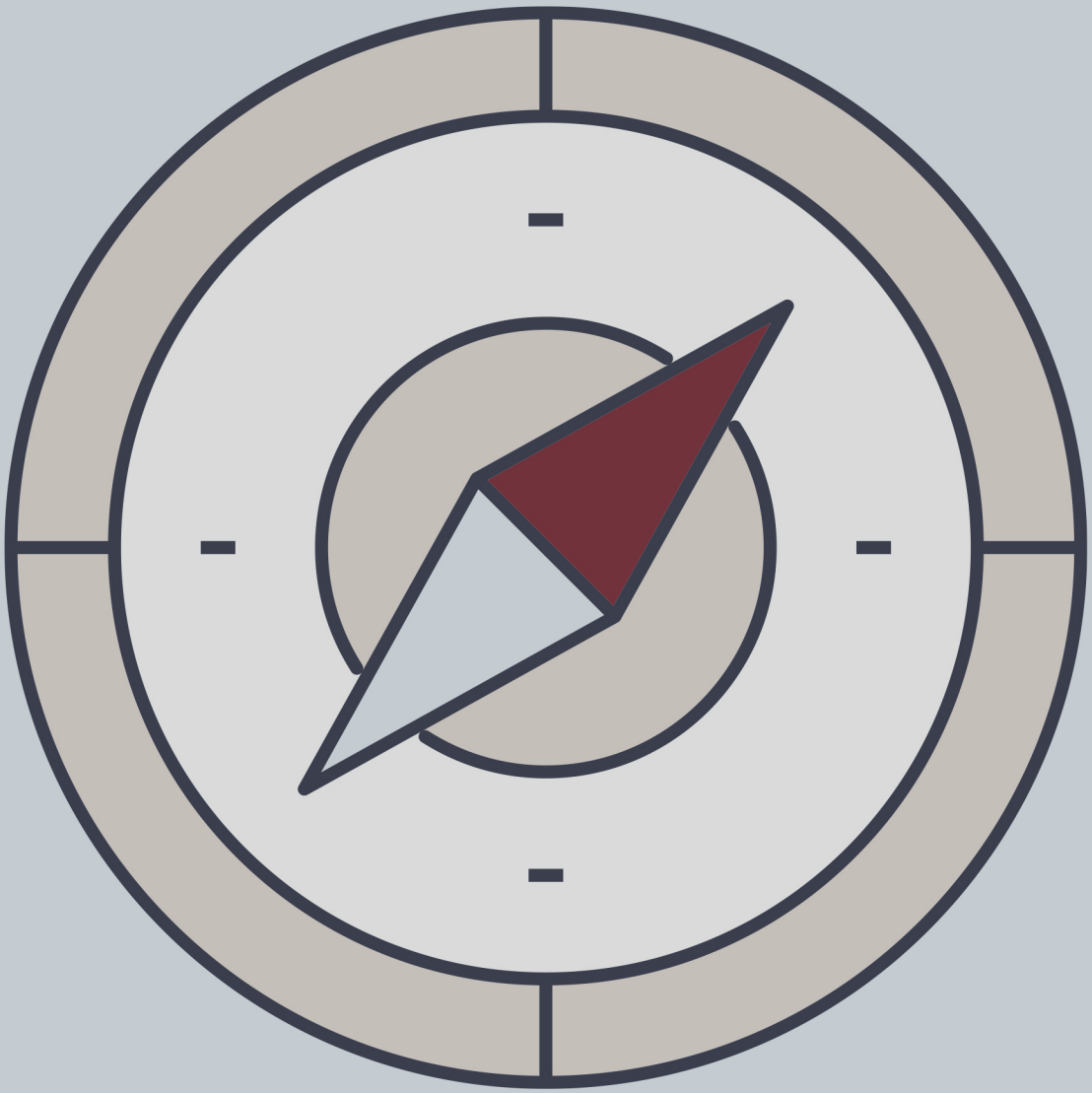
A COACHING MASTERCLASS ON

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



HANDBOOK

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FOREWORD

Over the years, when I was teaching positive psychology, I often heard people saying: "I really love the ideas and concepts and I really see the potential, but it is all a bit overwhelming". And I can understand this point. Positive Psychology is a broad field, and involves a wide range of topics, including mindfulness, strengths, self-compassion, resilience, just to mention a few.

So at a certain point I was asking myself: What if we could provide students, helping professionals, clients and other people who aim to incorporate PP into their daily life with a profound, yet easy to understand framework for explaining and practicing positive psychology?

What if we could help both experts and non-experts to grasp the principles of positive psychology easily and offer a way to look at themselves and others in a holistic way, incorporating emotions, values, challenges, strengths and more?

What I learned through practicing psychology is that the key to well-being is the way people look at themselves. At the core of well-being lies the relationship that people have with themselves. I believe it is all about relating to the self. Sadly, many people still look at themselves from a very limited perspective. The lens through which they view themselves is characterised by limitations and weaknesses. A lens that highlights "have to's" and "should's", conditions for being good enough and flaws to be corrected. Perhaps the most difficult part of being a helping professional is being confronted with so many beautiful human beings who fail to see their own beauty and potential.

