



The Positive Living Skills Philosophies, Beliefs and Concepts

Welcome to Positive Living Skills.

We are pleased to share with you an overview of the philosophies, approaches, beliefs and concepts that underpin the Positive Living Skills Wellbeing programs.

This document gives you a broad overview of how we approach emotional wellbeing, the concepts within our programs, and it refers to some of the underpinning theories and research that supports the learning experiences within our programs.

For more information, refer to the Frequently Asked Questions within our website, the detailed resource information provided with each program kit, or contact us.



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The current situation

The current mental health situation for young people in Australia is frightening:

- Suicide remains the leading cause of death for children between 5 and 17 years¹
- One in seven young Australians 4-17 experiences a mental health condition in any given year.²
- One in ten young people aged 12-17 will self-harm, one in 13 will seriously consider suicide, and one in 40 will attempt suicide³
- Evidence suggests three in four adult mental health conditions emerge by age 24 and half by age 14⁴

This means that several students in each classroom could be heading for or are already experiencing a serious mental health problem.

We believe this MUST change.

Our core Philosophy

At Positive Living Skills, we believe that every child has the capacity to reach his or her own unique potential and that every child in today's world must learn proactive and practical ways to look after their own mental wellbeing. If this learning begins in Early Childhood and Preschool, and continues through Primary School, then when children are ready to transition into High School they have developed a solid awareness of how they think and feel, and they can create long term habits for how to calm themselves when feeling stressed, and they have tools to apply to help them to self-direct their thoughts, feelings and behaviours toward a positive life experience.

We are also committed to supporting and enhancing teacher wellbeing, while also supporting parents, carers and the wider community.

Our vision is to significantly and positively impact the alarming statistics of anxiety, depression and suicide, within one generation.

Our approach

When mental health leaders are asked when 'prevention' begins, the collective response we have experienced has often indicated that their belief is that prevention begins at the first sign of a mental health problem.

We have a different perspective on when prevention begins.

Our belief is that prevention MUST begin with children from as young as 3 years of age through teaching habitual skills for emotional wellbeing BEFORE there are signs of mental health challenges. We believe when social and emotional learning is taught using **Priming, and Distributed Practice**, then children can build **long term habits** for emotional wellbeing, or in other words with spaced repetition and lots of practice we can create habitual strategies to maintain our wellbeing with all the concepts building on and supporting each other.

¹ Breakdown: In 2018, suicide accounted for over one-third of deaths (38.4 per cent) among people aged 15-24 years and over a quarter of deaths (29.4 per cent) among those aged 25-34 years. Suicide remains the leading cause of death of children between 5 and 17 years, with 100 deaths occurring in this age group, at a rate of 2.5 deaths per 100,000 children. On average, a person who died by suicide in 2018 lost 36.7 years from their life. (*Youth Beyond Blue*)

² Breakdown: 13.9% children and adolescents aged 4-17 years experienced a mental disorder in the last twelve months (*Youth Beyond Blue*)

³ Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR. (2015). The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Canberra: Department of Health. (*Retrieved from Youth Beyond Blue*)

⁴ Breakdown: Kessler, RD et al. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62: p. 593-602. (*Youth Beyond Blue*)

Just as children learn to wash their hands, clean their teeth, tie their shoelaces or ride a bike, building habitual skills to maintain emotional wellbeing **MUST** also be learned, and because school is the universal location where children learn, this is the platform to begin emotional intelligence education.

Priming, Distributed Practice, and Long-Term Habits in more detail:

(1) Priming⁵, is an implicit memory effect where exposure to one stimulus influences a response to another stimulus.

Research is now widespread on how conceptual positive priming is caused by 'spreading activation,' where the first stimulus activates related concepts and therefore 'paves the way' for the second stimulus to travel faster.

*All scripted learning experiences within the Positive Living Skills programs are worded and phrased intentionally with positive language patterns, and the concepts within the Positive Living Skills program relate to and therefore 'prime' participants for the other concepts. For example, **Highlights** builds skills for improved positive **Focus**, and **Focus** builds appreciation skills (**Highlights**). **Relaxation** skills can also enhance **Focus** skills, and supports **Self-Esteem**, and so on. So positive conceptual priming and Kindness priming can be applied in this program. Levels of the program prime others also.*

(2) Distributed Practice, a learning strategy where practice is broken up into a number of short sessions spread over a longer period of time.

