

# The Expanding Vision of Positive Behavior Support: Happiness, Helpfulness, Hopefulness

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# Accomplishments: What We Have Done

- Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions
- Association for Positive Behavior Support
- Annual International Conference on PBS
- Website ([www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org))
- Linkage to cognate organizations  
(e.g., the PBS SIG in ABA)
- Impact on government funding priorities  
(e.g., multiple grants for PBS research)
- Codification of PBS in Federal law: IDEA

# Unfinished Business: What We Need To Do

- Develop a conceptual framework, grounded in relevant theory and data from multiple sciences, to guide our efforts in a systematic, prescriptive fashion
- Build infrastructure to ensure the future viability of the PBS approach: preservice, inservice, organizational change/reallocation of resources

# Unfinished Business: What We Need To Do

- Disseminate the PBS approach to new venues and to new populations by developing relevant strategies
- Articulate and promulgate a set of standards that accurately and concretely define the nature of PBS to ensure procedural integrity and quality control

# Three Themes

- Happiness: QOL as the central dependent variable in PBS
- Helpfulness: Systems change as the central independent variable in PBS
- Hopefulness: Facilitating the development of QOL and systems change by incorporating knowledge from other sciences

Happiness



# Centrality of QOL

What can go right in a person's life?

VS

What are the forms of psychopathology that ruin a person's life?

# Dimensions of Quality of Life

- Material well-being
- Health and safety
- Social well-being
- Emotional well-being
- Leisure and recreation
- Autonomy



# Material Well-Being

- Adequate housing
- Basic necessities (food, clothing)
- Sufficient income
- Availability of transportation
- Amenities (toys, computers, valued personal possessions)

# Health and Safety

- Adaptation to chronic illness and/or physical impairment
- Appropriate medication
- Access to medical services
- Personal safety – home and community
- Health and wellness

# Social Well-Being

- Social competence (interests and skills)
- Social networks (friends vs isolation)
- Community acceptance (social and ethnic clubs, religious groups, hobby groups)
- Accessibility of desirable social contexts

# Emotional Well-Being

- Close relationships (love, attachment, intimacy)
- Positive mood
- Emotional stability

# Leisure and Recreation

- Social and solitary activities that generate personal pleasure (hobbies, sports, vacations, arts and entertainment, outdoor activities)

# Autonomy

- Being able to choose basic items: clothing, food, personal belongings
- Being able to make major life choices: living arrangements, social relationships, recreation and leisure, vocation, academic interests, religion and spiritual preferences
- Self-sufficiency: achieving a level of competence that reduces the level of support required from others (e.g., self-care, food preparation, safety in the community, money management)



# Impediments to QOL

- Problem behavior
- Skill deficits
- Dysfunctional systems

# The Problem With Problem Behavior

- Prevents full community integration (home/school/employment)
- Demoralizes family members (parents/siblings) and teachers
- Increases likelihood of institutionalization (loss of choice/dignity)
- Rejection by others (social isolation/no friends)
- Damages self-esteem (shame/regret)

**Summary: Destroys quality of life**

**Helpfulness**

Support  
vs  
Cause and Cure

Laboratory (Analog) Research  
as a Prelude to Effective  
Support

# Support: Maintenance and Sustainability



# Linking Sustainability to Systems Change: A Model

# Elements of a Model for Systems Change to Promote Sustainability of Effective Practices

- Vision
- Skills
- Incentives
- Resources
- Action plan

# Application of the Systems Change Model

- Vision e.g., goodness-of-fit; person-centered planning
- Skills e.g., collaborative teaming and team training
- Incentives e.g., responsiveness to social and emotional needs
- Resources e.g., life arrangement and life coaching
- Action plan e.g., group action planning

Hopefulness

# Extending PBS: Multiple Populations and Venues

## Populations

- Emotional and behavior disorders
- Mental health / mental illness
- Traumatic brain injury
- Juvenile delinquency
- Deaf / hard of hearing
- Conduct disorder
- Bullies
- Literacy issues
- Typical families
- Fetal alcohol syndrome
- Alzheimer's or dementia
- Sex offenders

# Extending PBS: Multiple Populations and Venues

## Venues

- Cross-cultural settings
- Underserved communities
- Head start classes
- High schools
- Interagency coordination
- Rural settings
- Normative work / living settings
- Medical / clinical settings

Note: Source of entries is from the first and second conference agendas of the Association for Positive Behavior Support, Orlando, FL (2003) and Tampa, FL (2005)



# Extending PBS: Linkage to Multiple Sciences and Disciplines

- Organizational management
- Community / ecological psychology
- Cultural psychology
- Biomedical sciences
- Positive psychology

# Organizational Management: Systems Change Themes

- Models for effective service delivery
- Models for effective training
- Models for effective team building
- Models for building motivation
- Models for ensuring accountability
- Models for data management

# Community / Ecological Psychology: Illustrative Examples

## A Focus on Prevention

- Identification and analysis of environmental risk factors
- Proactively addressing the issue of scarce resources (not enough time, money, personnel)
- Preventive support plans that appeal to the broader needs of settings and communities

# Community / Ecological Psychology: Illustrative Examples

## Building Sources of Social Support

- Support networks in the lifecycle
- Self-help groups

## Empowerment

- Networking
- Influencing policy formation
- Effectively competing for resources
- Building organizational coalitions

# Cultural Psychology

- Cultural relativism: conceptualizing problems
- Cultural values: identifying acceptable goals
- Cross-cultural competence: customs, rapport, cooperation

# Biomedical Science: Some Possibilities

- Knowledge of brain function influences how to build competencies
- Biological factors as setting events for problem behavior
- QOL and health psychology / behavioral medicine



# Positive Psychology: Our Greatest Scientific Ally?

“Positive psychology is an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions (Seligman et al., 2005)”

# Positive Psychology: Our Greatest Scientific Ally?

- A strengths-based approach
- Address behavior challenges by increasing competence
- Competence involves character building reflecting six virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence
- Improve QOL by focusing on social and emotional well-being
- Create institutions that enable positive affect
- Widespread application across populations and venues

We Are Not a Lonely Voice in  
the Wilderness

We Are One of Many Voices in  
a Chorus