



An Exploration of Positive Psychology Strategies to Promote Teacher Flourishing

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My darling daughter, Blake, and my supportive husband, Dave, for giving me clarity, hope and a desire to understand how we make the best of this life.

'How do you move further along on your own path toward a good life? First, by recognizing that the good life is not a destination. It is the path itself, and the people who are walking it with you.' (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023)

Thanks for walking with me.

Abstract

Data on teacher wellbeing, or illbeing, paints a bleak picture of a profession suffering from anxiety, stress and burnout (Education Support, 2023). Students need teachers who can model psychological wellbeing and who are functioning optimally (Weare and Gray, 2003). Yet there is a gap in the literature focusing on proactive teacher wellbeing interventions in the UK. There is some support for teachers already suffering from poor mental health, but proactive resources to promote optimum mental health are lacking. The majority of wellbeing initiatives either focus on students (Waters & Loton, 2019) or are reactive - trying to fix an existing problem.

The field of positive psychology has a growing body of literature with empirically validated strategies to improve wellbeing which are resource-free and can be implemented at the individual level (Vanderweele, 2020). Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore a range of positive psychology strategies to promote teacher flourishing. Flourishing is defined in this context as a heightened state of psychological wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). Eight secondary school teachers working across four schools in North West England participated and collaborated in an eight-week online intervention. Using Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework, the intervention explored strategies to increase positive emotions, bolster relationships and support accomplishment. The PERMA Work Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2013) survey was used to measure the impact of the intervention alongside questionnaires for each domain (where teachers rated each strategy) and group interviews.

The findings indicate that flourishing is highly individualistic and therefore teachers need to be offered a range of strategies with autonomy over which strategies to use and how. The data showed the intervention promoted flourishing for this small sample in the short term, but longitudinal studies with larger samples would be needed to determine the extent to which findings can be generalised and to assess the long term impact.

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Introduction

When Martin Seligman, one of positive psychology's central proponents, published 'Flourish' (2011) he found by almost every metric - access to higher education, human rights and transportation - life was better than 50 years before; paradoxically, levels of happiness in the UK decreased during the same period (Seligman,2011). Similarly, Global Mind Project's (2024) survey, capturing 500,000 respondent's perceptions of the impact of psychological competence on their lives across domains such as mood, motivation, cognition and resilience, found Britain the second most unhappy country in the world. Education Support's Wellbeing Index (2023) utilised the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, which has a minimum score of 14 and a maximum of 70; their survey showed the nation's unhappiness is more keenly felt among teachers with a staff wellbeing score of 43.4, well below the national average of 51.40. The level of unhappiness across the nation, and within our schools, suggests a disconnect between the growing literature on flourishing and people's everyday lives. While findings from the field of positive psychology are illuminating in terms of how to flourish, this information is often privy to academics alone (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Researchers (Vanderweele, 2020; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Shankland & Rosset,2016) have begun to resolve this problem, writing accessible articles to encourage a wellbeing focus in a range of settings. Aiming to bridge the gap between wellbeing theory and everyday practices in teachers' lives, this thesis will explore positive psychology strategies to promote teacher flourishing. The research

seeks to understand the psychological barriers to flourishing, which strategies have the greatest impact for participants and the extent to which the intervention promotes flourishing.

Seligman posits the focus of positive psychology is wellbeing, and 'the gold standard for measuring wellbeing is flourishing' (2011:13), positioning it as a heightened state of wellbeing. Through his PERMA framework, which is used to navigate this research, he proposes that flourishing is achieved through the presence of: **p**ositive emotions, **e**ngagement, **r**elationships, **m**eaning and **a**ccomplishment. Vanderweele (2017) criticises such definitions and measurements due to the absence of virtue, which has been shown in philosophical literature to be a key component of flourishing.

Vanderweele (2017) argues that whilst an individual may judge themselves as content with life, they could engage in morally reprehensible behaviour and would not be deemed to be flourishing. As teachers are expected to behave morally and ethically (Department for Education, 2021b), this research assumes that at the very least teachers are not without virtue at work. Therefore, Seligman's (2011) more focussed psychological definition of flourishing guides this research.

Personal Interest and Aim

Positive Psychology is of great personal interest as it provides strategies for how to thrive, rather than survive (Lyubomirsky, 2007), which is needed considering the unhappiness within the profession. I have used positive psychology strategies to improve my wellbeing at work and I am highly motivated to promote flourishing with

other teachers. Understanding strategies to promote teacher flourishing will improve my professional practice, helping me take a more holistic approach to teacher development in my mentoring roles.

Like most teachers, my main purpose is to positively impact the lives of students (Roberts, 2020: 19). Ginott (1972: 5) captures the powerful influence that teachers have on student wellbeing, a notion that is at the heart of my teaching philosophy:

‘...It is my personal approach that creates the climate.

It is my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous...’

In line with the Department for Education’s (DfE) teaching standards, teachers have a responsibility to model ‘the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils’ (DfE, 2021b). If teachers want students to be ‘joyous’, and to behave positively, teachers themselves must cultivate such attributes. By sharing strategies with teachers, my aim is to positively influence their levels of flourishing (a worthy pursuit in its own right) and to widen the reach of this research as these teachers potentially share strategies with students and colleagues.

Context

The eight participating teachers work across four secondary state schools, with one teacher consulting across a number of schools, in the North West of England. As the intervention focuses on individuals enhancing their flourishing, the context of the

schools was deemed to be less pertinent information than teacher wellbeing in the profession overall. The starting point for this thesis is that there is a problem with teacher wellbeing across the profession and within the region. The TES Teacher Wellbeing Report (2024) analysed the responses of 6,600 school staff, and found that in the last year, 74% of staff considered leaving teaching with many feeling that issues were systemic, rather than specific to their school. In 2021-2022, 9.7% of the state school sector - 44,000 teachers - left the classroom (DfE:2023) and in 2022-23, the DfE missed its target for trainees in secondary school by 41% (DfE:2024a). The recruitment and retention crisis is indicative that teachers are not flourishing at work.

Education Support's Teacher Wellbeing Index (2023), a longitudinal survey completed bi-annually for validity, represents the views of 3,004 education staff. Surveys reveal that staff wellbeing is on a downward trajectory. Whilst there is debate about whether teacher wellbeing is worse than other professions (Jerrim et al, 2021), with 83% of secondary teachers claiming they are stressed, 47% experiencing anxiety and 36% experiencing burn out (Education Support, 2023), there is undoubtedly a problem. In North West England, 48% of teachers felt that they were not supported with their mental health and wellbeing (Education Support, 2023), a statistic which puts the region in one of the country's least supported.

Considering tragic cases such as the suicide of Headteacher Ruth Perry (Martin 2023), it could be argued that the government's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (DfE, 2021a) does not go far enough to safeguard teacher wellbeing. Ball's claim that 'performance has no room for caring' (2003:224) is particularly chilling given the

devastating impact of the accountability system on this teacher. The DfE (2024b) has announced an investment of £1.5million to improve workload and support mental health, although it appears a reactive initiative. This research seeks to empower teachers, on a small scale, to be proactive, using positive psychology strategies to flourish.

The Importance of Teacher Flourishing

Learning how to flourish, regardless of profession, could be our life purpose (Aristotle, 2009). The quest for happiness has been described as 'the Holy Grail - the meaning and the purpose of life' (Lyubomirsky, 2007:2). While some researchers question the worthiness of such a pursuit (Ford & Mauss, 2014; Miller, 2008), Lyubomirsky defends the aim as 'serious and legitimate' (2007:2).

Teachers spend minimum of 1,265 hours of directed time in the school building (DfE, 2024c) - so there is a powerful argument that schools are best placed to help teachers to flourish (Norrish, 2015). Teacher wellbeing is paramount for the overall functioning and flourishing of a school: 'Good staff wellbeing is essential for cultivating a mentally healthy school, for retaining and motivating staff and for promoting pupil wellbeing and attainment' (www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk).

The benefits of experiencing subjective wellbeing- the overall judgement that a person makes about the quality of their life (Diener, 1984) - include: increased energy, stronger relationships, more productivity and having qualities such as being well-

liked, and cooperative (Lyubomirsky, 2007). With greater wellbeing comes greater ability to learn, adapt, pay attention and think creatively and happier teachers will be more resilient (Seligman,2011).

There is a gap in the literature on interventions to promote teacher flourishing. Any focus on wellbeing in schools has largely been on students; of the 75 positive psychology interventions reviewed by Waters & Loton (2019), only 2% were whole-school and included staff wellbeing. Using data from their review of 23 teacher wellbeing interventions, Cann et al (2023) note the content covered in multi-foci interventions rarely focus on gratitude or using strengths. Interventions more often address managing emotions through mindfulness and relationships. Only one of these interventions was based in the UK. Therefore, bolstering the literature with strategies that teachers can use to promote flourishing is a worthwhile pursuit (Waters, 2011).

Research Questions

To explore positive psychology strategies to promote teacher flourishing, the following questions guided the research:

RQ1: What are the psychological barriers to flourishing?

RQ2: Which positive psychology strategies could be explored?

RQ3: On which pillars of flourishing do this cohort of teachers need to focus?

RQ4: To what extent does the intervention promote flourishing?

RQ5: Which strategies do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?

Having established the need for a research focus on teacher flourishing, definitions and a justification for the chosen PERMA framework will be explored.

Literature Review

Definitions

The exploration of positive psychology is nascent, therefore definitions and measurements for 'flourishing' or 'wellbeing' have not been agreed (Cabrera and Donaldson, 2024). Essentially, this study seeks to understand what teachers can do to improve their overall happiness. However, Seligman (2011) abhors the term 'happiness', claiming that it is an unusable term for scientific enquiry, but Waldinger and Schulz (2023: 19) argue the term is helpful because 'Nobody says, "How's your human flourishing?"' These terms are used interchangeably in positive psychology literature (Butler and Kern, 2016) which felt natural in this intervention.

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Positive Psychology

As the American Psychological Association President, Seligman broadened the paradigm of psychology, helping psychology move away from a singular focus on pathology and disorder to encompass how to live optimally (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Zimbardo's recent work (2018) on how to create heroes, seems symbolic of how the field of psychology has expanded - whereas his landmark prison study (1999) highlighted the human capacity for assuming oppressive roles, his recent work focusses on people harnessing characteristics to be at their best. Positive psychology does not replace traditional psychology, rather it *adds* and

broadens our understanding of the whole spectrum of human behaviour (Gable and Haidt, 2005).

Flourishing

Optimal mental health is not simply the absence of dysfunction or mental illness, rather it is living 'within an optimal range of human functioning' (Fredrickson & Losada 2005:678). Flourishing is defined as 'to grow vigorously; to thrive... to be in one's prime' (Collins, n.d). Waldinger and Schulz (2023) like the dynamic, continual sense of development of the word - a helpful lexicon to use in this intervention where teachers will actively participate to improve their wellbeing. Traditional definitions of flourishing include elements like character and virtue (Vanderweele, 2017) but this research uses Seligman's definition, where flourishing is confined to optimum psychological wellbeing.

Theoretical Framework

To provide a meaningful structure to the intervention and data collection, a theoretical framework that I could operationalise was required, so Seligman's PERMA framework was selected. Within the literature, the main debate concerns how flourishing is achieved: whilst some theories favour hedonic components, 'the experience of joy, contentment or positive wellbeing', and others favour eudemonic, 'a sense that one's life is good, meaningful and worthwhile' (Lyubomirsky, 2007: 32),

Seligman's theory combines both. Theorists have proposed models which include different domains of wellbeing, but there is a shared epistemological assumption that the topic of flourishing is multifaceted and requires a multidimensional framework (Butler & Kern, 2016).

Seligman's (2011) epistemological assumptions are that flourishing is the aim of positive psychology and flourishing can be studied, measured and improved. His framework, PERMA, consists of five domains which antecedents to flourishing: **p**ositive emotions, **e**ngagement, **r**elationships, **m**eaning and **a**ccomplishment. These 'building blocks of well-being' (Seligman, 2018:2) provide the opportunity for interventions to improve each building block independently of the others (Cabrera and Donaldson, 2024). The actionable elements (for example, increasing positive emotions) are ideal for this practical exploration of flourishing. It is promising that the OECD framework for teacher wellbeing (Viac & Fraser, 2020) acknowledges the need for the profession to address the issue, however for the purpose of this research, a framework created with positive psychology strategies in mind was selected. Seligman (2018) acknowledges that his framework may not comprehensively cover all aspects of wellbeing, but for this intervention, five domains, as opposed to Huppert and So's ten (2013), for example, was more appropriate. This research focuses on what individual teachers can do for themselves, so elements such as 'autonomy' in Ryan and Deci's (2000) framework would be a challenge to action at the individual level.

Cabrera and Donaldson (2024) identify PERMA as one of the most significant positive psychology frameworks. In their systematic review of the empirical literature on

PERMA, they analysed 111 peer-reviewed articles on PERMA interventions; of the 170,544 participants, 5,117 were teachers. Researchers identified the work of Kern et al. (2014) as having shown positive association between PERMA and job satisfaction with a sample of teachers. Capturing the impact on workers more broadly, a positive association was shown between PERMA and happiness at work (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022). The review provided empirical evidence that improving wellbeing through the domains of PERMA leads to flourishing at work – a compelling reason for the selection of the framework.

Criticism for PERMA comes from Goodman et al. (2017) who claim that PERMA has a correlation of .98 with subjective wellbeing and each domain of PERMA had a mean correlation of .61 with each other. They argue that PERMA simply measures subjective wellbeing. Seligman defended his framework claiming that subjective wellbeing may be a useful overall measure, but it does not provide specific information to inspire action to improve wellbeing; whereas with PERMA, it is possible to identify the domain that requires improvement and work on it independently through intervention (Caberera and Donaldson, 2024) - a helpful aspect of the model for this short intervention where not all elements can be explicitly covered. The value of measuring PERMA appears to be in the information to be gleaned about which domain to focus upon, rather than using an overall PERMA score (Jimenez et al., 2023).

Having evaluated PERMA and noting that tools to measure PERMA at work (Butler & Kern, 2013) were available, I concluded this was the most user-friendly and actionable

framework for this research. I will now move on to answer RQ1 by exploring the psychological obstacles to flourishing.

Psychological Barriers to Flourishing

Some research suggests that people have an inaccurate understanding of what makes them happy (Wilson & Gilbert, 2005), therefore one of the aims of this research is to help teachers understand what helps and hinders their flourishing. Understanding the negativity bias, hedonic adaptation, the arrival fallacy and the brain's propensity for making comparisons, provides a greater appreciation of the impact that each strategy may have in overcoming them. Positive psychology strategies can be used to overcome these obstacles and help people to flourish (Vanderweele, 2020).

Humans evolved with a natural negativity bias to help spot dangers in their environment (Baumeister, 2001). When threat is detected, energy usually used by the brain is diverted to the body's fight or flight response. This results in poorer memory, decision making and reduced creativity (Granville-Chapman & Bidston, 2020) - this is not conducive to effective teaching - and yet teachers are often in this state of stress and overwhelm (Education Support, 2023), so strategies from the positive emotions domain are needed to counteract the negativity bias (Shankland and Rosset, 2016).

Due to hedonic adaptation (Brickman and Campbell, 1971), people constantly alter the goalposts of their lives (see Diener et al., 2009 for revisions to this theory which suggest the concept is more nuanced). Whilst a new job promotion or exam success initially provides happiness, people adapt and start to yearn for the next milestone. People also adapt their definition of a successful, flourishing life by comparison. Human brains do not think in absolute terms, instead they make judgements based on comparisons (Santos, 2018). Strategies from the accomplishment domain to help people to define their metric for success, and stay present are helpful to thwart the impact of hedonic adaptation and comparisons.

Ben-Shahar (2007) cautions against the 'arrival fallacy', where people believe they will flourish once they have accomplished X, Y or Z. He recommends creating an atmosphere of growth and finding a way to enjoy the journey. This is in-keeping with Howard's advice that teachers should 'master a sense of incompleteness' (2020:105) and instead, celebrate small victories. Strategies from positive emotion and accomplishment help teachers to practice this philosophy and appreciate the present.

