Shoots & Ladders: Having Infinite and Influential Presence With Everyone Starts With our Mindsets

Alana R. Pudalov
apudalov@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/100

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/100
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Shoots & Ladders: Having Infinite and Influential Presence With Everyone Starts With our Mindsets

Abstract
Survivors of the Holocaust among other seniors in NYC shared their unimaginable experiences of how they began believing in the power of one’s “mindset” as defined as ideas and attitudes held by an individual. Individuals shared how they have grown from trauma through learning verbal and nonverbal ways of telling their stories with significant others, family, friends, staff and strangers. Survivors communicated stories through art, music and words both said and left unsaid. The book, the “Survival Guide to living a life of Shoots and Ladders” will be a story of narratives and research on mindset and the sense of well being individuals can achieve from writing, hearing, sharing our stories through words, humor or even having hope of a sense of togetherness through a community in person and/or online. Readers will be presented with unique narrative perspectives and psycho-education on how the more fully individuals believe in their presences and the potential of the presences of those around them, the more inclined they are to lead healthy, happy, and fulfilled lives. Individuals can elevate their personal and professional lives through understanding how mindsets influence health and wellness. Survivors noted how in any moment, individuals can accept and apply a mindset of having infinite and influential presence in their lives, which leads to a sense of personal freedom given any external circumstances.

Keywords
Psychology of survivors, mindsets, positive portfolios of people, trauma

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Social and Behavioral Sciences

This other is available at ScholarlyCommons: http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/100
Shoots & Ladders:

Having infinite and influential presence with everyone starts with our mindsets

Alana Pudalov

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Danny Torrance
August 15, 2016
Shoots & Ladders:
Having infinite and influential presence with everyone starts with our mindsets
Alana Pudalov - apudalov@gmail.com

Capstone Project
Master of Applied Positive Psychology
University of Pennsylvania
Advisor: Danny Torrance
August 15, 2016

Abstract
Survivors of the Holocaust among other seniors in NYC shared their unimaginable experiences of how they began believing in the power of one’s “mindset” as defined as ideas and attitudes held by an individual. Individuals shared how they have grown from trauma through learning verbal and nonverbal ways of telling their stories with significant others, family, friends, staff and strangers. Survivors communicated stories through art, music and words both said and left unsaid. The book, the “Survival Guide to living a life of Shoots and Ladders” will be a story of narratives and research on mindset and the sense of well being individuals can achieve from writing, hearing, sharing our stories through words, humor or even having hope of a sense of togetherness through a community in person and/or online. Readers will be presented with unique narrative perspectives and psycho-education on how the more fully individuals believe in their presences and the potential of the presences of those around them, the more inclined they are to lead healthy, happy, and fulfilled lives. Individuals can elevate their personal and professional lives through understanding how mindsets influence health and wellness. Survivors noted how in any moment, individuals can accept and apply a mindset of having infinite and influential presence in their lives, which leads to a sense of personal freedom given any external circumstances.
Dedication

Share
How we perceive ourselves, those around us, and our environments influences if/how/when we share the stories of who we were/are/can be. For me, the words share and silence duel in their echoes in my head; I seek to be hidden and I hide to be seen. I am those unique pairing of statements. We started a blog, Show and Tell, centered on sharing as a therapeutic way to create togetherness. In sharing, whether by seeing and hearing and/or being seen or heard, we can experience freedom to become ourselves and create a mutually beneficial exchange of strengths, wisdom, and belief in loving our future visions of ourselves. In the spaces between the stimuli and our responses, do we consciously or subconsciously, shhh or silence who we are or do we share who we are to the best of what our knowledge and experiences are in that moment. I realized that I shared my truest self when I was with someone who not only fiercely fought for my best-interests because he knew how legally but because he believed in me. Even though I was finding my words and ways of being, he was by my side supporting me in his fullest capacity: to be me, believe me, and believe in me. Since knowing him, I consider him my superhero but he is my Believe(in) You hero. His infinite and influential presence and believing in me still resonates in my sense of who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming. Future directions of my Capstone include starting a non-profit that would empower individuals of any and every age to become each other’s Believe(in) You heros to encourage the elevation of one another through creative emotional, social, communal connections and advocacy.

P.S. For his birthday, I wrote him a card playfully building on the message of the card which was wishing you s'more laughs, love, etc. and as per the illustration, every time I think of wishes coming true (basically every time someone blows out birthday candles) I associate the thought, feeling, and action of wishing to him for making my unimaginable childhood wish come true; us staying together. I know my purpose is to everyday find ways to have a spirit flickering of his belief in me and my story to those with whom I share and experience my life. I dedicate this book to you. Through sharing and our dance of listening and speaking, I found how to be me and experience my mind, body, and soul as home, then and now. I thank you.

We are all candles of infinite and influential presence - Believe(in)You

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal”
- Thomas Jefferson
I would like to thank my advisor Danny Torrance for his ongoing support and belief in the success of my Capstone process, paper, and projects. I was lucky to be working with Danny throughout the year as he was my journal reader so we quickly were able to develop a close relationship and in addition to his academic and professional insights and mentoring, I am grateful for his kindness, compassion and interest in my passion of understanding how to effectively integrate the best practices of social work and positive psychology.

I am infinitely thankful to my classmates, TAs, and professors who made an extra effort to see & hear me throughout our MAPP journey and have connected since graduation. You know who you are and I just want to express my appreciation for your insights, phone calls, voicemails, texts, hugs, laughs, listening, loving, and believing in me and how we can grow and support one another.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my family, friends, and team at NYFSC. With our team approach to implementing positive psychology inspired interventions at our senior centers, we were able to immediately see the transformative effects of positive psychology and its application through our interventions. Our clients, staff, and community partners were able to grow and learn throughout my journey through MAPP and we have all been transformed as a result. A special thanks to my interns this summer who believe in the promise of our Show & Tell blog just as much as I do, if not more. We love seeing how taking time to truly be, see, and hear someone changes relationships in the most exhilarating and unpredictable ways. One moment, conversation, story can be giving of strength, hope, and humor that someone needs or could benefit from and we have been touched to find out that this has and could be us all.

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Chance for her powerful words resonated deeply with me and inspired me to starting asking. I learned how to ask people to share their stories and created Show&Tell because of her wisdom and passion!

Many hugs, kisses, and infinite love to my family and friends who supported me throughout this journey <3.

“Speak to all people as though they are the wisest, gentlest, most beautiful beings on Earth; for what they believe, they become”
- Heather K O’Hara
Part 1.
SOCIAL WORK - believing in our stories and presence no matter what obstacles we face

Part 2.
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY- research showing how our mindsets in every moment change outcomes in health and wellness - believing in the power of our mindset can lead us to achieve

Part 3.
Integration of Social Work and Positive Psychology in the appendixes:
1. Positive Portfolio creating a daily positive psychology inspired mindset
   A. Puzzle Pieces Page
2. Positive Portfolio creating daily positive psychology inspired mindset of believing and achieving as individuals and as a collective
   B. Show & Tell Blog
3. LaGuardia Senior Center Facebook Page
Prologue - Gathering the Strength I did not have

As I tripped on my shoelaces, I bent down at the curb right in front of the Courthouse. I could not understand why my multicolored, sparkly shoelaces would not stay in the bow that I tied, so I tied them again, and double knotted them, but they refused to stay together. My mom was getting impatient with me, since we were in a hurry, but I insisted that I could manage my shoelaces on my own. So we walked up to the entrance of the building and soon after, I got lost in a maze full of faceless adults. I took a deep breath because I knew that I had to be under control, just like my shoelaces. I knew that I longed for this meeting and had to regain my composure and tell the truth about what was best for my siblings and me.

Even though the current divorce rate is at least half the married couples, when my family started the divorce proceedings it was definitely an unimaginable experience especially to me as a young child. In the middle of the first year of the proceedings, I was assigned a law guardian, ironically named Faith, who was supposed to represent me in court, but how could she do that when she did not reply to my emails or answer my messages? When my younger sisters and brother were forced to live with my father part of the time, even though my father abandoned the family about a year ago, they were shocked. I knew something was terribly wrong with my father, from the way he verbally abused us but what could I do, only being 11? While learning about the constitutional rights in US history and after doing some research, I knew that I had the right to be represented in court by an attorney. Regardless of whether or not the judge changed her mind, I was determined to be heard and discuss my situation with the judge. I did not want to challenge my law guardian’s authority but I knew that a law guardian was supposed to hear what the kids were saying and do what is in their best interests. When my grandparents came over, I discussed what I learned about my rights and how I was determined to make things better.
for all of us. I told them that I wanted to pursue obtaining my own attorney, because I knew that my siblings depended on me but getting an attorney to listen to me, at my age was definitely a challenge. After putting in the effort to hire an attorney with my babysitting money, after a six months legal battle the judge decided that my attorney could not represent me, but she would like to have a conference with me.

