A Positive Pen Pal Program:

Promoting Well-Being Through Intergenerational Connections and Positive Humanities

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Author Note

This paper outlines a pilot program designed for Education Based Housing, Inc. and is a Service Learning Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Positive Psychology.

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Abstract

The Positive Pen Pal Program is an intergenerational initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at Education Based Housing, Inc.’s (EBH) affordable housing communities through communication exchanges involving writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music. The pilot program involves a month-long, bi-directional letter writing exchange about topics such as gratitude, meaning, and purpose between ten pairs of residents, with each pair comprised of a senior resident and a youth resident. This project provides a stand-alone playbook for EBH’s Resident Engagement Specialists. The playbook includes a brief introduction to well-being; sample recruitment letters for seniors and youth; sample instruction letters for seniors and youth; sample prompts for writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music; sample marketing information to solicit sponsorship from community businesses; measurement tools to assess aspects of well-being of the participants; and survey questions to assess the impact of the program on the participants. The implications of this work include enhanced understanding of the interplay among positive psychology, the humanities, and intergenerational interventions in affordable housing communities. Beneficially, this intervention is low-resource and expandable across multiple humanities domains and residential communities.

Keywords: well-being, positive psychology, positive humanities, intergenerational intervention, positive affect, writing, art, music
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Positive Pen Pal Program

In the greater Houston, Texas area, Education Based Housing, Inc. (EBH) seeks to reduce societal impacts of housing insecurity by providing safe and affordable housing to low-income families and seniors, while offering residents educational tools to foster growth and independence. To assist in EBH’s mission, this project offers a Positive Pen Pal Program, an initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at EBH’s communities through communication exchanges involving writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music. The suggested intergenerational pilot program involves a month-long, bi-directional letter writing exchange about topics such as gratitude, meaning, and purpose between ten pairs of residents, with each pair comprised of a senior resident and a youth resident. Thereafter, the blueprint program can expand to engage senior and youth dyads in positive humanities interventions involving visual art and music.

This project summary provides a sector analysis; a review of positive psychology research literature describing intergenerational positive psychology interventions using activities situated within the humanities like writing, art, and music; an application plan; and an appendix comprised of a stand-alone application playbook for EBH’s Resident Engagement Specialist (RES). The playbook includes a brief introduction to well-being; sample recruitment letters for seniors and youth; sample instruction letters for seniors and youth; sample prompts for writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music; sample marketing information to solicit sponsorship from community businesses; measurement tools to assess aspects of well-being of the participants; and survey questions to assess the impact of the program on the participants.

EBH exemplifies the declaration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that affordable housing means “more than four walls and a roof” (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014, p. 3). It means cultivating space and opportunities for
every inhabitant to flourish. EBH’s properties provide residents with beautiful surroundings in which to live, rest, grow, and thrive. EBH’s support services offer residents platforms to nurture existing strengths and bolster skills for the future. At the heart of EBH’s mission is a desire for economic stability for its residents—an important pillar of well-being (Prilleltensky, 2016). Intertwining principles of positive psychology and the humanities, we are grateful for the opportunity to be part of EBH’s mission of promoting human flourishing in seniors and youths. We hope this project will have ripple effects throughout all members of EBH’s communities.

**Sector Analysis – Affordable Housing**

Shelter, along with food and water, has long been considered a basic human need within psychological theories of development (James, 1892/1984; Maslow, 1943). Addressing these fundamental needs for security facilitates one’s ability to develop the building blocks of well-being (Kaufman, 2020). Yet, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 10-15% of American households faced some form of housing insecurity (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2020), such as instability, affordability, frequent moves, housing and neighborhood quality and safety, overcrowding, and homelessness (Cox et al., 2019; Frederick et al., 2014; Kushel et al., 2006). Risk factors for housing insecurity include poverty, race, ethnicity, and lack of education (Cox et al., 2017). Among the numerous impacts of housing insecurity are poor health outcomes and lower academic achievement (Charkhchi et al., 2018; Obradović et al., 2009; Stahre et al., 2015).

In the greater Houston, Texas area, EBH operates within specific legal and tax guidelines enacted by Congress and the State of Texas. Congress enacted the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC; Internal Revenue Code §42) as part of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The legislative intent was to encourage new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings to provide low-income rental housing. Section 42 housing includes apartments, single-family housing, single-occupancy rooms, and provisional housing for the homeless. Properties may
incorporate low-income and market-rate rental units, and designate space for commercial use. To attract equity investment from private developers, the LIHTC offers tax credits. In Texas, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs administers the LIHTC through a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). Each Section 42 property enters into a Land Use Restriction Agreement (LURA) with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs defining specific supportive services it will provide to residents (covering categories outlined in the QAP such as transportation, children, adults, health, and community). Each LURA requires the reporting of limited metrics, such as number and demographics of participants in each program, along with copies of marketing materials utilized to advertise and recruit participants.

**The Story of Education Based Housing, Inc.**

EBH, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1999 in Houston, Texas, partners with real estate developers to establish and manage affordable housing communities and provide supportive services. Currently, EBH serves communities in the metropolitan Houston area, including three senior communities (ages 55 and over) and eight multi-generational communities (B. Sandifer, personal communication, January 21, 2021). Within each community, approximately 80% of the units are designated affordable housing and 20% are market rate. EBH’s Executive Director, Jarvis Taylor, underscored that in the world of affordable housing communities, “there is no one-size-fits-all” model (personal communication, January 15, 2021). Accordingly, each EBH property operates under a separate LURA, offering different supportive services depending on its residents’ identified needs. All EBH’s low-income housing residents are cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of household income for housing. Challenges faced by EBH’s low-income housing residents vary by demographic factors. Seniors over the age of 65 tend to be the most cost-burdened of all residents, paying almost 50% of their income for housing, and experiencing food insecurity and variable ability to afford prescription medication.
African-American residents’ primary risk is housing stability related to financial concerns involving rent payments, employment, and/or child care. Hispanic and Latinx residents primarily struggle with health concerns (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

EBH endeavors to design programs that benefit all households, mindful that residents’ income levels limit access to healthy living activities. EBH aspires to design classes and programs within the scope of each community’s LURA that are creative, engaging, and energizing (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021). All EBH properties offer classes in healthy nutrition and financial planning. Other educational programming includes exercise classes, general education diploma courses, arts and crafts, and computer skills. Services include childcare, notary, transportation, social events, and annual health fairs. Notably, EBH and its residents are proud of their housing. Taylor notes EBH’s communities are “beautiful and don’t look like affordable housing,” and residents have access to stable wi-fi, spacious community rooms, dog parks, and pools (personal communication, January 15, 2021).

As part of its overall mission, EBH seeks to foster communities in which seniors can age in place rather than moving to nursing homes, a cost-savings both for seniors and the state of Texas (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021). EBH also endeavors to serve as a bridge to traditional housing for multi-generational families. EBH provides stable housing and education while families accrue the financial resources, skills, and independence necessary to move to market rate rentals or purchase their own homes.

In addition to providing services and programming directly to residents, EBH partners with various service providers to meet the needs of its community members and facilitate a variety of interpersonal connections. For example, EBH has partnered with DEFINE body&mind, a wellness studio offering fitness and well-being educational classes, and Texas
A&M Agrilife to build community gardens. Other external partners provide on-site services such as grocery delivery and educational sessions on parenting, insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid (B. Sandifer, personal communication, January 26, 2021).

Taylor identified a number of EBH’s strengths and challenges (personal communication, January 15, 2021). Strengths include: (a) tending to the needs of senior residents (e.g., offering classes to keep seniors engaged and connected during COVID); (b) engendering high levels of senior participation in program offerings; (c) quickly identifying resources and developing partnerships to help recovery efforts and provide assistance during emergency situations like hurricanes; (d) engaging a strong roster of community partners to provide services and foster connections between residents and myriad individuals beyond EBH’s RES; (e) bringing resources and opportunities to residents, rather than simply referring residents to external providers; and (f) cultivating a demographically diverse staff.

Regarding residents and staffing, EBH’s current challenges include: (a) addressing seniors’ self-isolation and disconnection from their families; (b) overcoming working families’ reluctance to participate in voluntary programming; (c) helping multi-generational residents understand that affordable housing should be short-term while they access services and learn skills, working toward the goal of moving out and living independently; and (d) allocating a reasonable number of properties to each RES to optimize desired service and education outcomes (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021). EBH’s broader challenges include: (a) generating a greater supply of affordable housing to meet high demand; (b) boosting neighborhood acceptance of new low-income properties; and (c) fundraising for resident support services. EBH recently hired a consultant to develop a three-year strategic plan to capitalize on strengths and address the foregoing challenges.
Applications of Positive Psychology

EBH indicated interest in a positive psychology pilot program to engage seniors and “bridge the gap” between seniors and youths in EBH communities (B. Sandifer, personal communication, January 26, 2021). EBH stated its goal is for the pilot program to be a customizable blueprint that can extend across other EBH properties in the future (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

EBH’s Program Manager, Bri Sandifer, emphasized that EBH’s seniors experience anxiety, depression, and deepened isolation, especially during COVID (personal communication, January 21, 2021). EBH and MAPP Service Project liaison, Henry Richardson, indicated EBH’s residents, particularly seniors, might benefit from positive psychology applications grounded in enhancing PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement; Seligman, 2011). Importantly, EBH noted overlapping goals for both its senior and youth resident populations directly relating to dimensions of PERMA and the physical, mental, and social well-being deemed crucial by the World Health Organization (WHO; 1948). For instance, EBH desires to assist its residents by nurturing a sense of meaning, positive emotions, health/fitness, resilience, confidence to be self-sufficient, ability to navigate social systems, mentor-mentee relationships, emotional development, and character development. By generating positive psychology learning programs between its senior and youth residents, EBH could cultivate downstream well-being benefits for both groups.

