Evaluating Your School's Mental Health Status, Pastoral Structures and Wellbeing Programs

IBSC Conference
Monday 11 July 2011
City of London School

John Hensley

School Counsellor
Barker College
Sydney Australia
john_hensley@barker.nsw.edu.au

What are we doing here?

We will:

1. clarify or confirm terminology and ideas
2. discuss a framework for "evidence"
3. discuss the evidence for whole school wellbeing programs
4. reach some conclusions and identify directions
5. trial a checklist to evaluate our own school's wellbeing programs and status
6. discuss if this was a worthwhile workshop

POSITIVE PSYCHOLGY
and Whole School Wellbeing Programs

- What is it?
- Whose definition is it?
- What is it meant to do?
- Are the outcomes able to be measured?
- What do the outcomes say about positive psychology?
- Is there a clear direction?

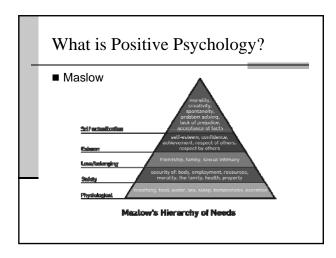## What is Positive Psychology?

- Rutter 1964-74
  - Protective Factors & "wellness rather than illness"
- Seligman
  - Optimistic Child 1995
  - The Science of Optimism and Hope 2000
  - Authentic Happiness 2002
  - Character Strengths 2004
  - Positive emotions, positive character, positive institutions
  - CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) has remained a key component

What is Positive Psychology?

- Wellbeing
  - Positive Psychology Center (UPenn)
  - Wellbeing Institute Cambridge
  - Geelong Grammar AUS
  - Wellington College UK
- Resilience
  - Resilience Project UK
  - Promise Project UK
- Happiness
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) UK
- Mindmatters, Safe Schools Framework AUS

What is Positive Psychology?

■ Maslow

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Resilience/Wellbeing Programs

Targeted
Individual or small group – obvious need

Indicated
Grade level or group – for a reason

Universal
Whole school or grade level - prevention

What is Positive Psychology?

■ Noble and McGrath 2008
  ■ "Positive Educational Practices"
    1. Social and emotional competency
    2. Positive emotions
    3. Positive relationships
    4. Engagement through strengths
    5. A sense of meaning and purpose

What is Positive Psychology

- The problem with the drift from a "population CBT" model to an "organisational wellbeing" model is that it may now be difficult to measure outcomes.
- The drift is even more apparent when we look at recent conferences, e.g. "Happiness and its Causes."
- The following review of outcomes involves primarily "universal CBT" programs.

What is it meant to do?

- Happiness can be increased at a population level, and that happiness is authentic
- Resilience can be trained and/or improved
- Mental health problems can be reduced by using early intervention, positive psychology principles
- Strengths and virtues can be taught
- All of this brings greater fulfilment in life

Can it be measured?

- "Levels of Evidence"
- **from National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia)**

I   Evidence obtained from a systematic review of all relevant randomised controlled trials

II   Evidence obtained from at least one properly designed randomised controlled trial

III - 1 Evidence obtained from well-designed pseudorandomised controlled trials (alternate allocation or some other method)

III - 2 Evidence obtained from comparative studies (including systematic reviews of such studies) with concurrent controls and allocation not randomised, cohort studies, case-control studies, or interrupted time series with a control group

III - 3 Evidence obtained from comparative studies with historical control, two or more single arm studies, or interrupted time series without a parallel group

IV   Evidence obtained from case series, either post-test or pretest/ post-test

V   *"I heard a really interesting speaker the other day…"*

Outcomes

- Seligman and Steen 2005
  - "We found specific interventions that make people lastingly happier, and we believe this study holds implications… for the future of positive interventions and perhaps clinical interventions"

Outcomes

- Green, Grant and Rynsaardt 2007
  - "Life coaching was associated with significant increases in levels of cognitive hardiness and hope and significant decreases in levels of depression."
  - "…all participants fell within the 'normal' range of psychopathology….were not an 'at-risk' population."