There are many worthwhile prevention or intervention strategies and programs that aim to teach young people the knowledge and skills that might assist them to maintain long term mental wellbeing. Some of these involve a short series of sessions, or they are aimed at being implemented when a problem becomes evident in the learning or home environment. The Positive Living Skills Early Childhood Wellbeing Program is made up of 48 individual learning experiences (plus suggestions for adaptations and extensions), and the combined stages of the Primary School Wellbeing Program contain 216 individual learning experiences. The aim is for teachers or educators to make Positive Living Skills a part of daily teaching at least once each week. 'Spaced repetitions have considerable potential for improving classroom learning'.⁶

Distributed practice is the most efficient method for long term learning.

(3) Long term habits are created with repetition and practice, and the brain can change itself through neuroplasticity.

One of the most extraordinary discoveries of the twentieth century is that our thinking, learning and acting can shape our brain anatomy and our behaviour. We can rewire our brains, for better or worse. When we repeat an activity over and over again, eventually all of our relevant neural systems work together to automatically produce the activity, and the activity becomes a 'habit'.

This concept has been explored when considering 'procedural' or 'implicit' learning to build long term procedural memories. Procedural or implicit memory functions when we learn a procedure or group of automatic actions, occurring outside our focused attention, in which words are generally not required. Our nonverbal interactions with people and many of our emotional memories are part of our procedural memory system, and riding a bike or driving a car depends on procedural memory. The other form of memory is called 'explicit' or 'declarative' memory, which begins to develop in children at age two. Explicit memory consciously recalls facts or events and is the memory we use when describing what we did on the weekend'.⁷

⁵ De Groot, A. (1983). The range of automatic spreading activation in word priming. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour. DOI:

⁶ Dempster, F.(1989) Spacing effects and their implications for theory and practice. Educational Psychology Review. Vol.1, Iss 4. Pp 309-330 DOI: 10.1007/BF01320097

⁷ Doidge, N. (2007). The Brain that changes itself. Stories of personal triumph from the frontiers of Brain Science. Victoria, Australia: Scribe Publications. p.15; p.64; pp.229-230

If we can apply the concept of explicit learning to building skills for managing wellbeing, then we believe that we can build, with repetition and practice, long term habits for how we support our own emotional wellbeing, so that we can learn to quickly re-direct our focus and apply strategies to change our emotional state from stressed to relaxed more quickly.

This is based on a combination of conscious awareness and long term memory; through trying different techniques we find a series of strategies that work for us then through repetition and practice we can learn how to quickly apply those strategies to calm ourselves when we are aware that we are stressed or choose a more empowered thinking process when we want to.

We believe that children can learn to become aware of their emotions, thoughts and behaviours, and learn how they are linked, and they can develop the self-awareness to understand how they respond to stressors, and they can learn practical skills that will help them to self-calm when they choose to, or self-motivate or self-direct when they choose to, and then build a long term memory for these skills.

The PLS programs are designed for children to learn positive living skills habitually by repeating and practicing the skills in short sessions over a long-term period of time with the resource pool of stand-alone learning experiences all building on and supporting each other for positive living.

How the Program Builds

The program builds as children develop their Positive Living skills.

At the **Early Childhood/Foundation** level, the PLS program focuses on building **Awareness** of feelings and thoughts. Learning experiences are activity based and experiential.