I met with the judge and spoke about all the things that I had kept inside for so long. I had to say what was equivalent to a hundred pages long argument, but I did not know if I had ten minutes, to paint a picture of what we were going through, or over an hour. I felt like an attorney giving a closing without preparing an opening argument. I knew I had to do what a hired attorney could not but with less legal mumbo-jumbo but with honesty and devotion. I had to do whatever it took for me to keep composure in the chilly room, with the elderly judge ruffling her black robe. All the strategies from the public speaking class I took went out the window and I had to be sincere without being completely emotional, but it was a huge obstacle when I had to keep my composure and try to hold back the tears when I faced heart-breaking questions. I broke down and in my moment of crisis, I knew that I would never forgive myself if I did not recollect my thoughts and make sure my siblings did not visit my father without supervision. I knew that by the judge’s reaction, this was the first time she was heard some of the information about how my father had joy in making us cry, and as sad as it was, the judge finally realized why, the whole situation was very misjudged.

When I finished the meeting I went down those same steps I came up and I felt like I was of a new mindset. Even though it was probably the most simultaneously positive and negative emotional experience of my early childhood, my moment of advocacy is definitely something that I am the most proud of. So with pride, I am thankful, that I was able to collect myself and
represent myself, when the critical time came. We grew together as siblings, forming an unbreakable bond of trust and unconditional love. It is not always that easy to just move on and be a stronger person, because in all honesty there are hard times to get through and challenges our family faces. I am infinitely grateful for this experience because the overwhelming positive emotion of knowing that I have friends, family and teachers that have shaped me into who I am and gave me the power that I thought I did not have is something that forever influences how I experience my own identity.

In Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi’s article, Positive Psychology (2000), Seligman’s personal and professional epiphany, about the power of learning how to “see into the soul”, echoes the sentiment of my story. By conversing with his daughter, he had a shift in perspective which is how one can focus one’s attention on cultivating strength and supporting others flourish instead of dwelling on what is not seemingly correct at the time. Through the highs and lows emotionally in our relationships with family, friends, coworkers, significant others and everyone with whom we interact, we never know the potential of what we may learn from one another and how we might recognize an opportunity to reframe a trauma narrative as a life accomplishment.
We can play Hide & Seek throughout the Shoots & Ladders of our lives. As children, we learn about ourselves and others by playing games such as hide and seek, shoots and ladders, and show and tell. This book aims to highlight how we can use the power of mindsets to lead our best lives of navigating the ups and downs of life through the ways we ask and answer questions and converse and build relationships with one another. I propose we inject some playfulness to see if Showing & Telling empowers our mindset of creating infinite and influential presence as individuals and together as one. A Rabbi once shared that we have the potential to have infinite goodness through our words and actions and the ripple effects of everything we are can be irresistible in subsequently helping us to attract health, wealth, and wellness. A mindset of believing in ourselves can lead to unlimited opportunities for growth and learning for us and those around us.

The original centering question for the capstone was “if a tree falls in a forest and nobody is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” I realized after hearing and learning from my heroes’ stories, I need to ask another question that would shape my perspective: the question isn’t can you be seen and heard, it is how you will and how will you see and hear others? My proposed answer in this Capstone is mindset: in any moment, nobody can give us our mindset or take it away, except for ourselves. My stories of shoots and ladders, falls & rises, impact my mindset and who I am in the moment.

How can I create an infinite and influential mindset to most effectively impact change?
When I think of what I pitied most in the world was those individuals with enormous beauty, defeat, struggle, suffering and have found and created a path out of their depths of darkness but are not able to share their stories; potential stolen from them and us all. Their potential for loving, kindness and concern illuminates a sense of meaning, purpose, and potential in their sacred stories that the world will never hear. In the stories of survivors that I have heard, I know with deep depths that their awareness of both the darkness and the light gives us an appreciation for what it means to live with meaning and purpose. In the togetherness of the sharing of stories, I felt blessed to be present in such a powerful exchange of wisdom, laughs, love and high intensity connections and begin my story with my note of gratitude.

We will never forget. Always remembering. Believe & Achieve

I share with the permission of the speakers, their stories.

Dear Rabbi,

I felt tremendously moved in so many ways by your words tonight. I experienced a deep and resonating impact from the way you shared your stories of surviving the Holocaust and I found myself craving to know the parts that you fast forwarded through or might have felt there was not time to share with the group. I was able to thank you for sharing your words after the event but found myself speechless of how to meaningfully share my appreciation and gratitude for your energy, time, and sense of what it means to be a survivor that you dedicated to us tonight.
I find myself craving to know more of your experiences and I'm at my core fascinated by your strength in sharing your story. I feel sad that towards the end there was a sense that you had to conclude when I was hoping that was only the beginning of what you might want to share with us. Maybe I saw myself in you in that moment, for there are many times I've wanted to speak but couldn't find the safe way to express myself either due to my shyness or the audience. I respect that your story is sacred and I wanted to tell you a little about myself and see if you might be interested in continuing to tell me more about your life story.

My name is Alana and I attended your event with my mom and sister. I am a social worker and work for New York Foundation for Senior Citizens as the Director of LaGuardia Senior Center and I supervise Mott Street and Dyckman Senior Centers in NYC. I work full time and I'm also pursuing my Masters of Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. As a social worker in the senior centers, I've seen how some people find their rarest and purest meaning in their most fragile states. After working at the centers for over five years, I developed a hunger to understand the branch of psychology that might support individuals through their darkest times of questioning humanity. My interest in PTSD stems beyond my work at the centers and I've learned in my Masters in Positive Psychology Program the topic of Post-Traumatic Growth and how there is potential, especially through storytelling, to develop a sense of resilience and recovery. I've been intrigued and hopeful that there's a way to create a space, in telling and listening to a story, to hold both traumatic and sacredly positive moments in an innovative and integrated way.

In my program, we will be working on a Capstone Project which is similar to a Master's Thesis. I would absolutely love to write my Capstone Project featuring your narrative which truly exemplifies to me what the study of positive psychology has the potential to become in the fu-
ture. I would truly be blessed if you would be willing to continue a conversation with me and would be open to sharing your thoughts and feelings about how you learned about gratitude, love, friendship, purpose and meaning through some of what I imagine to be your hardest and character defining moments. If not, thank you again for sharing your story with me tonight and taking the time to read my note to you.

Thank you for all the ways you inspired me.

Thank you,

Alana Pudalov

Rabbi RM was a 10 year old child when he came to the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz. There he witnesses unimaginable atrocities as well as unexpectedly beautiful and courageous acts of faith and kindness. He is one of the youngest children inmates of the camp and he survived and became a world renowned author, speaker, philosopher and scholar. He credits his survival to God. “I never gave up hope and trust in God,” he said. “I always had, at least on the back burner, a rope to God. He holds me and I’m not alone. I always felt something controlled me - an invisible wire” (Personnel Communications, Rabbi, 2016). Holding up his arm revealing his identification number, he shared “Ladies and gentlemen, I consider this tattoo a badge of honor” (Personnel Communications, Rabbi, 2016). Thank you Rabbi.
I needed to be close to him again and re-experience our emotional and conversational intimacy. I was so in the moments of his sharing of his story that throughout the duration of the time he spoke, I was focused solely on the words that left his mouth. During each slide of his PowerPoint presentation, I was focused on each and every word, possibly syllable by syllable. In what was hidden, the emotions, I noted but only after we parted ways. He has a sacred story that I was able to hold in our sharing of ourselves during our time together.

I want to hold on and savor his words. Hearing his story of survival made me savor every moment I had that day after I saw him—moments I had not even thought of as deeply like the feeling of sitting or having a breath of fresh air. Moments, I had taken for granted. I wanted to remember fully so I went to the place we met and started writing the essence of what he told me. There is no way that I can capture his memories in as poignant, purposeful, or prideful way, but my promise is I will do my best.