One exciting idea that emerged from discussions with EBH is an intergenerational communication platform connecting senior and youth residents through an exchange of cards, letters, recorded messages, and arts and crafts. EBH, specifically Sandifer, envisioned an
intergenerationally-beneficial “pen pal initiative” and is enthusiastic about implementing one.\(^1\)

Such a program has the potential to forge connections between senior residents who have limited contact with individuals outside their communities but excess free time, and children in multi-family communities who might benefit from additional adult connections and can offer contagious energy and technical skills that could benefit seniors (B. Sandifer, personal communication, January 21, 2021). An intergenerational program creates value by cross-mentoring and leveraging differences in perspective, life experience, cultural competencies, knowledge, abilities, and skills (Davidson, 2011). It can activate multimodal positive psychology applications to generate well-being benefits across all areas of PERMA (Seligman, 2011).

Aligned with EBH’s mission, this program taps into several domains within Prilleltensky’s (2016) I COPPE well-being framework (interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological, and economic)—most notably, relationships, community belonging, and residents’ degree of meaning and mattering. Additionally, this type of program can leverage the humanities, such as writing, music, and art, to help senior and youth residents nurture positive emotions, meaning, engagement, achievement, skill-building, creativity, curiosity, and relationships, and break down social and cultural barriers (Tay et al., 2018).

Sandifer suggested launching a pilot program with 10 youth-senior dyads bridging two EBH communities: Providence at Kuykendahl Court (a senior community located on the outskirts of Houston) and Brittmoore (a multifamily community located within Houston; personal communication, January 26, 2021). Several implementation issues were important to consider in developing the project: (a) involvement of the RES who will administer the pilot; (b)

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\(^1\) Taylor noted the importance of naming programs in ways that entice rather than inadvertently deter participation (personal communication, January 15, 2021). Initial possible names for this senior-youth communication exchange included “Positive Pen Pal” or “Character and Crafts.”
participant opt-in protocols; (c) development of written materials, participant prompts, and timelines for roll-out; (d) safety protocols (e.g., vetting of participants, screening of communications, rules regarding exclusion of photographs and contact information); (e) marketing at the two communities; and (f) metrics for measuring the impact of participation on senior and youth residents. While the required LURA metrics predominantly focus on the number of participants in educational programs, EBH is keenly interested in the broader benefits to its residents.²

Review of the Literature: The Foundation for the Positive Pen Pal Program

This section reviews relevant research at the intersection of positive psychology, housing, intergenerational interventions, and positive writing, art, and music interventions to inform development of the Positive Pen Pal Program.

Housing and Positive Psychology

Though housing is considered a basic human need (James, 1892/1984; Maslow, 1943), 10-15% of households in the United States today face housing insecurity (e.g., instability, affordability, quality and safety, overcrowding, and homelessness; Cox et al., 2019; Frederick et al., 2014; Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2020). Certain demographics, including those served by EBH, experience more severe forms of housing insecurity, namely seniors, Black and Hispanic/Latinx, single, less educated, and low income (Cox et al., 2017). Housing instability affects aspects of individual and community well-being, including limitations on seniors’ access to health care and appropriate medications (Kushel et al., 2006), and increases in family stress, risks for child neglect and abuse, and academic difficulties in children and adolescents (Cutts et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004; Warren & Font, 2015).

² For instance, during its cylinder garden educational program with Texas A&M Agrilife, EBH assessed children’s perceptions about horticulture and their ability to identify fresh vegetables pre-and post-program.
Recognizing the criticality of stable housing, the United Nations (2014) declared adequate housing a basic human right, underscoring the importance of housing as the social and emotional center of individual’s and family’s lives, and a place to live in peace, security, and dignity. A vast body of research underscores the importance of adequate housing for health and employment (Henwood et al., 2013), physical, social, and psychological well-being (Padgett, 2007), and human flourishing (King, 2003). Having a home fosters autonomy, family relationships, and personal life goals (King, 2017), cultivates self-governance through privacy, dignity, and community (Alexander, 2018), and infuses a sense of control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 1999).

By providing comfortable, attractive, and affordable housing to its residents, EBH offers this foundational stability, security, and shelter, creating opportunities for improving personal, relational, vocational, and financial health. In seniors, secure housing affords independence, familiar routines, and a location to both receive care and protect treasured items encapsulating their memories and identity (Gilroy, 2005). Likewise, stable housing affords children more opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive (Cutts et al., 2011; Warren & Font, 2015). Stable, affordable housing combined with educational programs, such as those provided and envisioned by EBH, brings resource-effective well-being benefits for all households.

To support this undertaking, the field of positive psychology can inform evidence-based strategies for fostering well-being in individuals, groups, and communities, such as EBH’s seniors and youth. Before reviewing extant research and programming in this exciting area, it is important to understand the strivings of positive psychology and the well-being frameworks outlining multiple dimensions of individual and community well-being. We will then explore how these positive psychology theories are transformed into practice through the creation of positive interventions—intentional activities augmenting individual and collective well-being in
measurable ways (Pawelski, 2020).

**Positive Psychology Models of Well-Being**

The WHO defined health as a broad, interdisciplinary construct inclusive of mental, social, and physical well-being, rather than defining health simply as the absence of illness (1948). Since then, scholars and practitioners have proposed numerous well-being frameworks (see reviews by Butler & Kern, 2016; Forgeard et al., 2011; Hone et al., 2014). In the behavioral and social sciences, these frameworks are grounded in two philosophical approaches to well-being, hedonic (feeling good) and eudaimonic (functioning well), with flourishing, a combination of both, as the gold standard (Keyes & Annas, 2009; Seligman, 2011). Early positive psychology models include Diener’s (1984) conception of subjective well-being (positive emotions, life satisfaction, and happiness) and Ryff’s (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being (purpose in life, personal growth, positive relationships, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and autonomy). Ryan and Deci (2000) also emphasize the importance of autonomy (independent self-control of our behavior), as central to eudaimonia and suggest autonomy, relatedness (connections with others), and competence (being successful in our endeavors) are universal psychological needs.

Seligman (2011) proposed a five-component model of flourishing: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). In PERMA, positive emotions generate hedonic happiness, broaden awareness, and gradually build durable personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Engagement involves flow, or optimal experience, during which action and awareness merge in total absorption, resulting in enjoyment without conscious attention to self, time, or emotions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Positive relationships are crucial to well-being across the lifespan, from happier, well-adjusted, and confident children to adults and seniors with better physical, social, cognitive, and emotional well-being (Haidt, 2006;
Meaning connotes having a sense of mattering and purpose in life, and allying with something larger than oneself (Seligman, 2002). Finally, accomplishment involves pursuing goals, seeking mastery, and persevering through difficulties for the sole sake of achieving rather than netting external rewards (Seligman, 2011).

Based on PERMA, Kern et al. (2016) developed a corresponding model of adolescent well-being, the EPOCH (engagement, perseverance, optimism, connections, and happiness). EPOCH outlines key flourishing factors in adolescence that promote PERMA and forecast positive outcomes in adulthood (Kern et al., 2016). While there is no one-size-fits-all model of well-being, the important message to glean from these frameworks is that cultivating multiple well-being domains fosters human flourishing (Butler & Kern, 2016). Importantly, these domains incorporate the aspects of well-being EBH desires to improve in its senior and youth residents and will be central to the expandable pen pal blueprint designed for EBH.

Positive Interventions

Positive interventions are evidence-based, voluntary activities undertaken by individuals and communities for the purpose of increasing well-being through the growth of capabilities and the prevention of negative outcomes (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Pawelski, 2016; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). They can be short in duration, simple in implementation, and self-directed (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Pawelski, 2020; Schueller, 2014). They focus on building, enhancing, or preserving positive qualities, such as resilience, character strengths, gratitude, and optimism (Csikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000). While positive interventions predominantly aim to grow desirable states of being, some strive to lessen undesirable conditions (Pawelski, 2016). They work through various mechanisms and pathways, such as enhancing self-regulation, autonomy, and self-efficacy (Pawelski, 2020).

Pawelski’s (2020) proposed fundamental elements (i.e., activity, active ingredient, target
system, target change, and desired outcome) provide a framework for understanding how positive interventions work. Intervention designers and users can analyze, personalize, and synthesize interventions by starting from each end of the sequence, commencing with either an activity (the intentional action of a particular positive intervention) or a desired outcome (the well-being life effect), and proceeding serially through the components. When choosing an intervention for a particular context, it is important to consider culture, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ableness, and socioeconomic resources (Pedrotti & Edwards, 2017).