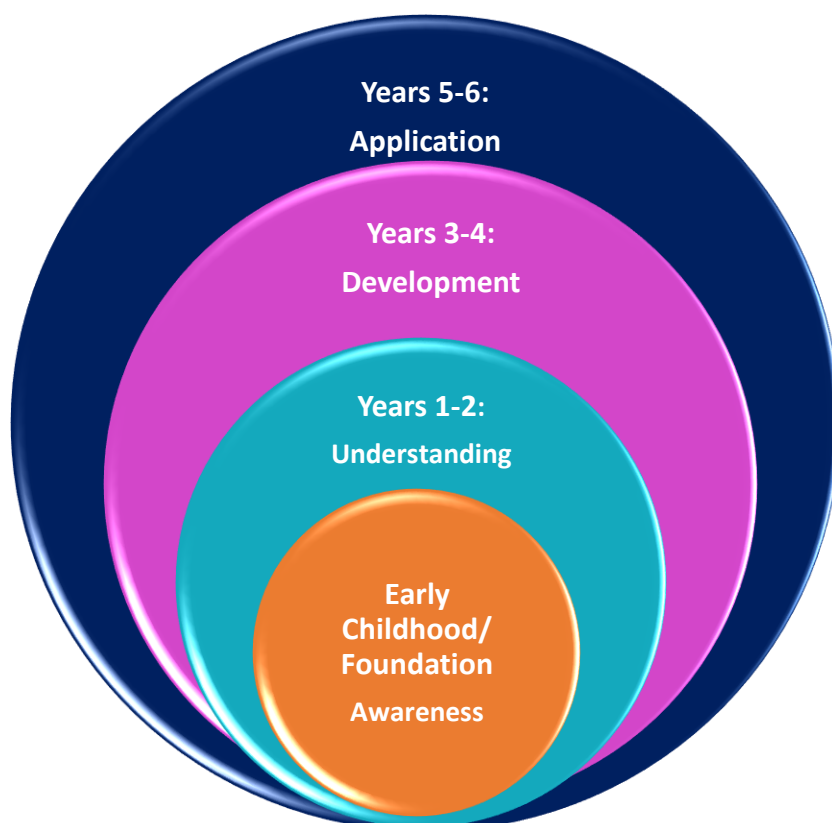
In Years 1-2, Lessons focus on **Understanding** the link between our feelings, thoughts and actions. Learning experiences begin to link activities and experiences with outcomes.

In Years 3-4, the program focuses on the **Development** of skills to direct feelings thoughts and actions. Learning experiences begin to build skill levels through application and sharing.

Years 5-6 of the PLS program focuses on the **Application** of skills to choose a positive focus daily. Learning experiences build skill levels through self-reflection, sharing, application and development.

Core Program concepts

There are six core program concepts in both the Positive Living Skills Early Childhood Wellbeing Program, and the Positive Living Skills Primary School Wellbeing Program. The extensive body of research of Dr. Terry Orlick, PhD, author of the book 'Positive Living Skills', and esteemed colleague of the Australian Positive Living Skills team, has inspired many of the learning experiences within this core program, in particular within the Units of Highlights, Focus, Relaxation, and Cooperation.



Highlights

The learning experiences within Highlights teach children to make connections with positive things that exist or occur daily within themselves and others and in the world around them, and to harness the positive emotions that follow. Children have the opportunity to build skills to look for, notice and fully appreciate the simple moments that encourage a sense of joy in their lives, and build positive associations and relationships through highlights. They have the opportunity to build a skillset to recall and develop highlights for a positive mood shift. Experience-Dependant Neuroplasticity is a topic scientists are now exploring even further, as they learn more about our ability as human beings to have the capacity build neural structure in our brains by repeatedly sensing feeling and thinking about certain things for prolonged periods of time.⁸

Feelings

The learning experiences within Feelings teach children to identify their own feelings, consider why and how they experience particular feelings, and then identify the behaviours that can follow. Children learn how their feelings and thoughts drive their behaviours and actions, and they identify how their actions and behaviours can influence the feelings of others. They begin to build skills for self-awareness and self-management as they learn how to begin to take control of their emotions and responses to situations and other people, and build skills for social awareness and management. Ultimately children learn how to create space between events and their responses so they can begin to choose empowering feelings and thoughts. These are key skills in any high quality Social and Emotional Learning program, and SEL has been widely proven to have positive impacts for children both personally and academically.⁹

Focus

The learning experiences within Focus teach children appropriate strategies and skills to build, maintain and utilise 'focus' skills. Children will learn how to become aware of the present moment and focus in connected ways on what they are experiencing in that moment. They will also learn the importance of focusing on particular goals and outcomes that they want to achieve and also how to incorporate positive focus skills when experiencing hardship and challenges. This unit allows children to develop skills to build and maintain a fully connected focus, to focus through distractions, and to explore positive emotions and happenings in their daily lives and use their positive focus as a way to experience more happiness, achieve goals and experiencing the emotions they choose. The research suggests the Focus activities also assist those children diagnosed with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.¹⁰

