

Positive Psychology, Spirituality, and the Treatment of Addictions

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Abstract

The overlap between positive psychology and spirituality allows for potential collaboration between social workers and clergy/congregations in the support of those with addictions. This presentation will examine this intersection, and provide a case example demonstrating how it was applied in a local community treatment center context.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Define the concepts of positive psychology and spirituality as they apply to addictions treatment.
- Describe how positive psychology and spirituality intersect.
- Articulate strategies for social work collaboration with clergy/congregations around support for those with addictions (based on a case example).

Defining the Concepts

Positive Psychology (PP): “an intervention, therapy, or activity primarily aimed at increasing positive feelings, positive behaviors, or positive cognition, as opposed to ameliorating pathology or fixing negative thoughts or maladaptive behavior patterns” (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Spirituality: inclusively defined as “a human being’s subjective relationship (cognitive, emotional, and intuitive) to what is unknowable about existence, and how a person integrates that relationship into a perspective about the universe, the world, others, self, moral values, and one’s sense of meaning” (Senreich, 2013).

The quest to find meaning and purpose in life.

History of Positive Psychology and Addictions

- Positive psychology and its related interventions (PPIs) developed in the 1990s as a response to pathology-focused treatment in clinical psychology.
- Initial focus was on depression; research shows improved outcomes for clients using PPIs as part of the therapeutic process (Bolier, Haverman, Westerhof, Riper, Smit, & Bohlmeijer, 2013; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).
- More recently applied specifically to addictions treatment (Krentzman, 2013); addictions theorists and practitioners have long noted that developing a good and sustaining life can prevent relapse (Krentzman & Barker, 2016).

Positive Psychology and Spirituality

Two concepts from the positive psychology literature highlight the ways in which spirituality can be integrated:

- 'North of neutral' framework (Peterson, 2006)
- 'Flourishing' (Keyes & Haidt, 2003)
- Spirituality and its associated practices is an avenue for developing a positive, satisfying, and flourishing life.

Case Example

St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church

Priest: Father Eric

Location: Boston's South Shore, city of about 90,000 residents

"We are a Christian community rooted in historic faith, formed by liturgical worship, and motivated to serve our neighborhood. In everything we do, we embrace the motto: 'Show them Jesus!'" (St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church, 2018).

Gavin Foundation (local site)

"Our Intensive Treatment Services program is a 64-bed healthcare facility that provides Acute Treatment Services (Detox) and Clinical Stabilization Services to adults struggling with alcohol or drugs, including heroin and prescription drugs. The programs offer separate units for men and women and focuses on stabilizing individuals, enhancing their motivation to change, and linking them to continued treatment and collateral services" (Gavin Foundation, 2018).

Case Example

St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church

History of hosting weekly recovery groups in the building

Father Eric began offering a weekly spirituality group (storytelling) and spiritual care on-site at Gavin House (including Bibles)