Positive Interventions for Seniors and Youth

Seniors. The world’s population over age 60 is expanding rapidly and is forecast to increase from 12% to 22% between 2015 and 2050 (WHO, 2017). This dramatic increase in senior populations presages global ramifications for individual and collective well-being. The daunting costs and mounting impact prompt a consideration of the meaning of “aging well.” The WHO and the United States National Institute on Aging (2011) published a joint report identifying the goal of keeping seniors healthy and living independently as one of the greatest opportunities of the 21st century. One of the most promising avenues to achieve such crucial outcomes for seniors is to implement effective, resource-efficient, modifiable lifestyle interventions, such as physical activity or writing about gratitude, to bolster protective factors and reduce age-related health declines, including devastating, accelerating neurocognitive risks ranging from mild cognitive impairment to dementia (Mangialasche, 2012; Treichler et al., 2020).

Youth. Similarly, effective resource-efficient positive interventions for children and adolescents, such as gratitude practice, can enhance multiple domains of well-being; promote strengths, self-knowledge, and interpersonal skills; enable coping with adversity; and foster beneficial academic outcomes (Bowers et al., 2010; Magyar-Moe et al., 2015; Owens & Waters, 2020). EBH’s dedication to the well-being of its senior and youth populations invites a
tremendous opportunity to design an intergenerational positive intervention to help residents at both ends of the age spectrum flourish.

**Intergenerational.** Intergenerational programs bring together people of different age cohorts in ongoing, mutually beneficial, and planned activities designed to achieve specified goals (DeVore et al., 2016). They create value by leveraging differences in perspective, cultural competencies, knowledge, abilities, skills, and life experience (Davidson, 2011). Social connectedness (rewarding and meaningful relationships with others) is frequently highlighted in these programs and is a basic need that promotes well-being beyond mere social contacts or network support (O’Rourke et al., 2018). Intergenerational initiatives foster connectedness, cooperation, interaction, and exchange between generations (Canedo-García et al., 2017), providing developmental benefits for all generations involved (Belgrave, 2011; Lee et al., 2007). For instance, research shows intergenerational bonding can help alleviate loneliness in both generations, engendering personal growth, empathy, and better well-being outcomes (Aguilera-Hermida et al., 2020; Tam, 2014).

Non-familial intergenerational programs can foster unique bi-directional learning and growth experiences between seniors and youth (Lee et al., 2020). Seniors benefit from these programs, including enhanced physical, mental, and emotional health, and development of a greater sense of meaning (Murayama et al., 2015; Sakurai et al., 2016). Hearteningly, intergenerational programs capitalizing on social engagement help maintain cognitive functioning in seniors, and by extension, promote independent living. For instance, longitudinal research with cognitively intact, community-based seniors volunteering in schools found intergenerational interventions stymied age-related decline in brain regions related to memory and cognitive functioning, boosted expansiveness of social peer networks, and improved self-reported health (Carlson et al., 2015; Fujiwara et al., 2009; Sakurai et al., 2016). Likewise, young
people develop social values and interest in civic engagement; higher social and emotional functioning; reduced anxiety; and improved communication skills, caring behaviors, and positive attitudes about aging (Artale, 2001; DeVore et al., 2016; Fair & Delaplane, 2015).

The benefits of these intergenerational programs provide hope and myriad avenues for developing positive interventions to enhance well-being across the lifespan. One exciting and emerging area is the positive humanities, an interdisciplinary collaboration between positive psychology and the humanities (Pawelski, in press). The positive humanities, and particularly the arts (namely visual art, music, and writing), offer promising means for crafting resource-efficient, intergenerational interventions in non-school, non-familial, community environments.

**Positive Humanities Interventions**

A useful framework for exploring the arts in intergenerational initiatives involves a conceptual model of the positive humanities capturing a range of flourishing outcomes (Tay et al., 2018). These outcomes include domains of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, psychological competencies, civic involvement, and indices of physical functioning—all pertinent to positive aging and intergenerational intervention research.

**Visual Art.** Recent research provides encouraging results supporting visual art as a means to promote well-being outcomes, prevent health decline, and preserve quality of life in seniors (e.g., Beauchet et al., 2020). Studies show consistent connections between visual art and flourishing outcomes in demographically diverse seniors, including Hispanic/Latinx Americans (Alders & Levine-Madori, 2010), African Americans (Johnson & Sullivan-Marx, 2006), and Korean Americans (Kim, 2013).

Vital for seniors, engaging with visual art fosters flourishing outcomes through sustained benefits for the aging brain (e.g., Alain et al., 2019; Mahedran et al., 2018). For instance, a meta-analysis of seniors revealed visual art engagement involving creativity, art education, sharing,
socialization, and modeling was associated with neurocognitive and psychological well-being benefits (Masika et al., 2020). Research shows that even a dyadic (2-person) visual art discussion intervention can expand seniors’ social connections more extensively than discussions about hobbies and interests (Wikström, 2002). While appreciating (viewing) and expressing (creating) visual art both foster well-being outcomes, expression provides greater opportunities for flow and is advantageous for individuals with limited literacy (Lomas, 2016; Masika et al., 2021).

At the other end of the age spectrum, children drawing pictures of their future happy selves showed increases in self-esteem (Owens & Patterson, 2013). For adolescents, participating in visual arts programs in schools and art museums led to the development of social and emotional learning and social connections, improved goal setting and decision making, and increased empathy and emotion recognition (Kastner et al., 2020; Mogro-Wilson & Tredinnick, 2020). Even the simple act of maintaining a creative arts journal can lead to increased resilience and decreased symptoms of depression in adolescents (Vela et al., 2019).

**Music.** Like art, engagement with music yields well-being benefits, including mood regulation, increased self-awareness, and social relatedness (Coopersmith, 2019). Music interventions for adults and seniors have generated inspiring results, including higher levels of autonomy, positive emotions, meaning, purpose, and positive relationships (Hallam et al., 2014; Livesey et al., 2012). Crucial for aging, music engagement fosters brain health (Zatorre, 2005).

Importantly, music is equally beneficial at the other end of the age spectrum. Engagement with music in childhood is associated with ensuing developments in literacy, creativity, self-confidence, social intelligence, and self-regulation (Hallam, 2010). Music is ubiquitous in the lives of adolescents and they devote significant amounts of time and money to music listening (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011; Miranda, 2013; Roberts et al., 2009). Engagement with music positively affects adolescent development of identity, emotion regulation, coping, personality,
motivation, and art appreciation (Miranda, 2013). Music helps adolescents develop a sense of self, connection, and belongingness (Mohan & Thomas, 2020). Research also suggests music increases positive emotions and promotes relatedness, academic achievement, and creativity (MacDonald et al., 2006; Miranda & Gaudreau, 2011; Schellenberg, 2006).

**Writing.** Writing offers a powerful medium to bolster thriving in seniors and youth, particularly because of the strong connection between writing and meaning-making. Eudaimonic approaches to well-being suggest a happy life is one that is engaged and meaningful, with contributions to something bigger than ourselves (Seligman, 2002, 2011). The foundation of meaning is a sense of community and connectedness with others (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Writing can cultivate meaning by providing avenues for belonging (social inclusion), purpose (contribution to the world), storytelling (making sense of past experiences), and transcendence (seeing beyond ourselves; Smith, 2017).

Several studies examined well-being benefits in seniors writing about gratitude. For instance, 20 days of daily gratitude writing yielded increases in gratitude and physical health, and decreases in loneliness and negative emotions (Bartlett & Arpin, 2019). In another study, two weeks of gratitude writing showed increases in flourishing (Killen & Macaskill, 2015). In a third study, writing gratitude and forgiveness letters showed increases in life satisfaction and subjective happiness (Ramirez et al., 2014).

In young adults, research suggests writing about pivotal challenging and positive life experiences, and crafting a coherent personal narrative, are associated with many well-being outcomes (Burton & King, 2004; Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). In a small study of high school and university students writing a back-and-forth journal about a multicultural young adult novel, participants noted the interactive journal dialogue helped them make sense of their own lives (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). Likewise, high school students reflecting on life purpose
and meaning in an intergenerational journal intervention with their parents gained greater connections to others and had an increased sense of meaning (Gillham et al., 2013). Children and early adolescents who kept a daily diary of positive events showed increased happiness, higher levels of school satisfaction, and fewer depressive symptoms (Carter et al., 2018; Froh et al., 2008). Children who wrote about positive emotional experiences, gratitude, or best possible selves showed lower negative emotions and higher positive emotions, subjective happiness, life satisfaction, and gratitude, which buffered the effects of stress (Booker & Dunsmore, 2017; Burton & King, 2004; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; King, 2001; Toepfer & Walker, 2009).

Overall, research supports links between writing about positive topics and well-being outcomes, including positive emotions that broaden attention and perspective, facilitating opportunities to build skills and cultivate health benefits (Burton & King, 2004). A non-familial intergenerational Positive Pen Pal writing intervention involving EBH’s seniors and youth is viable to broaden positive emotions, enrich meaning and connectedness, and promote well-being.

