



LVS CONSULTING

Positive Psychology – what does it mean for coaching?

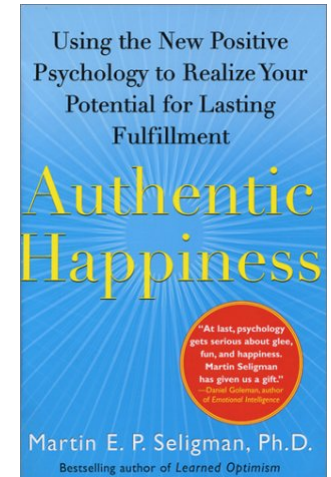
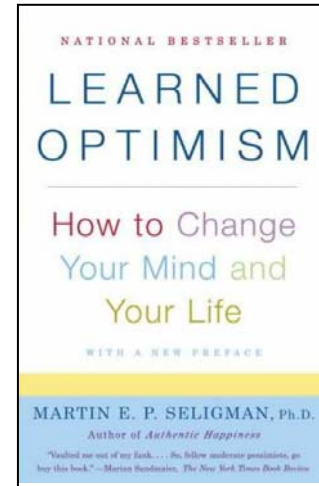
ICF-GTA Coaches

Fall Conference 2009

Lisa Sansom, LVS Consulting

A brief history of Positive Psychology

- Dr. Martin Seligman
- Learned Helplessness
- Optimism
 - Explanatory style
- IPPA
 - International Positive Psychology Association
 - Next World Congress in England, summer 2010
- MAPP
 - Masters in Applied Positive Psychology, U Penn



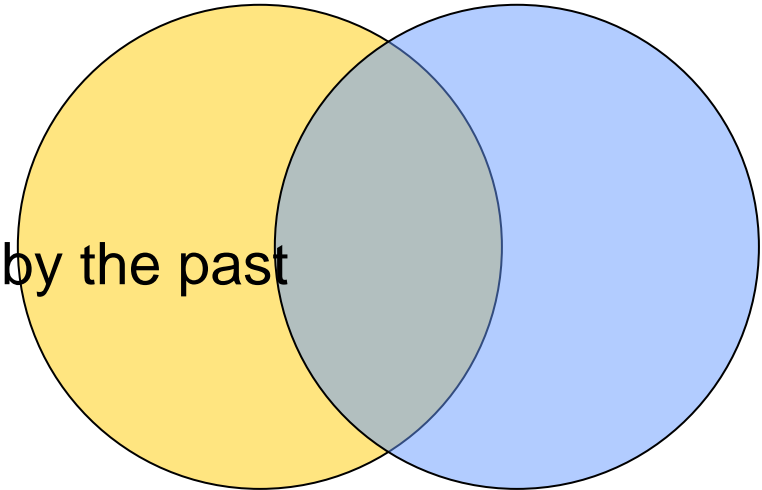
Positive Psychology

- Study of people at their best
- Science of what makes life worth living
- Flourishing
 - 51% by 2051
- Umbrella term for researchers
 - Psychologists
 - Neuroscientists
 - Funding attraction
- No claims to have invented the field



Overlaps and differences

- Client is whole
- Future-oriented
 - Pulled by future, not pushed by the past
- Strengths-based
- “Happiness”
 - Subjective well-being (SWB), flourishing
 - Fulfilment, meaning, contributions
- Broad applications
 - Personal, professional, organizational, relationships, cultural
- Real-world applications



One key difference

- Positive Psychology
 - Scientific
 - Research-based
 - ICF research portal = 7 articles
 - Empirical studies
 - ICF research portal = 4 case studies



New model of SWB

- Authentic Happiness = 3 pillars
 - Emotion, engagement, meaning
- New Seligman book (tentative title: Search for Well-Being) = 4 pillars
 - Positive emotion (includes engagement, aka “flow”)
 - Meaning
 - Positive Relationships
 - Positive Accomplishment
- Other considerations:
 - Positive organizations (education, military, politics)
 - Positive health (more than the absence of illness)



Why be “happy”?

