

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

MANUAL FOR COACH



Foreword

We believe that the ultimate goal of coaching is for clients to become autonomous. As a coach, we can support our clients in choosing and following a direction *they* perceive as valuable and meaningful; a direction that results in subjective wellbeing or, using a more common term, happiness. Research on positive psychology has provided a large number of tools that are well suited for this purpose.

This manual is an attempt to structure a selection of these tools and create a step-by-step protocol for coaches who wish to integrate positive psychology into practice. We hope that this manual will inspire you to use positive psychology as framework for helping your clients.

Again, this manual presents only a selection of tools. To provide a complete collection of resources, we created the “Positive Psychology Practitioner’s Toolkit” to meet your needs as well as your client’s needs. This is the one-stop resource for a variety of rich resources that you can come to again and again, categorize them according to client, and have full support from a team dedicated to meet your requests.

Signing up and registering takes only 5 minutes and you will be granted instant access to the most extensive positive psychology resources out there.

Click here to sign up: <http://positivepsychologyprogram.com/signup.html>

All the best,

Hugo Alberts & Seph Fontane Pennock

Introduction & Guidelines

1.1 Positive Psychology

So far, many clinical interventions have focused on ways to decrease problems, departing from the question: “what is wrong with people?” It is hard to deny that this entails an important question. In our attempts to answer the question, we have gained more understanding of many illnesses and have developed effective treatments for a wide range of problems. However, as an inevitable consequence of our focus on the negative aspects of well-being and health, such as distress and disease, we developed an almost exclusive attention to pathology. Scientific psychology focused disproportionately on pathology and repair, and devoted relatively little attention to factors that “make life worth living.”

What we have learned over 50 years is that the aforementioned pathology-based view on human functioning does not move us closer to the prevention of serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have largely come from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not correcting weakness. We have discovered that there are human strengths, such as courage, future-mindedness, optimism, and interpersonal skill that act as buffers against mental illness and promote healthy self-regulation.

Research on positive psychology aims to investigate what actions lead to optimal self-regulation, to well-being, to positive individuals, and to thriving communities. For instance, scientific studies attempt to gain more insight in what families factors contribute to children who flourish, what work settings lead to the greatest satisfaction among workers, what policies result in the strongest civic engagement, and how people’s lives can be most worth living. In addition, research in the field of positive psychology seeks to unveil factors that contribute the prevention of problems, such as depression, substance abuse or violence. In the past 30 years there has been a development of competency-based, more collaborative approaches to working with clients. Positive Psychology and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy are amongst these approaches, which are predominantly directed toward clients’ preferred futures and strengths instead of their past problems and deficits.

1.2 Positive Psychology Coaching

The goal of this manual is to bridge the gap between science and practice, by using Positive Psychology interventions to enhance wellbeing. Positive psychology has brought us a diverse set of scientifically tested exercises and positive interventions; interventions that have been found to promote wellbeing by fostering healthy self-regulation. In stead of primarily focussing on the question: “what is the problem of my client and how can this problem be solved?” the question is: “what does a valuable life look like in the eyes of my client and how can this be achieved?” Although both questions may seem similar at first glance, they are not. Repairing weakness is not the same as building strengths. Moving closer to a desired direction is not the same a preventing oneself to move in an undesired direction. Subjective wellbeing is more than the absence of mental illness or problems. Getting rid of fear, anger, and depression will not automatically fill you with peace, love, and joy. Getting rid of weaknesses will not automatically maximize your strengths.

The focus of this manual is not on what is wrong with the client and on repairing what is worst, but first and foremost on strengths, what is right with him and on creating what is best. The goal of the manual is to help your client to move closer to a desired outcome, to desired regulatory goal. For

an overview of the most important differences between traditional therapy and positive psychology therapy/coaching, see appendix 1.

1.3 Core Ingredients

Awareness

Awareness is the most important pre-requisite for change. Change is impossible if we are not aware of the fact that something can or needs to change. Therefore, the first phase of the intervention is to enhance awareness of the desired outcome. In designing a positive outcome – instead of problem solving – the coach sets out to design something, there is an output, there is something to achieve. It is not just a matter of removing a problem; there is a designed something that was not there before. The first phase includes the personal goals of the client. It involves the answer to the question: what does a valuable life look like? After uncovering the personal values and goals of the client, the next step is to investigate the discrepancy between these values and the current life that the client lives. In other words, the client becomes aware of the extent to which he or she is living in accordance with his personal values.

