



**Building Professional Excellence- Part 2**  
**Session 7: The Science of Well-Being: Positive Psychology Strategies for Increasing Meaning and Achievement**  
**Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Bob Bertolino**

**1. Question from Lori Beckwith**

How do you motivate clients toward the positive when they are firmly stuck in the negative? How do you motivate them toward making even small changes in their thinking or actions?

**Answer from Presenter**

Great question. I recommend considering two things when it comes to motivation. First, much of what presents as negativity is just the person's way of relating to the world. People who tend to come across as more negative and perhaps, pessimistic, are not likely to become optimists. Therefore, I recommend using a lot of acknowledgment and validation. I would say, "It sounds like things have been difficult for you. You have very good reasons for feeling and seeing the world the way you do." Acknowledgment and validation, in my experience, are a crucial vehicle in letting people know we understand. When people feel heard and understand the chances that they are going to be more open to trying to make small, subtle shifts to experience more optimism.

Second, I would think about motivation as being on a continuum. It is not a matter of whether or not a person is motivated. The question is: What is this person motivated for? For example, let's say a person says, "Well, I just don't want to feel like crap anymore. My life is awful." I respond with, "It sounds like things haven't gone the way you'd hoped and your life seems awful. Tell me more about that." Then I would say, "When was the last time you can remember feeling just a little bit better—not great—just not so in the dumps?" Usually people will give some kind response that gives us something to build on. Then we can say, "What was different?" and "Would you like to experience that feeling just a little more?" and "I've got some ideas that might help with that."

To your point, making even small changes is critical. If client think we are trying to get them to make wholesale changes and pull themselves out of a rut just by doing what we say, they are likely to fail. I would acknowledge and validate, search for a small instance of when things went better, and then work together to find something that the client agrees to try as an "experiment." You might even offer to do that activity at the same time as the client. For example, you could both, for one week, at night, agree to write down three things that went well during the day. Then you would share those experiences with each other during a session. I hope this helps!

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**2. Question from Nisha Talwar**

Can we get some more positive activities that we do and practice with our clients who are unmotivated [workbook resources]?

**Answer from Presenter**

There are many very good choices of books and websites with activities for clients. Here are a few I recommend:



**Books:**

Achor, S. (2010). *The happiness advantage: The seven principles of positive psychology that fuel success and performance at work*. New York: Crown Business.

Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Diener, E. (2010). *Practicing positive psychology coaching: Assessment, activities, and strategies and success*. New York: Wiley.

Lopez, S J., Pedrotti, J. T., & Snyder, C.R. (Eds.). (2014). *Positive psychology: The scientific and practical application of human strengths* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Sage.

O'Hanlon, B., & Bertolino, B. (2012). *The therapist's notebook on positive psychology: Exercises, activities, and handouts*. New York: Routledge.

Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. New York: Oxford.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: The Free Press.

**Websites:**

[Happify.com](http://Happify.com)

[Happier.com](http://Happier.com)

[Authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu](http://Authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu)

[Thepositivityinstitute.com.au](http://Thepositivityinstitute.com.au)

[Positivepsychologyprogram.com/positive-psychology-exercises](http://Positivepsychologyprogram.com/positive-psychology-exercises)

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