Relaxation

The learning experiences within Relaxation expose children to the concepts of the physical and emotional benefits of relaxation practices in daily life. This learning has an experiential focus and encourages a high level of student engagement, helping children to learn practical skills that will support them to recover from and manage stress, improve sleeping habits, and improve focus and learning ability. It teaches children the importance of breathing, and to more effectively manage their emotional state, embrace peaceful moments of silence, and experience simple daily joys that lift the quality of every day of life. One sample of Dr Orlick's research evidence supporting the Positive Living Skills concepts involved a study of Canadian Grade 2 students. After participating in 4x20 minute intervention sessions per week for 9 consecutive weeks involving relaxation and highlights, the experimental group were better able to relax themselves at will than the control group, and they increased the frequency of their positive highlight experiences.¹¹

Hanson, R. (2013) *Hardwiring Happiness: The new brain Science of Contentment, Calm and Confidence*. USA: Crown Publishing Group

⁹ Durlak, J., Weisseberg R., Dymnicki A., Taylor R., Schellinger K. (2011) The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based interventions. Society for Research in Child Development, Inc, 82, 405-432

¹⁰ Hester, K., and Orlick, T.(2006) The Impact of a Positive Living Skills Training Program on Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Journal of Excellence, Issue 11.

¹¹ Gilbert, J., Orlick, T.(1996). Evaluation of a life skills program with grade two children. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling Journal. 31,139-151.

Cooperation

The learning experiences within Cooperation expose children to the concepts of working effectively with others in mutual support, to give and take and compromise, and to collaborate together to achieve goals. This learning encourages a high level of engagement through play and activities, helping children to identify what it means to work collaboratively and voluntarily with others to achieve tasks with a common purpose or benefit. Children learn that they can contribute to a common vision achieving group goals and celebrating successes together. It teaches children to identify how they can work effectively with others to problem solve and achieve win-win outcomes. **At early learning stages**, many of the Cooperative Learning Experiences within the PLS Program are focused on children being 'left in' the game rather than sitting 'out'. This is done intentionally to allow children time to grasp concepts, build their skill levels, and maximise their learning at this pivotal development stage. as they transition from Preschool to Primary School. ¹²

Self-Esteem

The learning experiences within Self-Esteem teach children the concept of ones' own worth and personal value and how this shapes quality of life. The unit teaches children to become aware of how they view themselves and others and how to build confidence and a healthy level of self-esteem or self-worth. Self-esteem can involve a variety of beliefs about oneself such as an appraisal of one's own appearance, beliefs, emotions and behaviours and also focuses on lack of judgement or comparison and building appreciation and happiness for others' successes as much as our own. This learning helps children to learn the skills to identify how they see themselves and others, and how to build confidence and build a growth mindset, where they believe that their intellectual abilities are qualities that can be developed (as opposed to qualities that are fixed).¹³

The Positive Living Skills Primary School 'Extension' Program

The Positive Living Skills Primary School Wellbeing '**Extension**' program is designed for delivery to students in Years 3-6:

Appreciation

The learning experiences within Appreciation teach students to appreciate themselves, others and their environments and communities. This growing sense of appreciation builds self-esteem and self-confidence, while it assists students to form meaningful social relationships. Appreciation fosters a positive attitude and supports social and emotional wellbeing at the same time as fostering a respectful classroom. Focusing on appreciation and gratitude shifts moods and perspectives to a positive focus and helps students to develop a more optimistic and resilient attitude. Developing gratitude helps students and teachers to focus on what is working in their lives and trains their minds to focus on positive things. ¹⁴ Students who have a positive focus are more present in the moment and more productive. Appreciation and gratitude practices teaches empathy and understanding of the differences between students, including other cultures and perspectives.

Unit: Communication

The learning experiences within Communication teach students the concepts of communication and what makes communication respectful and effective. Teaching is focused on communication with self and as they learn to understand their own internal dialogue, they can begin to become aware of their internal beliefs and values and

¹² Orlick, T. (1981a). Cooperative play socialization among preschool children. *Journal of Individual Psychology*. 2(1), 54-64.

¹³ Yeager, D., Dweck, C. (2012). Mindsets That Promote Resilience: When Students Believe That Personal Characteristics Can Be Developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47 (4), 302-314

¹⁴ Howells, K. (2018). Developing gratitude as a practice for teachers. In Jonathan Tudge & Lia Freitas (eds). *Developing gratitude in children and adolescents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 240-261

gain an understanding of whether these are supportive or otherwise. Building effective communication skills supports healthy self-esteem and confidence and will assist students to achieve the outcomes they seek in their lives. As students learn how their physiology can affect their thoughts and emotions, they are taught ways to use their physiology to support and encourage positive emotions and self-motivation. Students learn how to ask themselves better quality questions to help them feel more empowered and to lift their own personal expectations and standards to lead toward meeting their personal potential.

