

Positivity, motivation and empowerment in the workplace: from crisis to leadership of self

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+ Stress

- Signs of stress
- Stress in the higher education sector
- Stress on a spectrum
- My 'crisis' – looking back on it now

+ Can we regain lost motivation and positivity?

- Yes – but it takes a lot of **time** and **work**
- Having something that anchors you is important
- Need to develop positivity, resilience, emotional intelligence
- Need to develop ways in which to cope with your stress, reflect and look at your life and work, seek support, and work towards cultivating positivity, hope and motivation

+ Positive psychology

- What is positive psychology?
- 5 reasons I like it
 - Forward looking and motivating
 - Practical and applied
 - Free – or cheap
 - Easy to implement in our busy lives
 - Highly effective - it works

+ Positive psychology in our workplace

- 3 critical facets of a motivating work environment
 - The belief you can make a difference
 - The belief in your own value
 - Your sense of belonging
- Connecting the dots – you, your work, your life



+ Positivity

- What is positivity?
- Why work on increasing our positivity?
- Positivity and happiness lead to success in the workplace – difficult to achieve if you're going through crisis or challenging times, but there are practical strategies that you can do to increase positivity at work, to help yourself and your colleagues

+ Effects of positivity on our psychological state



+ Effects of positivity on physical health

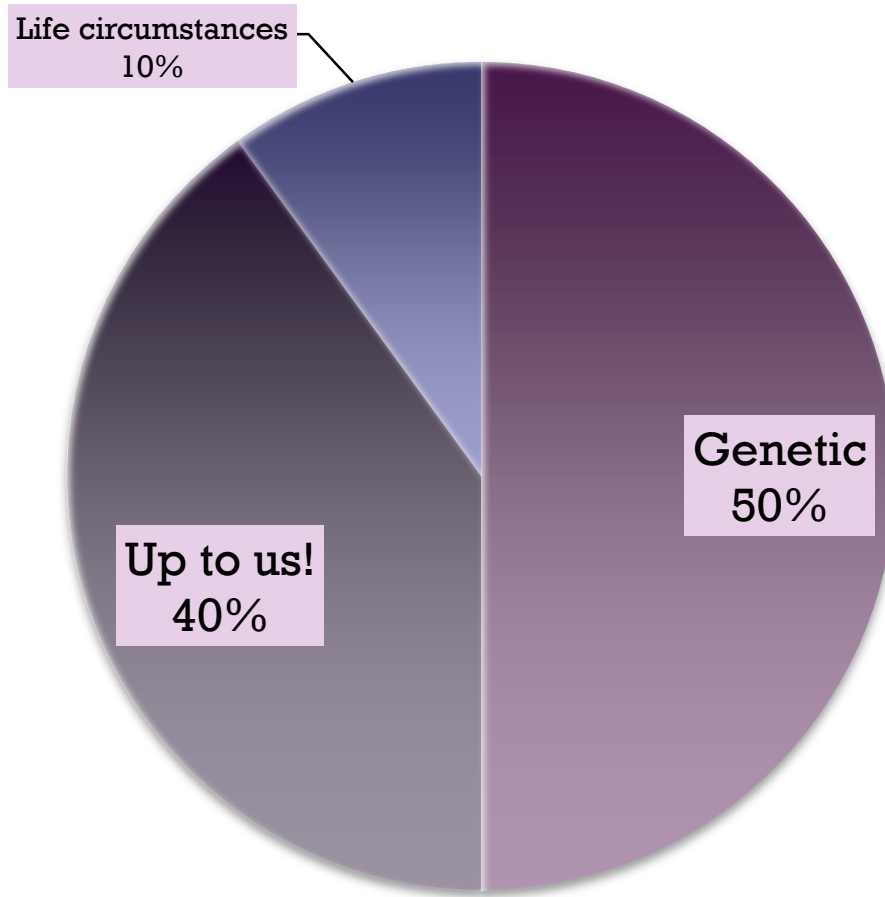




What can positive people do?