The decision was made to focus on three domains of PERMA to explore in depth but keeping the content broad enough to cover enough strategies for all teachers to take something of value (Cann et al, 2023). The literature review will now explore positive psychology strategies from the domains that were agreed upon in collaboration with the participants (positive emotions, relationships and accomplishment). The strategies

explored in the literature review formed the basis of the intervention and help to answer RQ2 - 'Which positive psychology strategies could be explored to promote flourishing?

Positive Emotions

Traditionally, emotions and education were viewed as unrelated entities; however, positive psychology, and specifically positive education acknowledges that school experience and learning is heavily influenced by the emotions of staff and students (Norrish, 2015). Whether a person will flourish (or languish) can be determined by the frequency and intensity of their positive emotions - or what researchers refer to as 'positive affect' (Diener, 1991). Analysing data from 487 teachers (Dreer & Gouase, 2022), noting the German educational context, researchers found there was a substantial difference between the frequency of positive emotions experienced by teachers who were and were not satisfied with their jobs - therefore researchers recommend increasing positive emotions to improve job satisfaction and retain teachers.

There is debate about whether the very pursuit of happiness (as an emotion) is paradoxical because in the pursuit of feeling good, people set unrealistic expectations, misjudge which activities are conducive to feeling good and they constantly assess feelings (Ford & Mauss, 2014). Therefore, the focus must be on creating the *conditions* for positive emotions rather than chasing the emotion (Catalino, 2015)

and on automating these habits (Ford & Mauss, 2014). Accepting negative emotions and appreciating that they often provide useful information is important in overall emotional wellbeing (Norrish, 2015).

Gratitude

Morgan et al. (2014) caution that philosophers sometimes dictate how, when and why gratitude should be expressed. This must not be a deterrent for the teachers in this study, therefore they should have autonomy with their application of gratitude.

Whilst the following findings are correlational rather than causational, grateful people experience an increase in energy, helpfulness and relative happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2007) and gratitude bolsters relationships (Seligman, 2011). However, Morgan et al. (2014) criticise the tendency to present gratitude as solely positive, highlighting the close association with negative emotions such as guilt and indebtedness.

In Emmons & McCullough's (2003) randomised trial with 192 participants (though notably undergraduates which isn't a representative of the general population), one group of participants expressed gratitude for ten weeks - each week, they penned five things they were grateful for, while the control groups considered five difficulties or big events. The gratitude group were more fulfilled, hopeful and exercised more however this did not provide an overall increase in positive affect. The researchers'

second, more intense study, had the same participants keep a daily gratitude diary and this group did increase their positive emotions - highlighting that frequency plays a role in increasing positive emotions. In contrast, in Lyubomirsky's (2007) intervention where participants counted their blessings, the participants who did the task once a week increased their happiness but participants counting blessings three times a week did not. Therefore, the frequency of strategy use needs to be explored by the individual teacher to have impact without becoming a chore.

Teachers are often deterred from wellbeing initiatives which are complicated, require expertise and resources (Shankland and Rosset, 2016), therefore it is promising to see gratitude activities that require little time or preparation have a positive impact on positive emotions, though this will vary for individuals.

Prioritising Positivity

To counteract the natural negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001) and increase positive emotions, teachers can habitually plan small moments into their day that naturally make them feel good (Catalino, Algoe, & Fredrickson, 2014). With their sample of 235 adults, Catalino et al. (2014) found that people who intentionally create opportunities for positivity improve their relationships, are more present and self-compassionate. The intensity of positive emotions is less important than the frequency (Diener, 1991) as the emotions from a single event quickly fade (Catalino, 2015). According to Fredrickson's Broaden and Build theory (2004), experiencing

frequent positive emotions will help teachers to broaden their attention, problem solve easier and because of building a set of skills to think creatively, will reduce stress; pertinent information for stressed teachers (Education Support, 2023).

Given the importance of autonomy to teachers (Day and Gu, 2007) this is an empowering strategy as it gives control to the individual to increase positive emotions in a highly personalised way.

Savouring

To hinder the impact of hedonic adaptation, researchers recommend savouring - which they define as creating, deepening and extending enjoyment through thoughts or actions (Bryant and Veroff, 2007). Samios et al. (2023) claim savouring at work is especially important for teachers because they may have limited leisure time to experience positive events.

In a randomised experiment (Bryant and Veroff, 2007), both groups of participants were instructed to take a 20-minute walk each day for a week but only the experimental group were told to pay attention to the positive things in their environment. This group experienced greater positive affect. In their whole-school approach to positive education, staff at Geelong Grammar referred to this strategy as 'hunting the good stuff' (Norrish, 2015).

With their sample of 110 Australian school teachers (though convenience sampling was utilised which could hinder generalisability), researchers (Samios et al., 2023) used a range of validated psychometric measures to assess teachers' propensity to

savour, their sense of meaning in life and their response to their most stressful work event. Findings highlighted that savouring the moment buffers against stress and increases meaning, both significant factors given the retention crisis.

Savouring is a simple way to improve wellbeing (Vanderweele, 2020) which is helpful for teachers with limited time (Howard, 2020). Lyubomirsky (2007:196) warns the belief that 'tomorrow will be better than today' prevents people from living in the moment. Given the chaotic nature of the school day and the relentlessness of the academic year (Howard, 2020), teachers will need to consciously work on this strategy (Santos, 2018) to increase their positive emotions.

Kindness

Another way to increase positive emotions is to frequently complete acts of kindness (Buchanan & Bardi, 2010). Vanderweele (2020) cautions that more research is required as the evidence base relies upon a limited number of small, randomised trials, but he acknowledges that this research does show acts of kindness contribute positively to increasing positive emotions.

In Buchanan & Bardi's (2010) experiment, 86 participants (aged 18-60) spent ten days completing daily acts in one of three randomly assigned groups: acts of kindness, acts of novelty or no acts. Using The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al, 1985), a tool to measure overall wellbeing which has internal reliability and temporal stability (Pavot & Diener, 2009), researchers found that completing new and kind acts positively impact wellbeing. In their analysis of Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade's

(2005) finding that participants who completed all five acts of kindness on one day (for six weeks) rather than one each day, Buchanan & Bardi (2010) posit that novelty plays an important role and that the latter group may have adapted to the strategy, thus reducing its impact. Therefore, the teachers in this study should find varied ways to be kind. Teachers' actions could create a culture of kindness as they may inspire students and staff with their own acts of generosity (Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

This strategy could support teachers' flourishing according to Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self Determination Theory: teachers can have autonomy over the act, being kind will build competence because individuals perceive themselves as useful, resourceful and selfless (Lyubomirsky, 2007), and the strategy creates the feeling of relatedness as the act of kindness involves other people. However, Sherman (2016) cautions that individuals can compromise too much with this strategy. By the nature of the profession, teachers are constantly giving, this is potentially problematic as according to Weare (2015) teachers need to have realistic expectations of themselves and impose healthy boundaries. Therefore, acts of kindness must be completed at a frequency that energises rather than depletes teachers.

To conclude this section and to answer RQ2, using strategies such as gratitude, prioritising positivity, savouring and acts of kindness have been empirically proven to increase positive emotions in the short term (more longitudinal research is needed to measure impact over time). Strategies are relatively quick and easy to implement (Vanderweele, 2020), though willpower is required to form these habits (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2018). Increasing the frequency of the individual teachers' positive

emotions is important because the domain contributes to teacher flourishing and because the emotional needs of the teachers must be met before they can model emotional regulation and wellbeing to students (Weare and Gray, 2003).

Relationships

This strand of the PERMA framework acknowledges the vital role that meaningful relationships and a sense of connectedness play in an individual's ability to flourish (Norrish, 2015). This domain is especially pertinent for such a socially interactive profession; relationships with students and staff are at the heart of the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2021b) and they can have a significant impact on teacher wellbeing. For example, Hargreaves (2000) interviewed 60 teachers and found that teacher-student relationships can be a great source of positive emotions; conversely, problematic relationships can have a negative impact on teacher wellbeing (Ofsted, 2019). Teacher attendance and retention is improved with positive relationships (Howard, 2020), which is helpful because, 66.2% of teachers were absent due to sickness for an average of 8 days in 2022-2023 (DfE, 2024a). It is promising that positive relationships between colleagues can contribute to happiness at work (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) but it is concerning that Education Support's survey (2023) demonstrated that loneliness at work is experienced twice as much by people working in schools. Considering Seligman's (2004) claim that happier people spend more time in company, it is perhaps surprising that teachers, who are very rarely in solitude, are lonely and suggests that the *quality* of relationships is important.

Positive Losado Ratio

Losado and Heaphy (2004) analysed exchanges between managers and their team members across 60 business teams. They found that most teams had a 1.8:1 positive to negative comments ratio; underperforming teams had a ratio of 0.36:1 and high performing teams had a 5.6:1. Whilst the ratio of positive to negative is questioned by Brown et al. (2013), the notion of being more positive than negative is not disputed. Considering professional adults in business (the original sample) are likely to need less reassurance and positivity than students, it could be argued that the ratio needs to be even more positive for teacher-student relationships, though Seligman (2011) notes that a ratio of 13:1 gives the impression of being insincere. Strategies such as identifying what went well, 'hunting the positive' (Norrish, 2015), and posing questions which focus people on the positive (Seligman et al., 2009), allow for a greater emphasis on the positive aspects of school life and were used to great effect at Geelong Grammar (Norrish, 2015). Overcoming the cognitive bias to pay more attention to our own contributions (Kahneman, 2011) to instead notice the contribution of others helps to show respect (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023) and bolster relationships.

Small Social Interactions

In keeping with Wilson & Gilbert's (2005) idea that people are poor at predicting what will make them happy, research shows that people underestimate the positive impact of human connection, focusing instead on what is measurable - it is easier to

quantify money or career success than the quality of a relationship, and therefore people fail to prioritise relationships (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023). This was robustly illustrated by Epley & Schroeder (2014) across 9 experiments, though notably in an American context where cultural factors may influence the degree to which findings translate. Participants on public transport were asked to predict whether they would be happier to travel in solitude or to have a connection with a stranger. Participants predicted they would be happier alone, but having a social connection even with a stranger gave a happiness boost – a helpful finding for teachers often working in buildings with hundreds of people (many of whom they don't know well). Therefore, seeking opportunities for small moments of social interaction throughout the school day, can provide a positive emotion boost for teachers. Epley & Schroeder (2014) suggest that a reason for avoiding social interaction is interference with goals – therefore teachers could look for opportunities, such as spending time in the staff room - depending on the culture (Frankel, 2010) - rather than working through breaks, to create the opportunity for small interactions to improve their wellbeing.

Active Listening

Building connection through listening and showing 'respectful engagement' (Dutton, 2003:2) is an essential skill for teachers. The largest study of human happiness began in 1938 at Harvard University with an initial sample of 725 men, which then expanded to include their wives, children and grandchildren. Researchers studied participants over their lifetimes (making this work significant in terms of sample size and longevity), so researchers were able to identify reliable 'predictors of human

thriving' (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023:20). The researchers recommend cultivating curiosity by posing interesting questions, listening avidly and considering the person's perspective to promote rich conversations and build relationships.

Brown (2013), whose work explores vulnerability, proposes showing empathy, which supports connection, in contrast to sympathy which prevents connection; she suggests listening carefully and resisting the urge to find solutions, instead providing space for people to share their feelings. Granville-Champman & Bidston (2020) recommend paraphrasing what the person has said, posing questions for clarification and ending with a summary. The challenge for teachers, is fully listening often requires unlimited time, which they rarely have given the highly structured nature of the school day (Howard, 2020). Educational research has focussed on teaching listening skills to students, rather than improving teachers' listening skills, which suggests listening may be an overlooked area of pedagogy.

Waldinger and Schulz's (2023) fundamental finding speaks to the value of relationships for flourishing: 'Good relationships keep us healthier and happier. Period.' (2023:10). Given the vast amounts of data this study analysed, it can be relied upon to suggest that teachers should use strategies, such as establishing a positive Losado ratio; actively listening; embracing opportunities for social interaction and using strategies from the positive emotions domain to bolster relationships to promote flourishing. The centrality of relationships to wellbeing is captured by Norrish who states, 'a person cannot flourish in isolation' (2015:71).

Accomplishment

Accomplishment is a highly individualistic concept and is influenced by the stage of a teacher's career (Day & Gu, 2007). When considering what accomplishment means, teachers often focus on external rewards, job titles and tangible accolades (Norrish, 2015) but focussing on intrinsically motivated aspects of the role, rather than external, is more conducive to flourishing (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Positive education aims to expand the parameters for the definition of accomplishment to place greater emphasis on the journey, striving towards and not just *achieving* meaningful goals. Therefore, the intervention is more concerned with the subjective nature of accomplishment - how teachers personally define and enjoy accomplishment, rather than traditional objective measurements.

In a broad sense, the accomplishment intervention will seek to help teachers to flourish using Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job-crafting. One facet of job-crafting is working more effectively, reducing dull tasks and increasing challenging tasks to "shape [work] so that it better contributes to the well-being of oneself and others" (Vanderweele, 2020: 85).

Optimism

According to Lyubomirsky (2007:87),

'...how you think about yourself, your world and other people is more important to your happiness than the objective circumstances of your life.'

Likewise, Seligman (2011) claims emotions are often in response to *beliefs* about adversity not the adversity itself. Having the belief and self-confidence in one's skills

and capabilities to accomplish goals, what Bandura (1997) terms 'self-efficacy', improves teacher's evaluations of their working lives (Song et al. 2020:23). Teachers cannot always control their circumstances at work, but adopting positive mindsets and beliefs is within their power.

An understanding of neuroplasticity is a good place to start for adapting thought processes and beliefs. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to re-wire itself; for example, because black cab drivers need to know all routes within six miles of Charring Cross Station, they develop excellent spatial awareness. This is reflected in brain scans showing larger hippocampi than non-cab drivers, demonstrating a physical change in their brains through repeated thought patterns (Woollett & Maguire, 2011), resulting in greater accomplishment- in this case, remembering all routes. The simple strategy of teaching participants about neuroplasticity has been shown to build resilience and support accomplishment (Paunesku et al., 2015). Learning about neuroplasticity may make it easier for teachers to envisage forming new neural pathways, even for those who have been in the profession for many years and have established beliefs.

In an optimism course, students were taught to look for evidence to swap negative explanations for more optimistic possibilities. Participants' ability to reframe their beliefs had a long-lasting impact; two years after the course they experienced less depression when compared to a control group (Gillham & Reivich, 1999). A flaw with such studies that claim to focus on wellbeing, is they report negative outcomes e.g. symptom reduction instead of positive outcomes to assess the impact of an intervention (Norrish, 2015). The same strategy is used as part of the Penn Resiliency

Programme - a wellbeing intervention that has been robustly tested in studies across the world (Forgeard & Seligman, 2012). Researchers caution that unrealistic optimism can result in poor decision making (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003), so realistic judgements are needed.

A challenge for teachers with this strategy is that a busy work environment and a cognitively demanding job (Howard, 2020) makes it hard to notice the information to interrogate beliefs. Brains process approximately 11 million pieces of sensory information per second (DiSalvo, 2013); the average person has 60,000 thoughts per day (Sasson, 2001) and makes 35,000 decisions (Hoomans, 2015). To make sense of the world, in a concept known as confirmation bias, brains seek information to support beliefs (Kahneman, 2011) – people see what they expect to see and discount the rest. To illustrate the brain's ability to discount information, what researchers call 'inattention blindness', Simons and Chabris (1999) instructed participants to count how many times team members on one team passed the ball. Whilst focussing on this task, many participants didn't notice the person dressed as a gorilla walking through the game. These findings were replicated by Drew and Wolfe (2013). The studies show how easy it is to discount obvious information, which ultimately shapes beliefs. Therefore, it is a helpful strategy for teachers to be mindful of their beliefs, and where appropriate, look for evidence to challenge and reframe them. In the intervention, this strategy was referred to as 'challenging limiting beliefs' which used more operational language than the idea of broadly being more optimistic.