Unit: Choice

The learning experiences within Choice teach students that they have the capacity to build skills to self-direct their emotional states, their responses, their behaviours and their focus from moment to moment. Learning experiences encourage students to develop a strong sense of personal empowerment or a strong **internal 'locus of control'**¹⁵ where they believe that the outcomes they will experience in life will not be predominantly controlled by others or luck or chance, but rather that their own efforts and expectations will strongly influence their experiences and outcomes. The learning experiences teach students that they are responsible for their own learning and when they choose to engage students will become more motivated. This unit also promotes accountability, ownership and problem solving and as students build their decision making skills, they also build their self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience.

Unit: Solutions

The learning experiences within Solutions teach students the concepts of problem solving and provides strategies to find solutions in daily life. It focuses on respecting the perspectives of others and building effective negotiation skills. Students learn to identify how they can work effectively to understand challenges, work through potential options and outcomes, and problem solve to achieve positive outcomes for self and others, particularly when faced with challenging situations. When students learn that there are usually a range of options to consider when facing a decision, and they can implement a model for problem solving that can assist where they can consider the different potential outcomes of a range of options, it helps them develop critical and creative thinking skills that can apply in many areas of life for many years to come.

Unit: Leadership

The learning experiences within Leadership teach students how to develop and model leadership qualities and deliver their personal best effort, being an example for others to follow. It is mostly modelled on the concept of self-leadership, defined as the practice of intentionally influencing our thinking, feeling, and behaviours to achieve our objectives.¹⁶ The learning builds skills for self-awareness and self-management as well as social awareness and relationship skills. Students learn the importance of setting an example for others to follow as well as the importance of followership, as they build respect and value for themselves and others. Students learn to identify what it means to be a leader, taking responsibility for their own actions and outcomes, and displaying respect, persistence, integrity and a positive focus as they build resilience. Students learn to support themselves and others to grow and learn, to communicate with confidence and humility, and take positive action toward goals.

Unit: Potential

The learning experiences within Potential teach students the concepts of considering their personal potential and what they could be capable to achieve in their lives, from a daily perspective as well as looking toward the future. It explores what it means to give your personal best effort, and how to develop and achieve meaningful goals in life, by choosing how to direct your focus, and by identifying and taking steps toward those goals letting go of self-imposed limits. This learning encourages a high level of student engagement, helping students to identify what it means to develop a vision and the self-belief to move toward that vision, with the understanding that as long as you are delivering your best effort, any outcome can be an opportunity to learn and grow.

¹⁵Mearns, J. The Social Learning Theory of Julian B Rotter. Retrieved from <http://psych.fullerton.edu/jmearns/rotter.htm>

¹⁶ Bryant A., Kazan, A. (2013). *'Self-Leadership'*. McGraw Hill, US.

Other core Positive Living Skills beliefs

We are pleased to also share with you below just some of the beliefs and assumptions that underpin the content within all our Positive Living Skills Wellbeing Programs. While you may not see these words or specific reference to these concepts within the Lessons, they are implied. These concepts come from many years of study and application in the area of human behaviour and the keys to live a fulfilled and balanced life of meaning and purpose.

We all have personal resources. We believe that every human being has resources within them, although there are times when each of us can become disconnected from those resources. It is our belief that no student or child is 'broken' or needs 'fixing'. Our work assists others to see, uncover, discover, access and develop the resources they have within them. Some children benefit from extra support in a range of areas and are encouraged to receive support and connection with those who can further assist them.

Each of us has the ability to 'write our own story'. It is our belief that we all have the ability to create opportunities to pursue the goals we desire. If we have a vision to achieve something or become something or someone, and we are willing to commit to that vision, work at it, and persist, we have the ability to achieve our personal best effort toward that outcome.

Many times young people are told from many sources all the things they 'won't' be likely to achieve, or 'shouldn't' do, or 'can't' do, and we are suggesting that when this is said to young people enough times, they begin to believe it. Once you believe something you see more evidence of it and it can become a truth for you, and this can work to either move you closer to what you want to experience, or further away. We also do not believe that certain rewards or opportunities are entitlements, rather that if we make a choice and are prepared to commit and persist, then our life is our own to pursue the goals we seek, as long as those goals are ecological; meaning they are good for the individual, good for others, and good for the greater good.