*It was World War II, and his younger sister and all four grandparents passed away during the Holocaust. AL and his parents did all they could to survive in the Bershad concentration camp in Transnistria, which is where they were struggling to survive. "If you don't have the strength for your survival, or the strength of belief that survival is possible," said AL, "you can't survive."

AL and his parents courageously found that strength until they were liberated by the Soviets in 1944 after three years in the camp. AL was born in 1936 in Romania, which had a large Jewish population who lived comfortably before World War II. "It's amazing that when the war began, we began to feel the hatred and anti-Semitism we never experienced before," AL ex-
The war became personal for AL in July 1941, when his maternal grandparents were shot and killed by their neighbors. Over 100 Jews died in the attacks.

In October, the AL and the remainder of his family were sent to a Jewish ghetto and then on to Bershad. "It was a slave labor camp," AL said. "This one had over 6,000 Jews. If you could not do the work, (you) were shot.” Al’s baby sister and paternal grandparents lost their lives due to typhus and starvation in the camp. "One third of the people in the camp survived." AL shared that among the valuables his father had sewn into the family's coat liners before their deportation was a glass cutter. He used the tool to get assigned replacing windows in the sleeping quarters and could escape more risky, painful and brutal tasks.

"You do anything you can to survive," AL believed.

After the Soviet liberation, AL's family made their way to a "displaced persons" camp in Italy. They later immigrated to the U.S., where he had family. AL spent his career working in the in the field of technology and spent 30 years with IBM.

"I never, in my wildest dreams, imagined what life would be like after the camp," said AL, who, with his wife, has two daughters and grandchildren.

A decade ago, his daughter convinced him to go back to Romania and the sites of his childhood traumas. With hesitations, he went with her.

"As it turned out, it was a very interesting experience," AL said.

His later years have been different from his childhood, but AL remembers lessons learned.

"The world has not changed as much as we would like to believe," AL said.
Lead researchers in the field of positive psychology ask questions and explore multi-disciplinary theories and applications of what does it mean to live a good life and what leads to flourishing. Given the messages of survivors of the Holocaust, we see where individuals need all their strength wisdom, and social supports to endure dark times in their lives. Given AL’s lingering question of how we can use our awareness of the darkness to illuminate purpose and meaning for future generations, his story naturally drives one to ponder how can we change the world. His question is in alignment with lead positive psychologists who are also looking to discover and grow our own “ladders” towards success and goals and offer them to others; how do we create light in the darkest of nights as well as in our calmest of moments simply drinking tea and reflecting on our day.

Founding leaders of positive psychology, Seligman (1999), Diener (2002), Valiant (2002), and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) focus on discovering ways that achieving mental wellness is beyond the lack of mental ailments. Many authors, artists, philosophers, coaches, musicians, social workers and professionals and people with personal interest and investment strive to understand how constructs such as hope, wisdom, and creativity lead to feelings of fulfillment. Positive psychology has added to the dialogue of interdisciplinary conversation about happiness and wellbeing by both pursuing new perspectives in striving for what it means to live well in addition to having findings and positive interventions that are evidence based.

In 1980, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was added to the DSMIII as a psychiatric condition (American Psychiatric Association & American Psychiatric Association Task Force on DSMIV, 2000), which both increased awareness of the negative hardships of trauma survivors as well as generated momentum for professionals to develop evidence based theories and practices.
that could alleviate listed symptoms of PTSD. For instance, individuals with PTSD might experience flashbacks, hyper arousal or feelings and thoughts of avoidance (Carlson & Dutton, 2003). The field of positive psychology created an alternative theoretical and applied framework which is that through the toughest moments in life, individuals can emerge with added strengths, wisdom, growth and learning. Psychologists in the field of positive psychology believe that survivors can flourish after a traumatic event. Even though a commonly accepted practice with psychologists was to focus on the negative repercussions and symptoms their clients were experiencing, positive psychology presented a new perspective.

Martin Seligman, President of the American Psychological Association in 1998, inspired and founded the field of positive psychology (Peterson, 2006). Seligman was driven to create a sense of balance in the field of psychology where in addition to understanding the difficulties and negative emotions, thoughts, and experiences, individuals could also research and orient themselves and clients toward strengths and personal and professional success (Peterson, 2006). Seligman has dedicated his career towards emphasizing ways that people of all ages, ethnicities, professional fields and from different parts of the world can elevate both themselves and those around them. He built a network of researchers and practitioners who pursue researching purpose and meaning and are committed to developing studies, policies, project with the aim of not only seeing ways in which wellbeing impacts health but also provides a new perspective to the topic of this paper, which is discovering how one can most effectively grow with and after traumatic experiences.
In answering the question of how to create light from the darkest of moments and experiences, we can realize the limitations of one’s mindset and metaphors as we apply those to ourselves and others and that is what motivates so many people to pursue deeper study of positive psychology. For example, in the metaphor of the tree, we know that trees cannot move nor have the ability to direct conscious attention and energy. Staying still keeps one from feeling any sort of pain or discomfort of the chains they would feel if they moved. How do we shift our mindset and metaphors to reflect that in recognizing the human sparks we all have that are not defined by our external circumstances, as definition of being human, we can create lives with meaning, purpose, potential and become the light for how we see ourselves and those we are seen by that glow extra uniquely in the darkest of contexts. We can change our mindset to be exactly who we want to be. Our mindsets can be individual’s tools to live what positive psychologist are committed to defining and applying a sense of a life lived as well as possible. The central argument of the book is that inspiring our mindsets can assist survivors of trauma to live with their stories and believe they can achieve to the fullest extent their personal and professional goals.

Current research and applications of positive psychology interventions lead individuals to understand the power of positivity that can develop infinitely from applying positive psychology. Exploring how integrating positive psychology interventions into one’s life as mindset choices can lead to even higher levels of happiness and wellbeing focused on positive inspiration from people’s stories. Creating a positive portfolio of people’s stories and life lessons is an innovative way to apply the meaning of the findings of positive emotions in relationships, mindset research and the tools of positive interventions. The active ingredients Show & Tell are ensuring its success by creating positive habits of attention. Each time one looks at the page, one will be posi-
Shots & Ladders

tively reminded of his/her strengths and highlights with the positive portfolio of stories for example, and if one feel anxiety before going to speak to someone new, one could quickly look at my mindset visuals and be gently reminded how to be positive even in nerve wracking situations. The positive psychological shift that could be created could have value for all.

Positive Humanities

Caracciolo (2015), Moores, Pawelski, Potkay, Mason, Wolfson and Engell (2015), and Rebele (2010) demonstrate the power in the mindfulness of the words of writing and how we can apply the origins of positive psychology to our conversations and communities. Individuals can also become more aware of understanding ways in which their words and stories that we tell ourselves and one another can define and shape what wellbeing means to each of us individually and collectively.

Caracciolo (2015) reviews empirical work that suggests that there are psychological benefits and consequences of connecting with literature. One highlight is the idea that the self can be viewed, both philosophically and psychologically, as a narrative construction (Caracciolo, 2015). When readers take in the stories of others in literature, that process can have an impact on them that can range from negative to positive. Analyzing reader’s stories can lead to a deeper understanding of the effects of reading literature. Some individuals may find comfort in relating to characters or plots the characters have experienced. In addition, many readers might find insight from lessons the characters have learned and apply those morals to their own lives. We need to be aware of the “being” in well being and the “psychology” in positive psychology as all of our puzzle pieces exist in the larger context of our identities. One piece of puzzle or one chapter of our stories can help to show us the ways that we are one in a community. We are a tree in
a larger, infinite forest. Sometimes, we might feel like a sum of branches and other times, we are more connected to our roots.

We all have moments of speaking and moments of silence. How and when we communicate is often consciously chosen by the individual but we are all communicating even when our verbal or nonverbal communication could be unintentional. Reading poems from Moores, Pawelski, Potkay, Mason, Wolfson and Engell (2015), illustrates the power of the single word. Poetry can bring into focus the power of being mindful of the moment and the precise words that are in front of us (Appendix D). Through this sense of mindfulness after reading poems, one develops a sense of how important word choice and connection can be and how there is infinite interpretation to the meanings associated with our poems and writing of every variety. As individuals expose themselves to the various forms of writing, in poetry, we are made aware of the meaning of words and how they are strung together for a cumulative meaning. The sum of the meaning of the words in poems, capture the beauty of individuals in the forest. Each has their own inner rings of stories and interwoven struggles and strengths.