Strengths

Seligman (2004) posits people should design their lives to make the most of their strengths, especially in their jobs; consequently, engagement increases and accomplishment improves. According to Gallup data, employees who use their strengths daily are 8% more productive and, significant for the retention crisis, 15% less likely to quit (Flade et al, 2015). People who regularly use their strengths are 18 times more likely to flourish (Hone et al, 2015). The Values in Action Survey of Character Strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2005), is a reliable, valid and widely used survey which identifies a person's signature character strengths, out of a possible 24, though critics of positive psychology dispute the choice of strengths included (e.g. transcendence) and omitted (e.g. self-respect) (Kristjánsson, 2013).

In a randomised trial, participants who found a novel way to use one of their five signature strengths every day for a week, reported greater levels of happiness and the effects lasted for six months after the intervention (Seligman et al., 2005). Support for the strategy comes from Harzer and Ruch (2012) who found that people frequently using four of their signature strengths are more likely to refer to their job as a calling. This is interesting for teaching, which was traditionally considered a vocation (Hansen, 1995), but the current recruitment and retention crisis suggests this may not be the case at present – teachers using their strengths may shift this perspective.

Goals

People who have meaningful goals are more fulfilled than those who don't (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999). Goal setting instils a sense of purpose, meaning and control (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

When setting goals, language choices are important: setting an approach goal e.g. 'I will secure a new job role' rather than an avoidance goal e.g. 'I don't want to be stuck in this current role' is more conducive to flourishing as avoidance goals increase anxiety and reduce happiness (Elliot et al., 1997). Using negative language e.g. 'stop worrying' prompts the brain to focus on the directive e.g. 'worrying' (Harris, 2023). Using language focussed on the desired behaviour e.g. 'stay calm', helps with accomplishment and positive statements promote positive emotions (Fredrickson and Losado's (2005).

The salient ingredients of the accomplishment domain are summed up to great effect by Norrish:

When we are using our strengths, when we are intrinsically motivated, when we believe in ourselves - that is when we can perform at our best while enjoying the process and not just the "finish line" (2015: 224).

Teachers need to broaden their definition of what success means for them at the time in their career (Day and Gu, 2007), to challenge limiting beliefs to be more optimistic and to frame goals positively.

Conclusion

According to Lyubomirsky and Sheldon's (2005) pie chart aspect of their Integrative Model of Sustainable Happiness, 40% of a person's overall subjective wellbeing can be improved through intentional activity, with 50% due to genetics and 10% life circumstances. This model inspired many researchers to explore how happiness can

be improved (Newman, 2020). Criticism comes from Brown and Rohrer (2019)- though Lyubomirsky and Sheldon (2019) accept their critique that the influence of intentional activity on happiness may be less than 40%, they maintain that people can still engage in meaningful activities to improve their happiness. This is congruent with Vanderweele's claim that 'The evidence from numerous randomised trials has now established a number of do-it-yourself activities that can be used to improve various aspects of well-being' (2020: 79). Such activities have been explored in the literature review to understand the strategies that can be explored in the intervention to promote teacher flourishing by increasing positive emotions, bolstering relationships and improving accomplishment.

To answer RQ1, the teachers need to understand and use strategies to override the natural negativity bias, thwart hedonic adaptation, resist the 'arrival fallacy' and challenge cognitive biases.

In response to RQ2, a flourishing teacher is one who creates the conditions (Catalino et al., 2014) to experience positive emotions frequently (Diener, 1991). Strategies to increase positive emotions include expressing gratitude, prioritising positivity, completing acts of kindness and savouring.

A flourishing teacher will have meaningful relationships. Teachers can: actively listen and work on empathetic rather than sympathetic responses; embrace small moments of social interaction; work on making more positive than negative comments and employ the strategies from positive emotions with a focus on other people.

Having a broad and personalised definition of accomplishment (Norrish, 2015) which moves beyond performative metrics and speaks to their values (Granville-Chapman & Bidston, 2020) can promote flourishing. Strategies could include identifying and using strengths, challenging and reframing beliefs and setting specific and meaningful goals.

The PERMA framework has been used to add coherence and structure to the review and intervention. Whilst the domains can be measured and worked upon independently (Seligman, 2018), the literature has made it clear that the domains undoubtedly influence each other. For example, when exploring the link between positive mood and task performance (accomplishment), Tsai, Chen & Liu (2007) found that energy, perseverance and positive mood were enhanced by positive interactions (relationships), which improved task performance. Showing that relationships impact positive mood and positive mood impacts accomplishment. Similarly, relationships affect engagement as the chance of a worker being engaged is increased seven-fold if they have a best friend at work (Rath 2007). The elements of the PERMA framework complement each other. Whilst the domains of engagement and meaning haven't been explicitly explored in the intervention, based on this finding in the literature, they could be influenced as a by-product of the intervention.

Having answered RQ1-What are the psychological barriers to flourishing? and RQ2 - Which positive psychology strategies could be explored? I will explain and justify the research design.

Methodology

A cross-sectional, mixed-methods design was employed to explore positive psychology strategies with the anticipated outcome of improving teacher flourishing.

My Role Leading the Intervention

Granville-Chapman & Bidston (2020) claim to inspire others to flourish, the leader must be committed to their message, be flourishing themselves and be trusted.

Therefore, alongside building my expertise through reading and creating the intervention, I used the strategies to improve my flourishing and built trust with participants by sharing my experiences.

Design of the Intervention Content

Based on their review of 23 teacher wellbeing interventions, Cann et al., (2023) discovered the most promising improvements in mental wellbeing came from multi-faceted interventions because teachers found an activity, amongst the many available, that addressed their individual needs. Whilst the impact of each individual strategy may be modest, utilizing numerous strategies could increase the potential to promote flourishing (Vanderweele, 2020). Cann et al. (2023) also found when participants committed to weekly meetings (for a period of between four and nine weeks), wellbeing was enhanced. Therefore, a multi-foci (covering positive emotions, relationships and achievement) intervention exploring a range of simple and easy-to-implement (Dreer & Gouase 2022) positive psychology strategies (explored in the

literature review) was delivered in eight weekly sessions so teachers could use the strategies with the best person-activity fit. Teachers appreciate control over their own learning (Day & Gu, 2007), therefore once participants had tried all the strategies in the weekly sessions, they were invited to apply the most personally impactful strategies to their everyday lives. Asking for details about the strategies they chose to use and to rate their impact helped to answer RQ5- 'Which studies and strategies from the intervention do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?' The intervention and data collection were structured according to Seligman's PERMA framework, making it easier for participants to assess the impact of each domain in isolation; though at times this created a rigidity with participants analysing which domain strategies belonged to, which is a detail irrelevant to their wellbeing. Striking the balance between breadth and depth was challenging as the aim was to arm teachers with a range of strategies whilst also ensuring they understood the scientific basis for the strategies. Please see Appendix A for an overview of the intervention content.

Online Delivery Method

In reviewing online positive psychology interventions, researchers note that combining positive psychology with online delivery opens opportunities to provide necessary mental health tools (Mitchell et al., 2010). The intervention was delivered using Microsoft Teams to create accessibility and convenience, - a priority of mental wellbeing initiatives (Mitchell et al., 2010) - for teachers participating from

different schools. Considering the contagious impact of negative emotions (Hatfield et al., 2009), the intention of inviting teachers from different schools was to create an atmosphere of growth and prevent complaints about a single school. A weakness of the online delivery is the diminished opportunity for organic moments of connection, which given the research on the power of social connection, may have reduced the impact of the intervention. Though this could be offset by the convenience of the online delivery method for participants.

Collaboration

Collaboration with participants helped to answer RQ3 - 'On which pillars of wellbeing do this cohort of teachers need to focus?' I felt that the most impactful use of intervention time would be to focus on positive emotions, relationships and accomplishment, largely because they are the most actionable domains and I intended to have some input from participants within those domains. However, my research highlighted the benefits of involving teachers in the design of the intervention to optimize engagement and meet participants' needs (Cann et al, 2023). Corroborating the work of Ryan and Deci (2001), Granville-Chapman (2024) included a participatory phase in research on how school leaders can promote flourishing, and reported that teachers valued autonomy. Therefore, to confirm that my initial hypothesis was correct and that these domains would in fact be impactful, participants in this research were able to vote for three domains of PERMA to explicitly explore and completed the PERMA Work Profiler and I shared and discussed

the data with them. This collaboration allowed me to consider participants' needs and values (White, 2016) and ethically, respected their views (Granville-Chapman, 2024).

A colleague with experience of delivering wellbeing sessions generously collaborated in the early design stages. Her feedback to reduce lecture-style content created the opportunity for participants to be active in their knowledge acquisition about flourishing; she encouraged me to reconsider my structure - introducing key concepts like neuroplasticity and psychological barriers early allowed me to reinforce key ideas throughout the intervention. She identified areas to tighten semantics, for example changing the question 'What does mental health mean to you?' to capture more specific information: 'Define mental health'. A discussion about the personal nature of wellbeing prompted me to explore participants' definitions and measurements of flourishing, rather than using a generic definition.

Time was set aside each session for participants to share advice on how they were using the strategies in their settings, which helped others to vary the way they used them, which influenced findings by increasing their impact (Lyubormirsky, 2007). Contributions throughout the intervention (the quiz at the beginning of each session, ongoing discussions, and final questionnaires) helped me to understand which information resonated and which needed re-teaching.

Research Instruments

Roberts (2002) encourages wellbeing researchers to establish an aim which can be assessed and measured. Cann et al. (2023) highlighted a lack of robust evidence to

support positive education interventions, and researchers suggested that the way PERMA is often measured needs to be more robust (Caberera and Donaldson, 2024). Therefore, a mixed-methods design was employed using validated surveys (measuring positive outcomes), quizzes, a questionnaire designed for the research, and group interviews. The table below outlines the data collected to answer each research question (RQ).

Table 1

Data collection method used to answer research questions

<u>Question</u>	<u>Data</u>
RQ1: What are the psychological barriers to flourishing?	Literature
RQ2: What are some of the possible positive psychology strategies that could be explored?	Literature
RQ3: On which pillars of flourishing do this cohort of teachers need to focus?	Vote PERMA Work Profiler Discussion
RQ4: To what extent does the intervention promote flourishing?	PERMA Work Profiler Interviews Questionnaire
RQ5: Which strategies do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?	Discussions Questionnaire Interviews

As a springboard to answer RQ4 'To what extent does the intervention promote flourishing?', Kern & Butler's (2013) PERMA Profiler at Work survey was used at the beginning and end of the intervention to measure wellbeing. As the questionnaire is based on the PERMA model, it is simple to use the data from the questionnaire to evaluate different domains of the intervention and provide insightful data in a short

timeframe (Edwards & Talbot, 1999). Time was allocated within the first and last session for participants to complete surveys negating the poor response rate often associated with surveys (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Though Vanderweele (2017) claims physical health is an important aspect of flourishing, the reduced version, omitting questions on physical health and negative emotion was used to keep the data focussed on the three domains explored in the intervention.

Vanderweele (2020) posits the questions themselves can be a strategy for introspection and can inspire change, likewise participants in the Harvard study gained helpful insights from the questionnaires and interviews (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023). The survey was chosen to be valuable to the participants as an educational tool and a way of tracking their personal flourishing. Whilst the PERMA Profiler was a useful starting point for measuring teachers' flourishing, the qualitative data provided through discussions, open-ended questions and interviews was more insightful for evaluating the impact of the intervention as participants' perceptions of their own wellbeing is more meaningful than a test score.

To solidify previous learning, participants completed a weekly quiz using Microsoft Forms. Multiple choice questions were used to quickly assess basic understanding of the content and, ethically, I wanted to keep the intervention engaging and fun without participants feeling like they were being tested. Designing questions that were appropriate for their skill kept them engaged (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and gave a positive emotion boost through a sense of accomplishment. Open-ended questions fostered collaboration such as 'Is there anything specific that you would like us to

cover?’ - allowing me to design elements of the intervention in response to teachers’ needs. Likewise, open questions such as ‘What have you remembered that I haven’t asked you about?’ allowed me to broaden the scope, preventing key information and patterns being omitted (Norrish, 2015). Field notes were used to capture participants’ authentic contributions (Kawulich, 2005).

To answer RQ5 ‘Which strategies do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?’, a five-point Likert-style scale was used to assess participants’ attitude towards each strategy because they are reliable and simple, though they lack sophistication (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). Therefore, the questionnaires used open-ended questions allowing participants to provide detailed examples of how they used strategies and the impact on their flourishing.

To triangulate data and create a full picture of the impact of the strategies, participants attended an online group interview, creating opportunity for participants to expand their answers with specific details, as is commonplace with interviews (Bryman, 2012). Group interviews were chosen as a further opportunity to foster connection and for participants to collaborate, learning different ways of using the strategies.

Reliability

When considering their measurement of PERMA, Butler and Kern (2016) state three items are necessary to reliably represent each domain, which their PERMA Work Profiler does. On this basis, the questionnaires were designed to comprehensively

capture information about each domain and consisted of nine questions (which upon reflection was possibly too labour-intensive for participants) capturing the impact of each strategy with examples of strategies in use.

Responses to surveys can be influenced by multiple factors, such as emotional state and external events (Edwards & Talbot, 1999). Therefore, a range of data collection methods were used to establish an overall picture of the impact of the intervention. The repetition of surveys at start and end points, use of weekly quizzes, discussions and interviews allowed me to collect data over a ten-week period, mitigating the impact of influencing factors, increasing the reliability of the measures.

The intervention was conducted between May and July - a period with distinct exam pressures for teachers. Despite what teachers may say, researchers claim there is no pattern throughout the academic calendar linked to teacher wellbeing (Jerim et al., 2021). For consistency, the intervention was delivered at the same time, every Wednesday evening for eight weekly sessions.

Whilst the content of the intervention and the measurement tools could be replicated with ease (available in Appendix), it is difficult to separate my impact on participant engagement (Bakker, 2005) in terms of my own engagement and delivery style. As noted by the researchers from the longest study of happiness, 'The point is that every study is a product of its time and the human beings who conduct it'. (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023: 16). However, the key finding is the strategies teachers use to flourish are idiosyncratic. The mixed-methods approach creates the opportunity for the individual's preferences and progress to be captured and therefore similar results could be replicated with other participants.

Validity

The literature review, which underpinned the strategies used and the design of the intervention, explored reliable, peer-reviewed sources and empirically validated strategies, though as noted, some strategies were tested on relatively small samples.

The validity of the PERMA Profiler (upon which the Work Profiler is based) has been tested on 30,000 participants to ensure that the questions are accurately measuring each domain. The measurement tool 'demonstrates acceptable model fit, internal and cross time consistency, and evidence for content, convergent, and divergent validity' (Butler & Kern, 2016: 21). The questionnaires created specifically for this research, whilst comprehensive, have not been empirically validated. The collaboration with a colleague in the early stages of intervention design did allow for careful consideration of language choices to ensure the questions were measuring what was intended.

PERMA Profiler data was shared with participants (individually) before their interview and then participants evaluated whether the scores were a reliable indication of their flourishing. Generally, the results were felt to accurately measure each domain. What the PERMA Work Profiler doesn't capture is an explanation for the results and therefore interviews were invaluable in gaining a full understanding of contextual factors - this provided the opportunity for reflection on which scores were influenced by external factors and which by the intervention, ensuring greater validity and more accurate findings.

To validate the findings, the data was triangulated (Creswell and Miller, 2000) allowing for identification of inconsistencies, contradictions and congruence in the data (Mathison,1988). Consequently, claims about the impact of the intervention could be supported and interrogated by different data types.

Sample

Recruiting teachers who are 'already over-burdened' (Samios et al., 2023:331) is challenging, as Cohen et al. (2018: 109) note, 'a teacher simply might not have the time to spend with the researcher.' Realistic consideration was given to access to participants (Cohen et al., 2018) given the time investment required and therefore the online delivery method was employed. Consequently, the sample size was small- which contributed to teacher wellbeing as an environment where participants felt comfortable to contribute was created. Practically, this created feasibility (Edwards & Talbot, 1999) to collect rich qualitative data which made the analysis manageable. However, the small sample has created the most significant limitation of the study and consequently findings cannot be generalised.