- Happy people (high in SWB)
 - Live longer
 - Live healthier (fewer colds and other illnesses)
 - Faster recovery when sick
 - More friends (causal?)
 - Higher pay at work and more promotions
 - Better satisfaction with work
 - Higher quality relationships
 - Overcome challenges more easily
 - And other important findings...
- Happiness is a process, not an end goal



Positive Emotion (First pillar)

- PANAS scale
 - Positive Affect Negative Affect scale / schedule
 - Watson, Clark & Tellegen 1988
- Measures positive and negative emotion separately



Sample PANAS questions

- Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now (1-5 scale):

Interested

Distressed

Excited

Upset

Strong

Guilty

Scared

Hostile

Enthusiastic

Proud

Irritable

Alert

Ashamed

Inspired

Nervous

Determined

Attentive

Jittery

Active

Afraid



PANAS findings and implications

- Positive Affect (PA) is not simply the absence of Negative Affect (NA)
- PA seems to be consistent for an individual across time and situation
 - More variable for some individuals than others, but this variability is also consistent
- People high in PA more likely to be married (and happily so) and to like their jobs
 - Chicken and egg issue
- People who describe themselves as religious or spiritual higher on PA

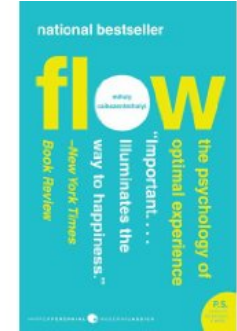


Genetics of happiness?

- According to twin studies, PA is heritable – influenced by genetics – but less so than intelligence
 - About 50% of your PA is heritable
 - But does not mean inevitable as genetic expressions can be changed
 - 10% is situational
 - 40% is entirely within your choice / control
 - This is what coaches are predominantly working with
 - Maybe reframing of situational too?



Flow / engagement

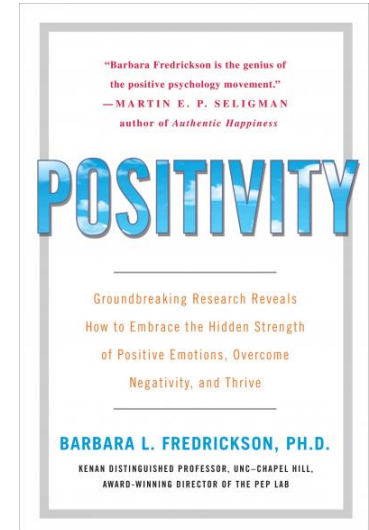


- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- Flow = experience of working at full capacity
- Optimal balance between skill and challenge
 - Creativity
- Activities perceived as voluntary
- Distinguished from “junk flow”
- Coaching: teach people how to rise to the occasion and meet challenges
 - Otherwise depressed people who manage to keep busy in meaningful ways are not troubled by their symptoms while engaged



Positivity Ratio 3:1

- Barbara Fredrickson
- Work with Marcial Losada
- Broaden & Build theory
 - Not specific-action tendencies
 - Positive emotions signal safety
 - Future-oriented
 - Encourage learning, openness
 - Undo the effects of negative emotions
- 3:1 for flourishing
 - John Gottman: 5:1 in close relationships



Meaning (2nd pillar)

- Coaching – meaning-making
- Post-traumatic growth (PTG not PTSD)
 - 85% know PTSD – studies show that knowing about it makes it more likely to occur
 - Yet PTG is a more common outcome
- Strengths of belief, spirituality
- Meaning in life questionnaire
 - I understand my life's meaning.
 - I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.



Opportunities for coaching on meaning

- Values
- Strengths
 - VIA vs. Gallup
- Increasing the perceived meaningfulness of an activity
 - Increases internalization / intrinsic motivation
 - Increases task curiosity
 - Increases autonomy
- More on this in accomplishment pillar



Findings on Meaning

■ Church-goers

- ❑ Healthier
- ❑ More forgiving
- ❑ Less drugs, crime
- ❑ More education, more money, live longer

■ Active ingredients:

- ❑ Comforting beliefs / ritual
- ❑ Social support (confounding!)
- ❑ Connecting to something permanent, important, larger than yourself