Rebele (2010) advocates for the connection between writing and wellbeing in demonstrating how when one is free to write his/her feelings and thoughts, he/she can learn more about self-awareness and one’s identities. When we give ourselves permission to freely write, we can experience new sides of ourselves and in reflecting on our journaling, can tap into new emotions and thoughts while also having insights on other experiences and knowledge. Writing encourages well being because it is the opportunity for one who perhaps is not able or comfortable to speak to express themselves in a safe manner that is private and full of potential.

Positive psychology is still a growing tree but the roots of positive psychology expand deep into other disciplines such as social work, philosophy and the humanities. Through our under-
standing of art, religion, philosophy, spoken and storytelling, individuals understand ways to best create healthy trees and ideal environments for trees and ecosystems to flourish. As we can mindfully become more aware of the roots, trunk, and leaves of the tree, we can understand that in order to create the wellbeing and happiness that we uniquely strive for in our lives and for those around us, that process starts with the core of who we are and acknowledging the pain with the pleasure and the words spoken and words left unsaid.

**Topic of Focus of Positive Psychology: Mindset**

Individuals hold onto stories of who we are and who we have met and use both of those perspectives of stories as ways to define who we are. In a way, survivors of trauma have unique ways to share their senses of who they are because they are recovering after having had experienced life-changing experiences. In this section, I will argue that the mindset research of positive psychology offers ways that individuals can help themselves and others, become their best selves, at any given time. We can build on the benefits of the positive intervention of positive portfolios to create positive portfolios of people who inspire us to have faith in our sense of being and use their fireworks of passion and purpose to fuel our own mindsets of being present and influential (Appendixes A & B). Jer Clifton eloquently defines James Pawlski’s intervention of positive portfolios as collections of quotes, pictures, music, and more that spark positive mindsets such as awe, love, safety and serenity (Clifton, 2012). Positive interventions can be understood as ideas and tools that have the potential to improve behaviors and positive portfolios can be created by any individual who would like to have written, verbal, auditory, or other mindset cues of moments that spark happiness, purpose and passion.

In these two Facebook pages, individuals see ways that mindset can simply be inspired by words or images and have the potential to help people with negative mindsets who see diffi-
culties in every opportunity become individuals who see the opportunities in the difficulties they experience. As individuals become more self-aware, they become clearer on how they can connect with their thoughts and feelings and the sense that they have the choice to believe what they choose about themselves and that one’s mindset is what individuals can learn to control even during the hardest of times. From conversations with Holocaust survivors, we learn that even when the external circumstances are beyond one’s control and choice is nearly eliminated from one’s experience in life, the choice is in what thoughts we choose to have. Even still when life seems unimaginably difficult in possibly every sense that one can imagine, we have the ability to be ourselves to ourselves and nobody else has the power to take that away from ourselves. After learning from four survivors of the Holocaust and hearing a resonating theme that mindset can make the difference between life and death, the lessons from their stories add to the fields of social work and positive psychology by seeing how positive psychology inspired interventions centered around mindset can support clients as they seek counseling or other clinical interventions or treatments.

What’s on your mind? This is a common question that people ask and answer sometimes without deep thought or consideration. What if we really did begin to become aware of our mindset and share more authentically and vulnerably with those around us? Researchers have found that our mindset can make a difference in the quality of our lives, which empirically supports the sentiment of the survivors of the Holocaust who shared their stories. For instance, Dweck (2016) notes the difference between a growth and fixed mindset perspective. When individuals believe their abilities and talents will be developed through hard work and feedback from others then they have a growth mindset. They put their energy into learning and feel empowered, collaborative, and innovative (Dweck, 2016). Positive interventions are opportunities
for individuals to put into practice the process of applying different mindsets to their experiences. Understanding that goal attainment can be a self-fulfilling prophecy whether or not we consciously intend for it was confirmed by findings by researcher Marchant (2016). Marchant explores different ways that the placebo effect proves powerful across individuals experiencing health and mental health struggles suggesting that one’s beliefs and mindsets can influence feelings and future actions. Marchant met with individuals who experienced a spectrum of different health and mental health issues and explored their roads to recovery with different treatments that respected a holistic approach to wellness. In addition, McGonigal (2015) emphasizes that individuals’ subjective beliefs about themselves as being able to cope effectively with stress is a significant factor in how they actually respond in stressful situations. With the hope and creativity in shaping our mindsets, we release infinite and influential moments of who we are into the universe (Chance, 2016).

We learn about cultivating human flourishing through research as positive psychology is rooted in science and we have also seen powerful ways that having a faith of wellbeing impacts health and happiness in individuals and communities. Understanding diverse experiences in life empowers us to explore how positive interventions and constructs can be applied effectively and empower us to create the mindsets we desire in every and each interaction. From conversations for the blog Show and Tell, individuals of varying ages, ethnicities, and “shoots and ladders” in life, shared ways they find positivity, meaning, and purpose in their lives. From the stories individuals have shared from the Blog as well as at LaGuardia, Mott Street, and Dyckman Senior Centers, researchers noted that the most precious moments came from individuals learning about themselves and others from the positive psychology inspired questions and expressing their curiosity about how they can apply positive interventions in their lives.
We add to our knowledge of the science of wellbeing by observing and analyzing the cultures of well-being through the perspective of understanding how believing in ourselves, others, and freedom can complement each other to cultivate positivity for individuals (Pargament, 2016). Individuals can respond and react to the theories, research, and applications differently depending on their past experience (Pargament, 2016). There is a question of how effective the positive interventions are in and of themselves but there is also a question of to what extent do people truly believe that they deserve happiness and well-being. A mindset of feeling and being deserving of well-being can lead to change consciously or subconsciously (Marchant, 2016).

Interconnected threads of theoretical, empirical, and experiential analysis aim to answer the question of what are positive interventions and how can they be as effective as possible given one’s experiences in life (Pawelski, 2016). Positive interventions can fuel the extraordinary potential of trauma survivors amongst other clinical populations. To better understand the potential of the field of positive psychology, we first look at what positive psychology means as a broader field speaking to the importance of vulnerability through sharing and close relationships and then with that understanding, we will explore the impact positive psychology inspired practice can have on survivors of trauma and explore what trauma survivors can teach us about the psychology of living a life lived well. Survivors of trauma and seniors at LaGuardia, Mott Street Senior Center, and Dyckman Senior Center shared answered to the questions (Appendix B) and a resonating theme of lifelong happiness and health was having relationships where people felt they could be authentic and share vulnerabilities and strengths and weaknesses with one another. More than that sentiment, seniors shared their beliefs that a sense of togetherness was key and helped them to fight isolation and depression (Appendix B).
The idea that happiness is about moving in the right direction for oneself versus focusing on happiness being at a destination of choice, resonates deeply with some individuals who have learned becoming a survivor means passionately and actively creating ways to make the most meaning out of one’s perspective and experiences in order to move through them or reach a more meaningful place about what and why something happened. Individuals can increase well-being for him or herself and cumulative positive emotions in their relationships through using positive interventions, which could be due to both self-fulfilling prophecies and the impacts of the interventions themselves. As Merchant (2016) found in her explorations of the placebo effect, our beliefs and mindsets contribute significantly to our perceptions and experiences with others. One aim of positive psychology is to enhance human flourishing which can be applied to promoting positive emotions in relationships including one’s relationship with oneself. As individuals in romantic relationships increase positive emotions in their relationships, they can experience more empathy and improve wellbeing. This is one example of how our mindset of positive emotions growing in relationships can transform our sense of wellbeing.

Emotions can impact individuals’ spectrums of health and mental health. A variety of dimensions of emotions such as intensity of emotions experienced, duration of emotions and the context in which the emotions are experienced can influence the extent to which individuals can cultivate well-being in their lives (Merchant, 2016). Positive interventions can support individuals as they aim to improve their senses of well-being which could improve the totality of positive emotions experienced in a relationship (Pawelski, 2016). Fredrickson states that people with positivity are able to respond to struggles rapidly, live longer lives, and are more effective leaders in professional contexts (Fredrickson, 2009). Fredrickson’s ideas of raising positivity are to become more caring and empathetic, connect with the outdoors and reduce intake of negative
news. From Fredrickson’s research, we are able to understand on a deeper level how both positive and negative emotions are both variables in the equation of well-being for individuals and romantic relationships.