We always have a choice. We believe that choice exists in all situations. While we have no control over what other people might do or say, or over external events in our lives or environment, we can control our own choices and responses. We can choose how we will respond to any external event; we can choose how we will respond to others, and we can learn to choose our thoughts, our feelings and our actions, despite external circumstances. We can also choose what we will focus on, and how fully connected our focus is, from moment to moment.

Our choice of focus drives our lives. From moment to moment, we have a choice as to what we will focus on and how fully we will connect with the moment we are experiencing. What we choose to focus on is totally within our control. Choosing the subject of our focus moment to moment directly influences our experience of life. We can choose to focus on what is working rather than what isn't, we can choose to focus on what we are grateful for, we can choose to focus on the positive aspects of self and others, and we can choose to focus on how we will make a difference in our lives and the lives of others, rather than how others will contribute to us. This is not to say that we don't strive for improvement. On the contrary, identifying how we can continually improve based on the concept of maintaining a growth mindset can be an extremely positive focus, and it directs the focus away from perceived failure, judgement, blame or denial.

A fully connected focus¹⁷ is being completely connected to what you are doing, seeing, reading, learning, feeling or experiencing right now in this very moment. A great deal of information is transmitted verbally and visually, and our ability to listen attentively, watch attentively and remember relevant information is extremely important to our level of performance in every aspect of life. The ability to implement a fully connected focus is essential for optimal learning.

Relaxation is essential in today's world. Developing skills to achieve a regular relaxation response is an essential component of positive living. When we teach our body and mind to relax, integration occurs, and we can reduce our levels of anxiety, pain, stress or anger. Effective relaxation training has been linked to lower blood pressure, greater immune function, lower risk of cardiovascular disease, healthy weight maintenance, better quality sleep, improved concentration and improved long-term memory and learning.

¹⁷ Glynn, B., Orlick, T. (2010). Fully Connected Focus – Interview with Terry Orlick. Journal of Excellence. Issue 15.

As the world we live in develops more technologies and distractions, relaxation and focus skills become even more important to teach and develop within ourselves and others and neuroscientists, medical doctors and even geneticists are showing that mindfulness cultivates attention, compassion, happiness and relaxation and decreases impulsivity, anxiety and other difficult emotional states'.¹⁸

Positive imagery is powerful. Imagination is a wonderful and powerful thing. We all enjoy dreaming of a destination we would love to visit or an experience we would love to have. Most of us use our imagination every day, as we picture what our future might look like or how the new food we are about to try might taste, or we can imagine ourselves thinner or healthier or wiser. Children spend significant time in imaginary worlds. Images flood our minds all the time and we get caught up in them. We can choose to focus on images that are pleasant and supportive and positively challenging, or otherwise.

There is much research on the power of mental training and how the same brain patterns can be activated when a person imagines performing a certain behaviour as are activated when actually performing the behaviour.¹⁹ When we learn to direct our thoughts to images of a past positive event, we cultivate appreciation of the positive aspects of our lives and ourselves, and we re-live and reconnect to positive emotions. Similarly, when we imagine a future event the way we would like to experience it, we have an opportunity to take action towards achieving that goal.

We are all unique individuals. No person will have the exact same outlook as another to every event or situation. Each of us is a unique blend of beliefs, values, past and present experiences, culture and background, and will approach or respond to situations differently, while at the same time we can all remain connected to each other as human beings. Any experience or feeling we have or have had has most likely been experienced by another suggesting that we do not have to be alone in this life. At the same time, we have a right to our unique perspective. Looking at others with curiosity and appreciation rather than judgement promotes peace, harmony, growth and learning.

People assign meaning to events. We 'filter' events that happen in our lives through our individual beliefs and values, our past experiences, our culture and background, our understanding of time and space, and where we choose to place our focus. Events around illness, health, death, birth, finance, marriage, divorce, communication, family and relationships will all mean different things to different people at different times according to their own unique filtering system. The same event can have completely different meanings to different people. 'It's not the events of our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean.'²⁰

Distinction can be made that people do not necessarily choose illness or accident or tragedy or loss. What they can do is choose how they **respond** to those events that are outside of their control.