In the first phase, the coach also helps to increase awareness on personal qualities that signal optimal self-regulation. The client becomes aware of personal resources in terms of strengths that can be used to reach the desired goal. At the same time, attention is devoted to the possible factors that prevent the client from living a value-based life. These can be internal factors (e.g. rumination or ineffective emotion regulation) or external factors (e.g. unsupportive environment or tight deadlines). Awareness of these factors is an important step, because they may prevent a client from reaching the desired outcome.

During the process of change, when the client has already started making behavioural or cognitive changes, awareness remains a core ingredient. For instance, awareness of positive emotions such as joy, energy or gratitude are indicators of a positive change. They signal that the chosen direction of change is a preferred one. Moreover, many clients are inclined to focused on “what still needs to be done”. Although it is good to envision the future and remember goals, too much focus on goals can sometimes cause goal frustration. Therefore, awareness of progress that has already been made is important for building self-efficacy and reducing frustration.

Change

Once clients are aware of the desired pathway of change, the next step is manifesting change. The coach helps the client to move closer to the desired direction by offering advise or support. In addition, the coach monitors progress and discusses the progress with the client. The client determines whether he or she prefers to take small steps or prefers a more radical change.

Positive Emotions

Positive Psychology coaching broadens the client’s perspective by having him or her undertake activities that generate positive emotions , like for instance valued action (session 1), using stengths (session 2), practicing mindfulness (session 4) and other well tested interventions (session 5). Although fleeting in nature, positive emotions broaden meaning, expand behavioral repertoires, help clients generate new ideas, and facilitate reinterpretation of old and bitter memories. This broadening occurs at cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels. Therefore, positive emotions in Positive Psychology coaching are not

simply indications of joy or happiness but also more and importantly generate cognitive, behavioral, and affective changes.

1.4 Important messages

Depending on the nature of the personal goals of your client, the manual and practices may require some personal interpretation and usage. As in real life, it is really difficult to make a stepwise protocol that works for every client, for every problem and every goal.

Note that this manual has not been tested scientifically. Although evidence exists for the effectiveness of the exercises used in this manual, the complete step-by-step manual as it is presented here has not been scientifically investigated.

1.5 Reference

Please use this reference when referring to or citing this manual:

Alberts, H.J.E.M. (2013, September 12). *Positive Psychology Coaching; Manuals for Coach and Client*. Retrieved from <http://www.positivepsychologyprogram.com>.

Session: 1 - Introduction, Values and Goal Setting

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: introduction

- Introducing each other
- Discuss rules:
 - What clients disclose during the therapy sessions is kept in strict confidence and all information shared in session are considered privileged information and confidential.
 - Both client and therapist are committed to being on time for sessions
 - Without honesty, the value of the sessions will be seriously affected in a negative way. Both therapist and client are being honest about all matters discussed.
 - The client shares what he/she wants to share. The client always holds the right to not share information.
 - The therapist evaluates the cooperation repeatedly with the client during the intervention
- Discuss the nature of your approach (positive focus; achieving desirables outcomes, fostering healthy self-regulation) with your client. Explain the boat metaphor to your client (see appendix 1).
- Ask the following Questions:
 1. Problem: "What brings you here?" "What would you like to change?"

2. General goal formulation: "What would you like to be different as a result of these sessions?"

3. Progress: "Where are you now on a scale of 0 to 10?" "How do you manage to be at that number?"

4. Motivation: "10 means you're willing to give it your all, and 0 means you're not willing to put in any effort."

5. Confidence: "10 means that you are very confident, and 0 means you have no confidence at all that you can reach your goal."

Part 2: Awareness of Values and valued living assessment

Ask your client to complete the Top 5 Value Exercise.

The 5 most important values of my client are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Take some time to discuss the meaning of these values. What do they mean to your client and why is this value important to her?

Value 1 means to my client: _____

Is important to my client because: _____

Value 2 means to my client: _____

Is important to my client because: _____

Value 3 means to my client: _____

Is important to my client because: _____

Value 4 means to my client: _____

Is important to my client because: _____

Value 5 means to my client: _____

Is important to my client because: _____

Plan B

alternatively, you can do the gravestone exercise (see website). The idea of this exercise is similar: revealing what is most important to your client. However, make sure that your client feels comfortable doing this exercise.

Part 3: Goal Setting

- Ask our client to do the Happiness Pie Exercise (if your client has already completed this exercise, you may continue with the next step).
- Discuss the scores on the valued living questionnaire and the happiness pie. Is there any discrepancy that needs attention? Is there anything your client would like to change in his/her life*? Is there anything that prevents your client from living in accordance with his/her values?
- Ask the client about his goal for coming to the therapy or about the concerns he wants to address in therapy. "What would be the best outcome of you coming to see me?"
- Goal setting

Ask your client to set some concrete goals. Guidelines:

Make sure your client:

- formulates both distal and proximate goals
- formulates approach goals in stead of avoidance goals
- formulates mastery/learning goals in stead of performance goals

These are the personal goals of my client:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

* note that although the scores on the valued living questionnaire or happiness pie may not give rise to the idea that something needs to change, there can still be aspects of the client's life that he or she wants to change. Sometimes these changes involve specific behaviour or actions, like stop biting nails, dealing better with emotions, etc.