Survivors of trauma shared that their sense of surviving post trauma means sharing their stories with those individuals they are close with as well as general audiences who are receptive to hearing their messages. For instance, AH shared that for her, isolation during her time in the concentration camp was what was hardest for her as she no longer had any family. She shared how heartbroken she was to know that she was absolutely all alone during the most painful and excruciating time in her life. She describes feeling the hardest of negative emotions due to the lack of social connectedness of anyone she knew and she noted, throughout her recovery post trauma, that she gravitates towards positive emotions in her marriage and relationships with friends and family. To her, positive emotions in relationships of every quantity and quality is everything to her in a way. She is extremely proud of her children and grandchildren and in her message, she encourages people to branch out and make connections that could add meaning and connection to their lives. In a way, this section is meant to be a way of further sharing her story about the importance of positive emotions in relationships both in that present moment and forever in the future. She shared how powerful emotions can be and how positive emotions from moments in the past carried her through her most difficult times. She encourages future generations to seize these moments and make the deepest connections they possibly can because those emotions can be carried with us infinitely (Hecht, 2016).

Romantic Relationships
One pillar of positive psychology is to envision the “good life” and every couple can create their own mutually agreed upon definition of what that phrase means to them (Seligman, 2002). Seligman expands on this premise with three parts to his framework: positive institutions, positive traits, and positive experience (Seligman, 2002). His belief that positive experiences encompass both positive emotions and subjective well-being overlaps with Fredrickson’s emphasis of the importance of emotional ratios. For instance, he describes ways in which positive emotions can assist in undoing negative ones like when one is reminded of a positive memory, he or she could be less stressed over a fight during the day. This finding is key to the creation of positive portfolio which can inspire positive emotions and mindsets (Pawelski, 2016). As individuals see how experiencing and expressing positive emotions can strengthen their relationship, they will seek innovative ways to create positive emotions by having new experiences, meeting with friends and family members, and finding ways as individuals to become more attractive, both mentally and physically. As noted in Appendix B, a positive portfolio of positive mindsets was created and is available to those interested (Puzzle Pieces).

Another significant layer to understanding the relationship between positive and negative emotions and how they cultivate well-being in romantic relationships is to understand how underlying mechanisms and motivations may manifest differently than outward behavior. Some emotions might not be outwardly expressed for a variety of cultural and social reasons. For instance, negative emotions can be useful in signaling fear and anxiety which serves a critical purpose in guiding our decision making processes but individuals could not feel safe to express their thoughts with their partner. If individuals are able to learn from their emotions, positive and negative, it has the potential to empower them to live fuller lives of integrated emotional wellbe-
ing, meaning that individuals could experience, communicate, and express a fuller range of their humanness.

From the work of Fredrickson, Seligman, and Peterson, we understand ways that both positive and negative emotions can determine theoretical and applied meanings of wellbeing in romantic relationships. As we become more attuned to what emotions make us feel positive and negative, we can make decisions aimed at matching the desired emotional experiences we envision. The more self-aware individuals become of their expressed positive and negative emotions in their romantic relationship, individuals can focus on experiencing and expressing more positive emotions, which will lead to increased wellbeing.

Awareness of negative emotions especially: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling” are the most dangerous to wellbeing and stonewalling and emotionally withdrawing from an interaction are key predictors of divorce (Carrere, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000). Researchers also used couples’ perceptions about their relationships and each other to model stability or divorce which emphasizes how important having this piece of information in individual’s mindsets can be to a thriving romantic relationship.

Nozick's (1990) argues that striving for happiness can inspire individuals to pursue experiences that lead to: close connection with others, understanding of ourselves and those around us, and a sense of being moved by something innovative whether it is something musical or in nature. The more each individual can become more self-aware, mindful of one’s mindset, empathetic, and compassionate to his/her partner’s emotional state could lead to improved communication and cohesion. If individuals understand the relationship between positive and negative emotions to well being and flourishing, couples committed to their relationships could apply their unique blend of empathy, humor, practical wisdom, compassion, and positivity to bring out
the best in each other and have their best relationship with each other despite obstacles they face. The importance of these findings is that once individuals understand the importance of their emotions in relationships, individuals can approach all their interactions with others with a fresh mindset of the infinite and influential nature of these moments with one another. Not only in our romantic relationships, but every conversation and relationship can we have the potential to be present and exchange emotions that fuel one another’s growth and learning.

From this introduction to one area in the field of positive psychology focusing on positive emotions in relationships, we can begin to understand why mindset research is key to leading to long-lasting positive change as individuals and how we communicate and interact in our relationships. Building on the importance of the belief of mindset, Arthur Aron created 36 Questions that can help you fall in love which we featured on our blog (Appendix C). He creates a mindset of his participants that they have the potential to fall in love through the process of asking, answering and listening to the responses which can lead to people having that experience just with that mindset rich with possibilities (Arthur, 2016). In creation of Show & Tell, center Director and interns asked the participants to choose questions that resonated with them and included his full list of questions as some of our prompts.

In LaGuardia Senior Center, seniors shared that they derive meaning from how they live each and every moment and participated in conversations about sharing and mindsets that they believe are life-long lessons they would like future generations to know. It is how we choose our thoughts, words, and actions, and this is propelled by our mindset, worldview, and self-view. For instance, as noted above on how we can increase positivity in romantic relationships, what if we first learn to apply those lessons to our relationships with ourselves? How can we make our relationships with ourselves our top priority? What are ways trauma severs individuals’ connec-
tions of mind/body? How can we repair those connections through a sense of believing and achieving? What if you had a best friend who believed in you 100%? It could be your significant other, mother, dog, etc. What if that person was you? What if you became that person? How might our lives be different if our choices reflected our full belief in being deserving of health and wellness? How can we use our personalized approach of believing and achieving to apply the positive interventions that science suggests will lead to greater happiness and health?

Pawelski’s (2016) model of positive interventions overarches previous definitions of positive interventions with the addition of making the pieces of interventions interchangeable depending on both the individual(s) and context. His findings provide hope and inspiration for those who are looking to increase happiness and wellbeing while being empirically supported which leads us to consider wellbeing as a lifestyle choice for long-term future studies but the path to creating a positive psychology lifestyle after extreme trauma is a path yet paved. For instance, it could be like a patient who does not take medication saying that the medication is not effective. We can help survivors of different traumas feel deserving of positivity and wellbeing by creating new sources of closeness and connection through vulnerable sharing. Depending on the individual, the road to recovery might mean saying “bye” to past experiences or just changing how survivors carry their stories? Survivor of trauma can hold the depths of their experiences while also feeling free to pursue their fullest state of positivity. Enduring long-lasting trauma could create even deeper potential for the imagination to cultivate definitions of well-being and faith in our purpose and potential for having survived the unimaginable. As McGonigal researches conceptualizing stress, we aim to use mindset and storytelling research to integrate the fields of social work and positive psychology and how individuals who experienced, are experiencing, or will experience trauma, experience their potential expanded to “see both the glass half
empty and half full and refillable” through having a fuller spectrum of darkness to light and our mindset allowing us personal freedom to move forward in the ways we choose.

In learning how specific domains of positive psychology are integrated with the science of wellbeing, we focused our energy, efforts, and understanding on the potential of the human experience. More specifically, theories supporting the connection between savoring and wellbeing and addressed and articulated ways in which positive psychology supports the scientific study of flourishing (Bryant, 1989). From conversation with survivors who have existed with near to nothing and not even their choice in identity, a sense of savoring rang through their narratives. They attributed their surviving to multiple reasons and somewhere unexplainable but they all did share a sense of treasuring whatever they had in terms of food, drink, positivity and faith from one another. Savoring, which is enjoying something to the fullest, is an essential part of the conversation because the survivors stories propel us to understand the connection of why we need to change our mindsets now, and not take another moment for granted (Personal Communications, AL, 2016). Savoring can be understood as mindfully engaging in thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that amplify the positivity and happiness of events (Bryant, 2003). Practitioners doing clinical work can acknowledge the hardships and difficult experiences that clients have but in a way that does inspire hope, optimism when appropriate, and humor (also when appropriate) (Reivich, 2016).