**Measuring the Effects of Positive Interventions on Well-Being**

Positive psychology offers scientifically validated tools to measure the effects of positive interventions on both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Adler & Seligman, 2016). For example, instruments assess affect or mood (e.g., Emmons Mood Indicator [Diener & Emmons, 1985]; Positive and Negative Affect Schedule [Magyar-Moe, 2009]), satisfaction with life (e.g., Satisfaction with Life Scale [Diener et al., 1985]); subjective happiness (e.g., Subjective Happiness Scale [Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999]), subjective well-being (e.g., Well-Being Survey [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013]), eudaimonic well-being (e.g., Ryff’s Well-being Scales [Ryff & Keyes, 1995]), and flourishing (e.g., Flourishing Scale [Diener et al. 2010]; PERMA-Profiler [Butler & Kern, 2016]). Specific attributes can be measured as well, such as gratitude (Gratitude Questionnaire [McCullough et al., 2001]) and
optimism (e.g., Optimism Test [Seligman, 2002]). The foregoing measures can be used to assess the efficacy of positive interventions for amplifying the well-being of intervention participants.

**Application Plan**

Based upon the extant research supporting engagement with the arts to achieve well-being outcomes in both seniors and youth, we developed a Positive Pen Pal Program as an expandable blueprint for resource-efficient, intergenerational, positive arts interventions at EBH. The pilot Positive Pen Pal Program involves an intergenerational positive intervention connecting EBH’s senior and youth residents through communication exchanges involving the arts. The intervention involves bi-directional letter writing between senior-youth pen pal dyads residing in two different EBH communities. This proposed pilot program can serve as a customizable blueprint “with wing potential” (J. Taylor & B. Sandifer, personal communication, January 15, March 18, 2021) for extension across other EBH properties in the future and engaging different humanities such as visual art and music.

**Target Population**

As noted above, Taylor identified EBH’s strengths as their ability to tend to the needs of, and garner participation from, senior residents (e.g., offering classes to keep seniors engaged and connected during COVID; personal communication, January 15, 2021). Among EBH’s challenges, Taylor highlighted seniors’ isolation and disconnection from their families (J. Taylor, personal communication, January 15, 2021). Sandifer likewise emphasized that COVID intensified seniors’ feelings of anxiety, depression, and isolation (personal communication, January 21, 2021). The proposed intergenerational positive intervention program will forge connections between senior residents who have limited contact with individuals outside their communities but excess free time, and youth in multifamily communities who might benefit from additional adult connections and can offer contagious energy and technical skills that might
Positive Intervention Design

Five elements comprise positive intervention design: (1) identifying a desired outcome; (2) selecting a target change; (3) focusing on a target system—a psychological, emotional, spiritual, physiological, or social dimension; (4) choosing one or more active ingredients; and (5) crafting an activity, such as writing, thinking, speaking, or moving (Pawelski, 2020).

Based on EBH’s articulation of its goals, strengths, and challenges, we started with EBH’s desired outcome and designed this project with the aim of enhancing the subjective well-being (positive emotions and life satisfaction) of EBH’s seniors and youth (Diener, 1984). One primary goal of this positive psychology intervention is to enhance positive emotion, the P in positive psychology’s PERMA well-being model (Seligman, 2011). Two target systems of this positive intervention include affect (emotion) and relationships (Pawelski, 2020). The theoretical target changes are enhanced connections and engagement of EBH’s participating seniors and youth, which we suggest will result in outcomes of increased positive emotion and overall life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Pawelski, 2020; Seligman, 2011). The theoretical active ingredients of this positive intervention are autonomy, relatedness, self-efficacy (believing in one’s own ability to be successful at a task), and competence (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 2009; Pawelski, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The activity in our initial pilot model is writing. Future expandable blueprint activities can include art and music.

Research supports links between writing about positive topics and well-being outcomes, including positive emotions that cultivate health benefits (Burton & King, 2004). The pilot program and the resulting blueprint will leverage the humanities, such as writing, art, and music, to help senior and youth residents nurture positive emotions and relationships, and foster well-being (Tay et al., 2018).
Participating EBH Communities

The pilot program will involve 10 senior-youth dyads bridging two EBH communities: Providence at Kuykendahl Court (PKC) and Brittmoore (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). PKC, a senior community located on the outskirts of Houston, is comprised of 170 units (80% designated affordable housing and 20% allocated at market rate) housing 184 residents. The majority of residents are female (86%) with an average age of 71.8 years. The average age of the male residents is 72.5 years. The racial composition of the residents at PKC is 56% White, 12% Black, 3% Other, and 29% unspecified. Additionally, 7.5% of residents identified as Hispanic. Many residents at PKC have a “small town mentality” and are distanced from their families who live in different states (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

The Brittmoore, a multi-family community located within Houston city limits, is comprised of 150 units (84% designated affordable housing and 16% allocated at market rate) housing 275 residents. The average age of residents is 29.1 years, with a total of 81 youths under age 18. The racial composition of the residents at Brittmoore is 47% White, 14% Black, 4% Other, and 35% unspecified. Additionally, 41.7% of the residents identified as Hispanic. Brittmoore is described as an urban community (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

Positive Pen Pal Program Logistics

Involvement of EBH’s Resident Engagement Specialist

The EBH RES who is responsible for programming at both PKC and Brittmoore will administer the pilot project within the scope of current job duties. As this pilot program complements programming currently underway, the pilot Positive Pen Pal program will not add undue resource strain to the RES (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). The
RES will be responsible for managing project logistics described in more detail below, including identifying and recruiting senior and youth participants at both communities; matching dyadic pairs; distributing program materials and instructions to participants; receiving and monitoring pen pal correspondence between each senior-youth dyad for content and security issues; following up with participants to encourage timely engagement; mitigating potential participatory resistance; handling security concerns and dropout replacements; and administering measurement tools before and after the pilot project.

**Identifying, Recruiting, Screening, and Matching Pen Pal Program Participants**

Aligned with Fair Housing laws, EBH’s RES will advertise the pilot program and associated incentives to all residents and identify seniors at PKC and youths at Brittmoore who may be interested in participating (J. Taylor, personal communication, March 18, 2021). The RES will match dyads within the pool of participants in accordance with EBH’s existing protocols.

**Positive Pen Pal Activity: Back-and-Forth Intergenerational Letter Writing**

The pilot Positive Pen Pal Program will involve writing letters about positive events and experiences. Seniors and youth in each dyad will receive introductory welcome materials explaining the logistics of the back-and-forth letter writing program. The dyads will start the exchange by writing a letter in response to prompts provided in the Positive Pen Pal materials. Thereafter, on a weekly basis for one month, the senior and youth in each dyad will write to each other in response to prompts (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). Prompts will cover positive topics such as gratitude, positive life experiences, connections, character strengths, and life’s purpose and meaning.

In addition to stimulating writing about positive topics, the prompts will seek to leverage appreciation of differences between, and individual uniqueness within, the senior and youth
participants (Davidson, 2011; Pedrotti & Edwards, 2017). The intervention activities and prompts also will be mindful of participants’ literacy and language fluency. For instance, EBH staff is bilingual (Spanish and English) and can accommodate letter-writing within a dyad wishing to communicate in Spanish (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). Each prompt will suggest a response length between two paragraphs and two pages (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). An example of a prompt about gratitude is: Write about something in your life which you are grateful for today. Introduction materials will include “content guard rails,” such as: Please do not write about topics that may upset, frighten, or distress your pen pal. Please do not include your name, address, or other contact information, or photographs of yourself or anyone in your family (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). The members of each dyad will only know one another’s first name, and not any other identifying information (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

After the initial pilot program involving writing prompts about positive experiences and events, this blueprint can expand to engage senior and youth dyads in positive humanities interventions involving visual art. For example, EBH’s senior and youth dyads could exchange pictures of creative arts, including current projects such as decorating doors for holidays and vision boards (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). To facilitate this exchange, EBH could provide seniors and youths in the pen pal dyads with individual packets of art materials, such as colorful pens, markers, paper, glue, and fabrics. The seniors and youth could separately engage in artistic expression with the art materials in response to prompts like, Create a visual image of something you feel grateful for today, and include pictures with their letters. This modality is advantageous for individuals with limited literacy (Masika et al., 2021).

Future blueprint expansions of the dyadic exchange also can include music. Seniors and youth could write about what a particular genre or piece of music means to them, in response to
prompts such as *Describe a piece of music that is meaningful to you or makes you happy.* This engagement with music has the potential to lead to increased interest in ongoing music activities, such as exercise and dance classes. Essentially, the blueprint programs can be “stacked” for greater involvement and provide sequentially connected programming to residents, based on EBH’s evaluation of the residents’ evolving needs and the RES’s workload (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

**Safety Protocols**

The RES will screen each communication for potential concerns in accordance with EBH protocols before delivering it to the dyadic partner. With blueprint expansion, EBH could train volunteers from DEFINE body&mind and/or the community in EBH’s protocols for screening and reporting requirements.