Part 4: Closing the session & Homework

Feedback: In the last few minutes of the session, you may want to summarize what you discussed and give some feedback. Ask if there are any questions or concerns.

Homework

- Ask your client to make a visual representation of his/her goals and or values (also referred to as visionary board). This can be done digitally, by selecting images, photo's, words, names, etc. from the internet and combining them in a powerpoint file, or by hand, using magazines and other resources. Use the boat metaphore again and explain to your client that this visionary board can be percieved as the "gouvernail (steering wheel)" indicating the preferred direction of the boat. It can also function as a prime to stay on track.
- Based on the preferred change your client wants to make, you (the coach) select some questionnaires in order to measure progress and increase awareness. You are allowed to make your own questionnaire or add items that you consider relevant. You can send the questionnaires by mail to your client after this first session. Ask your client to complete them during the next week.

Information box

A common problem in this phase is the coach's failure to detect goals that are presented as values by the client. For example, the client may say, "I want to be happy" or "I want to be rich". This sounds like a value, but it is not. Being happy is something you can have or not have, like an object. Having a lot of money is a goal, not a value. A value is a direction—a quality of action. By definition, values cannot be achieved and maintained in a static state, they must be lived out. A practical way to avoid this confusion is to place any value statement that is actually a goal statement under the following microscope: "What is this in the service of?" or "What would you be able to do if that was accomplished?" Very often, this exercise will reveal the hidden value that has not been stated. Some "values" are really means to an end, in which case they are not values at all.

Session: 2 - Awareness of strengths and obstacles

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: Discuss the last week

- Did your client think about the issues that were addressed in the last session? Did your client talk about it with other people? Are there any things that your client wants to discuss concerning the last session?

- How was it to make a visionary board? If your client feels comfortable, you may take a look at it together.

Part 2: Awareness of Strengths

Despite life's struggles, all persons possess strengths that can be identified and used to improve self-regulation and enhance well-being. In addition, client motivation is increased by a consistent emphasis on strengths. Character strengths (e.g., kindness, teamwork, zest) are distinguished from talents and abilities. Athletic prowess, photographic memory, perfect pitch, manual dexterity, and physical agility are examples of talents and abilities. Strengths have moral features, whereas talents and abilities do not.

Exercise 1:

Invite a your client to identify two occasions when they have been at their best (when they felt at their best or performed at their best). The occasions can be of any duration from a few minutes to a year.

(It is important that being 'at your best' is meaningful to your client, not an attempt to impress or conform to what others think)

1. Get him or her to talk about the experience, re-living it as vividly as possible as they go.
2. Note down every example of a possible strength they display as they talk (use the lines below).
3. After they have talked about the events, invite them to consider the list you have noted down and to hone it into four or five areas of strength which characterize them at their best.

Possible strengths of my client (you may use the list on the next page):

Plan B

If your client finds it difficult to respond to the questions in the previous exercise, you can alternatively ask these questions (or look at the website for other exercises):

- When people say good things about you, what are they likely to say?
- What is it about your life, yourself, and your accomplishments that gives you real pride?
- What gives you genuine pleasure in life?

Table 2: Overview of VIA character strengths

Wisdom & Knowledge – strengths which involve acquiring and using knowledge	
	Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
	Curiosity: Openness to experience]: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
	Open-mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
	Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
	Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others
Courage – emotional strengths which involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal	
	Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or pain
	Persistence : finishing what one starts, persisting a group of action in spite of obstacles
	Integrity : speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
	Vitality / Zest : approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things half-way or half-heartedly, living life as an adventure, feeling alive and activated
Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others	
	Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
	Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
	Social intelligence :Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
Justice – strengths that underlie healthy community life	
	Citizenship :Working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
	Fairness: treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
	Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess	
	Forgiveness & Mercy: forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
	Humility / Modesty: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
	Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
	Self-regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
Transcendence – Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning	
	Appreciation of beauty and excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science.
	Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
	Hope / Optimism: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
	Humour / Playfulness: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people, seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
	Spirituality: Knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

Part 3: Discuss potential pitfalls/weakness

Take a look at the goals that have been set during the first session and at the 5 most important values. Discuss potential factors that may prevent your client from reaching those goals or living in accordance with the values. These can be internal factors (e.g. rumination or ineffective emotion regulation) or external factors (e.g. unsupportive environment or tight deadlines).