St. C's most recently has offered a monthly 12-Step Eucharist service

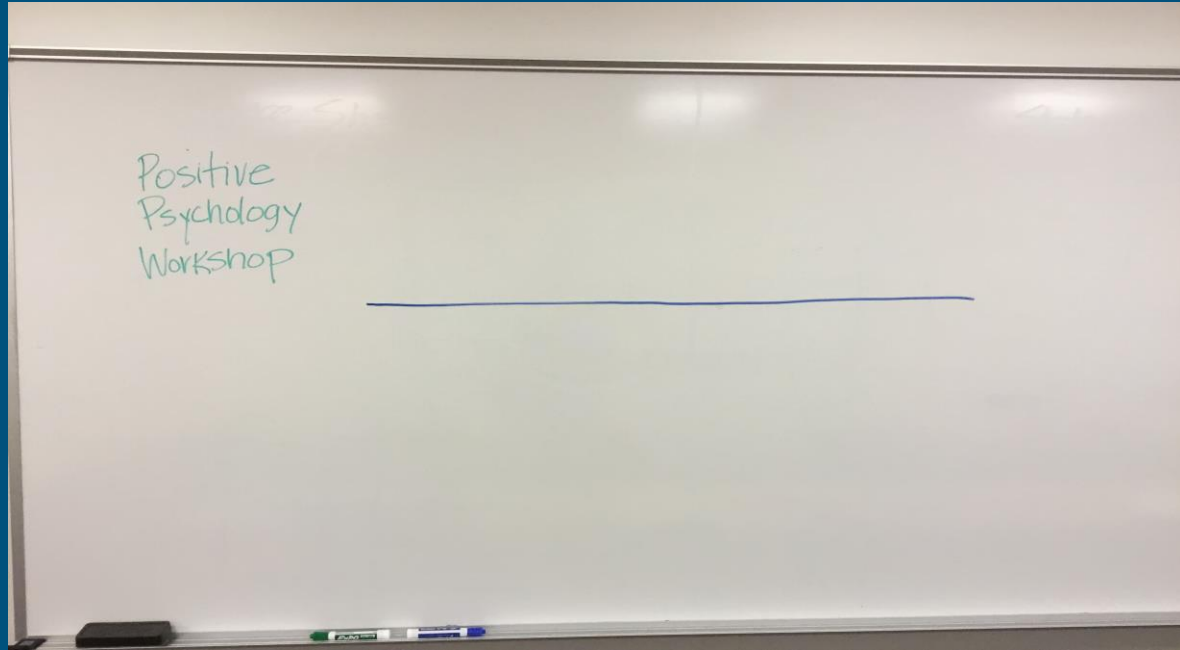
Gavin House

Agreed to allow this presenter, as a parishioner of the church and a licensed clinical social worker, to offer a monthly Positive Psychology Workshop to both the CSS men and CSS women