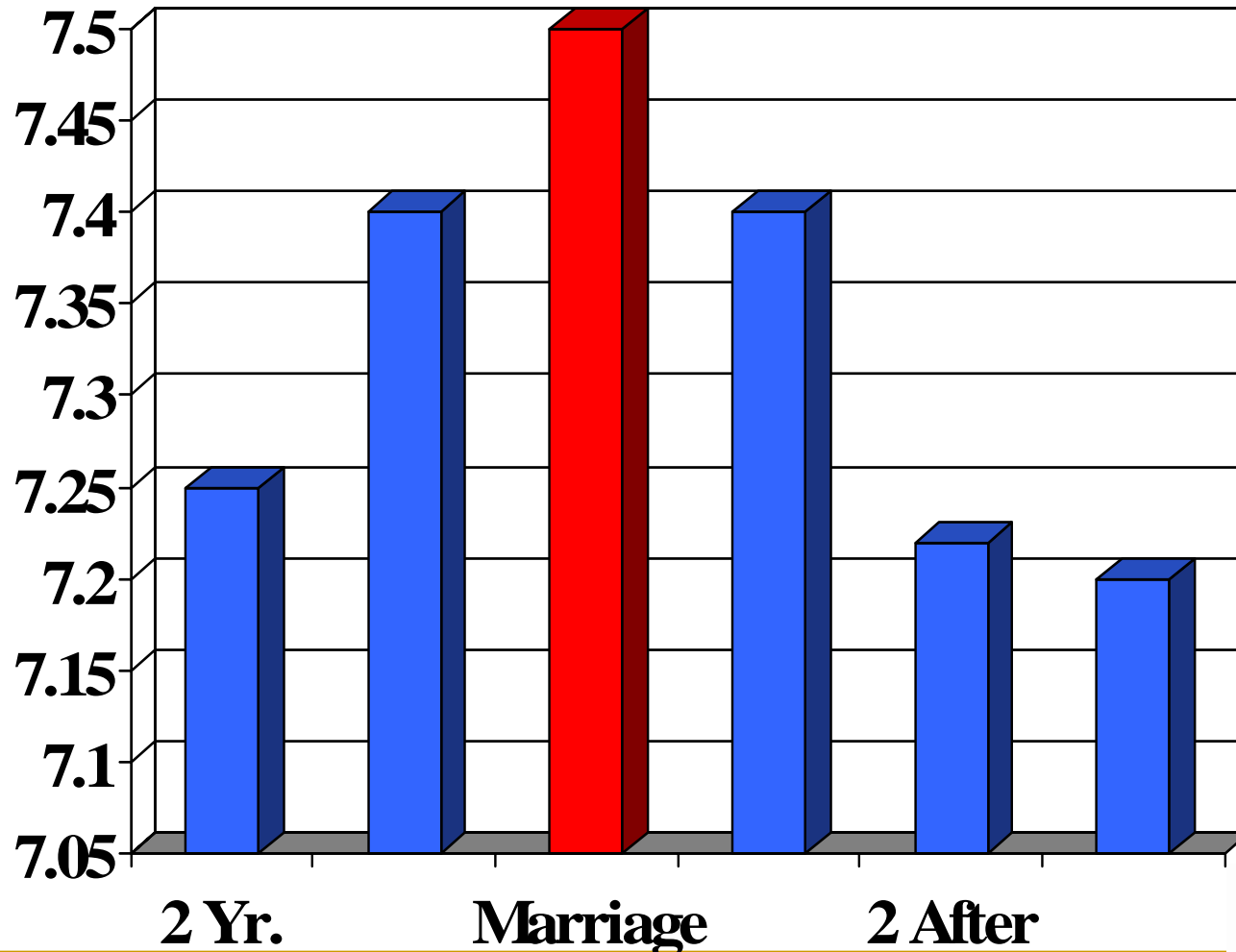


Positive Relationships (3rd pillar)

- Happy people have more friends, more likely to be married, have happier relationships
 - But which way does this go?
 - Can't just "give you more friends" to find out
- You can't do without social relationships
- Satisfaction with marriage spikes, and then returns to baseline
- When spouse dies, widows exhibit steep decline in life satisfaction and only slowly recover (5-7 yrs)