Outcomes

- Barrett and Farrell 2007
  - "This review highlights the worth of pursuing universal prevention to reduce the incidence of childhood anxiety and depression….one promising programme for school-based prevention is *FRIENDS.*"

Outcomes

- Merry 2007
  - "Although the idea of preventing depression has appeal and could potentially be cost effective, there is currently little evidence to support introducing depression prevention programmes."
    - Meta-analytic and Cochrane review
    - Targeted effective, Universal not effective

Outcomes

- Neil and Christensen 2007
  - "A number of schools programs produced positive outcomes. However, even well established programs require further evaluation…."
    - Medical Journal of Australia
    - Meta-analytic
    - Society for Prevention Research criteria used

Outcomes

- Spence and Shortt 2007
  - "Of the studies reviewed, the majority did not demonstrate positive effects upon depression immediately after intervention. Outcomes were marginally stronger around 6 to 10 months…..but not maintained."
    - Research Review in JofCPP

Outcomes

- Sin and Lyumomirsky 2009
  - Meta-analysis of 51 positive psychology interventions
  - "The results revealed that positive psychology interventions do indeed significantly enhance well-being… and decrease depressive symptoms"
  - Self-selection was predictive of good outcomes along with duration of intervention

Outcomes

- Sawyer et al 2009
  - "Despite using an extensive, structured programme, based on best evidence ….. the intervention did not reduce levels of depressive symptoms among participating adolescents."
    - Randomised controlled, 25 pairs of schools
    - Funded by *beyondblue* and NHMRC
    - Problems with delivery of the program

Outcomes

- NICE 2009
  - "Promoting young people's social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education"
    - Guidance involves mainly systemic change and management, rather than programs
    - Interim Evidence Statements are again mixed, e.g. conflict resolution is positive, bullying and disruptive behaviour is mixed

Outcomes

- Challen, Noden and West 2010
  - UK Resilience Programme
    - 22 schools involved
    - Used Penn Resilience Program
    - Funding and analysis by DCSF/DFE and London School Economics

Outcomes

- Challen, Noden and West 2010 *cont.*
  Final Report found…..
  - "…found a significant short-term improvement in pupils' depressive symptom scores, school attendance rates, and academic attainment in English."

  - "There was no impact on any of the outcome measures by the two year follow-up in 2010"

Outcomes

- Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof and Boehm 2011
  - Experimental study
  - "Expressing Optimism & Expressing Gratitude"
  - "We conclude that happiness interventions are more than just placebos, but they are most successful when participants know about, endorse and commit to the intervention"

Outcomes

- Rivet-Duval, Heriot and Hunt 2011
  - 160 adolescents in Mauritius
  - School based program using RAP-A (Resourceful Adolescent Program)
  - "The results, drawing from a culturally diverse population, suggest that universal programs such as RAP-A may be better seen as promoting positive mental health, rather than having a direct prevention or intervention effects on clinical problems."

Ongoing

- The Promise Project
  - Uses RAP
  - Measures depression scores
  - Government funding led by University of Bath
  - Results by the end of 2011

Conclusions

- Evidence for positive outcomes, specifically "inoculation for anxiety and depression" is very mixed – "set point/SWB" might be important
- Even good quality programs have problems getting results
- Many worthwhile outcomes may not have been measured
- The qualifications and commitment of staff who deliver programs seems important
- Further research is needed!

Conclusions *continued*

- "SenseAbility"
  - Australian program published in 2011
  - Has a substantial research review
  - Acknowledges the varied evidence for universal depression prevention programs
  - Focuses has changed to the "wellness end of the continuum"
  - Promotes awareness, help seeking, a common vocabulary and resilience

Possible Directions

- Pursue whole-school wellbeing/resilience programs, being mindful of the evidence
- Stick with intuition and experience
- Use good quality, inexpensive programs
- Investigate and use depression screening and interventions
- Investigate peer involvement and monitoring
- Use targeted programs, rather than universal, for depression and anxiety

Be happy about unhappiness

- A negative mood:
  - enables people to pick up detail and threat more accurately,
  - makes people less prone to influence or false or misleading information,
  - reduces people's irrational biases because everyone irritates them.