Another area of focus in positive psychology is the connection with the humanities and well-being because the humanities create other non-verbal ways for individuals to comprehend and communicate their mindsets and savor their and other people’s stories. Researchers are exploring ways that non-verbally, through arts, music or other means, communications and connections can be created. There can be emotions, thoughts, or experiences that are not shared verbal-
ly but non-verbally. Research has focused on activities that facilitate the expression of creativity, are easily assessable and have significant impacts on key health and mental health criteria (MacDonald, Kreutz, & Mitchell, 2012). The multidisciplinary conversation framed around participation in music and health outcomes has professionals noting their own constructs of how they experience music, health, and wellbeing with clinical and non-clinical populations. When individuals ask themselves, how do they feel and how to they wish to feel at a certain time in the future, they ponder how music can assist them in achieving their desired outcomes of emotional expression (MacDonald et al., 2012). Sudden loss has the potential to shake one’s definition of happiness. One’s definition and meaning of happiness changes over time while holding onto a resonating element from the past (McMahon, 2013). McMahon (2013) illustrates how different cultural groups have different interpretations of what a happy life means to the members of their community. For instance, for ancient Greeks happiness was being virtuous, for Christians, happiness means God and for many today, it means feeling good. He adds that happiness consistently means becoming one’s highest human calling and being one’s best self. In Western cultures, the word happiness has a connotation of being beyond one’s control to a certain extent, as an element of luck and serendipity is also part of one’s flourishing. He specifically notes how Hap is the root of the word happiness, which means luck or chance. McMahon also shares how during the Dark Ages, people believed that they had to bear the pain of suffering in their lives to be able to enjoy the pleasures of the afterlife. This point suggests that suffering has been acknowledged historically as a means of achieving a higher state even if it is a spiritual or soulful existence one imagines.

Individuals experience music as a unique stimulus that can trigger both positive and negative emotions and mindsets. Music can be used as an accessible and affordable method of
communication for those who do not have the verbal capabilities or find it more innate as a means of expressing their emotional states (Vastfjall, Juslin, & Hartig, 2012). Vastfjall et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of future studies in this area so professionals can apply the findings of musical emotion and health to their clients and networks. If individuals become more aware of how music listening changes their mindset then this is a tool to elevate one’s mood or validate it through somber music if that is one’s intention.

Looking more specifically at the clinical definition, the DSM lists bereavement as a mental health diagnosis when the presenting problem is related to the loss of a loved one and when symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder are present for up to two months. A number of treatments for bereavement have been used and evaluated, but music therapy models have been found to be the most successful in treating grief and bereavement (Rosner, Kruse & Hagl, 2010). In addition, empathy can be essential for any mental health treatment including music therapy, as is cultural awareness (Merchant, 2016). Developing increased cultural and religious empathy from sharing shows how music can be both a risk and potential opportunity to provide culturally sensitive therapy and support (Valentino, 2006). Current research leads individuals to feel and think hopefully about how listening, creating, and experiencing music can lead to new ways for individuals to engage and express their emotions in non-verbal ways. Music has the potential to create mindset shifts throughout the day for those who may be interested in connecting non-verbally in addition to or instead of verbally. For instance, at LaGuardia Senior Center, we use music chosen by the senior of the day to create the ambiance that they are desiring for that morning or afternoon. Choosing the music demonstrates their mindsets in terms of their moods and desires to share parts of their cultures or connections to hometowns in China or other places abroad.
Music creates momentum and mindset shifts in the center as the words and or beats bring up memories for the seniors and staff (Personal Communication, Weeks, 2016).

Examining human nature through belief in narratives and the potential of how positive psychology can help survivors to achieve captures a fuller perspective of what positive interventions can become and implications on communities. Positive psychologists who focus on finding the theories from narrative perspectives aim to delve deeper into the criteria and standards of what positive interventions are and how the outcomes of wellbeing can be defined in a commonly understood and agreed upon way as experienced by trauma survivors (Merchant, 2016). The focus on the empirical direction is to evaluate the reliability and validity of the results of research tests and see to what extent findings from the narratives could be generalizable. The experiential perspective allows individuals to develop a personal relationship with the theoretical and empirical perspectives of positive psychology and apply their belief in the power of the individual narrative to impact the change they desire.

Positive psychologists agree that what individuals choose to focus their attention on becomes significant to the extent those perceptions influence their mindsets. The foundation of the importance of perception to oneself and our environment sparks a dialogue that explores how these abilities can be strengthened through the use of positive interventions. James’s (1892/1984) theories about what makes individuals unique and original emphasize the construct of habits and how everything an individual does is either the beginning of a new habit or continuing an existing habit. This idea also brings into question to what extent individuals are aware of their own emotions, thoughts, and feelings as individuals cannot perceive everything at all times in the environment while simultaneously being self-aware of mind and body. The value of
habits derived from one’s mindset is in freeing our attention to move into higher realms, which means that individuals can use positive interventions to focus on increasing personal and professional success.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) frames the conversation in such a way that truly leads one to conclude that one’s attention leads to significant changes in health and mental health. For instance, “Information enters consciousness either because we intend to focus attention on it or as a result of attentional habits based on biological or social instructions” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pg. 30). Csikszentmihalyi’s research on attention as psychic energy illustrates the importance of how one’s consciousness which can be experienced on a spectrum of mental health. The belief that consciousness, attention, and habits contribute directly in the moment and long term to well-being for individuals and society as a whole indicates it will be important to become stronger in applying this mindset to our lives.

It is expected that strengthening one’s sense of self-regulation, self-determination, self-efficacy, and higher emotional intelligence will lead to higher levels of effectiveness of positive interventions and one’s ability to be aware of one’s mindset and act accordingly. Individuals have short-term desires that could prompt individuals to eat unhealthy foods or curse someone who instigated a fight but there is a long-term cost of these choices. For instance, teachers recommend that their students prepare for exams and health professionals educate their patients to practice self-care but it is the responsibility of individuals to have self-discipline to apply the recommendations to their lives. Baumeister (2006) explains that individuals release energy to control feelings, thoughts and behaviors to strive to be who we would like to be in both the present moment and future but there is a limited supply of this energy. Baumeister’s construct of
Self-regulation can be demonstrated across a spectrum from preventing snacking when on a diet to creating positive behaviors such as writing a final paper demonstrating expertise in an area of passion (2006). Baumeister’s overarching theory of self-regulation leads us to understand the significance of Brown and Ryan’s (2015) theory on self-determination, Maddux’s (2009) theory on self-efficacy and Curuso’s (2015) theory of emotional intelligence.

Self-regulation is essential when individuals experience conflicting motivations over holding different mindsets. As individuals have to make choices about staying up late to study or going to bed and being rested in the morning, four aspects of self-regulation work together: standards, motivation, monitoring, and willpower (Baumeister, 2006). As individuals are able to dissect these four areas when they feel conflicted or are making decisions, they can strengthen their “muscles” of self-regulation (Baumeister, 2006). Individuals can look at what would be the ideal behavior (standards), what would be the process to accomplish the standard (motivation), what situation and people help to keep accountability and also search for the internal strength to control opposing urges (Baumeister, 2006). Having a strong sense of self-regulation empowers individuals to be able to make decisions they desire to fulfill the personal, social, familial and societal standards they believe in and respect. If we have the ability to self-regulate we can more clearly connect the power of our mindset to our actions.

Individuals have varied cultural, spiritual, and socioeconomic backgrounds that influence the effects and duration of wellbeing from positive interventions. Bao and Lyubomirsky (2014) describe how being aware of hedonic adaptation allows researchers to create positive activities that are sustainable for one’s long-term mental health and wellbeing. Pawelski (2009) adds ways in which positive interventions can be dissected and then modified according to one’s needs and
wants so the interventions can be tailored to one’s lifestyle and goals. Schueller (2014) notes the
importance of personalized positive psychology and how researchers can explore several roads to
happiness by understanding a variety of interventions and modifications that are possible. Inter-
ventions can be adjusted considering the many components and contexts important to the indi-
vidual.