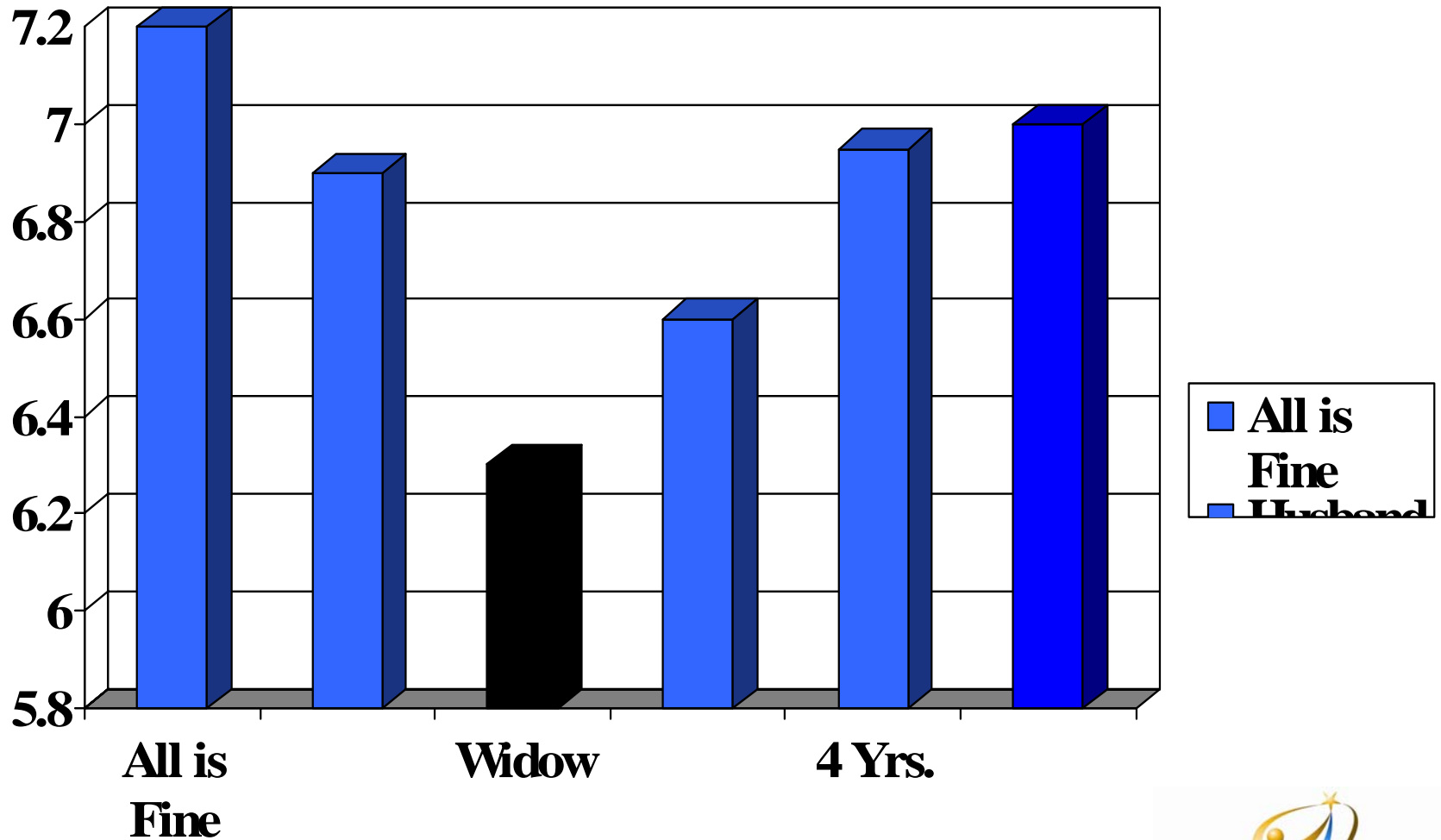
Adaptation to Marriage



Before



Slow Adaptation to Widowhood



Experience Sampling Method (ESM)

- Pager going off at random times of waking hours
- Introverts / Extroverts – how happy are you now? (1-6)
 - Alone?
 - With people?

