

HARNESSING STRENGTHS DURING CHALLENGING TIMES PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR STAFF

Setting the context:

Psychology since World War II has been largely devoted to repairing weakness and understanding suffering. Towards that end, considerable gains have been made. A model of classification of mental illness that allows international collaboration has been developed, and through this collaboration effective psychotherapeutic or pharmacological treatments have been developed for 14 major mental disorders. However, while building a strong science and practice of treating mental illness, psychology has largely forgotten about everyday well-being. Through its obsession with illness, science can be charged with neglecting wellness.

In recent decades psychology has experienced a shift in its emphasis and approach. A growing number of psychologists have come to realise that research into what is wrong with people has potentially been conducted at the expense of understanding what is right in people too. What makes people flourish as contented and fulfilled human beings is as much relevant as what makes people fail to reach their true potential. As well as designing interventions to help people *recover* there is a need to devote the same resources to helping people become more resilient. Thankfully, in recent years a new field of psychology that addresses this imbalance has emerged. This psychology called Positive Psychology is capturing the imagination of the world.

Positive Psychology investigates positive emotion and human strengths. It is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions. Applying the same rigorous research methodology to the investigation of all things positive, will offer benefits to us all. This new psychology seeks to be more *proactive* rather than reactive. Psychology has started to learn about protective factors (optimism, hope, and resilience) that may buffer individuals against adversity and challenge will be taught.

Both sessions will be firmly based on the principles of positive psychology. The programme will not be diagnostic or prescriptive. It does not seek to identify problems or offer solutions. It does not seek to understand, digest or evaluate system weakness, policy shifts, new protocols and/or procedures! In fact, it does not deal with the 'specifics' at all. The programme will potentially be a unique journey for each participant where he or she will learn what science has to say about becoming healthier, happier, resilient, rational and compassionate. It is a direct investment in the health and happiness of staff during these very challenging times. The objective is to introduce the new psychology and offer protective pathways for health and well-being and strategies for greater life and work satisfaction.

SESSION 1: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOUNCIBILITY – How to build resilience within ourselves

Methodology: Informal lectures, a number of reflective written exercises, group discussion

Life is an imperfect journey and crisis is guaranteed. There will always be setbacks and misfortunes. Resilience is the ability to adapt to the challenges of life. It's about bouncing back rather than falling apart. If you are strong in resilience you have this 'bouncibility' and can harness your inner strengths and coping mechanisms. Resilience is an essential life skill! Some people are very fortunate and have high levels of resilience. Others need to learn the skills at the heart of resiliency. If life is full of challenges then we need to know how to not only withstand the pressure but to thrive in adversity. Through ongoing cutbacks and changes the intensity of ever increasing challenges is very real. More challenges may lie ahead.

If you are low in resilience, you will focus too much on your problems and deficits and be overwhelmed during challenges. You will be drawn towards unhealthy conclusions and become more vulnerable instead of stronger. Resilience is about learning how to cope – tapping into our own resources and fostering more strengths in order to stay 'standing' during and after crisis. You can learn to be more resilient. Science has uncovered specific traits/factors that can be utilised at work and in our lives in general.

This seminar will explore the science of resilience and highlight evidence-based strategies linked to better outcomes during changes and challenges.

“More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That's true in the cancer ward, it's true in the Olympics, and it's true in the boardroom.”

Dean Becker, Harvard Business Review

Outline of content:

- What is resilience?
- Origins of research in resilience
- Factors underlining high resilience levels
- The Seven Learnable Skills of Resilience
- Other resilience models
- Tips from survivors, strategies for ourselves

SESSION 2: HEALTH AND HAPPINESS: How to refresh your life

Methodology: Informal lecture, reflective exercises, group discussion

Over many decades science has made a wonderful contribution in helping us understand negative emotion. The emphasis on deficits, disorders and disease has allowed for effective interventions to be developed in order to help and support people who are unwell or unhappy.

But why wait until we are unwell to learn about becoming healthier? Why wait until we are unhappy to explore happiness?

In recent decades research teams have started to examine positive emotion. This research has focused on what makes people happier, what gives them more meaning and purpose in life and what measures that they can take to lead them healthier. It will outline ten evidence-based strategies linked to embracing a better quality of life. The hope is that it will uplift and inspire change in the lives of those who attend but even more importantly inspire participants to incorporate it into their homes, workplaces and communities.

The seminar will not intrude on anyone's privacy. There will be some discussion/exercises but no one will feel under pressure to talk about personal matters.

Outline of content:

Addressing the negative bias

Asking the right questions

What matters most about this life?

Changing this day

Having the life you want

Ten evidence-based strategies that dramatically enhance the quality of our lives

“Well-being cannot exist just in your head. Well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships and accomplishments in your life.” Martin Seligman

THE FACILITATOR: Shane Martin Reg.Psychol., Ps.S.I.

Shane Martin is a psychologist dedicated to teaching the very best self-help psychology to empower people to enhance the quality of their lives. His 'Moodwatchers' self-help psychology course has been delivered at community venues throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. He has been a keynote speaker at numerous national and international conferences on a range of topics around empowerment, recovery and happiness.

He is a leading psychologist within the area of education having visited hundreds of educational institutions nationwide working with management teams, teachers/lecturers, students and parents promoting a psychology of health, happiness and resilience.

He lectures part-time in DCU and has provided training to many of Ireland's leading business organisations within the public and private sector. He has delivered training to mental health teams and multi-disciplinary teams attached to hospitals and hospices.

Shane is a published poet of two collections - *The Dark Room* and *Stilling the Dance of Time*. He is currently working on his third collection entitled *Thin Lines*. His first self-help psychology book entitled *'Your Precious Life - How to Live it Well'* is due to be published 2015. More information available on www.moodwatchers.com

- **Either session can be delivered as a morning or afternoon session.**
- **Companies can also have both sessions delivered as a whole-day event.**
- **For more information regarding fees etc please contact me directly – contact details below.**

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