Six participants were recruited through my professional network and I then collaborated with participants to expand the cohort by four, using snowball sampling. One withdrew once the day had been agreed and another due to ill health, leaving a sample of eight. Using colleagues' contacts to add participants was helpful in recruiting teachers - potentially making their contributions more objective (Cohen et al., 2018).

As outlined in the table below, the heterogeneity of the teaching population was represented to an extent (Cohen et al., 2018), though early careers, maths and science teachers are not included. The sample consisted of a cross-section of teachers - spanning different subjects, length of service and seniority from secondary state schools in North West England.

Table 2

Teacher profiles

Name	School	Length of service (years)	Subject	Seniority
T1	S1	16	Dance	Assistant Head
T2 (Male)	S2	19	PE	Middle Leader
T3	S3	9	English	Teacher
T4	S2	12	PE	Pastoral TLR
T5	S2	22	Art	Teacher
T6	S4	10	Health & Social	Teacher with TLR
T7	Several	35	Business	Previous Deputy Head Currently consulting
T8	S2	5	Drama	Assistant Head of Year

Data Analysis

Data collection was largely organised by PERMA domains: the PERMA Work Profiler answers provided a score for each domain and questionnaires, quizzes and interviews were organised by the domains. Then deductive thematic analysis was applied; the data fit into the broad themes defined by PERMA and themes within each domain were identified. A limitation of deductive thematic analysis is missing key themes not identified in the framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Considering confirmation bias

(Kahneman, 2011), I asked myself 'what am I missing because I'm not expecting to see it?' and created a 'broader findings' section to prevent significant data being omitted.

Within each domain, the use and impact of strategies on flourishing could be analysed to answer RQ5 and then the impact of the intervention overall could be evaluated to answer RQ4.

Ethical Considerations

It was essential that participants did not feel coerced into participating. Careful consideration was given to the wording of invitations and information sheets, explicitly stating that I appreciate the pressures teachers are under and that there is no obligation to participate. The power dynamic was carefully considered, and potential participants that I contacted directly had never been mentored or managed by me - such teachers may feel more under pressure to take part or be more susceptible to participation bias.

Potential participants received detailed information about the intervention so that I could gain informed consent (Cohen et al., 2018). It was clear on the teacher information sheet, the invitation, and in the sessions that teachers could withdraw at any time. Once the intervention began, it was important for me to be flexible, for example postponing the session that clashed with England men's football team semi-finals. Likewise, expecting and facilitating the need for teachers to catch up on sessions that they couldn't attend and removing any pressure to prioritise the

intervention over other commitments (which would be stress-inducing and counterproductive).

To mitigate the risk of participant bias and following Bourke's (2014) suggestion for transparency about reasons for collecting data, I reminded the teachers before completing surveys, questionnaires or interviews that this research was an exploration - I did not have a tight hypothesis that I was trying to prove - I was simply inquisitive about the impact of each strategy on this particular set of teachers.

Data protection was at the forefront of my planning. Field notes and transcripts were anonymized before being saved. Permission was sought to audio-record interviews. All data will be transferred to my supervisor to save until September 2027. All identifiers for teachers and their schools have been removed in the write up of the research (Cohen et al., 2018).

Mindful of the potentially invasive nature of interviews (Edwards & Talbot, 1999), I prepared most interview questions in advance and was considerate of the boundary between gaining helpful, detailed data and making participants feel uncomfortable; for example, pre-facing questions about their feelings about the accuracy of their PERMA Profiler data with, 'this is your personal data, so only share information or reflections with which you are comfortable'.

Limitations

Whilst the data from this intervention is insightful in terms of which positive psychology strategies have promoted flourishing with *this* cohort, the small sample size of eight teachers means that wider generalizations cannot be made (Cohen et al., 2018), a common criticism of samples in positive psychology interventions (Cann et al., 2023). The sample is representative of seniority and a good career span (ranging from 5 to 35 years) but it does not include maths, science or early careers teachers.

As the participants opted in, there is the potential they were naturally interested in flourishing and were more open to employing these strategies; other teachers may be more resistant to the notion. Participants committed to the intervention in their own time, therefore their desire to see their flourishing increase may be greater than teachers who experience the intervention in a mandatory training series.

From an ethical standpoint, asking teachers to sacrifice an hour of their time for eight weeks felt like the optimum amount of time for them to commit to the research and the minimum time to deliver the content covering a range of strategies. However, in their review of wellbeing interventions (though these were with students who may require more than teachers), Weare and Nind (2011) reported that the most effective interventions were between 9 months and a year and therefore a longer intervention to truly embed the strategies may have been more effective.

Measuring the impact of the intervention so soon after it ended may result in some data being omitted. Participants might find some strategies more useful in the future

in response to changing situations and this information can't be captured due to the cross-sectional nature of this study. A longitudinal study would capture the full impact of the strategies (Seligman, 2018) and would allow researchers to identify if strategies are more beneficial for certain situations or career stages. On the other hand, it could be that the impact seems more significant now and could reduce over time (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

The use of surveys only provides a 'snapshot' (Edwards & Talbot, 1999:33). Whilst the surveys used were to capture participants' feelings in a general sense, the emotional state of participants at the time of completing the survey could have influenced their responses (Edwards & Talbot, 1999).

Due to the subjective and personal nature of wellbeing (Granville-Chapman, 2024) the findings rely upon self-report data collection methods. It would be useful to balance this with reflections on the self-reports from work colleagues or family (Cabrera and Donaldson, 2024).

The methods employed to answer the research questions as robustly as possible have been justified. I will now explore what the research discovered about positive psychology strategies and teacher flourishing.

Findings and Discussion

The strategies used in the intervention have already been empirically validated.

Therefore, the main purpose of the research was not to simply test *if* the strategies increase flourishing (though their collective impact has been measured), but more insightfully *which* positive psychology strategies, out of a broad selection, support this small cohort of teachers to flourish. Due to the small sample size, the data was generated to provide information about the participants in this research, not to find trends to apply to the teaching population.

The following questions guided the research:

RQ1: What are the psychological barriers to flourishing?

RQ2: Which positive psychology strategies could be explored?

RQ3: On which pillars of flourishing do this cohort of teachers need to focus?

RQ4: To what extent does the intervention promote flourishing?

RQ5: Which strategies do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?

RQ1 and RQ2 have been answered in the literature review. I will now discuss the findings of the research, considering the literature explored earlier, to answer the remaining three research questions. Teachers will be referred to as T1, T2 etc. for anonymity.

RQ3: On which domains of the PERMA framework did this cohort of teachers need to focus?

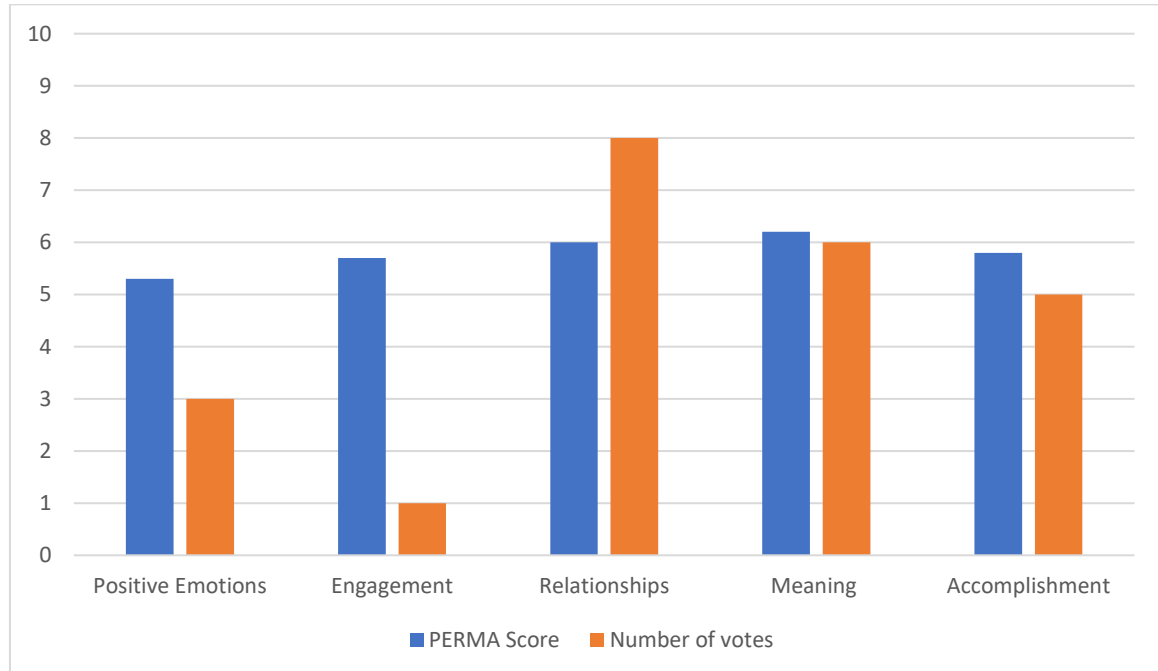
In-keeping with Jiminez et al.'s (2023) recommendation, data for each domain was calculated, rather than an overall PERMA score, providing actionable information (Seligman, 2018).

To confirm which domains of the PERMA framework to explicitly focus on, participants completed the PERMA Work Profiler (Kern & Butler, 2013) and the mean score for each domain was calculated, though this should be treated with caution given the small sample size. Importantly, the data for each individual teacher was considered when making decisions and this is presented in the analysis of each domain. Teachers also voted for three domains to explore.

The maximum score for each domain is 10 and the maximum number of votes any domain could receive is 8.

Figure 1

Mean PERMA scores and votes for each domain



Whilst only three participants voted to focus on positive emotions, this was the domain with the lowest mean score on the PERMA Work Profiler survey and the highest score any teacher had was 6.2, therefore positive emotions was identified as an area on which to focus. Relationships received maximum votes and given the importance of relationships to the profession (DfE, 2021b) and flourishing (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023), this domain was also selected. As accomplishment received more votes, has strategies which also influence meaning and that are relatively swift to implement, this domain was selected instead of engagement (which only received one vote and was felt by the group to be heavily influenced by system-level factors) and meaning (which had the highest PERMA score), which are loftier concepts, perhaps requiring more long-term strategies. My initial hypothesis that these were the areas to focus on should be noted as potential bias, however the data confirmed that focusing

on positive emotions, relationships and accomplishment would indeed benefit the participants.

The need for the intervention was evident from low PERMA scores and teacher reflections. T3 stated, 'I don't think I've ever been asked do I feel like I am fulfilled or...like I'm flourishing'. Whilst their line management meetings begin with a question about mental health, T6 feels it is an empty gesture; she expanded,

'A misconception in terms of teaching and what makes you...flourish is everyone thinks it's around workload. There are other things like you said about being fulfilled and being appreciated. I think those are the things are left behind'.

This was supported by T4 who previously focussed on 'avoiding negatives...you don't think it could be more than ok.' There was an initial opinion from T7 that flourishing is 'a gimmick' and that it would simply be 'another something', which perhaps speaks to the common 'bolt on' approach to teacher wellbeing (Howard, 2020). T7's perception change to understanding that flourishing is 'a researched and rich theory of positive change', highlights the value of a scientific grounding to the intervention to help dispel myths around wellbeing. This initial lack of understanding about flourishing is congruent with the lack of data on teacher wellbeing interventions (Cann et al., 2023; Waters & Loton, 2019) and supports the idea that flourishing should be addressed within the school system (Norrish, 2015).

Teachers reaped the greatest rewards from working on the domains where they are flourishing the least which suggests that diagnosing the needs of the individual

teachers and providing a responsive intervention (Seligman, 2018) is beneficial, especially if time is limited and all domains cannot be covered.

RQ4: To what extent does the intervention promote flourishing?

To gain an initial snapshot (Edwards & Talbot, 1999) of whether each domain had increased, the data from the relevant questions on the PERMA Work Profiler pre and post intervention for each teacher were analysed. The relationship between the intervention and results is correlational - it would be inaccurate to assume all changes are because of the intervention.

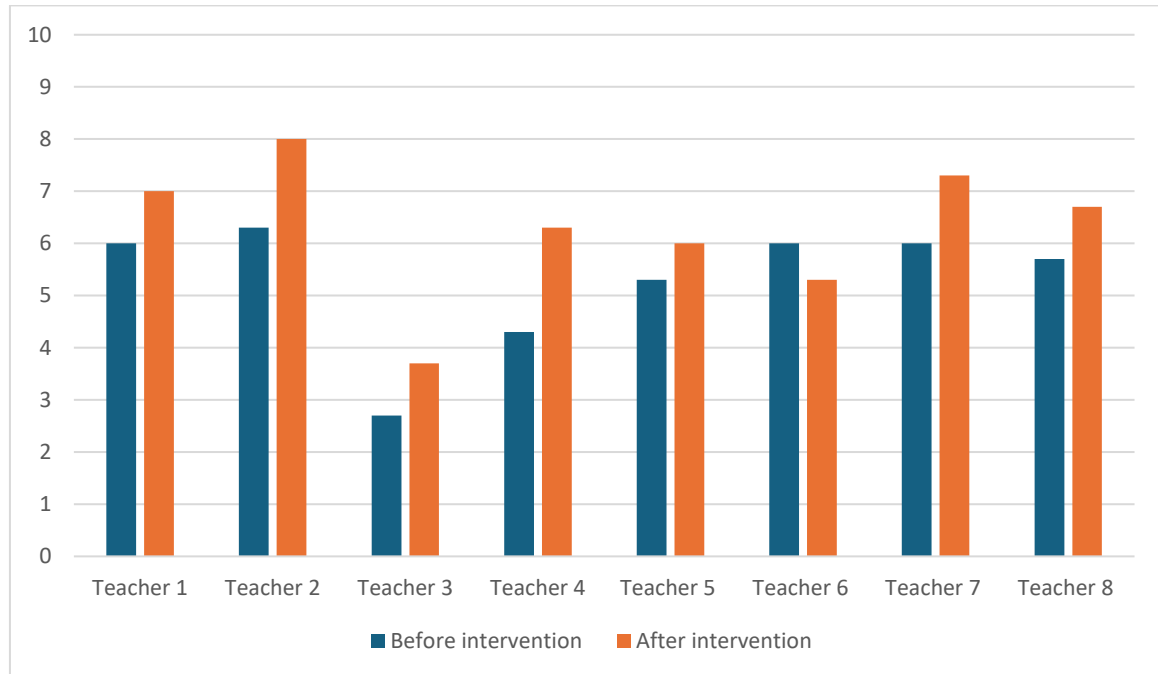
The extent to which each domain promoted flourishing will now be explored in turn.

Positive Emotions

Based on the PERMA Work Profiler, 7/8 teachers were experiencing more positive emotions after the intervention than before. On average (using the mean), positive emotions increased by 1 point. The range of change is from -0.7 to +2.

Figure 2

PERMA Work Profiler scores, pre and post intervention for Positive Emotions



The only teacher whose score was lower, T6, said her score was lower because she had handed in her notice and was disengaged, this is consistent with Dreer’s (2021) finding that the frequency of positive emotions is correlated with job satisfaction. This relationship is also evident with T3 who had low positive emotion scores and has low job satisfaction. T4’s PERMA score increased by +2, but it should be noted that personal circumstances at the beginning of the intervention contributed to a particularly low score. Though she acknowledged the strategies from this domain had been useful to support her in a challenging time, other factors also influenced her score.

When considering the impact that the positive emotions domain had on her flourishing, T3 said, ‘I genuinely think it’s made me a nicer person’ - she had started to

be more sociable and kind. She felt a deeper sense of ‘confidence and sense of self’ and an improved sense of wellbeing. This sentiment was echoed by T7 who felt more resourceful and less impotent. While T6 felt she was already a positive person (indeed her initial score is one of the highest in the cohort), she felt this had been reinforced by being more grateful, though this was not reflected in her score.