- They are:
 - More mindful of others and of situations
 - Take in more information
 - Make better decisions
 - Are more open minded and creative
 - Work more quickly, as they're motivated to achieve
 - At work more and are more productive when they're there
 - More proactive
 - Work with others better, leading to stronger relationships

+ Positivity aetiology



+ Three dimensions of positivity in the workplace



+ Positive thinking

- This has a powerful effect on our behaviour, emotions and abilities. We cannot always control what happens to us but we can control to some extent how we think about it.



+ Strategies to promote positive thinking

- Positive focus
- Optimism
- Gratitude
- Forgiveness

+ Positive psychology - critique

- You can't 'fix' things – yourself, your life, your motivation – just by thinking positively about it, that's nonsense
- It's extremely difficult to think positively when you're in crisis and to focus on implementing things
- That it puts the onus of 'getting well', recovery etc onto the individual and ignores contextual factors
- Critical about the 'wellness' movement – positive psychology is different to this but it might get swept up with it and not given its full due

+ Positive relationships

- We need to have close, trusting relationships in order to be happy – they're absolutely vital for our wellbeing.



+ Strategies to develop positive relationships

- Respect and appreciation
- Recognition
- Trust
- Generosity

+ Meaning

- Thinking around our work not just being a job that pays the bills but a role that makes a difference – often in our case to students and to academics.
- The actual work that you do doesn't matter, it's whether you feel as though your work is important and meaningful because it benefits others in some way.
- This allows us to be passionate about what we do and genuinely want to do the work – it's about recognising the value of the work that we do, for ourselves.

+ Strategies to (re)discover meaning

- Mission
- Impact
- Social responsibility



Motivation

- Theories of motivation at work
 - Needs based
 - Values based
- Motivation often dips around restructures or other changes, something our sector goes through regularly
 - We feel stressed, out of control, insecure, unstable, disconnected from our roles, unappreciated etc

+ Resilience

- Resilient people:
 - Bounce back from setbacks / crises / adversity more easily
 - Problem solve instead of staying within the problem
 - Have a more developed sense of self, often more self-confidence, tend to be more flexible and resourceful
 - Have more psychological resources that they can draw from when they experience transition – in and out of a job, relationship, promotion, restructure etc
 - Cope better

+ Resilience cont.

- Resilience and adversity
- Developing your resilience
 - Cultivate a positive thinking practice in which you consciously recognise when you have negative thoughts and deliberately flip it into a positive one
 - During adversity you will have a stock of resilience from which to draw, which will lessen the adversity-related stress you experience

+ Happiness

- Why discuss happiness?
 - Positive psychology is centrally concerned with happiness and there is a lot of research investigating this topic.
 - There is a close association with kindness and happiness in every day life
 - It is possible to be active in your happiness – to cultivate it



Gratitude

- Why is gratitude important?
- Linked to compassion
- Pulls you out of cycles of negativity you may be stuck in
- Helps you focus on what you do have rather than what you don't
- Cultivates thinking around yourself more broadly, thinking through what impact and contribution can you make in your work

+ Kindness

- Impossible for me during my adversity but something that was important for me prior and is now important for me again
- Cultivating a kindness practice: ask, how can I be kinder here?
- Counting kindnesses exercises: count them for a day, or for a week – being aware of the times where you're kind will make you kinder! (and happier

+ Specific strategies that work



+ 1. Thinking and reflecting



+ 2. Forgive yourself



+ 3. Seek support



+ 4. Volunteer (or similar)



+ 5. Rehearse scenarios



+ 6. Recognise the signs of stress



+ 7. Laugh or Cry club (LoC)



+ 8. When in doubt, write it out



+ 9. Go back to basics



+ 10. Sleep



+ 11. Get physical



+ 12. Meditation



+ Self-leadership and empowerment

- Self-leadership is a combination of self-direction and self-motivation that allows you to be able to achieve your personal and organisational goals (Lovelace et al., 2007).
- Practicing self-leadership, and encouraging it in others, is instrumental in creating a positive and dynamic work environment
- The notion of 'the self as a narrative project'



Final thoughts

- It is possible to change much of how we are in the way we think about ourselves – our behaviour stems from our attitude. Positive psychology offers tools for us to do this
- When we go through difficult times and adversity, we can learn important and profound things about ourselves that we would never see in regular times
- Change is the constant, rather than stability – once I accepted this, it allowed me to feel stressed less often
- Myself as a ‘narrative project’

+ Thank you

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