

JOURNALING AND ITS EFFECT ON POSITIVE THINKING AMONG STUDENT TEACHERS

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Abstract

Positive thinking plays an important role in positive psychology, a subfield devoted to the study of what makes people happy and fulfilled. Research has found that positive thinking can aid in stress management and even plays an important role in the overall health and well-being. The present study emphatically proves the importance of journaling in developing positive attitude and positive thinking which is an important goal of education for healthy citizenship. In order to see the results of journaling activity in developing positive thinking among prospective teachers, an experimental study was undertaken on the student teachers of SreeNarayana Training College, Nedunganda by using the single group pre and post test research design. As a preliminary step, 140 student teachers from two batches were selected who were less inclined to positive thinking in different contexts through a positive thinking test. Seventy students were selected for experimentation and the rest was treated as control group. The experimental group was directed to report their daily experiences by highlighting the positive aspects and keeping a gratitude journal. Reports were weekly monitored and proper guidance was given to the process of reflecting their experiences. The activity continued for a period of two months to the experimental group and tested the positive thinking skills of both the experimental and the control group. The tool used for journaling is gratitude journaling worksheet and positive experience worksheet in addition to the reflective reports of student teachers. The results showed that after implementing journaling activity, positive thinking among student teachers had increased considerably.

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INTRODUCTION

Positive thinking actually means approaching life's challenges with a positive outlook. It does not necessarily mean avoiding or ignoring the bad things; instead, it involves making the most of potentially bad situations, see the best in other people, and viewing one's abilities in a positive light. Some researchers, including positive psychologist Martin Seligman, often frame positive thinking in terms of explanatory style. People with an optimistic explanatory style tend to give themselves credit when good things happen, but typically blame outside forces for bad outcomes. They also tend to see negative events as temporary and atypical. On the other hand, individuals with a pessimistic explanatory style often blame themselves when bad things happen, but fail to give themselves adequate credit for successful outcomes. They also have a tendency to view negative events as expected and lasting which may have a detrimental impact on one's state of mind.

Positive thinking is an umbrella term for a wide range of ideas and techniques associated with the psychology of achievement. It is the main idea that lies behind the self-help movement that originated in the United States and has since become very influential worldwide.

Positive thinking aims to help people be more aware of the power of their thoughts and moods and how to manage them in order to lead a happier and more successful lives. The central idea is that it is not what happens to individuals, which leads them to be happy, healthy or successful, but how they interpret what happens to them and the extent to which they believe that it is possible to influence such events. Advocates of positive thinking believe that it is possible for individuals to make conscious decisions about how they are going to view the events in their lives, to learn to be optimistic rather than pessimistic and exercise more control.

The Health Benefits of Positive Thinking

Positive thinking plays an important role in positive psychology, a subfield devoted to the study of what makes people happy and fulfilled. Research has found that positive thinking can aid in stress management and even plays an important role in the overall health and well-being. According to the Mayo Clinic, positive thinking is linked with a wide range of health benefits including: longer life span, less stress, lower rate of depression, increased resistance to the common cold, better stress management and coping skills, lower risk of cardiovascular disease-related death, increased physical well-being and better psychological health.

Clearly, there are many benefits of positive thinking, but why exactly does positive thinking have such a strong impact on physical and mental health. One theory is that people who think positively tend to be less affected by stress. Another possibility is that people who think positively tend to live healthier in general; they may exercise more, follow a more nutritious diet and avoid unhealthy behaviours.

Positive Thinking versus Positive Psychology

While the terms positive thinking and positive psychology are sometimes used interchangeably, it is important to understand that they are not the same thing. First, positive thinking is about looking at things from a positive point of view. Positive psychology certainly tends to focus on optimism, but it also notes that while there are many benefits to thinking positively, there are actually times when more realistic thinking is more advantageous. For example, in some situations negative thinking can actually lead to more accurate decisions and outcomes (Alloy, et al 2000). Researchers Peterson & Vaidya (2003) also found that in some cases, optimistic thinking can lead to underestimating the actual risks involved in a particular decision.

Research background

Michael F. Scheier, a psychologist at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, has found that optimists handle stress better than pessimists. In a report in the current issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, he wrote that optimists tend to respond to disappointments like being turned down for a job by formulating a plan of action and asking other people for help and advice; pessimists more often react to such difficulties by trying to forget the whole thing or assuming that there is nothing they can do to change things - an attitude optimists adopted only when there was objectively nothing that could be done by optimists.

In one of the most hotly pursued lines of investigations, psychologists are tracking the importance of how people explain their failures to themselves. People tend to have a habitual explanatory style, a typical way of explaining the events that befall on them, said by Martin Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania.

Pessimists, Seligman has found, tend to construe bad events such as flunking an examination or giving a party that flops as resulting from a personal deficit that will plague them

forever in everything they do. Others see the same setbacks more optimistically, as being due to the mistakes that can be remedied. They feel that they can make the necessary changes.