You may use the metaphor of the boat. This part is on becoming aware of a potential leak in the boat and possible characteristics of the water (environment, life circumstances) and people on the shore (conservative people or unsupportive people).

Awareness of these factors is an important step, because they may prevent your client from reaching the desired outcomes.

Internal factors that may prevent your client from reaching those goals	External factors that may prevent your client from reaching those goals

Part 4: Closing session & homework

1. Ask your client to ask two other persons, preferably a friend and a family member to assess his strengths. Your client should use the two homework forms with strength-related questions and ask others to select 5 (not more or less) strengths that they believe are characterizing him/her. Ask him/her to bring this list to the next session.
2. Ask your client to pay attention to positive feelings this week. Feelings like for instance energy, excitement or gratitude. You can ask him/her to write down what he/she is doing, who is with him/her, and/or if any strengths are at play.
3. Ask your client to complete the VIA questionnaire online:
 - Go to: <http://www.viacharacter.org>
 - Click on the Take Surveys button in the menu bar.
 - Click on the VIA Survey option.
 - Click on the Enter the Survey Center to Register button.
 - The test is free, but you have to register to be able to take it. Fill out the form.
 - Click on the Register button and you will be taken to the test

Session: 3 - Manifestation of Change (Actions)

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: Discuss the last week

- Did your client pay attention to positive emotions during the last week? Discuss what your client noticed and how these emotions may be related to use of strengths or valued behaviour.

- Put the 5 top strengths of the VIA questionnaire, the peer assessed strengths and your own assessed strengths in the table on the next page.

Instructions:

- **Column One (Coach):** Record the five positive character attributes the coach identified. Place a checkmark inside the box that corresponds to the attribute the coach thought most characterized the client.
- **Column Two (Family):** Record the attributes that a family member identified and thought best described your client.
- **Column Three: (Friend):** Record the attributes that a friend of your client identified and thought best described him/her.
- **Column Four (VIA):** Record the top 5 strengths as evidenced by the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire online.
- **Column Five (Composite):** Add the number of times that each attribute was checked in the previous four columns.
- **Column Six (under/overuse):** Identify five strengths which your client may be lacking (underuse) or have in excess (overuse). Denote the strength with either X-O (Over) or X-U (under).
- **Column Seven (Desire):** Identify five strengths, which your client desires to possess.

	Character Strength	Coach	Family member	Friend	VIA	Total	Over/ under use	Desired
1	Appreciation of beauty and excellence							
2	Integrity							
3	Bravery & valour							
4	Creativity							
5	Curiosity							
6	Fairness							
7	Forgiveness							
8	Gratitude							
9	Hope & Optimism							
10	Humour & playfulness							
11	Kindness							
12	Leadership							
13	Love							
14	Love of Learning							
15	Modesty & humility							
16	Open-mindedness							
17	Persistence							
18	Perspective							
19	Prudence							
20	Spirituality							
21	Self-regulation							
22	Social Intelligence							
23	Teamwork/citizenship							
24	Zest							

Part 2: Using strengths to reach goals and overcome obstacles

In session two, you discussed potential factors that may prevent your client from reaching his goals or living in accordance with his values. These factors could be internal factors (e.g. rumination or ineffective emotion regulation) or external factors (e.g. unsupportive environment or tight deadlines).

Discuss with your client:

- Are there strengths that are currently being underused (used not often enough)?

- Would your client like to use these strengths more? If so, what could your client do to use these strengths more?

- Are there strengths that are currently being overused (used too often)?

- Would your client like to use these strengths less? If so, what could your client do to use these strengths less frequently?

- Are there strengths of your client that can be used to move closer to the personal goals? Discuss possible ways for using the strengths.

- Are there strengths of your client that can be used to overcome the potential obstacles that have been specified in session 2?

Part3: Make concrete plans for change

The goal of this phase is to elicit behavior change and then to support the client's commitment to sustaining such change. To achieve this, the coach will support the discovery of the client's ideas about how to move forward. You may ask the client the following action questions to identify the first concrete steps for action. In this phase, you can offer options for action or recommend specific courses of action.

Which elements of the goal/goals do you have the energy or desire to begin with?

What is most compelling/important for you to address?

What could be the best first step toward your outcome?

What can you do in the next week, no matter how small a step, that will move you (more) towards your goal? Ask your client to use the form in the client manual to list some concrete actions (action plans).

What would help making the first step easier?

Part 4: Closing session & homework

1. My client has planned the following concrete actions for next week:

2. Ask your client to pay attention to both positive and negative feelings this week. Feelings like for instance energy and excitement but also to negative feelings or thoughts that may accompany the process of change.