	Introverts	Extroverts
Social		
Alone		



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	Introverts	Extroverts
Social	2.4	2.9
Alone		



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	Introverts	Extroverts
Social	2.4	2.9
Alone	1.5	2.1



Positive Accomplishment (4th)

- Newest addition to Pos Psych
 - Contentious
- Achievement, accomplishing goals
 - Goal theory (Locke & Latham)
 - Self-efficacy (Bandura)
 - Grit / perseverance (Duckworth)



Grit (determination / perseverance)

- Grit scale (Duckworth)
- Among college students:
 - Higher GPAs, SATs
- In military:
 - Greater retention over first summer of training (Beast Barracks at West Point)
- In Spelling Bee:
 - Predicted number of hours of study
 - Predicted advancement to final rounds
- In another study (Duckworth) – self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents



Future directions

- Positive health
 - WHO – health is more than absence of illness
- Public Policy
 - Bhutan – Happiness Index
 - France – Nobel economists advising
 - World Index of Happiness – Ruut Veenhoven
- Positive Organizations
 - US Military – comprehensive soldier fitness
 - Physical, spiritual (meaning & purpose), family, psychological (resilience), social
 - Links to employee engagement
 - Positive education (Geelong, charter schools, etc)

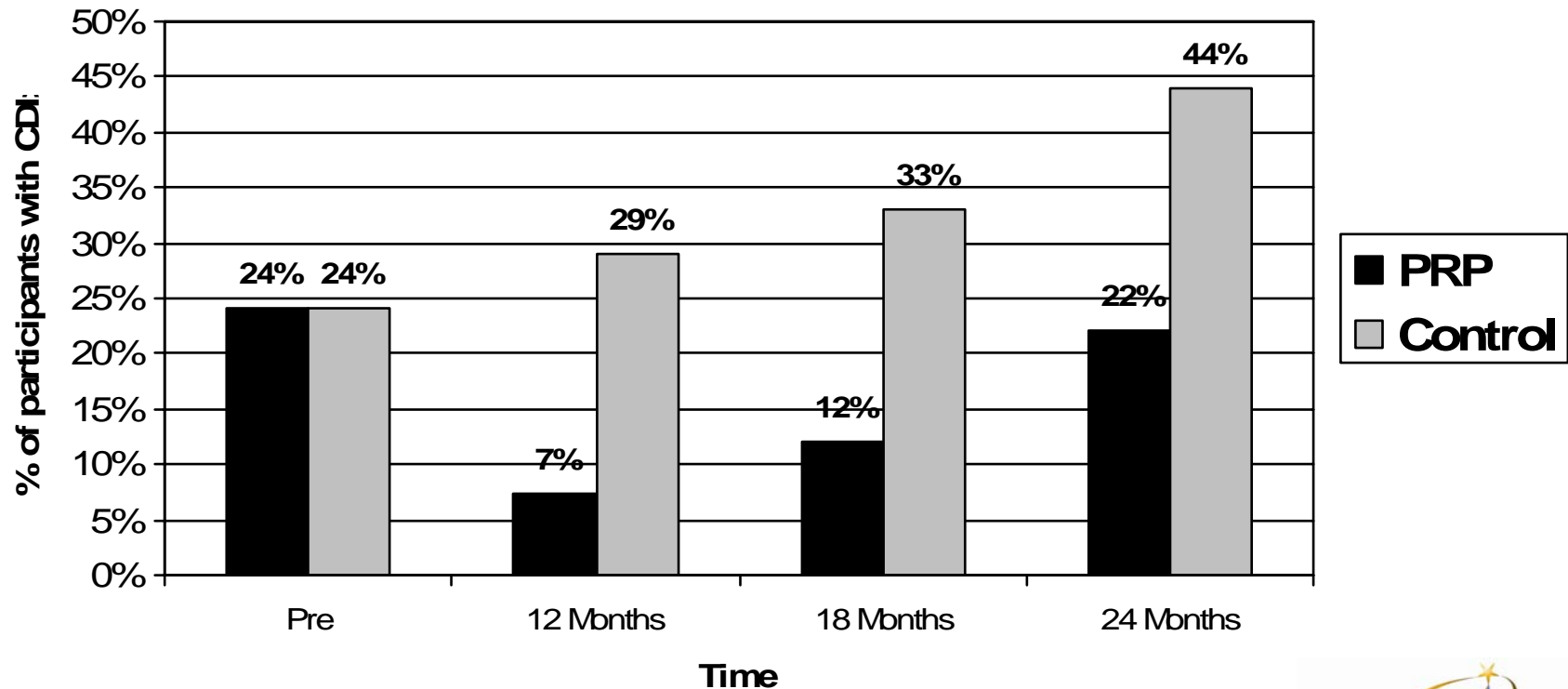
Future directions

- Evaluating and individualizing positive interventions



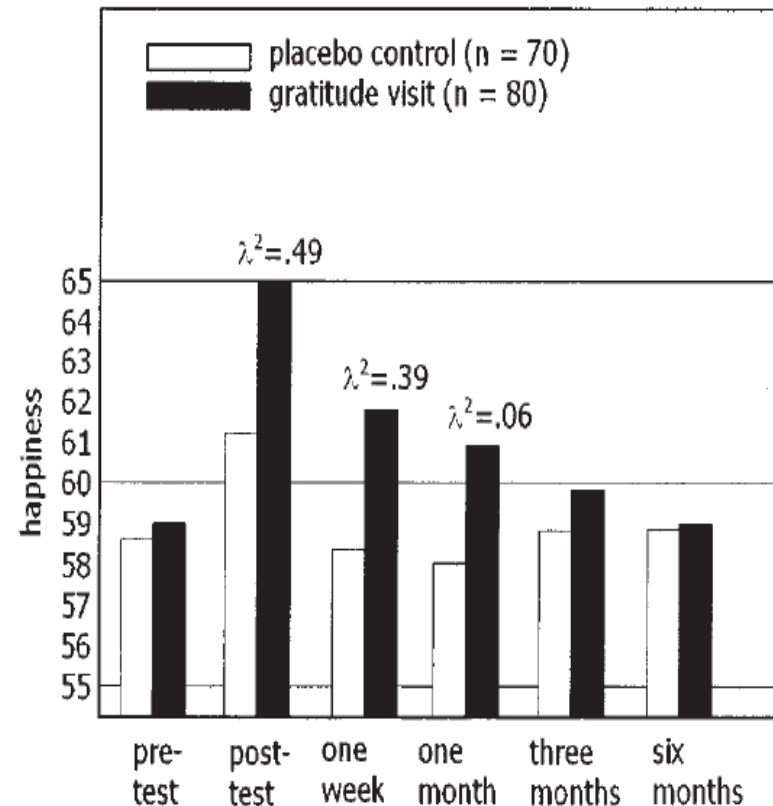
Penn Resiliency Program with school-aged children (8-15 yo)

Prevention of moderate to severe depressive symptoms (% of participants with $CDI \geq 15$) (From Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, & Seligman, 1995).