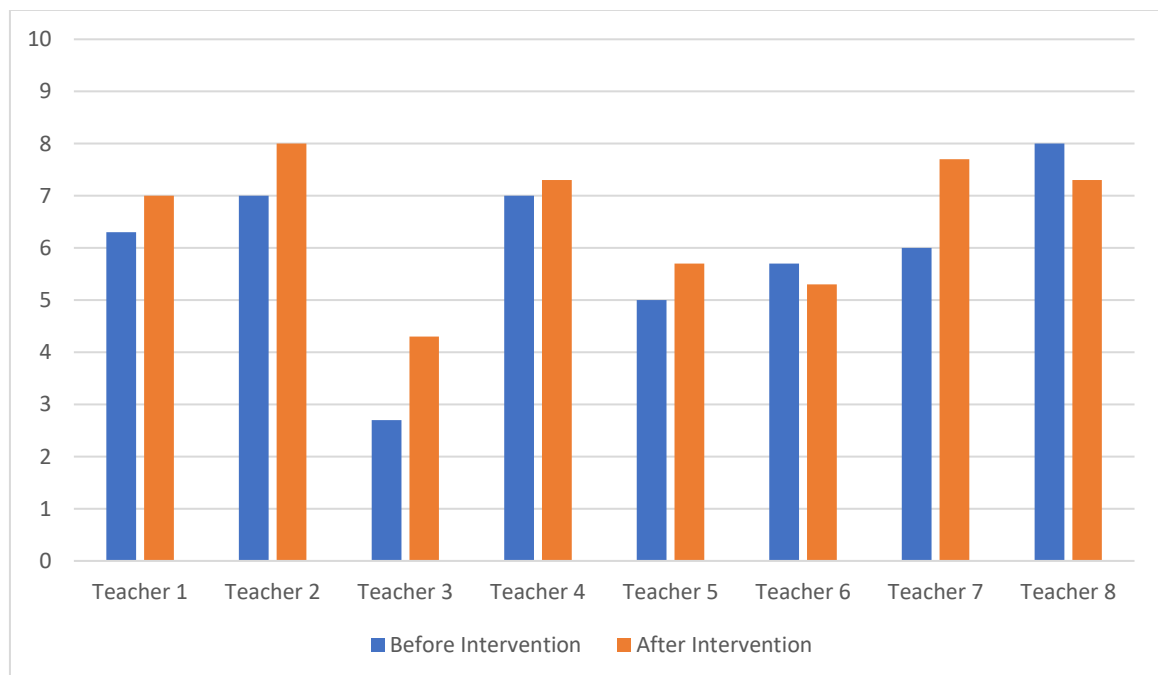
The PERMA data, teacher’s overall judgement and what they go on to say about the strategies from this domain (explored later), suggest that the positive emotions domain helped to promote their flourishing to varying degrees for the individual teacher.

Relationships

On average, scores for relationships improved by 0.6 points. The changes ranged from -0.7 to +1.6 points.

Figure 3

PERMA Work Profiler Scores, pre and post intervention for Relationships



Two teachers had lower scores post intervention. T8 was surprised that her score had decreased and put the difference down to her mood on the day (highlighting a limitation of surveys (Edwards & Talbot, 1999) as she felt her relationships had improved. It is worth considering the questions in this domain as there is a focus on support from other people; the participants could be improving their contributions to relationships but in such a short time frame, and with other people in their school not participating in the intervention, their input may not be fully reciprocated yet and therefore not reflected in the data.

When reflecting on the impact of this domain on her flourishing, T4 reported feeling 'fuller' and more socially- connected. T1, T3 and T7 felt more included and connected due to actively investing in their work relationships, whereas T6 was less invested due to her imminent move. T1 felt she had stopped being so critical and looked for the positives in her close relationships.

Teacher-student relationships are at the heart of the profession and have a significant impact on the teacher's subjective wellbeing (Howard, 2020). Teachers felt that relationships had improved with challenging students and they had made the effort to connect with well-behaved students more frequently. For T3, this domain helped her to become more open minded - she said, 'I am in less of a rush to change and keener to understand and learn.' This change of pace was also reflected by T2, '[the relationships domain] really made me stop and think more each day as I was dealing with the pupils.' Data explicitly focussing on relationships suggested the domain contributed to

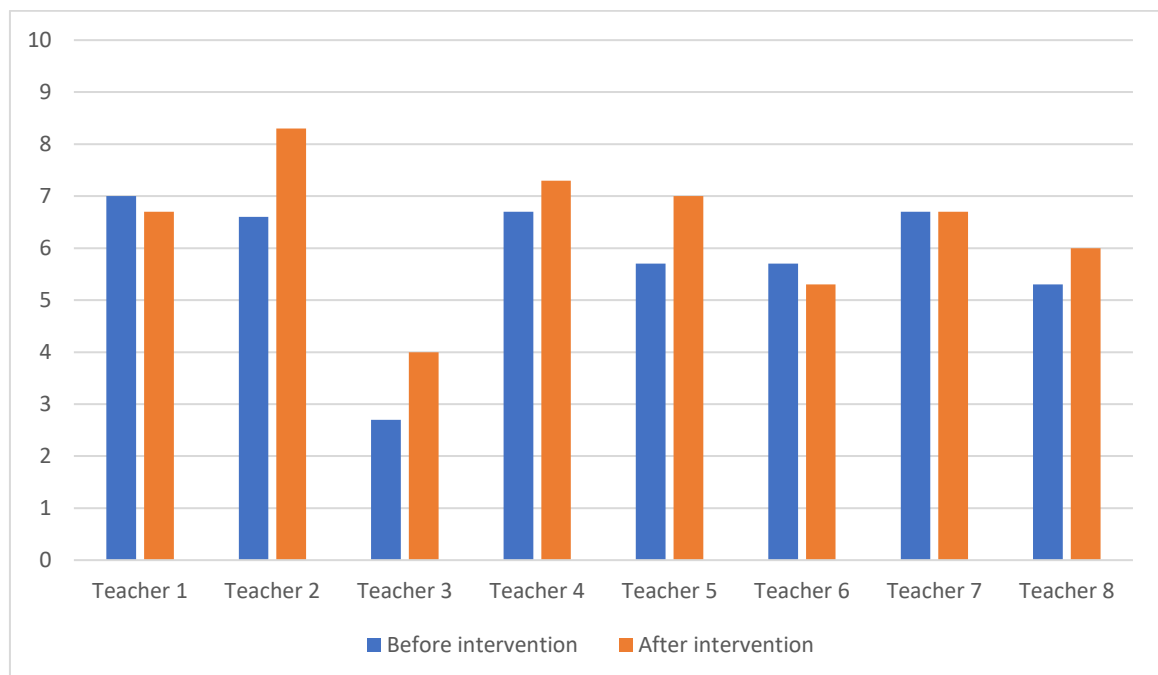
teacher flourishing, and answers for other domains also focus on relationships, showing the importance of this domain.

Accomplishment

Based on the PERMA Profiler, 5/8 teachers were experiencing a greater sense of accomplishment after the intervention than before. Two teachers had lower scores post- intervention and one remained the same.

Figure 4

PERMA Work Profiler scores, pre and post intervention for Accomplishment



On average, accomplishment increased by 0.6 of a point with a range span from -0.4 to +1.7 which again points to the individual nature of flourishing.

When she completed the initial survey, T1 was newly promoted and felt very accomplished, but having settled into the role her sense of accomplishment subsided slightly- this reflection supports the arrival fallacy (Ben-Shahar, 2007), she has adapted to the new role and her expectations have changed. However, T1 has made some great progress in this domain, as outlined later in this section - a reminder that the PERMA Profiler is a useful tool for reflection but it does not give a full representation of the domain. T6's scores were lower because she was due to leave her job and had lost motivation- her life circumstances, which according to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) account for 10% of overall happiness, seem to be heavily influencing these results to a greater extent than the 40% based on intentional activity. It is possible that T6 will find the strategies more helpful in her new job as she forms new relationships.

When considering the impact of the accomplishment strategies on their flourishing, T8 said, 'I have achieved goals I never thought I would be able to and I have made a stronger effort to push through issues at work where I do not feel confident due to limiting beliefs'. Whereas T4 and T7 felt accomplishment wasn't as important to them as the other domains and therefore had a lesser impact - T4 was surprised that her sense of accomplishment had increased by 0.6 on the PERMA Profiler. This supports the idea that ultimately what counts is how the participants perceive their progress in each domain (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

The overall sentiment was that increasing positive emotions and relationships had more impact on the day to day lives of the teachers and they seem to value accomplishment the least. This was supported by the PERMA data.

RQ5: Which strategies do teachers feel are the most useful to help them to flourish?

If teachers chose to provide examples of how they used a strategy, it was because it had high impact for them. For balance, the absence of comments from some teachers could be considered as being indicative of the strategy not having high impact for them.

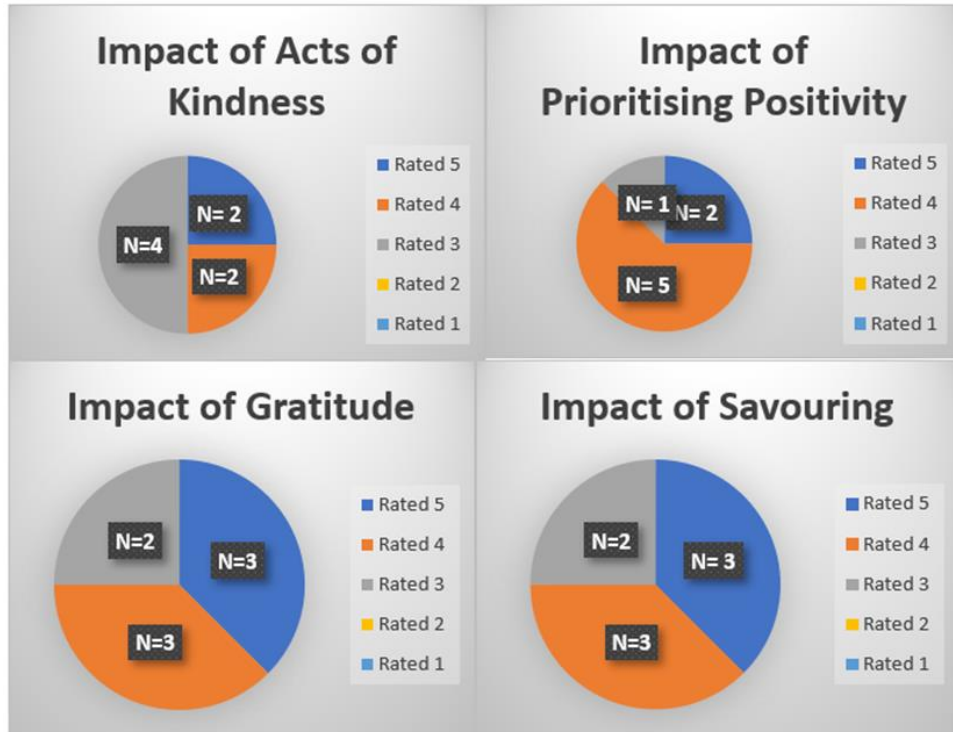
Positive Emotions

Positive Education appreciates the impact that emotions have on teachers, students and their learning (Norrish, 2015). This sentiment was echoed in this research: teachers were asked to rate (on a scale of 1-5) the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: How students and staff feel is central to their learning. 7 out of 8 teachers gave a rating of 5, showing that they totally agree with the statement. In response to discussions about the impact of emotions on learning, T2 introduced teachers looking at students' reports at the beginning of each lesson, so they understood the emotional state of the student.

As a starting point to establish which strategies had the greatest impact, teachers were asked to rate each strategy on a five-point Likhert-style scale where 5 had a very impact and 1 had no impact. The results are shown below:

Figure 5

The impact of strategies from positive emotions on flourishing



Note: N= Number of teachers. Total number of teachers = 8.

Prioritising positivity was deemed to be high impact with 7/8 teachers awarding a 4 or 5. Gratitude and savouring also had a strong impact with 6/8 teachers awarding a 4 or 5. Acts of Kindness was the strategy deemed to have the least impact with 4/8 teachers awarding a 4 or 5. Data shows that strategies are more powerful for some teachers than others and is testament to the individual nature of wellbeing (Granville-Chapman et al., 2024). The value of each strategy is demonstrated in how the teachers chose to apply them to their lives, which will now be explored.

Acts of Kindness

T2 and T4 used the strategy to boost positive emotions and improve staff morale through completing acts of kindness with colleagues. They rated acts of kindness as 5, stating 'acts of kindness boosts others which if they are more positive has a knock-on effect on those around us'. Likewise, T4 referred to the 'ripple effect' of emotions due to small actions. These two teachers work in the same office and said this made it easier to remember to use the strategies- the support from each other, as Day and Gu (2007) suggest, contributed to their wellbeing.

T3 spoke about 'putting herself out' to help colleagues - volunteering to cover lessons and inviting a teacher struggling with behaviour management to observe her lessons. Such acts have helped her to become more 'outward facing' and are part of why she is starting to feel more included with the staff body, a feeling that she hasn't had since starting at her school part-time after maternity leave. This example speaks to the power that simple strategies can have on more than one domain as the act of kindness also bolsters relationships (Seligman, 2018).

T4 challenged students to 'do something nice for someone'. The students she works with have low self-esteem, she said, 'Everything tells them that they are not what they are supposed to be- they always need to be better' but completing an act of kindness gave them a sense of accomplishment because they think 'I can do something good'. This is in-keeping with Lyubomirsky's (2007) notion that self-image and a sense of

resourcefulness is improved through acts of kindness. The strategies that teachers choose to use with the students is a good indicator of what has resonated with them.

Teachers have been more generous with their time and knowledge more generally. T1 said a member of staff, who she doesn't line manage, gave her a thank you gift for teaching her to be positive and how to make progress in her role. T1 said 'that's because of this course, because I've gone out of my way to help her loads and to train her up.' This also speaks to the interlinked nature of the strategies and the upward spiral that can be created (Fredrickson, 2004)- the acts of kindness have created a relationship as T1 was actively being positive, which made it easier to make friends (Lyubormirsky,2007), and have inspired gratitude and a sense of being appreciated (Norrish, 2015), which has bolstered their relationship (Seligman,2011).

Teachers used this strategy to be more kind in general (as opposed to planning acts in advance) and when the opportunity to be kind arose, they were mindful to take it. As Algoe & Way (2014) claim, whether teachers were doing, watching or receiving acts of kindness, they appear to have had a good feeling and therefore promoted their flourishing.

Prioritising Positivity

T3 planned positivity into her day with music in the morning and 'nutritious lunches eaten at a leisurely pace'. For T8, this strategy helped her to notice 'the little things in [her] day

that make [her] feel happy' as she actively planned them into her day. T4 reflected on her values and priorities and whether they were evident in her weekly plans - she noticed the absence of time with colleagues and friends, made changes accordingly and shifted her mindset to focus on planning for happiness in the present rather than constantly delaying it (Ben-Shahar, 2007).

The name of the strategy seems to have stuck with the teachers and prompted them to focus on positivity in all forms - being positive, looking for the positive and changing situations to be more positive. The simple act of looking for the positive to try and counteract the negativity bias has resonated with teachers, as it did with teachers and students in Geelong Grammar (Norrish, 2015). T3 said,

'there is something you said that really stuck with me -you have to train your brain to notice it...it's easy to forget that there are moments of hilarity in the classroom, that it is kind of fun at times. We don't talk about those things we tend to just whinge. I've noticed a big change in the way I'm thinking now.'

T3 has leaned into these positive moments more, even allowing them to meaningfully guide her lessons. In the same way that participants who were told to notice the good increased their positive emotions in the work of Bryant and Veroff (2007) so too did the teachers in this research.

In feeling more positive emotions herself and actively noticing the positive in others, T1 called a parent to celebrate a student's improved behaviour, '...and since this he has been

fantastic!' This is in-keeping with Frenzel's (2014) finding that when teachers experience more positive emotions their relationships with students improve. This links with T4's reflection that 'positivity breeds positivity...it's important to lean into the good when you can instead of being stuck and fixated with a negative mindset'.

