



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POSITIVITY AND STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACHES AT WORK



DR JONATHAN PASSMORE

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**T**he new Director of the Henley Centre for Coaching, Jonathan Passmore, has recently co-authored a book on the psychology of positivity and its relevance in the workplace. This new edition provides a comprehensive coverage of the contemporary field of positivity and strengths-based approaches at work.

## What is positive psychology?

Positive psychology has emerged as the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing intrapersonally (e.g., biologically, emotionally and cognitively), interpersonally (e.g., relationally) and collectively (e.g.,

institutionally, culturally and globally) and includes three levels of research:

1. The subjective level – past, present and future constructs: the past involving well-being, contentment and satisfaction; the present involving flow and happiness; and the future involving hope and optimism.
2. The individual level – individual traits that are positive, such as character strengths, talent and the capacity for vocation.

3. The group level – involving research into ‘civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals towards better citizenship’.

## Strengths-based approaches?

Whilst well-being may be viewed as a key outcome, the use of character strengths may be viewed as a key process of positive psychology. The concept of character strengths is based in a tradition that emphasises virtues as inducements to behave well, in contrast to traditions that focus on rules to be followed.

‘We’re seeking to approach individuals and organisations from a strengths perspective – looking for what is working well, how individuals are leveraging strengths, seeking optimal performance – compared to traditional approaches which may be diagnostic, problem solving, seeking root causes and so on,’ says Jonathan.

## What it means for you and your organisation

‘Our hope,’ adds Jonathan, ‘is that it will contribute to making workplaces more positive and meaningful places to work, and help develop organisations so that they can better leverage the strengths of their employees.’

The book focuses on individual approaches to positive psychology at work, organisational approaches to positive psychology at work and

business or sector-based applications of positive psychology.

Topics covered include:

- The potential benefits that positive emotions (joy, gratitude and hope) and positivity (encompassing emotions, thoughts and behaviours) have to offer employees and organisations.
- The impact of increased life expectancies and the positive aspects of aging in relation to work – particularly the benefits of aging and the positive contribution of older workers in the workplace.
- The well-being of health professionals, teachers and professors, IT professionals, farmers and agricultural workers, and those employed in the arts and crafts sector (including assessing the benefits of creativity interventions for increasing job satisfaction and well-being among other professional categories).
- Evidence of the importance of our connection with nature.

‘Overall, our aim is to offer an up-to-date edited title, with leading international scholars providing comprehensive and, importantly, critical reviews of wide areas of literature related to the psychology of positivity and strengths in the workplace.’

*The Psychology of Positivity and Strengths-Based Approaches at Work* is written by Lindsay G. Oades, Michael F Steger, Antonella Delle Fave and Jonathan Passmore.