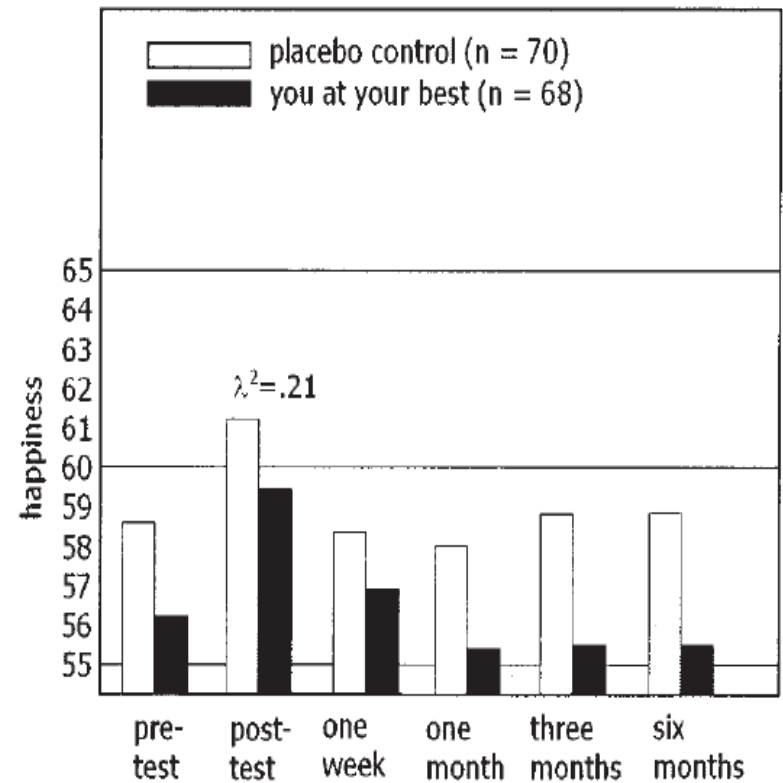
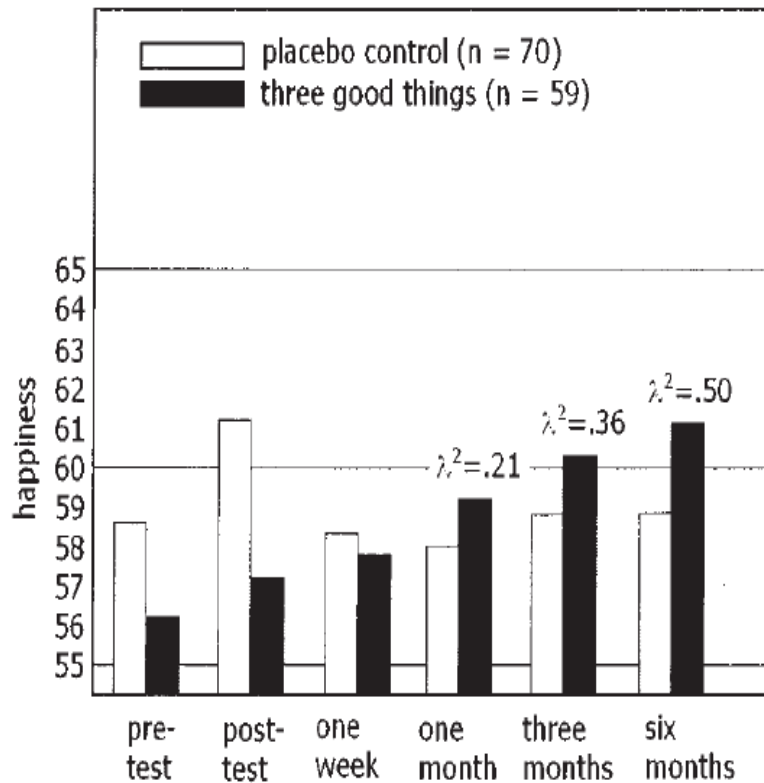


Validating positive interventions (Seligman, Steen, Park, Peterson)