**Technology Needs**

The future blueprint can include use of technology, as available and appropriate, to facilitate exchanges of writing, art, and music. Notably, this will require senior and youth participants to have access to electronic devices with cameras and microphones (e.g., Smartphones, iPads, or computers) and Wi-Fi connections. RESs would review such electronic exchanges within EBH’s current protocols for electronic communication. All communication would continue to be transmitted through EBH’s RESs and/or other volunteers to ensure compliance with content and safety protocols.

**Cost Investment**

This intervention is resource efficient. The costs of the pilot writing-based intervention are limited to provision of stationery and pens for participants and the RES’s time and effort administering the program. Future blueprint expansion projects beyond the initial Positive Pen Pal writing-based project could require purchase of electronic devices to loan to residents who
lack access, plus art and music materials. Some of these resource costs can be offset by seeking community business sponsors, a common practice for EBH (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

**Potential Resistance by Participants**

EBH may encounter resistance in a number of different areas, including from seniors with limited literacy; parents who are uncomfortable with their children corresponding with strangers; youth who might perceive writing as a homework-like chore; and participants who are inexperienced in writing about topics like gratitude, positive life experiences, character strengths, connections, purpose, and meaning. The RES will address such resistance through a description of EBH’s safety protocols and use of our written materials explaining the Positive Pen Pal Program. Additionally, in accordance with current programming, EBH will incentivize participation with offerings of snacks, COVID-distanced gatherings as appropriate, and EBH “treasure box” items such as gift cards (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

**Other Potential Hurdles**

Other potential issues that may arise include the need to intervene and speak to individual participants about the content or tone of communications or ultimately remove a participant from the program because of security or content issues. The need to replace a participant might become necessary as well, due to lack of engagement, illness, relocation, or death. Replacing dyad members will minimize disruption for the remaining member, and the safety protocols for removal and any necessary reporting requirements already exist within EBH’s operating protocols; EBH will ensure updated training for and compliance by RESs (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

**Measurement**

Metrics implemented in accordance with EBH’s LURA with the Texas Department of
Housing and Community Affairs predominantly focus on the number of participants in low-income communities’ educational programs. However, EBH is interested in assessing broader well-being benefits to its residents. EBH can measure changes in positive and negative affect associated with the Positive Pen Pal Program through the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010). EBH can have seniors and youth complete all scales at the beginning and end of the pilot month, and again after each month if EBH extends the program. Any youth participants between fourth and eighth grade can complete the PANAS-C, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule for Children (Laurent et al., 1999). The scales are available in English and Spanish at no cost for non-profit research purposes (Diener et al., 1985; Mapi Research Trust, 2019).

By tracking positive and negative affect alongside satisfaction with life and flourishing at the beginning and end of the Positive Pen Pal exchange, EBH can index the effectiveness of the program for raising positive emotions, decreasing negative emotions, and boosting satisfaction with life and flourishing in its residents. We also suggest using open-ended questions to qualitatively assess other outcomes not measured by these two scales, such as attitudes toward people who are different from each dyad member. Further, we suggest open-ended questions for participants to write generally how they felt about the project (e.g., things that went well, things to improve, and things they wished would be included in the future). Finally, we suggest metrics on number of participants, how many letters each participant writes, how long each participant remains engaged in the program, and for those who stop participating before the end of the pilot, any reasons for their withdrawal.

Limitations

The interventions proposed in this application plan are unique in a number of ways.
While researchers have studied intergenerational interventions in a variety of circumstances, including global populations (e.g., Japan; Sakurai et al., 2016) and across socioeconomic status (e.g., urban Baltimore; Carlson, 2015), they have not studied the exact populations nor application proposed here. Most of the intergenerational interventions in the extant literature are administered through school-based programs and include face-to-face meetings and shared activities between generations (e.g., reading books; Sakurai et al., 2016). It is not yet known whether anonymized interactions will have the same positive effects. Moreover, many studies identifying the positive effects of writing interventions were conducted in a university setting, using mostly White undergraduate students as subjects (e.g., Burton & King, 2004; Pennebaker, 1997). Furthermore, internationally-based studies of the positive impact of the arts on seniors may not be directly generalizable to U.S.-based populations, as seniors’ experiences with youth, or the arts, may differ cross-culturally (Ramírez et al., 2014; Sakurai et al., 2016). Finally, the research used several different well-being outcome measures, precluding direct comparisons across studies. Our hope for EBH is that these rich ideas from the current literature and extant programming translate well to EBH’s senior and youth residents in and around Houston, Texas, through the Pen Pal Pilot Program.

**Application Materials**

In the Appendix, we provide a stand-alone playbook for EBH’s RES that includes a brief introduction to well-being; sample recruitment letters for seniors and youth; sample instruction letters for seniors and youth; sample prompts for writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music; sample marketing information to solicit sponsorship from community businesses; measurement tools to assess aspects of well-being of the participants; and a proposed list of survey questions to assess the impact of the program on the participants.
Conclusion

Positive psychology practitioners aspire to integrate theory, evidence-based research, and practical considerations to design positive interventions to help individuals thrive. Based on our sector analysis and our literature review, we designed this Positive Pen Pal Program as a customizable blueprint for resource-efficient, intergenerational, positive arts interventions that could “soar like an eagle” across EBH’s communities (B. Sandifer, personal communication, March 18, 2021). It has been our honor to work with EBH to help advance its mission to build communities, educate families, and provide the foundation for a better future.
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Appendix

Positive Pen Pal Program Playbook

The Positive Pen Pal Program is an initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at Education Based Housing, Inc.’s (EBH) communities through communication exchanges involving writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music. The pilot program involves a month-long, bi-directional letter writing exchange about topics such as gratitude, meaning, and purpose between ten pairs of residents, with each pair comprised of a senior resident and a youth resident. The following document is a stand-alone playbook for EBH’s Resident Engagement Specialists, and includes a brief introduction to well-being; sample recruitment letters for seniors and youth; sample instruction letters for seniors and youth; sample prompts for writing about positive events and experiences, art, and music; sample marketing information to solicit sponsorship from community businesses; measurement tools to assess aspects of well-being of the participants; and survey questions to assess the impact of the program on the participants.
Positive Pen Pal Program

Playbook for EBH’s Resident Engagement Specialist
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Welcome to the Positive Pen Pal Program

Welcome to Education Based Housing, Inc.’s (EBH) Positive Pen Pal Program, an initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at EBH’s communities through communication exchanges involving writing, art, and music. The pilot program involves a month-long, bi-directional letter writing exchange between ten pairs of residents, with each pair comprised of a senior resident living at Providence at Kuykendahl Court (PKC) and a youth resident living at Brittmoore.

This booklet will provide you with information to implement this pilot program. Included are a brief introduction to well-being, recruitment flyers for use at PKC and Brittmoore, introductory welcome materials to provide to senior and youth participants, suggested prompts to use for the pilot letter writing program, sample prompts that could be used in the future for communications about art and music, and guidelines for the activity. Also included are tools to measure well-being, instructions for scoring the measurement tools, and suggested survey questions so EBH can assess the impact of the program.

Briefly, we suggest the following steps to implement the pilot program:

1. Recruit ten seniors from PKC and ten youth from Brittmoore to participate in the program.

2. Match the seniors and youth in pairs.

3. Provide each participant with the respective community welcome materials, which contain instructions for the letter writing activity.

4. Prior to beginning the pilot program, assess indicators of well-being of each participant. Have each participating resident complete the self-report Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and the Flourishing Scale (FS).3

5. Provide each participant with a choice of the first letter-writing prompts and a suggested date for completion, leaving enough time for your review prior to delivering it to the Pen Pal partner.

6. When you receive the letters, review them to ensure they comply with the activity guidelines and EBH protocols, and then share them with the Pen Pal partner.

7. Continue to provide prompts to the program participants and facilitate their weekly exchange of letters for four weeks.

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3 Versions in English, Spanish, and for parents to complete for their younger children are included as Appendices.
8. Following the conclusion of the pilot program, have each participant complete the self-report PANAS, SWLS, and FS again to assess changes in participant well-being.

9. To further assess the pilot program, provide a survey with questions for participants to answer about what they enjoyed, what they learned about themselves and their Pen Pal partner, and what could be changed to make the program even better.

We are very excited to provide this expandable pilot program to EBH and we wish you great success!

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Candidates for the Master of Applied Positive Psychology, 2021
University of Pennsylvania
Introduction to Well-Being

The field of positive psychology focuses on pathways to personal growth, well-being, and human flourishing. Well-being can mean *feeling good* and *functioning well*. When human beings are flourishing, they experience a combination of both feeling good and functioning well.