Session: 4 - Progress & Barriers (Mindfulness and Acceptance)

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: Discuss the last week

- Did your client manage to commit to the actions that were formed during last session?
What did he/she notice or experience?

- Did your client experience any hindrances or obstacles that prevented him/her from carrying out the desired behaviour? If there were obstacles this week, discuss the nature of these obstacles. These can be emotional discomfort and disturbing thoughts. If the client experienced discomfort, get a description of what the discomfort is in great detail. Look for specific components: bodily sensations, emotions, memories, thoughts, and so on.

- Did your client consciously use his/her strengths this week? Were strengths used to cope with difficulties?

- Ask your client how he/she typically deals with these obstacles (or difficult emotions/ thoughts/feelings in general). Does your client use avoidance techniques like distraction or suppression? Does your client use a rational way of coping, like analysing, rumination, worrying, putting things in perspective?

- Ask your client to give a rating on a 1 to 10 scale of how committed he/she is to moving forward with the planned actions, **even if your client has to make room for uncomfortable moments**. One equals “no commitment at all”, and 10 equals “complete commitment.” (Generally, clients should give a rating of 7 or higher at this point of therapy)

Part 2: Introducing Mindfulness

- Another way of introducing mindfulness is by being silent for one minute and asking your client not to think. No talking, just being. Ask your client what he/she experienced. Most of the time people experience the constant noise of thoughts. It is impossible to stop thinking by trying not to think.
- Ask your client if he/she heard of mindfulness and/or has meditation practice. Explain mindfulness in your own words. Make sure to use the terms:
 - attention
 - the present moment
 - willingness/acceptance (being open to your own experience when you experience it— without trying to manipulate it, avoid it, escape it, change it, and so on).

note: the website contains additional tools for introducing and using mindfulness/ acceptance.

Part 3: Guided meditation

In this phase you ask your client if he/she is willing to practice with mindfulness. If your client agrees, you can do a brief meditation together. Below you will find the transcript of the “three-minute breathing exercise”. This only takes 3 minutes (hence the name). You may also use different kinds of meditation here. Transcripts and audio files can be found on the website.

Transcript (for coach)

1. Awareness

“The first thing we do with this practice, because it’s brief and we want to come into the moment quickly, is to take a very definite posture ... relaxed, dignified, back erect, but not stiff, letting our bodies express a sense of being present and awake.”

“Now, closing your eyes, if that feels comfortable for you, the first step is being aware, really aware, of what is going on with you right now. Becoming aware of what is going through your mind; What thoughts are around? Here, again, just note the thoughts as mental events, as thoughts, not as facts.... So we note them, and then we note the feelings that are around at the moment ... in particular, turning toward any sense of discomfort or unpleasant feelings. So rather than try to push them away or shut them out, just acknowledge them, perhaps saying, “Ah, there you are, that’s how it is right now.” And similarly with sensations in the body.... Are there sensations of tension, of holding, or whatever? And again, awareness of them, simply noting them. OK, that’s how it is right now.”

2. Gathering

“So, we’ve got a sense of what is going on right now. We’ve stepped out of automatic pilot. The second step is to collect our awareness by focusing on a single object—the movements of the breath. So now we really gather ourselves, focusing attention down there in the movements of the abdomen, the rise and fall of the breath ... spending a minute or so to focus on the movement of the abdominal wall ... moment by moment, breath by breath, as best we can. So that you know when the breath is moving in, and you know when the breath is moving out. Just binding your awareness to the pattern of movement down there ... gathering yourself, using the anchor of the breath to really be present.”

3. Expanding

“And now as a third step, having gathered ourselves to some extent, we allow our awareness to expand. As well as being aware of the breath, we also include a sense of the body as a whole. So that we get this more spacious awareness.... A sense of the body as a whole, including any tightness or sensations related to holding in the shoulders, neck, back, or face ... following the breath as if your whole body is breathing. Holding it all in this slightly softer ... more spacious awareness. “And then, when you are ready, just allow your eyes to open.”

How was it for your client to do this exercise? What did he/she notice?