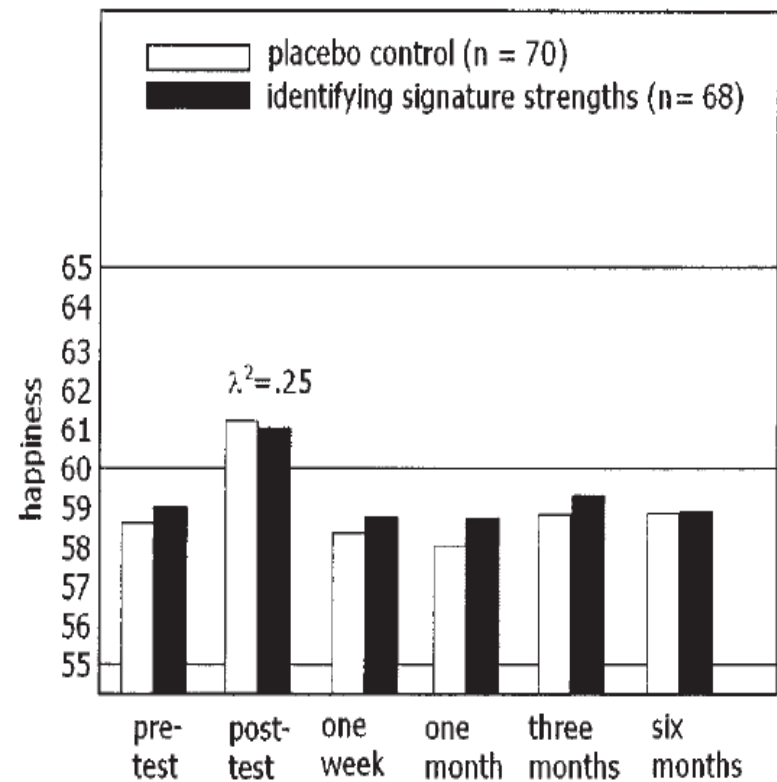
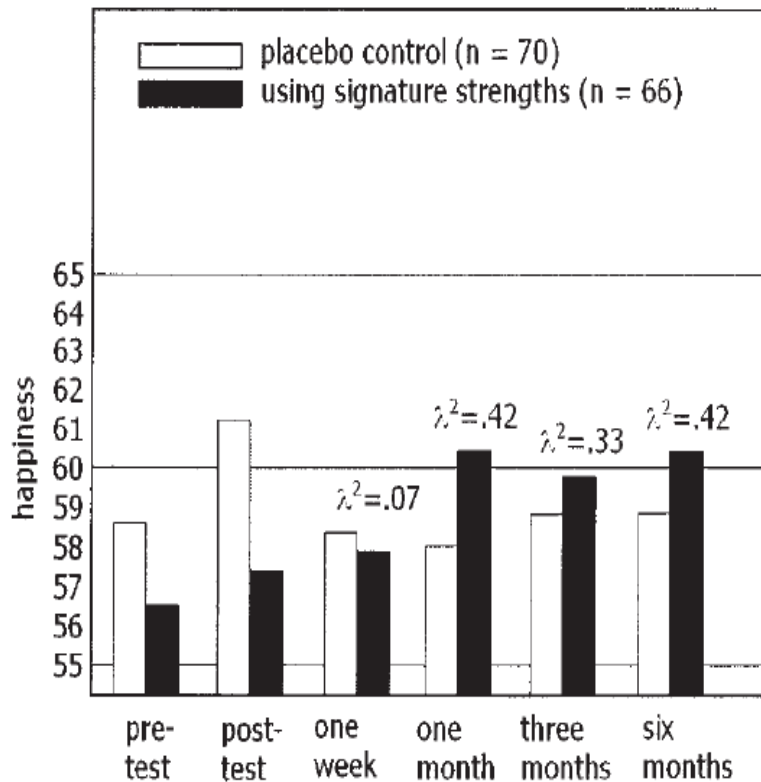
- Five different positive interventions:
 - Gratitude visit
 - Three good things
 - You at your best
 - Using signature strengths
 - Identifying signature strengths
- One week



Validating positive interventions (Seligman, Steen, Park, Peterson)



Validating positive interventions (Seligman, Steen, Park, Peterson)



Resources – books

- *Authentic Happiness* – Seligman
- *Learned Optimism* – Seligman
- *Positivity* – Fredrickson
- *A Primer in Positive Psychology* – Peterson
- *Happiness* – Diener & Biswas-Diener
 - Practically anything by Ed Diener
- *Spark* – Ratey (positive health)
- *The How of Happiness* – Lyubomirsky
- *The Happiness Hypothesis* – Haidt
- *Spiritual Evolution* – Vaillant
 - Harvard Study, another book: *Aging Well*



Resources – web

- www.authentichappiness.org – Seligman
 - Lots of assessments – all free
- www.ippanetwork.org – IPPA
 - International Positive Psychology Association
 - Membership \$30-\$90 US based on level
- <http://positivepsychologynews.com> – PPND
 - Free daily newsletter – written by MAPP alum
- www.lvsconsulting.com
 - My own irregular blog – follow my MAPP

