

Three Good Things Exercise

The Three Good Things technique is focussed on teaching the brain to examine and expand positive events that happen to every individual every day. The exercise is designed to counter the brain's negative bias, where we notice negative things more than positive things. By resolving only negative issues that happen to us we get back to a level of well-being that is fairly neutral functioning. The philosophy behind Positive Psychology is to go beyond the neutral point and create higher levels of well-being and thus resilience to negativity, stress, depression and anxiety.

In reality the brains negative bias means our neurology experiences more negative stress related hormones than it needs to.

Dr Barbara Fredrickson has studied well-being for 25 years and is the noted founder of the Broaden and Build theory. Her longitudinal research shows that if people experience 3:1 positive to negative emotions they flourish in life. That is to improve well-being we humans benefit from learning to broaden the positive events and build on them. That means; less stress, more productivity more health across the board. In fact, she found that people who learn to experience the 3:1 ratio live 8-10 years longer than those with a 1:1 ratio. Creating this level of well being in the workplace reduces absenteeism, improves productivity reduces stress and conflict, increases retainment and engagement.

Dr James Pennebaker has focussed his research in the effect of expressive writing, and found that people who write about their day using more positive emotion words report greater well being, better sleep and greater resilience to life across the board.

What does all this research suggest we do then?

Three Good Things

The three good things activity is well supported through neurological evidence and that at any age you can build new neural pathways through repetition. Consistent deployment either verbally or in written form of expression of your good events each day will eventually lead to a habit of broadening and building increased well being and flourishing. This is not about being happier, positive psychology is more about resilience and well being than fleeting happiness.

How Do I do the activity?

Reflect on your day, and identify three good things that happened to you.

1)

2)

3)

Broaden and Build

For each one you need to broaden and expand it to teach the brain how to release neural chemicals that build well being and create positive feeling. The chemicals are called serotonin, oxytocins, dopamine, these are all feel good chemicals. These chemicals counter the effect of stress hormones particularly the endocrines that effect body and neurology, such as cortisol .

The broad and build technique can completed by answering a few simple questions about each good thing.

Lets look at an example

Good Thing One: Got the express train home.

How did this good thing happen?

Just arrived at the platform at the right time after an excellent impromptu chat with a client, and arrived with time to get a drink.

What strengths did you deploy to contribute to the good thing happening?

I didn't stress about the train timetable so my ability to relax about the trains and just accept what is allowed me to arrive at the train station without expectation. Also deciding not to drive to the city today allowed me to take a break from the traffic snarls and be taken by train. It allowed me to type the first draft of this worksheet. Strengths used include mindfulness, planning, acceptance, decision making.

What does it mean to you?

To get time and space to create worksheets between coaching and workshops is just exceptional. I feel like I am building my career and body of work when I get a chance to download my take on Positive Psychology. Getting the direct express train means I also get home much quicker than driving and having achieved something with the time. Being home quicker means I get more relaxed time with my family, time to go out for dinner with my wife and see a movie.!!

How does it help you in the future?

It helps me by creating product and templates that ultimately helps others improve their well being. It helps me by crating more valuable connection time with my wife and free time to talk.

This example though very simple broadens and builds on what would seem a simple event. It shows how a simple event can be built upon to create real positivity.

Imagine if you just missed the express train and got the delayed stopping all stations train, I would bet many of us would grumble and experience cortisol!!

I suggest get a notebook and practice expanding the positive each day using the below technique.

Good Thing Event 1) _____

Your answers to these questions can be short.

1. How did this good thing happen?
2. What strengths did you deploy to contribute to the good thing happening?
3. What does it mean to you?
4. How does it help you in the future?