Part 4: Introducing Acceptance (willingness to experience difficult emotions and feelings)

- A possible way to introduce acceptance (as opposed to control) is by asking the client not to think about something for 2 minutes. This can be a neutral thought (a white bear) or related to the personal goal (a fearful thought). Probably the client will notice that control can lead to less control.
- Explaining the importance of acceptance and willingness to experience negative emotions can be done using the metaphors presented in appendix 3. When negative thoughts are taken seriously, they may prevent your client from living in line with his/her personal goals and values. They cause your client to stop moving in the desired direction. Some clients spend so much time dealing with negative thoughts and emotions by resisting them, that they lose track of the desired direction. Acceptance means allowing negative thoughts and emotions to be present, experience them fully, but not let them stop you from living the life you want.
- Explaining the difference between avoidance and acceptance can be easily done by usage of the word “but”. An example of avoidance is: “I would love to write a book, **but** I am afraid it will not be good enough”. Acceptance would be: “I would love to write a book, **and** I am afraid it will not be good enough”.

Part 5: closing session & homework

1. Ask your client how he/she wants to continue realising her goals. Preferably ask him/her to list a few concrete actions for this week. My client has planned the following concrete actions for next week:

2. Ask your client to practice mindfulness and acceptance this week. Your client can choose the preferred exercise(s). A sitting meditation, a body scan or the three minute breathing exercise". Inform your client that the exercises can also be used in case of difficult emotions or thoughts (coping). All exercises (also small informal ones) can be found on the website in pdf and/or audio format (mp3).

Information box

A potential danger of positive psychology is to use positivity to neglect or avoid negativity. Trying to think positively because you don't want to experience or acknowledge the negative side is very likely to result in the same paradoxical effects as other avoidance-based strategies. Using mindfulness and acceptance is therefore of crucial importance. Mindfulness requires willingness to stay in contact with both positive *and* negative experiences and is an important pre-requisite for using positive strategies.

A potential trap for the coach is to view the client's behavior change as a requirement for therapy to be considered a "success." When the client's commitment waivers or the client goes back to old avoidance behaviors, the coach begins to pressure the client to get the goals and actions accomplished. The harder the coach pushes on the client, the more resistant the client becomes. At its worst, this process can devolve into mutual confrontation, "resistance" interpretations, and even precipitous termination by the client. It is important for the coach to realize that no matter how carefully the stage is set for the client to choose valued actions, it is a choice only the client can make. Choosing not to go forward with a plan is a legitimate choice, as long as it actually is a choice. The gentlest way to work with a client in such circumstances is to completely validate the client and the dilemma he or she is facing. The coach might say: "If this were my life and I were seeing the consequences you are seeing, I could well imagine myself choosing not to go forward".

Session: 5 - Positive Emotions

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: Discuss the last week

Did your client manage to commit to the actions that were formed during last session? What did he/she notice or experience?

Did your client experience any hindrances or obstacles that prevented him/her from carrying out the desired behaviour?

Did your client practice mindfulness and/or acceptance this week? If so, what were his/her experiences?

Did your client consciously use his strengths this week?

Part 2: Cultivating Positive Emotions

Positive CBT explicitly focuses on cultivating positive emotions like for instance gratitude or joy. Research on positive emotions has repeatedly shown that cultivation of positive emotions broadens people's action repertoire and can help to contribute to a process of positive change. In this session, you will help your client to experience more positive emotions and thereby contribute to the process of change.

A way to experience positive emotions during the session is to do the following practice with your client:

1. *"One of many gratitude practices is to remember the people who have profoundly influenced you in your life. These are the people that had a great positive influence on you: grandparents or parents, teachers, bosses, a spouse, a child, or some iconic person you have never even met. Consider these people, mention their names, and tell me how they contributed to your life."*
2. Ask your client to mention 3 names of people that are or have been very important to him/her. Ask him/her to explain to you why these persons are/were important.
3. Discuss the exercise. How was it to do this exercise? Did your client experience any emotions?

Part 3: Closing session & homework

1. Ask your client how he/she wants to continue realising her goals. Preferably ask him/her to list a few concrete actions for this week. My client has planned the following concrete actions for next week:

2. Let your client choose one or more activities that can be done this week Examples of scientifically tested interventions that have been found to increase positive emotions are:

- practicing gratitude (3 good things)
- mindfulness meditation
- loving kindness Meditation
- practicing kindness
- listening to music (really listening, not using it as background noise)
- spending time in nature

Session: 6 - Evaluation & the Future

Date:

Client: Therapist:

Part 1: Discuss the last week

- Did your client manage to commit to the actions that were formed during last session?
What did he/she notice or experience?

- Did your client practice one of the exercises to increase positive emotions? Which exercise(s) was/were done? What did your client experience?

- Are there any other things your client would like to discuss?

Part 2: Evaluation

Discuss with your client his/her opinion about the intervention and your role as a coach.