Our choice of words can shape our life. The words we use to describe our world, and the quality of the questions we ask internally and externally, directly contribute to how we experience life. Our thoughts and beliefs are made of words and people label experiences differently. Our choice of language can either support and serve us, or could be working against us without us realising the impact. And because we have a built-in 'negativity bias', designed to protect us, we more easily notice the negative effects in our environment rather than the positive, '*your brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones*',²¹ so sometimes we tend to more easily describe what we don't want or dislike rather than what we do want or prefer, which comes into play in our language patterns.

All the learning experiences in the Positive Living Skills program have been scripted with intentional choices of words and phrases, to promote empowerment and a positive focus. For example, when considering emotions, we ask, 'How did you feel when.....' rather than, 'How did MAKE you feel?' The second option pre-supposes

¹⁸ Rechtschaffen, D. (2014) *The way of mindful education. Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and students*. W. W. Norton and Company, New York.

¹⁹ Ranganathan. V.K., Siemionow.V., Liu.J.Z., Sahgal, V., Yue, G.H. (2004). Mental power to muscle power – gaining strength by using the mind. *Neuropsychologia* 2004;42(7):944-56. DOI: [10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2003.11.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2003.11.018)

²⁰ Robbins, A. (1991). *Awaken the Giant Within*. (pp.103-104). New York: Free Press

²¹ Hanson, R. (2013) *Hardwiring Happiness: The new brain Science of Contentment, Calm and Confidence*. USA: Crown Publishing Group.p27

that the individual does not have a choice in how they respond. And we know from the research on priming that if we see or hear a certain word, we will be more likely to think of that word or associated words, so we can all be mindful of the suggestions we make to others and keep our words and language stated in the positive.²²

Our physiology can directly influence our emotional state. There has been a great deal of research on how our thoughts and emotions influence our physical health and body language. The way we think and feel affects the way we behave in a variety of ways. There is also now much evidence to support that the way we move and hold our bodies has a significant and lasting impact on how we think and feel. Even the subtlest changes in our facial expressions or our gestures can shift the way we are feeling in any moment, and therefore the way we evaluate our lives – the way we think and the way we act.

If you change your posture, breathing, patterns of movement, and or facial expressions, you can influence your hormone levels, and ongoing physiology habits can have a lasting impact on your performance and ultimately the success you experience in life.

People are not their behaviours. It is easy sometimes to judge a person's lasting character by their temporary behaviour, and it is also easy to label someone based on behaviour they exhibit or how you perceive that behaviour. When we are able to separate a person's worth from their behaviour, or their potential intention from their behaviour, we can develop more tolerance and compassion. When others learn to become more self-aware and learn to value themselves more, they can learn how their behaviour impacts others. Every person has the capacity for change if they are willing and able and are given compassion, support and education.

We are always Learning. Building and developing a **growth mindset** is an essential underpinning element of the suite of Positive Living Skills programs. A growth mindset is based on the belief that we all have the capacity to learn and grow and that our abilities are not fixed. When we learn that we have resources inside us and that we are capable of learning and growing, and we are worthy as a person, then with persistence and patience and effort, we can move toward the goals we wish to pursue in our lives, and as we build our skills and confidence we can ultimately move toward our potential.

It's important to note that cultivating a growth mindset *'isn't just about effort. Students need to try new strategies and seek input from others when they're stuck. They need this repertoire of approaches to learn and improve.'*²³

We believe students can learn from experience and they have the capacity to persist despite set-backs challenges and perceived failures. Students with healthy self-esteem are also happy for others when they experience success and can be inspired by that success. People learn by experience, which often involves actions or behaviours that can be perceived by ourselves and others as a mistake. Learning allows us the opportunity to avoid making the same 'mistake' twice and is an ongoing process that continues through all the days of our lives.

We believe in Social Justice for all. We believe in equality and fairness between human beings in a society and community. We support the peaceful and prosperous coexistence of people based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture and disability.

We welcome your feedback and contribution to our Positive Living Skills community, and we look forward to connecting with you further.



²² Mace, John H. (2003) *Study-test awareness can enhance priming on an implicit memory task: Evidence from a word completion task.* The American Journal of Psychology, 116(2), 257-279

²³ Dweck, Carol. (2015). <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/09/23/carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset.html>