Savouring

Teachers savoured by remembering, being present and anticipating small moments (Norrish, 2015). T1 is busy due to her new role - savouring reminded her to 'enjoy the small moments that make up a good life.' Likewise, T5 acknowledged that in her rush to 'the next thing' she needed to actively celebrate the small wins. T4 has been aware that she often looks back at moments in the academic year that were brilliant and wishes she had enjoyed them more at the time and has used savouring to try and engage with nice moments as they happen. T8 talked about a recent shift in her mindset regarding her change in job role, and savouring positive comments and feedback seems to have played a role in quashing doubts about her new role.

Savouring was used by T5 and T8 to anticipate the positive. Regularly savouring helped them to pinpoint important positive moments in their days, to look forward to them and to stop the harder moments from 'robbing the moments of joy'. For T5, anticipating seeing her form helped her to be positive and energetic, which they reciprocated which, in a virtuous cycle (Fredrickson, 2004) had a positive impact on her next lesson.

The teachers used savouring to remind them to slow down and meet their basic needs, which speaks to the unforgiving nature of the school day (Weare, 2015). Many of the responses reflected the change of pace that was necessary to commit to the strategies and to flourish. T3 had appreciated dedicating time in her week 'to commit to the concept of positivity'. For T1, savouring involved 'sitting outside in the morning with a brew and savouring the quiet'; T7 savoured sitting in the sunshine, and T6 used this strategy to fully engage with her colleague whilst eating lunch instead of working. It is promising to see teachers meeting their basic needs, which is an essential building block for self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Gratitude

The feeling of wellbeing and increased energy are benefits of gratitude identified by Lyubomirsky (2007) which were present in this research: gratitude was used to replenish energy 'at the end of a hard day at work' (T2) and appreciating the smaller moments were felt to 'boost my feeling of wellbeing' (T7).

T7 used gratitude to give her an energy boost,

'Focussing on what you've got lifts you up and gets you in the right frame for working with students because they want you to be up and positive all the time.'

She valued strategies that helped her to genuinely feel positive so she could be authentic rather than 'faking it'. Gratitude was used by teachers to focus on 'the good things in my life' (T7) and to appreciate 'small moments of joy' (T6)- a strategy that the teachers in the work of Bullough & Pinnegar (2009) also found helpful.

T6 noted she started to be grateful for small victories such as getting to work on time and leaving the house without too much stress. She considered that people who aren't grateful for the small things seem to put more pressure and stress on themselves.

Gratitude was used by T7 to re-focus, she explained,

'One day I was feeling low...and knew that the feeling would impact on my relationships that day. I decided to focus on all the ways I am grateful for my work and colleagues and this made my interactions that day more positive as I was looking for the positive'

Again, the impact of one domain on the other is clear and a reminder of the benefits of a multi-foci approach (Cann et al., 2023).

T1, who has responsibility for form time activities added a gratitude section to the personal development booklets and an email address where students can express their gratitude to teachers, which according to Bullough & Pinnegar (2009:247) should have a profound impact on flourishing as such expressions of gratitude from students 'feed our souls'. These initiatives are whole school and therefore have the potential to impact over 1000 people, which was one reason that this research focussed on teachers rather than students. Similarly, T7 used her knowledge of how gratitude can prevent comparisons and boost mood to help her trainee teachers to acknowledge the progress they had made and to prevent them 'spiralling out of control'.

In summary, teachers used the strategies to create conditions (Catalino et al., 2014), which have helped modestly increase their positive emotions. Teachers preferred different strategies to each other and applied them in different ways. The teachers have started to make small changes to increase their positive emotions as part of a habit which will prevent them from constantly assessing their flourishing (Ford and Mauss, 2014). These small, regular actions demonstrate the teachers' understanding that frequency of positive emotions is more important than intensity (Diener, 1991).

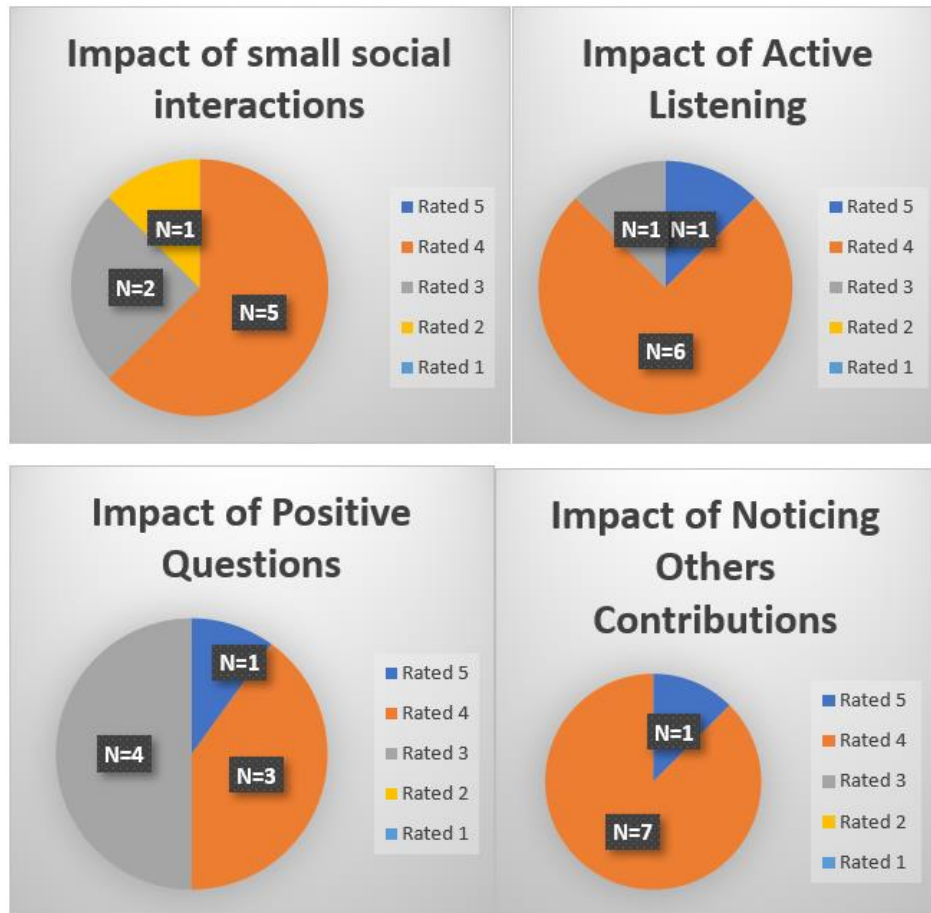
Relationships

Studies which relied on qualitative data in Cann et al's. work (2023) demonstrated improvements to relationships- which is echoed in this research; teachers provided ample evidence of having bolstered their relationships.

Again, teachers were asked to rate strategies on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 5 had a very strong impact and 1 had no impact. The results are below:

Figure 6

The impact of strategies from the Relationships domain on flourishing



Note: N= Number of teachers. Total number of teachers = 8.

Building a positive Losado ratio by noticing the contributions of others had a high impact with all participants rating a 4 or 5, whereas posing questions to build a positive Losado ratio was less impactful with 4/8 teachers rating a 4 or 5. Active listening had a high impact with 7/8 teachers rating 4 or 5. Increasing small social interactions was slightly less impactful with 5/8 teachers rating as 4 or 5. Again, the strategies impacted the teachers' sense of flourishing in different ways, which is why providing them with a range is important (Cann et al., 2023).

Active Listening

Brown's (2013) advice about resisting the urge to impulsively offer advice resonated with T1 who acknowledged that she is 'terrible for not listening first'; T7 referred to this as putting her 'rescuer self to one side'. A conversation in an intervention session revealed that as teachers we feel the need to advise and 'fix' as part of our professional identity but actively listening reduces conflict more effectively. T1 used active listening to understand why one student was in the wrong uniform, 'If I hadn't listened to her, she would have been in inclusion all day and we would have lost the trust that I gained by listening.' With her understanding of how people process the world differently, T1 had a more nuanced understanding 'that it is their truth.'

T4 combined the strategy of posing positive questions to encourage people to talk about interesting topics and actively listened to them- she felt this made the conversation less 'superficial' and she learnt more about them, which corroborates the work of Waldinger and Schulz (2023). She valued the authenticity the strategies provided. Acting in accordance with their values clearly plays an important role in teacher wellbeing (Granville-Chapman and Bidston, 2020).

Positive Losado

The attainable strategy of making 5 positive comments for each negative (Losado and Heaphy, 2004) proved impactful for participants. Some teachers repeatedly posed positive questions to encourage colleagues and students to find and remember

positive information during their days. T5 used such questions to support her trainee teacher to form the habit of focussing on what was going well. T4 swapped 'how is your day?' to 'what was the favourite part of your day?' to generate positive and meaningful conversations. T3 explained how she posed questions to help her children to focus on the positive aspects of their days:

"We talk about what we are happy about, what we are grateful for and what has been tricky today. It has deepened our conversations and strengthened our bond.'

T3, T4 and T5 used the strategy of actively seeking out the positive and noticing what others are doing, overriding the cognitive bias to think about their own contributions rather than other people's (Kahneman, 2011) and then offering a compliment. Consequently, T3 felt 'a positive uptick on [her] relationships personal and professional.' T5 used this strategy when addressing poor behaviour- she identified times the student behaved well, to let them know that she 'sees them', before introducing the comment about poor behaviour. This built trust in their relationship. Likewise, T2 found this especially helpful for restoring tense relationships. He was determined to be relentlessly positive with one challenging student, commenting on small things he was getting right and is happy to have 'won him round!' For this teacher, the strategy seems to have improved the relationship, provided a sense of accomplishment and given a positive emotion boost which speaks to the competence and relatedness aspects of Ryan and Deci's (2001) work. This overlap between

domains is congruent with Seligman's claim 'there are likely causal connections and third variable connections among the elements' (2018:2).

T1 shared her knowledge of the positive Losado ratio with colleagues and encouraged the head of behaviour to make phone calls about positive behaviour, which gave him a positive emotion boost. This inspired a conversation about how - ideally - people in roles with a behaviour focus should be making just as many positive calls as negative. She considered that people without the positive focus must go home feeling drained. Reflecting on how this impacts on a sense of meaning, she noted 'when you're battling everyday it's hard. It makes you feel disengaged and you think, what am I doing it for?' She felt that a sense of meaning was linked to feeling like she's doing something positive.

Small Social Interactions

The issue of loneliness experienced by school staff presented in Education Support's (2023) survey was evident in teachers' responses. T1 talked about doing break duty and ignoring her colleague, T6 said she 'shuts [herself] off' and eats lunch whilst responding to emails and T3 acknowledged she doesn't have the time to socialise with colleagues; like participants in Epley & Schroeder's (2014) experiment, teachers misjudge the powerful impact of small social interactions on their flourishing. As suggested by Waldinger and Schulz (2023), the teachers instinctively put more emphasis on what can be measured than on their relationships with colleagues; when actively trying to socialize with colleagues more, T3 admitted feeling guilty that she

should be working- she had to convince herself, 'I don't want to let my high standards go but there is nothing wrong with having a bit of social time at work.' Likewise, T7 reflected that at times 'the task becomes more important than the relationships' and it was especially important to make positive comments in these moments. This, and responses such as 'You get swallowed up with life' (T3) and 'after school its rush rush rush' (T6) also speaks to issues around workload and time (Samios et al., 2023). T5 said, 'I come off as being blunt because I'm time-limited. I'm giving them a curt version of myself. That's not me'. Being aware of the importance of social interaction, asking herself the question, 'What am I bringing to this moment' allowed T5 to behave in alignment with her values. As suggested by Santos (2018), these teachers had to make an active choice to change these behaviors to create the opportunity for seemingly insignificant social interactions. T6 considered that her behaviour must appear rude to her colleague and therefore made a 'conscious effort' to have social time, which speaks to the need for 'respectful engagement' Dutton (2003:2). Teachers' relationships with students seem to naturally take priority, so they focussed strategies on relationships with colleagues, which are just as important (Howard, 2020).

Teachers acknowledged that their personal relationships had slid down their list of priorities. In the chaos of the morning routine, T8 noticed there was little connection between herself and her fiancé; the simple act of making eye contact and 'acknowledging that we're here' made the morning feel less stressful, which speaks to the positive impact that feeling socially supported can have on biological processes (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023).

Considering Our Differences

The PANAS survey (Watson et al., 1988), which measures positive and negative emotions was used as a tool for personal reflection and prompted a discussion about how people experience emotions differently. This was also demonstrated in the range of PERMA scores for positive emotions. This, combined with the knowledge that the brain is filtering incredible amounts of stimuli per second and people are therefore processing that information differently led to some rich conversations about the assumptions we make about others. T1 made a conscious effort to build a relationship with a colleague on her team that she assumed looked down on her as a dance teacher who has very different views. Making the simple choice to talk to this teacher on break duty led to them finding common ground, she said 'It was nice to see that she saw I was human and I saw she was human.' Similarly, T3 realised 'No one sets out to be mean, forgetful, unreliable. We are all human.' There was sense of re-connecting with very basic ideas that possibly get forgotten about in the busy school day.

This domain created time for participants to remind themselves about the importance of relationships, which they know are essential for teacher wellbeing (Howard, 2020). T4 acknowledged the 'powerful' role that relationships play in overall wellbeing, which echoes the sentiment of Waldinger and Schluz's (2023) key finding that relationships are the most important influence on flourishing. Most of the examples that the teachers provided, regardless of domain, speak to the significant role that relationships play in flourishing. Put quite simply by T1, 'This whole twist on positivity

and gratitude, empathy and 5 positives to one negative it does make you feel better, doesn't it?'

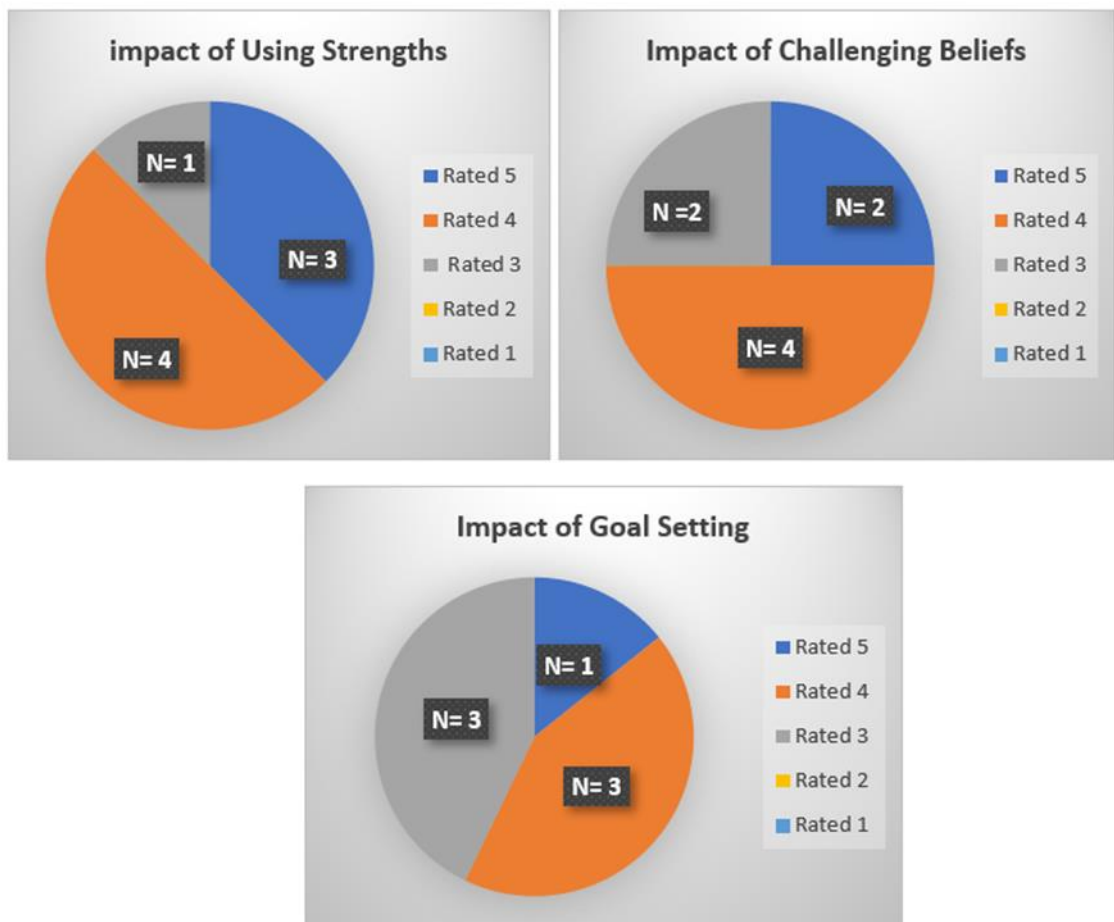
Accomplishment

In-keeping with the aims of Positive Education to broaden the definition of accomplishment (Norrish, 2015), teachers shifted their perceptions to understand the idiosyncratic nature of accomplishment. They appreciated that the domain is nuanced and encompasses much more than problematic performance metrics used in schools (Ball, 2003). T1 noted that accomplishment 'looks different for everybody- we all have our own success criteria'. T4 learnt to accept, 'it's ok for your sense of accomplishment to be different than others' and she started to acknowledge smaller, daily accomplishments. This approach will simultaneously help her to build frequent positive emotions which are necessary for flourishing (Diener, 1991) and in a virtuous cycle, improve accomplishment (Fredrickson, 2004). The changing nature of accomplishment was captured by T3, 'it's a fluid concept that will change... with the stage of life that you are at.' As T7 moves towards a different career phase, she has carefully considered what a 'good life' looks like for her now - this largely revolves around relationships. Whilst she felt that her sense of accomplishment hadn't changed, the intervention had led her to reflect on her changing definition and measurement of success. This speaks to the work of Gu and Day (2007) who note that accomplishment is different for teachers at different career stages. T7 also wisely spoke to the dangers of an unchecked focus on accomplishment, where in the past pursuing goals had made her 'lose sight of [her] priorities'- a reminder about the importance of balance for flourishing (Seligman, 2011) and living in accordance with values (Granville-Chapman & Bidston, 2020).