Theorists and researchers in positive psychology have proposed frameworks with multiple important dimensions that contribute to well-being. For instance, one framework that helps individuals think about the important dimensions of human flourishing is called PERMA,\(^4\) which stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. In PERMA, positive emotions reflect happiness, an indicator of subjective well-being. Engagement describes a state of being fully focused and using one’s strengths and skills to meet the challenges of an activity that is enjoyed for its own sake. Positive relationships help cultivate well-being across a person’s lifespan through being connected with others, one-on-one, in families, and with a community. Meaning refers to having a sense of mattering and purpose in life and being allied with something larger than oneself. Finally, a sense of accomplishment results from pursuing and reaching goals that are inherently important to each individual, rather than solely striving to meet the expectations of others. While there is no one-size-fits-all model of well-being, the important message to glean from these frameworks is that cultivating *multiple* dimensions fosters human flourishing.

The field of positive psychology offers activities called positive interventions: evidence-based, voluntary activities that individuals can undertake for the purpose of increasing dimensions of well-being. Positive interventions are designed to enhance positive emotions, behavior, thoughts, and other elements of PERMA. They focus on building, enhancing, or preserving positive qualities, such as gratitude and optimism.

An exciting area of study in the field of positive psychology is the connection between engagement with writing, art, and music and increased well-being. Writing, art, and music stimulate our brains and activate our senses and emotions. When we engage with writing, art, or music, we grow by stepping into new activities and learning about other people, broadening our perspectives and interpersonal networks. Trying out new artistic activities also prompts us to think and reflect on our thoughts, habits, feelings, behaviors, and viewpoints. Overall, engagement in activities involving writing, art, and music gives us opportunities to appreciate beauty and experience; build character, aptitudes, and skills; honor and appreciate different cultures and values; and expand life’s meaning.

Promisingly, experiences with writing, art, and music have shown positive effects on health and well-being, including positive neurological, emotional, psychological, and physiological changes. These boosts to well-being include enhancing short- and long-term memory capacity, creative problem-solving skills, reflectiveness, and physical health. Wider community benefits also are possible through deepened social connections when engaging in writing, art, and music with others. Thus, a Positive Pen Pal Program involving writing, art, and music may have positive well-being effects for EBH’s residents and communities.

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Sample PKC Flyer

Positive Pen Pal Program

Are you interested in increasing your well-being and positivity? Would you like to get to know someone through exchanging letters? Would you like to connect with youth? Would you like to make a difference in the life of a young person? Would you like to be a Positive Pen Pal?

PKC is offering a Positive Pen Pal Program in which participants exchange weekly letters with a youth resident from another EBH community and discuss topics such as gratitude, purpose, meaning, and more. All materials will be provided by EBH, who also will receive, review, and deliver the letters between PKC participants and their youth Positive Pen Pal. We are looking for ten enthusiastic PKC residents to participate in this Positive Pen Pal Program.

To register: Call or text your Resident Engagement Specialist at ___-___-_____. 

Sample Instruction Letter for PKC (Seniors)

Welcome to EBH’s Positive Pen Pal Program, an initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at EBH’s communities through exchanges involving writing, art, and music. For the next four weeks, you will be exchanging letters with a youth Positive Pen Pal about topics such as gratitude, meaning, and purpose. Engaging with these kinds of topics has been shown to improve well-being. You will be writing about how you feel when doing and thinking about positive things. Common positive emotions include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

Before you start writing letters to your Positive Pen Pal, we will ask you to complete three brief surveys so we can understand how you are currently feeling. Then we will provide prompts for you to answer in a letter with a suggested length between two paragraphs and two pages. You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members, but you may include photographs of any objects you write about in your letter.

You’ll give the letter to your Resident Engagement Specialist (RES), who will deliver your letter to your youth Positive Pen Pal. While you are writing your letter, your youth Positive Pen Pal also will be writing a letter to you, which you will receive from your RES. You may respond to your youth Positive Pen Pal in the next round of letters, along with responding to the next prompt.

At the end of the four weeks, we will once again ask you to complete the three brief surveys and provide feedback about the program, including things that went well and things that you think could be improved.

We’re very excited to have you participate in the Positive Pen Pal Program and we hope you enjoy the experience. If you have any questions, please reach out to your RES by phone or text at ___-___-____.
Are you interested in increasing your positivity and well-being? Would you like to get to know someone through exchanging letters? Would you like to connect with a senior citizen? Would you like to make a difference in the life of a senior citizen? Would you like to be a Positive Pen Pal?

Brittmoore is offering a Positive Pen Pal Program in which participants exchange weekly letters with senior citizens about topics such as gratitude, purpose, meaning, and more. All materials will be provided by EBH, who also will receive, review, and deliver the letters between Brittmoore participants and their senior Positive Pen Pal. We are looking for ten enthusiastic Brittmoore youth residents to participate in this Positive Pen Pal Program.

To register: Call or text your Resident Engagement Specialist at ____-____-_____.

Sample Brittmoore Flyer
Sample Instruction Letter for Brittmoore (Youths)

Welcome to EBH’s Positive Pen Pal Program, an initiative designed to increase the well-being of senior and youth residents at EBH’s communities through exchanges involving writing, art, and music. For the next four weeks, you will be exchanging letters with a senior Positive Pen Pal about topics such as gratitude, meaning, and purpose. Engaging with these kinds of topics has been shown to improve positivity and well-being. You will be writing about how you feel when doing and thinking about positive things. Common positive emotions include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

Before you start writing letters to your Positive Pen Pal, we will ask you to complete three brief surveys so that we can understand how you are currently feeling. Then we will provide prompts for you to answer in a letter with a suggested length between two paragraphs and two pages. You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members, but you may include photographs of any objects you write about in your letter.

You’ll give the letter to your Resident Engagement Specialist (RES), who will deliver your letter to your senior Positive Pen Pal. While you are writing your letter, your senior Positive Pen Pal also will be writing a letter to you, which you will receive from your RES. You may respond to your senior Positive Pen Pal in the next round of letters, along with responding to the next prompt.

At the end of the four weeks, we will once again ask you to complete the three brief surveys and provide feedback about the program, including things that went well and things that you think could be improved.

We’re very excited to have you participate in the Positive Pen Pal Program and we hope you enjoy the experience. If you have any questions, please reach out to your RES by phone or text at ____-____-____.
Week 1 Sample Pilot Writing Prompts

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through writing how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

**Option 1:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing a positive event or positive experience in your life. Why was it positive? What emotions did you feel when it was happening, or after it happened?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing something you are grateful for, or that you appreciate, today. Why do you feel grateful or appreciative?

**Option 3:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing one of your strengths. How do you use this strength in your daily life? Have you used this strength to accomplish something or help someone? How do you feel when you use this strength?

*Additional Guidelines:* You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any objects you write about. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Week 2 Sample Pilot Writing Prompts

Positive Pen Pal Program

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through writing how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

**Option 1:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing something that you really enjoy doing. What emotions do you feel when you are doing this, or after you are finished doing this?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing a time when you felt at your best. What were you doing, thinking, and feeling when you felt at your best?

**Option 3:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing an object or an activity that is meaningful to you. Why is it meaningful? What emotions do you feel when you are with this object or engaged in this activity?

*Additional Guidelines:* You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any objects you write about. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Week 3 Sample Pilot Writing Prompts

Positive Pen Pal Program

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through writing how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

**Option 1:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing one of your strengths. (If you previously wrote about one of your strengths, choose another strength!) How do you use this strength in your daily life? Have you used this strength to accomplish something or help someone? How do you feel when you use this strength?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing a positive or healthy habit that you practice every day or every week. What emotions do you feel during or after you do this positive or healthy habit?

**Option 3:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing something you are grateful for, or that you appreciate, today. (If you previously wrote about something you are grateful for, you can choose something new that you are grateful for today!) Why do you feel grateful or appreciative?

*Additional Guidelines:* You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any objects you write about. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Positive Pen Pal Program

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through writing how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

Option 1: Describe something you experienced this week that made you happy. Why did this experience make you happy?

Option 2: Describe something you enjoyed or appreciated learning from your Positive Pen Pal. Why did you enjoy or appreciate learning this from your Positive Pen Pal?

Option 3: Describe something new that you tried for the first time this week that you enjoyed. Why did you try it? What emotions did you feel during this experience?

Additional Guidelines: You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any objects you write about. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Week 1 Sample Art Prompts

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through art how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

**Option 1:** Create a piece of positive art using the materials provided. Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing your piece of art, and why it is positive for you. What does it mean or signify to you? How did you feel when you were creating it? What emotions did you feel?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing a piece of art that you like. What is it? What do the colors or textures look like? Did you create it, or did someone else? What does it mean or signify to you? What emotions do you feel when you are with this piece of art?

**Option 3:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing what type of art makes you feel a positive emotion, like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and/or love. Do you enjoy looking at paintings? Crafts? Photographs? Pottery? Sculptures? Knitting? Murals? Graffiti? What do the colors or textures look like? What emotions do you feel when you interact with this type of art?

**Option 4:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal describing a piece of art that you would like to create. What do you envision? What materials would you like to use? What colors? Would it be large or small? What emotions do you feel when you think about creating this piece of art?
Additional Guidelines: You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any art you create or describe. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Week 1 Sample Music Prompts

Choose one prompt from the following options and write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal. Please write at least two paragraphs and no more than two pages. Do not worry about making it perfect. This is a chance to explore through music how you think and feel about different topics. Common positive emotions people feel include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.