Bao and Lyubomirsky (2014) explore the concept of how individuals adapt to the ups and
downs in their lives as a method of reducing arousal and being able to redirect one’s attention to
survival needs and not just new opportunities and threats. Hedonic adaptation involves a gain or
loss in happiness after experiencing valenced events, followed by a return to baseline (Bao &
Lyubomirsky, 2014). Even though boosts to happiness achieved from happiness-increasing in-
terventions dissipate over time, there are ways to resist adaptation. Individuals have the ability
to consciously, intentionally, and purposely reduce the effects of adaptation so they can experi-
ence longer lasting positivity from the interventions that they do to increase well being in their
lives. When one makes the investment to do these interventions to improve their positive emo-
tions, they will be committed to understand how variety of activities as well as reflection can
support one in savoring the benefits for as long as possible. Individuals can think of the puzzle
pieces that they have which could mean different resources and abilities and strategize how to
create the most meaningful and impactful intervention that they are able to. When individuals
invest their time and energy to piecing together the interventions, they will be more invested in
the outcomes and want to make sure they keep adding to the benefits from the process and out-
comes of their personalized interventions and develop a positive psychology & wellness inspired
lifestyle.
Epilogue - Running With My Story

My friend finally pieced together my “I spy with my little eye” clues and guessed the eight miles sign of the half marathon that we are running. I am struck by the epiphany that I am equally running away from my “start” and towards my “finish” of becoming who I want to be. I learned from a young age that becoming a survivor of trauma means passionately and actively creating ways to make the most meaning out of one’s experiences to most effectively attain an authentic sense of health and happiness. As I neared the completion of the 13 mile race, my endorphins propelled my body to keep moving past the finish line similarly to how my love of positive psychology motivates me to pursue both my personal and professional aspirations with intention, eagerness, and devotion.

“It is time to turn the page” Jose, member of LaGuardia Senior Center, says confidently. While his fragile fingers literally turn the pages of his planner, we both know that he is implying having to rebuild his sense of self, other, and home over getting a divorce from his once love. As the Director of LaGuardia Senior Center and the Assistant Director of Programs at New York Foundation, I am blessed to work with him and thousands of seniors in NYC. Our vision is to create innovative health and mental health programs that will bring out the best in our members. We analyze the connection between physical health and emotional well being and strive to apply evidence-based practices to ensure that we serve our members in the best ways possible.

The question “If a tree falls, but nobody hears it, does it make a sound?” has unique meaning to me. The question makes me think of myself and all the other silent survivors who had to rely on all the strengths, real or imaginary, that we could to survive: to make it to the next mile mark, by having just one wobbly step in front of the next. After the eight mile selfie we took during the half marathon, I realized that physical exercise empowered me to connect with
my body in a new way that gave me renewed strength and confidence. When I was exercising, the power of my body could contain the memories. I am committed to dedicating my willpower, drive, and motivation to keep heading in the direction of my dreams and aspirations which motivates me to keep running my race. When there are races you are determined to win, you give it everything you have within and look outwards to build your strongest and most powerful support system of people and communities who believe in you.

I lived with an ingrained fear of parts of the race I have run. I have experienced childhood trauma and those events are a part of the narrative of who I am. I am a sum of what he did for countless years as well as all of the strength, resiliency, and drive I derived from my experiences so far. Understanding the past might be my first several inner tree rings, but the older rings have time to develop and grow stronger from being a survivor. I hope to continue to be motivated by experiencing and imagining the course of happiness, fulfillment, and learning what it means to love and be loved. My love of positive psychology has always been my foundation, even though I did not realize it until many years later. In my experience of the present, with an appreciation of the past and mindfulness towards the future, I smile seeing that I have learned to run the race with a unified mind, body, and soul.
References


psychological research on the effects of reading fiction. *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies, 17*, 517-539.


Harmon-Jones, E., Gable, P., & Price, T. (2013). Does negative affect always narrow and


Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize


Notes:
1. <3*  
<3* There are a spectrum of stories from the completely silenced to the as fully communicated as possible. To respect those silenced or who cannot share, the blank page is in your honor. Silence is a part of our stories. Silence can communicate as loudly as words. Without silence, how would we fully become aware of words?

2. <3**  
<3** To the authors of stories whose lives were cut short, the second blank page is in your honor. I would have loved to know the chapters you could have shared with the world. The stories, laughs, memories and the potential we will never know now.
Appendices:
1. Mindset Personal Blog
   https://www.facebook.com/Puzzle-Pieces-1669423803341207/

2. Show & Tell Blog
   https://www.facebook.com/shOwandtell

3. LaGuardia Senior Center Facebook Page
   https://www.facebook.com/laguardiaseniorcenter
4. Appendix 4

Round
An exploration of the trees we see &
Our art reflecting the stories showing the trees we saw through the eyes of who we are.
We start grounded together and grow into ourselves as individuals and together as one
Recognizing the natural darkness at night and the light of the day; uncertain
Of the clouds we see overhead and have passed by before our attention and those after we look away
Welcome to Show & Tell!

Introduction

*If you had the ability to share a message with the world, what would you say?*

Inspired by *Humans of New York* and the power of storytelling, the team at LaGuardia Senior Center have created *Show & Tell* with the goal of sharing real stories of the people in your community. It is our hope that this blog will remind us all of the power of compassion, love, and respect.

Please take a look at the questions used in our interviews below. Feel free to answer any questions from the list or create your own questions! If you would like to be featured on our page, please email Alana at laguardiaseniorkenter@gmail.com. You can include your name/picture or complete a post anonymously.
Questions in Chinese

1. 您小的時候,誰給你最大的影響?您從他學了什麼?
2. 如果您知道您想做的事情會成功,您會做什麼?
3. 您最清楚的記憶是什麼?
4. 您最珍愛的家族傳統是什麼?
5. 您最重要的人是誰?為什麼?
6. 您最幸福的時刻是什麼?
7. 您童年像什麼?您在哪裡長大?
8. 您有好笑的故事您想講嗎?
9. 您最驕傲什麼?
10. 您第一份的工作是什麼?
11. 您的父母是什麼樣的?
12. 有兄弟姐妹嗎?他們像什麼?
13. 您小的時候,誰是您最好的朋友?
14. 您小的時候玩哪一些遊戲?
15. 您的組父母像什麼?
16. 您小時候的家像什麼?城市呢?
17. 您有去過旅遊嗎?您去了哪裡?
18. 您最喜歡的季節是什麼?為什麼?
19. 在您家,誰燒飯?您最喜歡吃什麼?
20. 您最喜歡的節日是什麼?您這麼慶祝這個節日?
21. 您小時候像當什麼?
22. 您最害怕什麼?為什麼?
23. 如果您是這個年代長大的,您覺得什麼會改變?
24. 如果您可以跟您小時候講一句話,那句話是什麼?
25. 您對什麼有興趣?
26. 如果您可以拿到您覺得想要的東西,哪個東西會是什麼?
27. 您覺得怕什麼?
28. 您想當明星嗎?為什麼?
29. 您喜歡唱歌嗎?您會唱那一些歌?
30. 您想改變您自己嗎?為什麼?
31. 您有沒有想到一個東西您很想做?那個東西是什麼?為什麼您想做這個東西?
32. 您有沒有珍貴的回憶?
33. 您有沒有後悔了什麼?
34. 您在友誼覺看重的是什麼?
Questions in English
30+ questions from psychologist Arthur Aron
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/f...
1. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
2. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
3. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?
4. What would constitute a “perfect” day for you?
5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
6. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
7. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
8. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
9. Take four minutes and tell your life story in as much detail as possible.
10. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
11. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?
12. Is there something that you’ve dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven’t you done it?
13. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
14. What do you value most in a friendship?
15. What is your most treasured memory?
16. What is your most terrible memory?
17. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
18. What does friendship mean to you?
19. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
20. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people’s?
21. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?
22. Complete this sentence: “I wish I had someone with whom I could share ... “
23. If you were going to become a close friend with someone, please share what would be important for them to know.
24. Share an embarrassing moment in your life.
25. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
26. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
27. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven’t you told them yet?
28. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
29. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?