REFERENCES

Barrett, P.M. & Farrell, L.J. (2007). Prevention of Childhood Emotional Disorders: Reducing the Burden of Suffering Associated with Anxiety and Depression. *Child and adolescent Mental Health,* 1-8.

Challen, A., Noden, P., West, A. & Machin, S. (2010). UK Resilience Programme Evaluation – Final Report. *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, *Research Report No. DCSF-RB094.*

Gable, S.L. & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and Why) Is Positive Psychology? *Review of General Psychology, Vol. 9, No. 2,* 103-110.

Green, S., Grant, A. & Rynsaardt J. (2007). Evidence-based life coaching for senior high school students: Building hardiness and hope. *International Coaching Psychology Review, Vol. 2, No. 1*, 24-32.

Huppert, F.A. (2005). Positive emotions and cognition: developmental, neuroscience and health perspectives. *Psychology Press, Proceedings of 8th Sydney Symposium 2005,* 1-25.

Irwin, S., Sheffield, Dr J. & Holland-Thompson, K. (2010). SenseAbility. *www.beyondblue.org.au/senseability*

Littlejohns, Prof. P., Killoran, A., Tamber, S., Mountain, P., Kelly, Prof. M., Johnson, A., Loveman, C., & Kay, M. (2008). Systematic review of the effectiveness of universal interventions which aim to promote emotional and social wellbeing in secondary schools. *National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.* 1-24.

Lyubomirsky, S., Dickerhoof, R., Boehm, J. K. & Sheldon, K. M. (2011). Becoming Happier Takes Both a Will and a Proper Way: An Experimental Longitudinal Intervention To Boost Well-Being. *Emotion, Vol. 11, No. 2, 391-402.*

Merry, S.N. (2007). Prevention and Early Intervention for Depression in Young People – A Practical Possibility? *Curr Opin Psychiatry, 20(4),* 325-329.

Neil, A.L. & Christensen, H. (2007). Australian school-based prevention and early intervention programs for anxiety and depression: a systematic review. *The Medical Journal of Australia, 186(6),* 305-308.

NHS, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2009). Promoting young people's social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education. *NICE public health guidance 20.*

Noble, T. & McGrath H. (2008). The positive educational practices framework: A tool for facilitating the work of educational psychologists in promoting pupil wellbeing. *Educational & Child Psychology, Vol 25, No. 2,* 119-134.

Ozonoff, S. (2011). Editorial: The first cut is the deepest: why do the reported effects of treatments decline over trials? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 52, No. 7, pp 729-730.*

Rivet-Duval, E., Heriot, S. & Hunt, C. (2011). Preventing Adolescent Depression in Mauritius: A Universal School-Based Program. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, vol. 16, No. 2, 86-91.*

Rutter, M. (1989). Isle of Wight revisted: twenty-five years of child psychiatric epidemiology. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry, 1989 Sep;28(5):633-53.*

Salmon, G. & Kirby, A. (2007). Schools: Central to Providing Comprehensive CAMH Services in the Future? *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, vol. 13, No. 3,* 107-114.

Sawyer, M.G., Pfeiffer, S., Spence, S.H., Bond, L., Graetz, B., Kay, D., Patton, G. & Sheffield, J. (2009). School-based prevention of depression: a randomised controlled study of the *beyondblue* schools research initiative. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry,* 1-11.

Scudamore, C. (2008). What will Positive Psychology actually mean to Geelong Grammar School?

Seligman, M.E.P., Steen, T.A., Park, N. & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive Psychology Progress - Empirical Validation of Interventions. *American Psychological Association, Vol. 60, No. 5,* 410-421.

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, Vol. 65(5), 467-487.*

So What is Positive Psychology, *Auseinetter, Editor Abbie Patterson, Issue 30, No. 1/2008,* 18-20

Spence, S.H. & Shortt, A.L. (2007). Research Review: Can we justify the widespread dissemination of universal, school-based interventions for the prevention of depression among children and adolescents? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 48:6,* 526-542.