

Positive Past Experiences.

Goal:

- To support the development of positive emotions
- To illustrate the power of positive reflection
- To help identify personal strengths

Area:

- Well-Being

Keywords:

- Well-being, resilience, strengths

Skills Developed:

- Personal reflection, Story telling

Time Needed:

- 10 minutes to 30 minutes

**Materials/Props
Needed:**

- None required

Best For:

- Personal Development (self-help), Group Work

Overview:

Research is clear in showing that positive emotions have important restorative powers. When people experience positive emotions they tend to also report feeling enthusiastic, active and alert. High positive emotion is also linked to states of high energy, full concentration and pleasurable engagement. Research is also clear in demonstrating that positive emotions can help to broaden and build our repertoire of skills and responses to situations. Positivity serves to broadens one's spectrum of problem-solving skills, adaptive mechanisms and thought-action repertoires while building inventories and buffers of intellectual, physical, social and, most importantly, psychological resources such as optimism, resilience, and goal orientation (critical for the hope capacity). This in turn can lead to upward spirals of performance, adaptation, and well-being, even when hardships are encountered. It should be noted that this is not to deny negative emotions, as we need negative emotions to protect us and to help us focus at specific points in time. The key message is that negative emotions serve to drain our resources and positive emotions can help to reinstate and recharge our resources and reserves.



Advice:

- Follow the steps listed on the following pages. Remember there are no right or wrong answers here. What is important is that you take time to reflect.
- Once you have gone through the process of identifying positive experiences and have answered some questions about one or more experience, privately review or retell your story to someone. As you review or retell, consider some of the following questions:
 - How did it feel to recall and reflect on past positive experiences?
 - What does this tell you about some of your personal strengths?
 - If you discovered or confirmed a particular strength of yours, consider how you can make more use of this strength on a daily basis.
 - Did you discover something new about yourself?
 - Can you make use of this process with others?
 - Try and revisit your results from the Positive Past Experiences (PPE) exercise at least once a month.
 - Consider rerunning the PPE exercise at least once every 6 months to maintain positive energy.

References:

- Fredrickson, B. (2004). The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1367-1377.



Positive Past Experiences.

Your past experiences are small stepping stones and indicators to who you are today. Focus on the things you feel you have done well or enjoyed, a challenge you have mastered, or a contribution you are proud of. They may relate to family, work, school or leisure activities.

- A. List ten pleasurable experiences and/or achievements. An achievement is something you feel you have done well. Use action verbs wherever possible (e.g. designed, persuaded, organised, published, etc.)

1.

6.

2.

7.

3.

8.

4.

9.

5.

10.

- B. Circle five of your most favourite experiences. Now answer the following questions about each.

- i. What were you doing?
- ii. What talents/skills did you use?
- iii. What challenges and/or obstacles did you overcome?
- iv. What did you enjoy most about this experience?