To establish which strategies had the greatest impact, teachers were asked to rate each strategy on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 5 had a strong impact and 1 had no impact. The results are below:

Figure 7

The impact of strategies from Accomplishment on flourishing



Note: N= Number of teachers. Total number of teachers = 8.

Using strengths was deemed to have maximum or strong impact for 7/8 teachers.

Challenging beliefs was also deemed to be high impact, with 6/8 teachers awarding a 4

or 5. Goal setting had more mixed results with half of the teachers awarding a 4 or 5. The data indicates that for the teachers in this research, the strategies contributed to teacher flourishing. In the intervention, the strategy 'my best self' (Seligman, 2011) was used, but this did not resonate with teachers- no one mentioned this in interviews or on questionnaires, so it has not be explored further in the findings.

Strengths

Rather than finding new ways to use their strengths, as was the case in Seligman's (2005) intervention, teachers used this strategy to identify their strengths and then take positive action to job craft (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Having identified her strengths, T1 successfully negotiated a change in her new role to capitalize on them. Consequently, she feels 'valued and listened to'- conditions which will also help her to thrive (Jerrim, 2021). Similarly, T8 experienced a confidence boost as identifying her strengths and noticing how she used them made her feel 'loads better about the work [she] was doing well'. She realized that her pastoral role had become dominated by dealing with behaviour issues rather than working with students who needed emotional support (and where T8 felt her strengths were better employed). Consequently, she adapted how she balanced her time and is now feeling more fulfilled and connected to a greater range of students. T8 felt that using her strengths, such as being kind and caring 'had a positive impact on [her] communication and therefore [her] relationships with students. The approach of T1 and T8 is in-keeping with Seligman's (2005) advice to design a work life based on strengths and supports his conclusion that people who use their strengths are happier. T5's top strength was spirituality so she committed to her work in the church to a greater extent realizing

how much joy this provides her. Unfortunately, her attempt to use her spirituality in her church school through various initiatives was not embraced - a reminder that sometimes systematic barriers prevent the individual from fully utilizing aspects of the intervention. Likewise, T2, who is a PE teacher but has very little PE on his timetable has reminded himself about his coaching strengths and has consequently expanded his football coaching business- which is the highlight of his week. It is promising that teachers have considered accomplishment in different life domains, which is important for flourishing (Norrish, 2015) but it is frustrating that they are sometimes prevented them from using their strengths at work.

Beliefs

Reflecting on and challenging their beliefs has resulted in some perspective changes and positive action to help the teachers to flourish in the accomplishment domain. For T8, challenging her beliefs resulted in a shift in perspective about her role. She said:

‘The sidestep from teaching...even that language...I used to say stepped down from teaching. That I downgraded in my job. I’ve focussed more on the job that I do and the people who say ‘I couldn’t do what you do and you do a brilliant job’. It’s helped me to challenge the belief I’m not progressing.’

T8 seems more comfortable with the decision that she made to step into this position having re-framed her negative beliefs about the role and having crafted the job to utilise her strengths. She has also felt able to accomplish more in moments when she would normally get overwhelmed as she breaks the task down and asks herself the

productive question 'What *can* I do that will help move me forwards?' This type of optimistic thinking was echoed by T3 who has challenged herself to be open minded rather than imagining 'the worst case scenario' and for T7 rather than worrying that someone's negative attitude is a result of something she has done, she tries to assume it is unrelated to her, unless there is evidence otherwise. Teachers seem to have reframed their thinking in the same way as the students in the optimism intervention by Gillham & Reivich, (1999). T8 feels more confident, trusts her own judgement and has stopped 'asking for permission for every choice [she] makes.' Finding this autonomy is conducive to flourishing (Ryan and Deci, 2000). She also feels more engaged with her work and has a greater sense of meaning, which again speaks to the inter-related nature of the domains (Seligman, 2018).

Teachers found the strategies for challenging beliefs to be useful, actionable tools with students. T8 used this to help students with their relationships, challenging bold statements with absolute language like 'I hate that person' to be more accurate and then finding contradicting evidence. Likewise, T4 did the same with parents and students who were anxious before exams.

Goal Setting

T5 made an interesting observation about the link between energy and emotional state when setting goals - she noticed that listening to her thoughts when tired or anxious would result in her imposing limitations on herself. This speaks to the role that

positive emotions play in accomplishment (Fredrickson, 1998) but is also problematic given that teachers in this research have talked about how exhausted they often feel.

The ramifications of setting approach goals (Elliot et al., 1997) have been far reaching:

T2, T4 and T8 (who work in the same school), have worked to ensure that wording on report cards, and when addressing behaviour in assemblies is positive and describes the desired behaviour with targets such as 'do something praiseworthy'. T2 said, 'They like the positive slant to try and get them on the front foot' this confirms that positive statements promote positive emotions (Fredrickson and Losado, 2005) and T8 said this approach also encourages the staff to look for the positive behaviour. Likewise, T1 has worked on the school signage and the behaviour policy using her knowledge of approach goals and has used detentions as an opportunity to set goals and build relationships.

The simple awareness of mental fatigue caused by external stimuli and decision making, has created more self-awareness and self-compassion amongst some of the teachers. T8 and T4 said they used to question why they were mentally exhausted but T8 now thinks,

'I've spent all day making decisions and I don't have space left in my brain. I can articulate that better. Even understanding that has been brilliant.'

This has highlighted that simple facts, reflections and small changes can have a positive impact on flourishing, as acknowledged by T5, 'I realise that the smallest of changes can impact my well-being and that can lead to a new more healthy life for me and my family.'

Teachers found identifying their strengths to be a useful tool, but had various levels of success with making changes to use their strengths at work. Challenging their limiting beliefs has been insightful for some teachers and the benefits of this work could be felt long-term. Setting approach goals has been used with students more than for themselves. When asked to rank the domains, teachers had considered the accomplishment domain not as impactful as relationships and positive emotions. Perhaps because the impact is not immediate nor felt daily.

To prevent the PERMA framework and the use of deductive analysis from limiting my focus too much, I will now explore some broader findings which I found insightful and pertinent to the impact of the intervention.

Broader Findings

It takes work

Congruent with Lyubomirsky's (2018) notion that flourishing takes dedication, participants acknowledged the work required to effect change. T4 noted that increasing flourishing requires 'investing time' and 'being positive isn't just the absence of negative, it's so much more...and *working* on that.' In agreement T7 laughed, 'It does take work, doesn't it? I'm not the type of person who jumps out of bed and says 'wow'. When identifying previous misconceptions, T5 realised flourishing is about the *doing* and not just the learning, which speaks to Santos' (2018) GI Joe fallacy, where she argues that knowing is not half the battle. Teachers used words such

as 'effort', 'consciously' and 'actively' to capture the work required to flourish. Participants also grasped that flourishing is a long-term project by qualifying their statements with disclaimers like 'I haven't mastered this yet' or 'this is something I still need to work on'.

Unique Responses to the Intervention

The research supports Aristotle's (2009) notion that people pursue happiness in different ways, as the teachers' responses to the intervention were idiosyncratic. T1, and T8 diligently made notes, took the information very literally and applied strategies each day, whereas T7 took a philosophical approach, taking the overall message, reflecting and applying strategies more generally. T2 and T6 engaged with practical activities and video clips to highlight key messages- for example, the Monkey Business clip to show inattentional blindness. T5 captured her understanding in a piece of art each week, which as a strategy was beneficial for her flourishing- ordinarily she takes copious notes during development sessions, but she noted 'this is a good chance to not stress, she's not testing me, so I can see what comes up'. This reflects the ethical choice not to pressure participants and speaks to the pressures of performativity teachers normally experience (Ball, 2003). T5 expresses herself in a lofty, philosophical manner on questionnaires which were difficult to interpret, but an interview highlighted how robustly she had applied the strategies to her life- a reminder of the power of triangulating data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and the value of hearing the language the participants use (Edwards & Talbot, 1999).

Teachers Want to Share Their Knowledge

The teachers seemed to determine their flourishing in relation to other people. The examples of how they used strategies, whether from the relationships domain or not, are generally based on how they were used with their family, colleagues or students. T2, T4, T5 and T8 work in the same school and could support each other using the strategies personally and when implementing them in school. Due to her position of power, T1 has been able to disseminate the salient points from this intervention in a meaningful way across her school. T3 and T6 appear to have benefitted the least from the intervention in work with one potential contributing factor being that they were the only teachers in their schools on the intervention and they have both talked about their solitary approach to school life. In accordance with Coulombe et al. (2020) who tell researchers not to expect interventions to impact all participants, an alternative explanation could be that the intervention simply didn't impact them as much as other teachers. Given the nature of their profession, it is possible that teachers flourish even more by sharing their knowledge about flourishing with other people, which supports the notion that accomplishment which positively impacts other people is more meaningful (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023).

Teachers' highly personalised examples of the strategies in use, coupled with the PERMA Profiler data and ratings of the strategies, show that different strategies promoted flourishing to varying degrees for the small sample of teachers in this research.

Conclusion and Implications

Summary of Findings

This research confirms Vanderweele's (2020) claim that flourishing can be improved through straightforward strategies; the PERMA scores and more importantly what teachers feel about the impact of the strategies have shown that the intervention has promoted flourishing (in terms of psychological wellbeing), in the short term.

The research confirms to improve their flourishing, teachers need control and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000), which T7 acknowledged when she said, 'In teaching, we're often done *to*'. Teachers appreciated being able to reflect on their own needs. Therefore, teachers should be responsible for identifying the domain(s) they feel would have the greatest impact on their growth - this could be achieved using the PERMA Work Profiler as a starting point, but should be used in conjunction with teachers' overall judgement. I would caution that teachers asked for clarification when talking about 'meaning' and 'engagement' - outlining the type of strategies covered in each domain might help teachers make informed and accurate choices.

Granville-Chapman et al.'s (2024:7) claim 'flourishing is such a complex concept and varies significantly between individuals' was supported in the findings of this research as teachers benefited from different domains and strategies to each other. In alignment with Cann et al.'s (2023) recommendation, T1 acknowledged that the greatest chance of success is to provide a range of strategies to meet the needs of the individual teacher. She liked being given the research, and then being asked...

‘How does that relate to you? Then they take away one or two [strategies] after an hour...It’s their choice. I think we’ve all taken away different things.’

The teachers who actively and consistently engaged with the strategies (Santos, 2018), were in roles/schools that were permanent (therefore the work on relationships was worth investing in) and who had the opportunity to share their understanding of flourishing seemed to benefit the most from the intervention.

According to the PERMA Profiler and ratings for strategies, the positive emotions domain, which had the lowest initial scores, had marginally more impact on this cohort of teachers’ flourishing. In order of impact, teachers used the following strategies: prioritising positivity, gratitude, savouring and acts of kindness to promote flourishing. The impact of the accomplishment and relationships domains improved the same amount according to the PERMA Profiler. In order of impact, teachers used the following strategies: using strengths, challenging beliefs and goal setting to improve their sense of accomplishment. However, at the heart of most of the examples and discussions throughout the research was a great sense of value placed on relationships, which is in-keeping with the fundamental finding of the longest study of human happiness (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023). The strategies from the relationships domain in order of impact were: Improving the Losado ratio by noticing the contributions of others; active listening; small moments of social interaction and increasing the Losado ratio by posing interesting questions. Many of the strategies from other domains also impact the relationships domain. Though engagement and meaning were not directly addressed, they appear to have been impacted by other

domains. Alternatively, the fact that meaning has increased as much as the other domains which were addressed could suggest that the changes are not because of the intervention. However, the qualitative data suggests that the intervention has had a positive impact. If limited on time, a common-sense approach of working on the domain which requires the greatest improvement is recommended.

Evaluation of Collaborative Process

Collaboration was the driving force of this research. Participant input through the PERMA Profiler, opinion polls, and discussions provided the information for the intervention to effectively focus on their needs.

Whilst the opportunity for organic discussions and smaller moments of collaboration may have been hindered by the online delivery method, a benefit was that participants could use the chat feature to ask and answer questions and to chat to each other. This real-time feedback guided the sessions, created a light-hearted space for informal conversations and gave the quieter teachers a voice.

The advice from a colleague to reduce the content and re-structure aided participant understanding; examples were often rooted in key concepts such as the negativity bias or neuroplasticity- introducing these concepts early helped with the meaningful application of strategies.

The collaborative nature of the interviews allowed participants to reflect on each other's answers to deepen their own understanding; for example, when talking about the lack of impact the accomplishment section had on her, T7 said, 'I'm actually thinking about what T4 has just said' and went on to change her mind, identifying that her definition of accomplishment had simply changed. Though I did direct questions, some participants naturally dominated in the interviews. Using questionnaires was useful to give all participants a voice.

In the final session, T7 said, 'The process itself and meeting with other teachers has been positive.' Ultimately, my understanding of how to apply positive psychology strategies to an educational setting is a result of the collaboration with the teachers in this study- for which I am incredibly grateful.

Implications for Professional Practice

Engaging with the positive psychology literature and teaching strategies to promote flourishing has given me a secure knowledge of how to improve my own wellbeing. Identifying my strengths and being aware of cognitive bias that can prevent people from reaching their potential has inspired me to job craft. I have reduced my hours spent as a classroom teacher to expand my professional practice to include more teacher development so I have capacity to share my understanding of flourishing with more teachers. This is a topic that I would like to explore in greater depth as part of a PhD. Delivering the intervention has been an opportunity to develop my skills to lead

meaningful and responsive professional development, where I have been able to take a holistic approach.

The salient points from the research have been shared with the teachers to disseminate in their schools and I will continue to collaborate with the teachers beyond this research at their request.