Most people mix a pessimistic and an optimistic outlook to some degree. The new research findings apply more strongly to those people at the extremes, who more clearly exemplify one style or the other.

Work by several researchers has shown that people who tend to blame themselves for their misfortunes are more susceptible to diseases. For example, George Valliant, a psychiatrist at Dartmouth Medical School, and Christopher Peterson, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, worked with Seligman to study 99 members of the Harvard graduating classes of 1939 to 1944. The Harvard men had been interviewed on their return from World War II about their war experiences, and have had physical examinations every five years since their graduation.

Research Question

Positive thinking enhances learning and performance of every individual. While analyzing the present society, one can see that positive elements are towards a deteriorating trend which may have a significant impact on the mental well-being of the people. Realizing the importance of positive thinking, a conscious and committed effort must be taken by parents and teachers in achieving positivity in thought and action among future citizens. The present study intends to answer the question:

Whether journaling has a significant effect on developing positive thinking among student teachers?

Methodology

To answer the question, an experimental study was undertaken on the student-teachers of Sree Narayana Training College, Nedunganda by using a single group pre-test, post-test design. As a preliminary step, 140 student teachers were selected who are less inclined to positive thinking in different contexts through a positive thinking test. Out of them, 70 students were selected for experimentation and the rest was treated as control group. The experimental group was directed to report their daily experiences by highlighting the positive aspects and keeping a gratitude journal. Reports were weekly monitored and proper guidance was given to the process of reflecting their experiences. The activity continued for a period of two months for the

experimental group and tested the positive thinking skills of both experimental and control group. The tool used for journaling is gratitude journal worksheet and positive experience worksheet in addition to the reflective reports of student teachers. Positive thinking skill test was administered as pre-test and post test. The scores obtained in the tests were statistically compared using critical ratio.

Results and discussion

Data and result of the test of significance of the pre test and post test scores of students in positive thinking in experimental and control groups

Test	Group	No. of student teachers	Mean	S.D.	Critical Ratio
Pre test	Experimental	70	76.44	21.63	0.5
	Control	70	74.84	16.07	
Post test	Experimental	70	110.73	24.63	8.87*
	Control	70	80.31	14.74	

* Indicates significant at 0.05 level.

The results showed that after implementing journaling activity, positive thinking among student teachers has increased considerably.

The reflective report of the participants revealed that journaling had a positive effect on their behaviour and attitude. Daily analysis of the positive and negative feelings, emotions, attitudes, behaviours were subjected to self evaluation and self criticism which helped to gradually modify their thinking in the positive direction. Everyone reported the use of worksheet in enhancing their positive thinking and as the process went on, it could bring fruitful changes in their daily learning habits, behaviour and attitude towards fellow human beings.

Although positive psychology is prominent in many aspects of life and work, it has yet to find widespread application in our schools. This is, however, changing and a growing number of teachers are implementing strategies associated with positive thinking and learned optimism. Such techniques form the basis of what has come to be known as 'accelerated learning'.

While positive thinking has traditionally been viewed as a strategy for helping people to deal with problems, an increasing number of schools are implementing positive thinking programmes

in order to improve the quality of learning and achievement in young people. The underpinning principle is that positive thinking (sometimes referred to as 'learned optimism') leads to better learning.

In the meantime, all teachers can use positive thinking techniques more consciously and systematically by:

- a. Talking with learners about their beliefs and the way that they think about and respond to success and failure;
- b. Helping pupils to develop positive mindsets and to be optimistic about future learning outcomes;
- c. Encouraging pupils to identify barriers to their learning and to develop persistence;
- d. Using positive language, particularly the use of praise, when providing pupils with feedback on their learning;
- e. Making more use of positive language in teaching situations and helping learners to develop a positive vocabulary as part of their self-talk;
- f. Modelling positive behaviour within the classroom;
- g. Helping young people to develop a sense of purpose: seeing the big picture and also the steps required to achieve learning goals;
- h. Teaching young people how to set and achieve goals and how to monitor their progress; and
- i. Encouraging young people to develop a can-do attitude and to take greater responsibility for their decisions and actions.

Conclusion

The study emphatically prove the importance of journaling in developing positive attitude and positive thinking which is an important goal of education for healthy citizenship. Journal writing is an incredibly flexible instructional tool, useful across the entire curriculum. While often used as a class startup activity, it is used primarily to give students an opportunity to speculate on paper, confident that their ideas, observations, emotions and writing will be accepted without criticism. Journaling has added advantages as it sort out experiences, solve problems and consider varying perspectives, examine relationships with others and the world,

reflect on personal values, goals, and ideals, summarize ideas, experience and opinions before and after instruction, witness his academic and personal growth by reading the past entries. Moreover, by reading journal entries, teachers get to know the students' anxieties, problems, excitements and joys and also with this information, make plans tailored for their students. Being a comprehensive strategy, journaling can be extensively used at all levels for positive education.

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