**Option 1:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal about a song that makes you feel a positive emotion, like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and/or love. Why do you like this song? When did you first hear it? What are your favorite words from the song?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal about a positive memory you have about a song or a musical performance, like a street musician, live or televised concert, or musical instrument practice. Where were you? Where were the musicians? What emotions did you feel?

**Option 3:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal about a musical instrument that you like to play, or that you might like to try playing. Why are you interested in this particular instrument?

**Option 4:** Write a letter to your Positive Pen Pal about a song, or melody, or musical jingle that makes you smile or laugh. Why does this song, melody, or musical jingle make you feel good?

*Additional Guidelines:* You may use your first name in your writing. Please do not use your last name or provide any identifying details about yourself, such as names of family members or addresses. Please do not include
photos of yourself or your friends or family members. You may include photographs of any music, instrument, or performance you describe. Also, after you receive a letter from your Positive Pen Pal, you can reply to that letter when you write back to your Positive Pen Pal the following week.
Measurement

We recommend assessing the level of participation in, the well-being changes associated with, and the utilization and interest in the pilot Positive Pen Pal Program. This will entail the RES documenting the following information for residents of each community, as well as distributing the well-being measures (included below) and an easily fillable form to collect open-ended, Post-Program Survey responses from the participants. Alternatively, based on resident needs, the Post-Program Survey could be conducted in a conversational interview with the participants.

• RES to collect PKC Participant Demographics and Participation Level:
  o The number of senior participants from PKC (plus the demographics the LURA and EBH regularly collect, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, type of housing unit)
  o Number of letters written per participant
  o Frequency of use of each prompt offered (indexing the most successful, useful prompts and the least successful, useful prompts)
  o Did the participant remain engaged in the program for the full four weeks?
  o If the participant had to be replaced, what necessitated the change?
  o Was the participant interested in continuing in the Positive Pen Pal Program beyond the pilot program?
    ▪ If yes, what type of engagement was most desired?
      • Writing
      • Art
      • Music
• RES to collect Brittmoore Participants Demographics and Participation Level:

  o The number of youth participants from Brittmoore (plus the demographics the LURA and EBH regularly collect, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, type of housing unit)
  o Number of letters written per participant
  o Frequency of use of each prompt offered (indexing the most successful, useful prompts and the least successful, useful prompts)
  o Did the participant remain engaged in the program for the full four weeks?
  o If the participant had to be replaced, what necessitated the change?
  o Was the participant interested in continuing in the Positive Pen Pal Program beyond the pilot program?
    ▪ If yes, what type of engagement was most desired?
      • Writing
      • Art
      • Music
Recommended Post-Program Survey Questions

- In the Positive Pen Pal Program, what did you enjoy:
  - The most?
  - The least?
- What, if anything, did you learn:
  - About yourself?
  - About others?
  - About how your Pen Pal was the same as you?
  - About how your Pen Pal was different than you?
- What, if anything, did this program change in the way you think and/or feel about:
  - Yourself?
  - Your Pen Pal?
  - Your Pen Pal’s age group?
- What, if anything, changed in how you think and/or feel about other people?
- What do you think could be improved about this program?
• What would you like to see included in the future if we offer this program again?
Recommended Measures to Administer Pre- and Post-Intervention

- Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)\(^5\)
  - The PANAS is a 20-item questionnaire measuring positive and negative emotions over a specified timeframe, ranging from *today* to *on average* (e.g., today; during the past few days; during the past week; during the past few weeks; during the past year, on the average).
  - We recommend EBH measure participants’ emotions “during the past few days” and we worded instructions on the questionnaire accordingly.
  - Seniors and youth (or their parents\(^6\)) can complete the questionnaire in English (see Appendix A and B) or Spanish\(^7\) (see Appendix C).
  - The questionnaire asks participants to read a list of words describing various positive and negative feelings and emotions and circle a score that best applies to them for each emotion in the time period specified, along a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Very Slightly/Not at All*) to 5 (*Extremely*). Positive emotions are summed for a Positive Affect Score, and negative emotions are summed for a Negative Affect Score. Higher scores indicate greater intensity of emotions.
  - See Appendix D for Scoring the PANAS.

- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)\(^8\)
  - The SWLS is a brief 5-item assessment designed to measure self-reported judgments of general satisfaction with one’s life. The participant is asked to read a list of 5 phrases about the status of one’s life and enter a score that best applies to each phrase, along a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). The scores are then summed for a total Satisfaction with Life score. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with life.

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• **Flourishing Scale (FS)**

  - The FS is a brief 8-item assessment designed to measure self-reported judgments of flourishing. The participant is asked to read a list of 8 phrases about the status of one’s life and enter a score that best applies to each phrase, along a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). The scores are then summed for a total Flourishing score. Higher scores indicate a person with many psychological resources and strengths.
  - See Appendices H and I for English and Spanish versions.

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Material for Potential Sponsors

Positive Pen Pal Program

Would you like to make a difference in the lives of senior citizens and youth in our EBH community?

EBH is starting a Positive Pen Pal pilot program in which seniors and youth will exchange letters about topics such as gratitude, purpose, meaning, and more. In their letter exchange, participants also will create and share pictures of artwork and discuss the effects art and music have in their lives. Engaging with writing, art, and music is an effective way to increase well-being and is one way that we are working with our senior and youth residents to increase their social connections with each other and their communities.

There are a variety of ways to get involved. We are looking for sponsors to provide funding or materials, including stationery, pens, art supplies, and electronic devices such as tablets. Please see the attached Introduction to Well-Being that briefly describes the evidence on well-being that supports this program.

If interested, please contact ________.
The field of positive psychology focuses on pathways to personal growth, well-being, and human flourishing. Well-being can mean *feeling good* and *functioning well*. When human beings are flourishing, they experience a combination of both feeling good and functioning well.

Theorists and researchers in positive psychology have proposed frameworks with multiple important dimensions that contribute to well-being. For instance, one framework that helps individuals think about the important dimensions of human flourishing is called PERMA, which stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. In PERMA, positive emotions reflect happiness, an indicator of subjective well-being. Engagement describes a state of being fully focused and using one’s strengths and skills to meet the challenges of an activity that is enjoyed for its own sake. Positive relationships help cultivate well-being across a person’s lifespan through being connected with others, one-on-one, in families, and with a community. Meaning refers to having a sense of mattering and purpose in life and being allied with something larger than oneself. Finally, a sense of accomplishment results from pursuing and reaching goals that are inherently important to each individual, rather than solely striving to meet the expectations of others. While there is no one-size-fits-all model of well-being, the important message to glean from these frameworks is that cultivating *multiple* dimensions fosters human flourishing.

The field of positive psychology offers activities called positive interventions: evidence-based, voluntary activities that individuals can undertake for the purpose of increasing dimensions of well-being. Positive interventions are designed to enhance positive emotions, behavior, and thoughts, and other elements of PERMA. They focus on building, enhancing, or preserving positive qualities, such as gratitude and optimism.
An exciting area of study in the field of positive psychology is the connection between engagement with writing, art, and music and increased well-being. Writing, art, and music stimulate our brains and activate our senses and emotions. When we engage with writing, art, or music, we grow by stepping into new activities and learning about other people, broadening our perspectives and interpersonal networks. Trying out new artistic activities also prompts us to think and reflect on our thoughts, habits, feelings, behaviors, and viewpoints. Overall, engagement in activities involving writing, art, and music gives us opportunities to appreciate beauty and experience; build character, aptitudes, and skills; honor and appreciate different cultures and values; and expand life’s meaning.

Promisingly, experiences with writing, art, and music have shown positive effects on health and well-being, including positive neurological, emotional, psychological, and physiological changes. These boosts to well-being include enhancing short- and long-term memory capacity, creative problem-solving skills, reflectiveness, and physical health. Wider community benefits also are possible through deepened social connections when engaging in writing, art, and music with others. We hope that the Positive Pen Pal Program involving writing, art, and music will have positive well-being effects for EBH’s residents and communities.
Appendix A

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT SCHEDULE (PANAS)\(^{13}\)

We are interested in some of the ways you felt during the last few days. Following is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each word and then circle the appropriate number to indicate to what extent you felt this way during the past few days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very slightly/Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<td>2 Distressed</td>
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<td>3 Excited</td>
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<td>4 Upset</td>
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<td>5 Strong</td>
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<td>6 Guilty</td>
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<td>7 Scared</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Hostile</td>
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\(^{13}\) Adapted from Watson et al. (1988).
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Appendix B

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT SCHEDULE (PANAS): CHILD

We are interested in some of the ways your child felt during the past few days. Following is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please read each item and then circle the appropriate number to indicate to what extent your child generally felt this way during the past few days.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very slightly/Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
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14 Adapted from Science of Behavior Change (2018); Watson et al. (1988).
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Estamos interesados en conocer algunas de las formas en que se ha sentido durante los últimos días. A continuación se incluye una lista de palabras que describen diferentes sentimientos y emociones. Lea cada palabra y luego encierre en un círculo el número apropiado para indicar hasta qué punto se sintió así, es decir, cómo se ha sentido durante los últimos días.