The intervention has implications for the professional practice of the teachers involved (and in the case of T1, teachers in her school too). The opportunity to apply knowledge about flourishing in a timely fashion will, I suspect, be key to the long-term implication on professional practice. For example, as T4 begins her role leading the new 'Thrive' unit for students who are struggling in mainstream, she plans to use positive psychology strategies to create a culture of kindness, to focus on the positive, to re-define their sense of accomplishment and build social bonds. This timely application will re-enforce the key messages and strategies for her. In accordance with Santos' (2018) GI Joe fallacy, where she claims that knowing is not half of the battle, the impact of the intervention may diminish for teachers if they do not consistently apply the knowledge of flourishing to their professional practice.

Limitations

The intervention may inspire future changes to towards a more flourishing life, but due to the cross-sectional nature of the research, this cannot be measured. For future research, a longitudinal study would capture how long the effects last and if different strategies are used over time in different situations and career stages (Seligman, 2018).

I tried to mitigate the impact of participant bias by being transparent about research aims (Bourke, 2014) and explaining to participants that showing the strategies had a positive impact was no more valid than showing they had no impact. However, there is the potential participants provided answers to please me. It is hard to decipher whether T1's hypothesis, 'I think that if all staff could embed some of these strategies into their practise- schools would flourish!' is genuine enthusiasm for the intervention, or whether participant bias is at play. The fact that some PERMA scores showed a decrease and that participants were open about areas that didn't resonate, suggests that they have been honest and accurate, though biases are often subconscious (Kahneman, 2011).

The intervention was not part of mandatory CPD, consequently there were occasions when teachers could not attend the session, which could impact their preference for certain strategies. Each domain was covered across two sessions, so if teachers missed one session, they would receive some content from the domain. The teachers were diligent in using the PowerPoint and the quizzes to catch up (though there was no expectation for them to do so). A benefit of the online nature meant resources were

already online and easy to share (Mitchell et al., 2010). The only time that teachers missed sessions was due to professional commitments such as helping with school shows etc. Their selfless behaviour re-enforced that character and virtue did not need to be part of the framework for this intervention, as Vanderweel (2017) proposes.

As the intervention was multi-foci, it was not ethical to tightly monitor the use of each strategy as this would have increased the administrative burden on participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) and the constant monitoring would have diminished the impact on their wellbeing (Ford & Mauss, 2014). Participants were not asked to provide information on how many times they had used each strategy or to give real-time feedback on their wellbeing; instead, they reflected each week on how they had used strategies. Therefore, teachers could have tried some strategies more extensively than others, but the choice to not use a strategy speaks to what resonates with participants.

Future Research

Exploring teacher flourishing with a larger sample and including judgements of colleagues rather than relying solely on self- report, as part of whole staff development would provide quantities of generalisable data this research has been unable to provide. This would support Diener's (2012) call for positive psychology to shift focus from the individual to organizations.

Though the impact of this intervention was modest, Vanderweele (2020) notes that the strategies used in positive psychology interventions require few resources and can be done by the individual. As shown with Seligman's successful whole school approach at Geelong Grammar (Seligman, 2011), the potential for sharing strategies across populations, and having an overall impact could be significant.

In keeping with Huppert and So's (2013) recommendation that wellbeing should have a multi-layered approach, this research finds that for teachers to flourish long-term and in all domains, the use of positive psychology strategies at the individual level should be supported by whole school initiatives to create a culture of flourishing.

There were aspects that teachers felt were beyond their individual control such as ICT facilities impacting engagement and logistical issues largely about curriculum conflicting with more meaningful work. It is promising that researchers have proposed a new model 'leadership for teacher flourishing' (Granville-Chapman et al., 2024:1).

Leadership should explore ways to support teacher flourishing and create time for them to be seen as individuals. T3 noted that teacher development is missing a focus on the teacher as an individual- she said, 'It's rare you get someone stood in front of you that makes you think about *you* and your thought process.' She appreciated the opportunity to focus on her own needs as part of the intervention.

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Appendix A:

Table 1

Intervention overview

<p>Introduction</p> <p>Introductions to me and each other. Practicalities e.g. right to withdraw etc. Personal definition of flourishing & understanding of psychology Introduction to PERMA - vote for strands and discussion PERMA Work Profiler Happiness Pie Chart guesses and explanation Our lives happen in our heads discussion Why pursuing flourishing is a worthy pursuit Barriers: arrival fallacy, affective forecasting, negativity bias, absolutes, hedonic treadmill There is hope: Neuroplasticity Suggested reflection: notice where you languish and flourish. What have you adapted to?</p>
<p>Positive Emotions 1</p> <p>Quiz Benefits of positive emotions Misconceptions Prioritising positivity– reflection on weekly routine (do our values match what we are doing?) and where ‘the good stuff’ can go Random Acts of Kindness- studies & plan for implementation Discussion</p>
<p>Positive Emotions 2</p> <p>Quiz Reflection: when are the times in your week when you need a positive emotions boost? Neuroplasticity re-cap Savouring – eating activity; replaying happy memory. Plan for what savour during the week. PANAS survey and discussion Gratitude facts Gratitude journal Gratitude texts/ letters/emails Discussion</p>
<p>Accomplishment 1</p> <p>Quiz Discussion about sharing strategies with students Recap: positive emotions Misconceptions Data and guesses about sensory information and thoughts Beliefs- confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance Invisible gorilla experiment – YouTube clip Negative language Identifying personal narratives & re-framing Identifying values Strengths questionnaire Discussion</p>

Accomplishment 2

Quiz – the statistics of happiness
Reflection on strengths
Discussion: common limiting beliefs
Best possible life
Goals: approach and avoidance/ language
Setting a goal using WOOP
Re-cap psychological barriers
Discussion

Relationships 1

Quiz
Discussion: using previous strategies with relationships focus
Analysis of relationships at work – energising/depleting
Importance of relationships
Listening activity
Empathy video clip and discussion using previous data about differences
Building Losado ratio- positive questions & noticing contributions
Discussion

Relationships 2

Quiz
Body language activity
Embracing small moments of interaction
Hunting the good stuff
The dangers of social comparisons
Responding to their personal requests
Introducing personal happiness project

Conclusion

Repetition of definitions etc from first week and reflection on changes
PERMA Profiler 2
Questionnaires
Power of mental rehearsal activity as a reminder about the power of our thoughts and beliefs
Thank participants

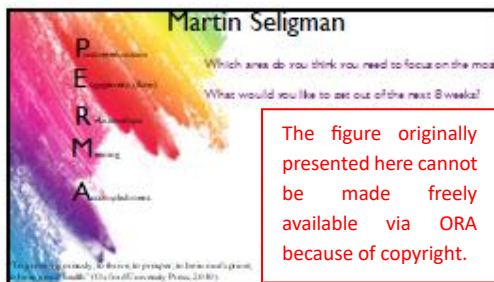
Example PowerPoint from intervention session



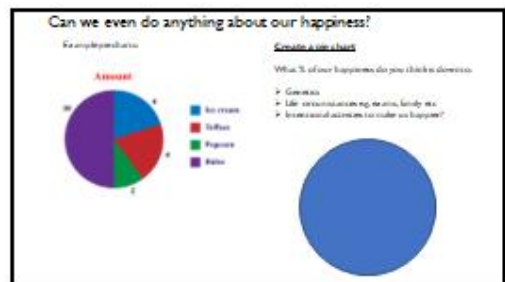
1



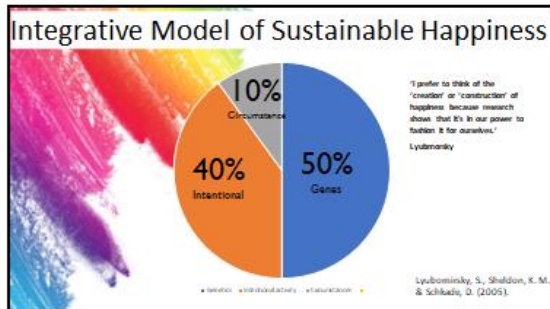
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3



4



5

Most of our lives happen in our heads!

"Tell me one last thing," said Mary. "Is this real? Or has this been happening in my head?"
Dumbledore beamed at him and his voice sounded loud and vibrant in Harry's ears, even though the bright mist was descending again, obscuring his figure.

"Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean it is not real?"

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6

Why should we strive to be happy at work?

- Positive emotions allow you to physically see issues and to think more creatively
- Can solve problems better
- More creative and innovative
- More flexible and adaptable
- More resilient

• Happier people live:

- longer overall lives
- better health, greater life expectancy, and lower chance of myocardial attack
- more self-confidence
- greater life success

People who thought about happy memory before sitting a test achieved higher scores

PERMA Work Profiler

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/perma-work>

Go with your gut instinct, there is no need to overthink.

So, why aren't we happy?

If permanently boosting your happiness is an attainable religious goal, where are you poor at it?
We have been conditioned to believe that the wrong things will make us lastingly happy.

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9

Why realize that what will make us happy?

- **The arrival fallacy:** We think about our happiness as being in the future, so thinking we will arrive some day.
- **We underestimate the power of social connection:** We think we want to be on our own, but connecting with people (even in brief) is very important.
- **We think that more materialism = possessions will make us happy when it is actually experience.**
- **We are social media as a source of comparison:** We realize we're unhappy because we compare ourselves with other people.
- **We think that we should be feeling positive emotions:** all of the time.
- **Realize when predicting something good or bad for our lives, we forget that there are lots of different aspects to our lives.** Even if something bad happens, there will still be aspects of joy in other aspects of our lives.
- **Realize time is not passing:** how long an event will last.

We have a poor judgement - of what and how long things will make us happy and tend to think that good events will keep us happy for a long time and bad events will be demoralizing.

We actually have a "psychological immune system" - we get over things quicker than we think but we also adapt in positive quicker.

After a year people who have seen the lottery, and people who have a non-dualistic have returned in their normal level of happiness.

10

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

11

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12

Hedonic Adaptation

We're running faster and faster but we seem to end up in exactly the same place

We simply adapt to the good things in our lives and we move on to wanting the next thing.

Hedonic adaptation occurs because of social comparison and habituation. We constantly start over. We compare ourselves to different people.

What have you adapted to what you were once craving for?

Tip: Try interrupting activities that you enjoy! When you come back to them, you get a novel boost again.

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13



Our brains don't think in absolutes

How much money a year do you think would make you happy?

When someone how happy people were with their salary people assumed based on what they already were.

- People earning less than 10k thought they would be happy with 10k
- People on 150k thought they would be happy with 200k

We make judgments based on comparisons

Time affluence is actually more important to us

14

We don't think in absolutes

Picking Musical Boxes (2013)

What was grade 6 the biggest?

Knowing that they are absolute values, we judge against reference points. The presence of the other notes makes us not absolute.

We don't think in absolutes either. We judge against reference points. The presence of the other notes makes us not absolute.

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15

The Good News Is... Neuroplasticity

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The more that we think a particular thought, the more it is for us to think that thought again.

16

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17

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18

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?"

PHILIP K. DICK

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Appendix B

Table 2

PERMA Profiler at Work Questions (Butler & Kern, 2013)

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Appendix C

Questionnaire About Positive Emotions

Positive Emotions

1. What is your name?

Enter your answer

2. Please rate the strategies in terms of the impact that you feel they have had on your subjective wellbeing

	1-Not all	2	3	4	5-Very strong in
Prioritising positivity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 blessings (3 things you are grateful for)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gratitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acts of Kindness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Savouring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. What do you now know about positive emotions that you didn't know/think about before?

Enter your answer

4. Which strategies/studies from this section of the programme on positive emotions have had the greatest impact on you and what has the impact been?

Enter your answer

5. Please provide an example (but feel free to include more) of a time that you have applied a strategy from the section on positive emotions to a situation in your work life.

Enter your answer

6. Which strategies will you use in the future (if any)?

Enter your answer

7. What impact (if any) has the course had on your positive emotions? What evidence are you basing your judgement on?

Enter your answer

8. Have you used any content from this section of the programme on positive emotions with students? What impact did this have and how do you know?

Enter your answer

9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the positive emotions section of the course?

Enter your answer

[Add new question](#)

Appendix D

Questionnaire About Relationships

Relationships

1. What is your name?

Enter your answer

2. Please rate the strategies in terms of the impact that you feel they have had on your relationships:

	1-Not at all	2	3	4	5-Very strong impact
Active listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Posing interesting questions with a positive focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Positive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small social interactions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Noticing other's contributions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Have any of the strategies that we used for other sections of the course had an impact on your relationships? For example: gratitude, acts of kindness, limiting beliefs, using strengths etc.

Enter your answer

4. What do you now know about relationships that you didn't know/think about before?

Enter your answer

5. Which strategies/studies from this section of the programme on relationships have had the greatest impact on you and what has the impact been?

Enter your answer

6. Please provide an example (but feel free to include more) of a time that you have applied a strategy from the section on relationships to a situation in your work life.

Enter your answer

7. Which strategies will you use in the future (if any)?

Enter your answer

8. What impact (if any) has the course had on your relationships? What evidence are you basing your judgement on?

Enter your answer

9. Have you used any content from this section of the programme on relationships with students? What impact did this have and how do you know?

Enter your answer

10. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the relationships section of the course?

Enter your answer

[Add new question](#)

Appendix E

Questionnaire About Accomplishment

Accomplishment

1. What is your name?

2. Please rate the strategies in terms of the impact that you feel they have had on your sense of accomplishment

	1-Not all	2	3	4	Very Strong
Challenging limiting beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using strengths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing definition of success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Goal setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing decision fatigue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. What do you now know about accomplishment that you didn't know/think about before?

4. Which strategies/studies from this section of the programme on accomplishment have had the greatest impact on you and what has the impact been?

5. Please provide an example (but feel free to include more) of a time that you have applied a strategy from the section on accomplishment to a situation in your work life.

6. Which strategies will you use in the future (if any)?

7. What impact (if any) has the course had on your sense of accomplishment? What evidence are you basing your judgement on?

8. Have you used any content from this section of the programme on accomplishment with students? What impact did this have and how do you know?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the accomplishment section of the course?

[Add new question](#)

Appendix F

Interview Questions

1. What misconceptions did you have before the course about what it means to flourish?

2. Which strand of the course do you think has had the biggest impact (Positive emotions, relationships and accomplishment) and why?

3. Personal project: What did you decide to work on? Positive emotions/relationships/achievement?

Which strategies did you use?

What impact did they have?

4. Do your PERMA scores feel like an accurate reflection? Are there any reasons for any significant changes? *This is your personal data, you do not need to share scores, or indeed any information at all if you don't want to.

5. We haven't focussed too heavily on engagement or meaning- but have these areas been impacted by other strategies?

6. If we had to deliver this course in an hour to staff, which info/strategies would you include to have the greatest impact?

7. What do you think is the impact of working on the intervention either with other people in your setting or on your own?

The following questions were repeated for each domain- positive emotions/relationships/accomplishment:

1. What do you now know about positive emotions/relationships/accomplishment that you didn't know/think about before?

2. Which strategies/studies from this section of the programme on accomplishment have had the greatest impact on you?

3. Please provide an example of a time that you have applied a strategy from the section on achievement to a situation in your life?

4. Which strategies will you use regularly?

5. Have you used any content from this section of the programme on achievement with students? What impact did this have and how do you know?

Appendix G

CUREC Approval

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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[REDACTED]
Department of Education, Social Sciences Division
University of Oxford

1 May 2024

Research ethics approval

Research title: An exploration of positive psychology strategies to promote teacher flourishing

Research ethics reference: EDUC_C1A_24_102

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:

Personal data: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the project is managed in accordance with the University's [guidance and legal requirements](#).

In-person activities: Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's [website](#).

Amendments: Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the [SSH IDREC webpage](#).

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk / student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk or ethics@soesci.ox.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Ward-Penny'.

Robert Ward-Penny, DREC Member

[REDACTED] Student CUREC

Appendix H

Teacher Consent Form



CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Approval Reference: EDUC_C1A_24_102

An exploration of positive psychology strategies to promote teacher flourishing.

		<i>Please initial each box</i>
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I understand how this research may be written up and published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I consent to being audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I give permission to be quoted directly in research outputs but only fully anonymously.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	I agree to take part in the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant dd / mm / yyyy
Date _____
Signature

Name of person taking consent dd / mm / yyyy
Date _____
Signature