40+ miscellaneous questions
1. What is the smallest thing you could change about your life that would make the biggest impact?
2. What is one question you wish you were asked more often?
3. What’s a question you’ve always wanted to ask your best friend but never did?
4. Who is your biggest teacher? Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
5. Who do you admire and why?
6. If you know you would succeed, what would you do?
7. What’s your first, most vivid memory?
8. What do you remember about your 20s? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60s? What events stand out in your mind? How was each age different from the one before it?
9. What’s your most cherished family tradition?
10 Who has been the most important person in your life? Can you tell me about him/her?
11 What was the happiest moment of your life?
12 What was your childhood like? Where did you grow up?
13 Are there any funny stories your family tells about you that come to mind?
14 Are there any funny characters from your life that you want to tell me about?
15 What are some of your proudest moments?
16 What was your first job?
17 Can you tell me about your parents?
18 Do you have any siblings? What can you tell me about them?
19 Who was your best friend growing up?
20 What games did you like to play as a kid?
21 Were your grandparents around? What were they like?
22 Can you tell me about the house you grew up in? How about the town?
23 Did you ever go on vacations/trips? Where?
24 What was your favorite season growing up? Why?
25 Who cooked in your house? What was your favorite meal?
26 What was your favorite holiday? How did your family celebrate it?
27 What did you want to be when you grew up?
28 What is a time you’ve been afraid?
29 How would you like to be a kid growing up today? How would life be different?
30 If you could give one piece of advice to a large group of people, what would it be?
1. If you could write a postcard to your great-great-grandkids reading this in 100 years, what would you tell them?
2. What life learnings, personal philosophies, mottos, and core values do you want to leave as legacy to your descendants? How did you learn these lessons or acquire these philosophies?
31. What three words would you use to describe the last three months of your life?
32. If you could go back in time and tell your younger self one thing, what would you tell?
33. When was the last time you tried something new?
34. What are you excited about/What are you looking forward to?
35. What do you like most about yourself?
36. What do you have that you cannot live without?
37. When you close your eyes, what do you dream of?
38. If you could ask for one wish, what would it be?
39. When you think of “home,” what do you think of?
40. What did you learn yesterday?
41. What do you think is the best invention?
42. If you were another person, would you be friends with yourself?
43. What’s the best gift you’ve ever received?
44. What’s the best gift you’ve ever given?
45. How did it feel to answer these questions?
Questions in Spanish

1. Si usted tiene que escoger a cualquier persona en el mundo, a quien le gustaría como un invitado a cenar?
2. ¿Le gustaría ser famoso? ¿En qué manera?
3. Antes de hacer una llamada telefónica, ¿alguna vez se ensaya lo que vas a decir? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Qué constituiría un día "perfecto" para usted?
5. La última vez que canto para usted? ¿Para alguien más?
6 Si eran capaces de vivir a la edad de 90 años y conservar la mente o el cuerpo de un 30 años de edad, durante los últimos 60 años de su vida, que le gustaría?
7 Por lo que en su vida se siente más agradecido?
8 Si pudieras cambiar algo de la forma en que se plantearon, ¿cuál sería?
9 Tomar cuatro minutos y contar su historia de vida con el mayor detalle posible.
10 Si pudieras despertar mañana después de haber obtenido ninguna cualidad o habilidad, ¿cuál sería?
11 Si una bola de cristal te podía decir la verdad sobre sí mismo, su vida, el futuro o cualquier otra cosa, ¿qué le gustaría saber?
12 ¿Hay algo que usted ha soñado hacer desde hace mucho tiempo? Por qué no lo has hecho?
13 ¿Cuál es el mayor logro de su vida?
14 ¿Qué es lo que más valoras en una amistad?
15 ¿Cuál es su mejor recuerdo?
16 ¿Cuál es su más terrible memoria?
17 Si usted supiera que en un año que iba a morir pronto, ¿cambiaría nada acerca de la forma en que ahora está viviendo? ¿Por qué?
18 ¿Qué significa la amistad para usted?
19 ¿Qué papel desempeñan el amor y el afecto juega en su vida?
20 ¿Qué tan cerca y cálido es su familia? ¿Siente que su infancia fue más feliz que la mayoría de otras personas?
21 ¿Cómo se siente acerca de su relación con su madre?
22 Completa esta oración: "Me gustaría tener a alguien con quien podría compartir..."
23 Si se va a convertirse en un amigo cercano con alguien, por favor, comparta lo que sería importante para ellos saber.

24 Compartir un momento embarazoso en su vida.

25 ¿Cuándo fue la última vez que lloro delante de otra persona? ¿solo?

26 ¿Cuál es algo demasiado grave para ser bromeado?

27 Si se va a morir esta noche con ninguna oportunidad de comunicarse con cualquier persona, que es lo que más lamento no haber contado a alguien? ¿Por qué no les has dicho todavía?

28 Su casa, que contiene todo lo que posee, se incendia. Después de salvar a sus seres queridos y mascotas, tiene tiempo para hacer de manera segura un guión final para salvar de un tema determinado. ¿Qué podría ser? ¿Por qué?

29 De todas las personas en su familia, cual muerte le encuentra más inquietante? ¿Por qué?

40+ Preguntas diversas

1 ¿Cuál es la cosa más pequeña que podría cambiar en su vida que haría que el mayor impacto?

2 ¿Qué es una pregunta que desea se le pidió más a menudo?

3 ¿Qué es una pregunta que siempre ha querido preguntarle a su mejor amigo, pero nunca lo hizo?

4 ¿Quién es su mayor maestro? ¿Quién ha sido la mayor influencia en su vida? ¿Qué lecciones a esa persona enseña?

5 ¿A quién admiras y por qué?

6 Si sabe que tendría éxito, ¿qué harías?

7 ¿Cuál es su primer recuerdo, más vivo?
8 ¿Qué recuerda de sus años 20? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60? ¿Qué eventos se destacan en su mente? ¿Cómo era cada edad diferente de la anterior?
9 ¿Cuál es su tradición familiar más querido?
10 ¿Quién ha sido la persona más importante en su vida? ¿Me puede decir acerca de él/ella?
11 ¿Cuál fue el momento más feliz de su vida?
12 ¿Cuál fue tu infancia? ¿Dónde creciste?
13 ¿Hay Alguna historia divertida Su Familia Le dados about Usted Que Vienen a la mente?
14 ¿Hay personajes divertidos de su vida hablarme Que desea?
15 ¿Cuales hijo algunos adj de Sus Momentos de alcalde orgullo?
16 ¿Cuál Fue Tu imprimación Trabajo?
17 ¿Que me puede decir cerca de sus Padres?
18 ¿Tienes hermanos? ¿Qué me puede decir de ellos?
19 ¿Quién fue tu mejor amigo Creciendo?
20 ¿Qué juegos te gusta jugar como un niño?
21 ¿Tuviste a sus abuelos alrededor? ¿Cómo eran ellos?
22 ¿Me puede decir acerca de la casa donde creciste? ¿Qué hay en la ciudad?
23 ¿Alguna vez fuistes de vacaciones / viajes? ¿Dónde?
24 ¿Cuál era su estación favorita creciendo? ¿Por qué?
25 ¿Quién cocinaba en su casa? ¿Cuál era su comida favorita?
26 ¿Cuál fue su día de fiesta preferido? ¿Cómo su familia lo celebran?
27 ¿Qué querías ser cuando fueras grande?
28 ¿Qué es un tiempo que has tenido miedo?
29 ¿Cómo le gustaría ser un niño que crece hoy en día? ¿Cómo sería la vida diferente?
30 Si pudiera dar un consejo a un gran grupo de personas, ¿cuál sería?
   1 Si usted podría escribir una postal a sus grandes-grandes nietos que leen esto en 100 años, lo que les diría?
   2 ¿Qué aprendizajes de vida, filosofías, lemas, y los valores básicos personales hacen que desea dejar como legado a sus descendientes? ¿Cómo aprendió estas lecciones o adquirir estas filosofías?
31 ¿Qué tres palabras utilizaría para describir los últimos tres meses de su vida?
32 Si pudiera volver atrás en el tiempo y decirle una cosa a usted más joven, ¿qué le diría?
33 ¿Cuándo fue la última vez que intentó hacer algo nuevo?
34 ¿Qué estás entusiasmado / ¿Qué es lo que espera?
35 ¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de ti mismo?
36 ¿Qué tienes que no se puede vivir sin él?
37 Al cerrar los ojos, ¿qué suenas?
38 Si pudieras pedir un deseo, ¿cuál sería?
39 Cuando se piensa en "casa", ¿Qué opiniones de?
40 ¿Qué aprendió ayer?
41 ¿Qué crees que es el mejor invento?
42 Si fueras otra persona, serías amigo de ti mismo?
43 ¿Cuál es el mejor regalo que has recibido?
44 ¿Cuál es el mejor regalo que he dado?
45 ¿Cómo se siente al responder a estas preguntas?