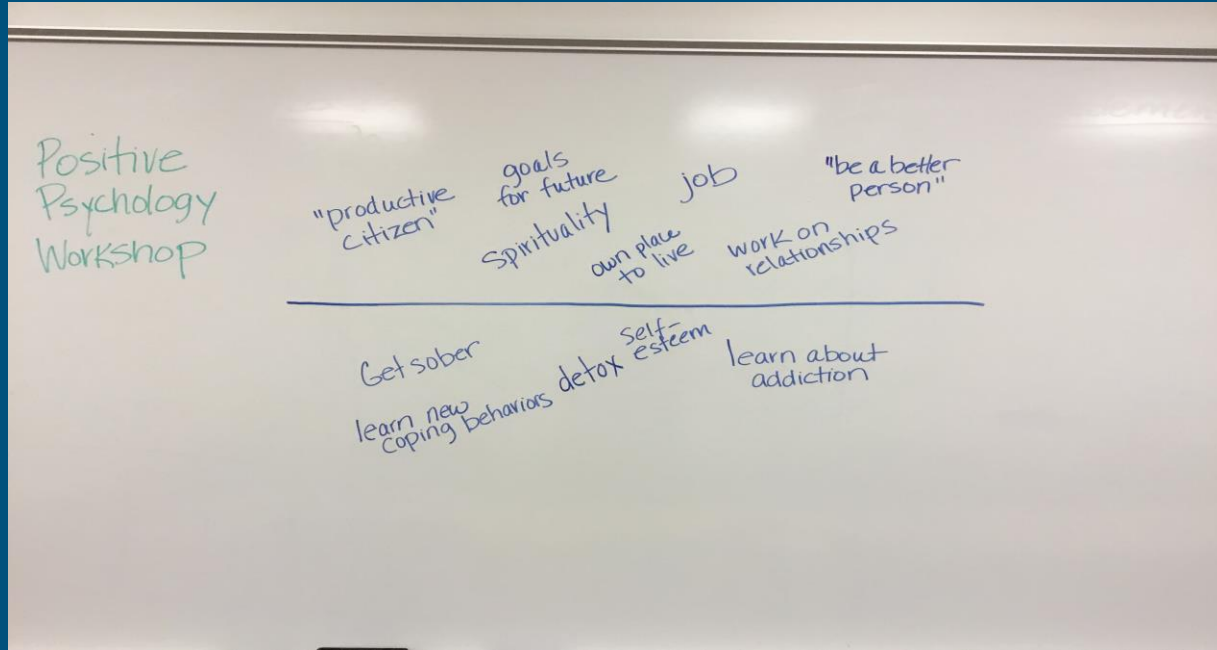
Positive Psychology Workshop

- Workshop, not group
- Same workshop offered once per month (residents turn over every 2-3 weeks)
- One session for men, one session for women, each about 1 hour
- Included interactive opening activity, defining and describing positive psychology, followed by the introduction of positive psychology practices for potential use in the recovery process
- On the week when the workshop was offered, the priest and presenter would integrate the concepts from the workshop into that week's spirituality group

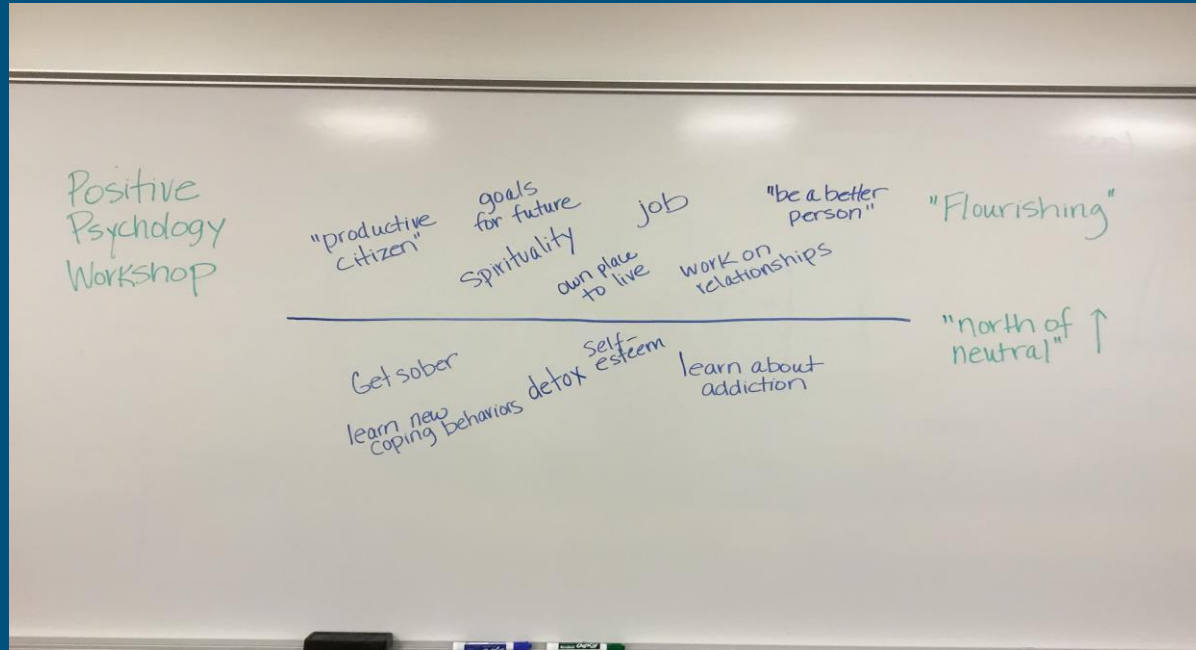
Interactive Activity: What is the goal of addictions treatment? What should it do?



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Positive Psychology/Spirituality Practices Overlap

- Gratitude exercises
- Acts of kindness
- Pleasurable/joy-giving activities

Conclusions

Timeliness of the collaboration: rise in concern for addictions in communities

Respect for roles: clergy vs. social work

Evidence-based practice in the context of spiritual care

Presenter's use of professional expertise and interests in service of the church

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