do you really want?
2. Pathways
 - How will you get there?
3. Efficacy
 - Do you believe you CAN get there?



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What You Can Do

- “I believe you can do this... do you?”
- “Later this week...”
- “You can’t do it... YET!”
- “What CAN you do?”
- “There is life after high school!”

“A pessimist is one who makes DIFFICULTIES of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes OPPORTUNITIES of his difficulties.”
-Harry S. Truman



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How can I help?

- I offer talks and workshops about:
- Positive Psychology and Wellbeing
 - Emotional Intelligence
 - Building Curiosity in students
 - Trust
 - Mindset
 - Parenting



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Stay in Touch

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