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15 Adapted from Irene Lopez-Gomez et al. (2015).
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Appendix D

PANAS Scoring Procedure

Two Subscales, with Scores Ranging from 10 to 50

1. **Positive Affect**: Total sum for the following items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19

2. **Negative Affect**: Total sum for the following items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20

Higher scores on **Positive Affect** indicate greater intensity of positive emotions. Higher scores on **Negative Affect** indicate greater intensity of negative emotions.
Appendix E

SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE - ENGLISH\textsuperscript{16}

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

7 - Strongly agree
6 - Agree
5 - Slightly agree
4 - Neither agree nor disagree
3 - Slightly disagree
2 - Disagree
1 - Strongly disagree

_____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

_____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

_____ I am satisfied with my life.

_____ So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.

_____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.


\textsuperscript{16} Diener, E. (n.d.). \textit{Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)}. https://eddiener.com/scales/7
Más abajo hay cinco afirmaciones con las que usted puede estar de acuerdo o en desacuerdo. Utilizando la siguiente escala de 1 a 7, indique su acuerdo con cada una poniendo el número apropiado en la línea anterior al número de cada afirmación. Por favor, responda a las preguntas abierta y sinceramente.

7 – Completamente de acuerdo  
6 – De acuerdo  
5 – Más bien de acuerdo  
4 – Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo  
3 – Más bien en desacuerdo  
2 – En desacuerdo  
1 – Completamente en desacuerdo

_____1. En la mayoría de las cosas, mi vida está cerca de mi ideal.
_____2. Las condiciones de vida son excelentes.
_____3. Estoy satisfecho con mi vida.
_____4. Hasta ahora, he conseguido las cosas que para mí son importantes en la vida.
_____5. Si volviese a nacer, no cambiaría casi nada de mi vida

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Appendix G

Scoring and Understanding the Satisfaction with Life Scale\textsuperscript{18}

1. Sum the scores across the 5 questions.
2. See below descriptions for understanding the scores.

30 – 35 Very high score; highly satisfied

Respondents who score in this range feel that things are going very well. Their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are about as good as lives get. Furthermore, just because the person is satisfied does not mean she or he is complacent. In fact, growth and challenge might be part of the reason the respondent is satisfied. For most people in this high-scoring range, life is enjoyable, and the major domains of life are going well – work or school, family, friends, leisure, and personal development.

25- 29 High score

Individuals who score in this range like their lives and feel that things are going well. Of course, their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are mostly good. Furthermore, just because the person is satisfied does not mean she or he is complacent. In fact, growth and challenge might be part of the reason the respondent is satisfied. For most people in this high-scoring range, life is enjoyable, and the major domains of life are going well – work or school, family, friends, leisure, and personal development. The person may draw motivation from the areas of dissatisfaction.

20 – 24 Average score

The majority of people are generally satisfied but have some areas where they very much would like some improvement. Some individuals score in this range because

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they are mostly satisfied with most areas of their lives but see the need for some improvement in each area. Other respondents score in this range because they are satisfied with most domains of their lives but have one or two areas where they would like to see large improvements. A person scoring in this range is normal in that they have areas of their lives that need improvement. However, an individual in this range would usually like to move to a higher level by making some life changes.

15 – 19 Slightly below average in life satisfaction

People who score in this range usually have small but significant problems in several areas of their lives, or have many areas that are doing fine but one area that represents a substantial problem for them. If a person has moved temporarily into this level of life satisfaction from a higher level because of some recent event, things will usually improve over time and satisfaction will generally move back up. On the other hand, if a person is chronically slightly dissatisfied with many areas of life, some changes might be in order. Sometimes the person is simply expecting too much, and sometimes life changes are needed. Thus, although temporary dissatisfaction is common and normal, a chronic level of dissatisfaction across a number of areas of life calls for reflection. Some people can gain motivation from a small level of dissatisfaction, but often dissatisfaction across a number of life domains is a distraction, and unpleasant as well.

10 – 14 Dissatisfied

People who score in this range are substantially dissatisfied with their lives. People in this range may have a number of domains that are not going well, or one or two domains that are going very badly. If life dissatisfaction is a response to a recent event such as bereavement, divorce, or a significant problem at work, the person will probably return over time to his or her former level of higher satisfaction. However, if low levels of life satisfaction have been chronic for the person, some changes are in order – both in attitudes and patterns of thinking, and probably in life activities as well. Low levels of life satisfaction in this range, if they persist, can indicate that things are going badly and life alterations are needed. Furthermore, a person with low life satisfaction in this range is sometimes not functioning well because their unhappiness serves as a distraction. Talking to a friend, member of the clergy, counselor, or other specialist can often help the person get moving in the right direction, although positive change will be up the person.

5 – 9 Extremely Dissatisfied

Individuals who score in this range are usually extremely unhappy with their current life. In some cases, this is in reaction to some recent bad event such as widowhood or unemployment. In other cases, it is a response to a chronic problem
such as alcoholism or addiction. In yet other cases the extreme dissatisfaction is a reaction due to something bad in life such as recently having lost a loved one. However, dissatisfaction at this level is often due to dissatisfaction in multiple areas of life. Whatever the reason for the low level of life satisfaction, it may be that the help of others is needed – a friend or family member, counseling with a member of the clergy, or help from a psychologist or other counselor. If the dissatisfaction is chronic, the person needs to change, and often others can help.

**Understanding the Satisfaction with Life Scale**

To understand life satisfaction scores, it is helpful to understand some of the components that go into most people’s experience of satisfaction. One of the most important influences on happiness is social relationships. People who score high on life satisfaction tend to have close and supportive family and friends, whereas those who do not have close friends and family are more likely to be dissatisfied. Of course, the loss of a close friend or family member can cause dissatisfaction with life, and it may take quite a time for the person to bounce back from the loss.

Another factor that influences the life satisfaction of most people is work or school, or performance in an important role such as homemaker or grandparent. When the person enjoys his or her work, whether it is paid or unpaid work, and feels that it is meaningful and important, this contributes to life satisfaction. When work is going poorly because of bad circumstances or a poor fit with the person’s strengths, this can lower life satisfaction. When a person has important goals, and is failing to make adequate progress toward them, this too can lead to life dissatisfaction.

A third factor that influences the life satisfaction of most people is personal – satisfaction with the self, religious or spiritual life, learning and growth, and leisure. For many people these are sources of satisfaction. However, when these sources of personal worth are frustrated, they can be powerful sources of dissatisfaction. Of course, there are additional sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction – some that are common to most people such as health, and others that are unique to each individual. Most people know the factors that lead to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, although a person’s temperament – a general tendency to be happy or unhappy – can color their responses.

There is no one key to life satisfaction, but rather a recipe that includes a number of ingredients. With time and persistent work, people’s life satisfaction usually goes up when they are dissatisfied. People who have had a loss recover over time.

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People who have a dissatisfying relationship or work often make changes over time that will decrease their dissatisfaction. One key ingredient to happiness, as mentioned above, is social relationships, and another key ingredient is to have important goals that derive from one's values, and to make progress toward those goals. For many people it is important to feel a connection to something larger than oneself. When a person tends to be chronically dissatisfied, they should look within themselves and ask whether they need to develop more positive attitudes to life and the world.
Appendix H

FLOURISHING SCALE\textsuperscript{20}
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Below are 8 statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by indicating that response for each statement.

• 7 - Strongly agree
• 6 - Agree
• 5 - Slightly agree
• 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
• 3 - Slightly disagree
• 2 - Disagree
• 1 - Strongly disagree

\begin{itemize}
  \item \_\_\_\_ I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.
  \item \_\_\_\_ My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.
  \item \_\_\_\_ I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.
  \item \_\_\_\_ I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.
  \item \_\_\_\_ I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.
  \item \_\_\_\_ I am a good person and live a good life.
  \item \_\_\_\_ I am optimistic about my future.
  \item \_\_\_\_ People respect me.
\end{itemize}

Scoring: Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

A continuación encontrará 8 afirmaciones con las cuales usted puede o no estar de acuerdo. Usando la escala de 1 a 7 más abajo, indique su grado de acuerdo con cada ítem, indicando dicha respuesta para cada afirmación.

- 7 – Muy de acuerdo
- 6 – De acuerdo
- 5 – Algo de acuerdo
- 4 – Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
- 3 – Algo en desacuerdo
- 2 – En desacuerdo
- 1 – Muy en desacuerdo

___ Llevo una vida significativa y con propósito.
___ Mis relaciones sociales me apoyan y son reconfortantes.
___ Me intereso y me involucro en mis actividades diarias.
___ Contribuyo activamente a la felicidad y al bien-estar de otros.
___ Soy competente y capaz en las actividades que son importantes para mí.
___ Soy una buena persona y vivo una buena vida.
___ Soy optimista acerca de mi futuro.
___ La gente me respeta.

Puntuación: Sume las respuestas, variando de 1 a 7, para los 8 ítem. El rango posible de puntajes es desde 8 (menor posible) a 56 (mayor posible). Un puntaje alto representa una persona con muchas fortalezas y recursos psicológicos.

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