1. Does your client notice a difference after these sessions? If so, discuss the nature of this difference.

2. Did your client manage to change his/her behaviour more in line with his values?

3. Did your client manage to use his/her strengths more?

4. What were positive aspects of the intervention and coach?

Intervention: _____

Coach: _____

5. Which aspects can be improved?

Intervention: _____

Coach: _____

Part 3: The future

1. How would your client like to proceed after these sessions? Are there certain commitments that he/she want to make? Perhaps there are actions, exercises or other aspects of the intervention that your client would like to continue doing or develop further in the future.

2. If your client wants to continue in certain way, discuss how he/she want to continue and how your client will make sure that he will stay on track (and stay committed). You may offer suggestions of course.

3. Ask your client to complete the questionnaires that you selected for the second time.

4. Close the session. Thank your client for his/her cooperation, and say good bye.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Differences between traditional therapy and Positive Psychology therapy/coaching.

Traditional therapy

Interventions meant to increase well-being by diminishing that which impedes or destroys human flourishing

Avoidance goals: away from what clients do not want (problems or complaints)

Goals (sometimes) defined by the therapist
Past or present oriented: cause-effect medical model

Analyzing problems is important

Focus on problems and weaknesses

Conversations about what clients do not want: positive reinforcement of “problem-talk”

Clients are (sometimes) seen as incompetent (deficit model)

Therapist gives advice

Therapist is the expert

Positive Psychology coaching

Interventions meant to increase well-being by enhancing that which causes or constitutes human flourishing

Approach goals: towards what clients do want (preferred future, what clients want to have instead of their problems or complaints)

Goals always defined by the client
Future oriented, letting go of cause-effect medical model

Designing positive outcomes and analyzing exceptions is important

Focus on solutions and strengths

Conversations about what clients do want instead of their problems: positive reinforcement of “solutions-talk”

Clients are always seen as competent (strengths and resources model)

Therapist asks questions to elicit clients' expertise

Therapist adopts a stance of “not knowing”; client is co-expert

Traditional therapy

Resources must be acquired, new skills must be learned

Therapists' theory of change

Therapist indicates end of the therapy

Success is defined as the solving of the problem

Higher percentage of depression, burnout, and secondary traumatization among therapists

Positive Psychology coaching

Resources are already present. Clients may want to become better at some skills

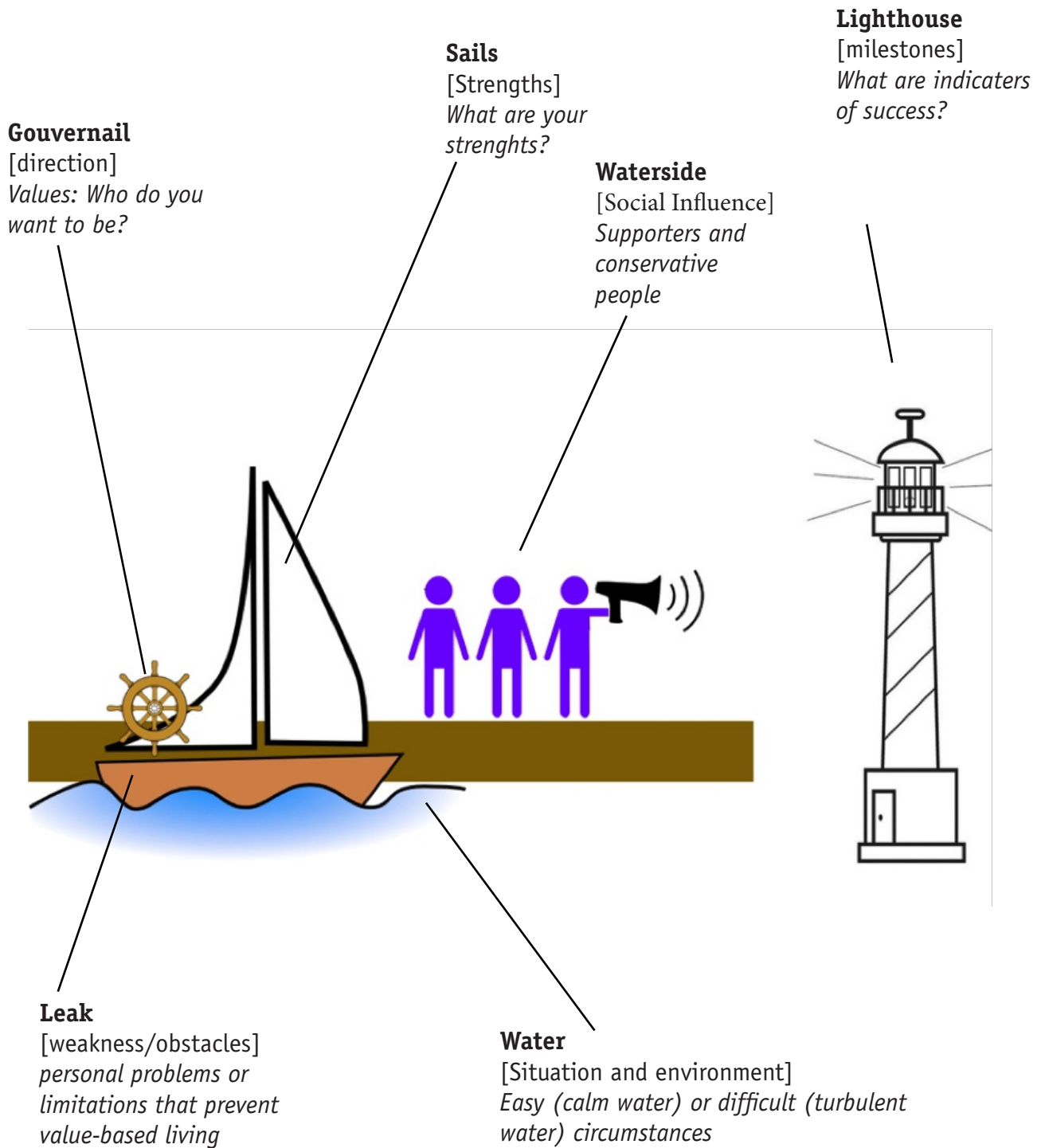
Clients' theory of change; therapist asks: "How will this help you?"

Client indicates end of the therapy

Success is defined as reaching the preferred outcome, which may be different from (or better than) solving the problem

Lower percentage of depression, burnout, and secondary traumatization among therapists

Appendix 2: The Boat Metaphore



(see the next page for detailed description of the metaphor)

The Sailboat metaphor in words

An easy way to explain coaching to a client is by comparing a human being to a sailboat. Most people come to visit a coach or therapist because of a problem. For instance, a client may find it difficult to cope with negative emotions, such as fear. The problem can be compared to a **leak** in the boat. Of course, it is important to fix this leak, or else the boat will sink.

However, even if you stop the leak 100%, your client will still not be able to get anywhere! It is his/her **sails**—the strengths in this case—that actually give your client forward momentum. You need to take care of your leak to prevent yourself from sinking, but you need to hoist your sails to catch a favorable wind and move forward.

However, the main question is: where does your client want to move to? Which direction does your client want to take? The direction of the boat is determined by the **gouvernail** (steering wheel). The direction we want to take in life is determined by our values. Values are the answer to the question: “What do we find important in life?” In other words, the gouvernail reflects the values of your client.

Once the boat of your client is moving (behavioural change), your client may notice that there are people standing on the **waterside**, who have different opinions and reactions. The waterside reflects the social environment of your client. The social environment reacts in different ways as a result of the change of your client. Some people welcome the change in behaviour, whereas other people find it difficult to deal with the new behaviour of your client. It is important for your client to stay true to his/her own values and not let other people determine the course of his/her boat.

No boat moves in isolation from the **water**. The water can be compared to the circumstances in life. Sometimes, the water is calm and steering the boat is easy. In other words, sometimes life is easy; we do not encounter a lot of difficult situations and find it easy to stay on track. Sometimes, however, the water can become very turbulent, making it more difficult to guide the boat in the desired direction. Especially when the going gets tough, it is important for your client to be reminded of her values and use the right techniques to cope with the “difficult water”.

When the boat of your client is moving, it is necessary to be aware of progress. Look out for the **lighthouse**. It is there to inform your client that about her route. During the process of change, your client will experience positive emotions like joy, gratitude, energy, etc.. These emotions signal personal well-being and inform your client, just like the lighthouse, that he/she is on the right track.

Appendix 3: The importance of acceptance



negative thought or emotion (e.g. fear) causing avoidance and preventing client from valued-based living and goal achievement



negative thought or emotion is present but allowed to be there (acceptance). One experiences the negative thought or emotion, but keeps moving in a value-based direction, pursuing personally valuable goals.

Afterword

We hope the tools presented in this manual have inspired your approach as a coach. Resources are rich in information and can easily change the relationship between you and your client, increase your understanding of yourself as a coach, and offers variety in your assessments and activities.

One can never have enough resources under their belt, although most tools are dispersed in different sources. Because of this, we have assembled an expansive collection of positive psychology tools called the “Positive Psychology Practitioner’s Toolkit”, an online database, for your use.

You will never have to look anywhere again for resources by becoming a member. We have the richest and most extensive resources and exercises that you can find anywhere online.

Sign up and register in under 5 minutes to becoming a member of the toolkit
(<http://positivepsychologyprogram.com/signup.html>)

We hope to see you in the members area!