One of the most important reasons for developing the sailboat metaphor was to offer people a different, more holistic "lens" to look at themselves. The sailboat metaphor addresses the full spectrum of human functioning. It highlights both the factors that reduce our well-being as well as those that allow us to flourish and grow. Looking at ourselves through the lens of the sailboat metaphor instantly broadens our view. It shifts our attention from what is wrong with us, to the resources in ourselves and in our environment.

More than anything, I hope that this metaphor will help you and the people around you to realise that we are all captains of our boat and that we are equipped with everything necessary for making our journey worth travelling.

Hugo Alberts

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, an increasing number of studies have addressed a wide range of topics that are at the heart of positive psychology, including well-being, resilience, goal setting, motivation, strengths and social support. As an inevitable consequence of this growing body of research, the number of practical tools to measure and increase well-being has increased as well. In this ever-expanding array of interventions and assessments, positive psychology practitioners can easily become overwhelmed by an abundance of choice and find themselves struggling to integrate all the different topics and tools in their work with clients. This can result in a common concern; where to start to integrate positive psychology into coaching or clinical practice.

This handbook complements a training program that was designed to offer practitioners a comprehensive, yet easy to understand framework to integrate positive psychology in their work with clients. The goal of this handbook is twofold. The first goal is to offer a structured, science-based resource that will enable practitioners to understand the various processes underlying the many topics within the field of Positive Psychology. The second goal is to offer a structural approach to directly apply positive psychology in order to assess and improve the client's level of well-being.

THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

This handbook introduces a sailboat metaphor that is used as a guide throughout the program. The different elements of the sailboat provide an easy to understand, yet comprehensive structure for addressing the essential elements of well-being and their interrelations. The structure of this metaphor not only creates order in the diverse range of techniques and theoretical constructs, it also offers clients an intuitive perspective on human functioning that captures the complex nature of well-being without the need to understand the theoretical and scientific underpinnings of the various processes involved. The metaphor will serve as a framework throughout this handbook.

STRUCTURE

In the first part of this handbook, we introduce the field of Positive Psychology and the developments within this field. In the second part, we focus on the sailboat metaphor. We address each of the elements of the metaphor, how the metaphor can be used to explain concepts like well-being, and how the metaphor can be used in a practical context. Part three covers the construct of emotional intelligence. First, emotions and emotional intelligence are explained using the sailboat metaphor as a guide. In the remaning chapters, we focus on several emotion-related skills and abilities that have been found to be essential for emotional well-

being. More specifically, we address emotional awareness, emotional knowledge (the ability to extract information from emotions), emotional beliefs (awareness of beliefs regarding the expression and experience of emotions) and emotional expression (the ability to express emotions in a way that promotes well-being). In varying degrees, these abilities are also defined as key components of emotional intelligence in most models of emotional intelligence.

SECTION I

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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INTRODUCING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The question "What is wrong with people?" has guided the thinking of many psychologists and dominated countless scientific studies during the 20th century. It is hard to deny that it is an important question. In our attempts to answer the question, we have gained insight into many illnesses and have developed effective treatments for a wide range of problems. However, focusing on disease and deficit has limited our understanding and knowledge-base to pathology, and as a consequence, we have devoted relatively little attention to factors that make life worth living.

A WEAKNESS FOCUS

Focusing on what is wrong with an individual is what we call a weakness focus. We place direct attention on negative aspects of an individual. In the context of work and performance, a weakness focus means that we are primarily concerned with behavior that is causing suboptimal or low performance. For example, during a performance evaluation, the employer is only focused on why an employee is not reaching his sales targets, or why he is not able to communicate well with customers.

> A weakness focus means a focus on what is wrong rather than what is right.

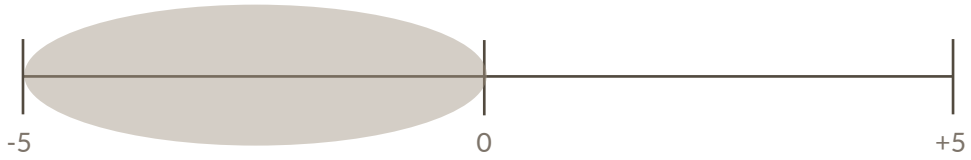
In a clinical context, this means that the focus is on behavioral or cognitive patterns that cause suffering and reduce well-being. Consider a psychologist who focusses only on the problems that a client experiences as an example. From this perspective, the psychologist may discover that the client thinks negatively about the past and these thoughts cause negative consequences in dealing with the present. The idea behind the weakness focus may seem intuitive: by fixing the weakness, we aim to increase well-being. However, as we will see, this view is far from complete and includes fundamental misconceptions about well-being.

A WEAKNESS FOCUS IN PSYCHOLOGY

After World War II, psychology became a science largely devoted to curing illness. As a consequence, a disproportionate amount of studies in psychology focused on psychopathology and factors that make life dysfunctional. In contrast, little research in the years that followed World War II focused on the factors that promote psychological well-being. For instance, an analysis of the ratio of positive to negative subjects in the psychology publications from the end of the 19th century to 2000 revealed a ratio greater than 2:1 in favor of the negative topics (Linley,

2006). This focus on psychopathology and markers of psychological disease has been referred to as the disease model of human functioning. The disease model can be easily explained by the picture in fig. 2.1.

Fig. 2.1 a focus on repairing weakness



In this picture, -5, represents suffering from problems, 0 represents not suffering from these problems anymore, and +5 represents a flourishing, fulfilled life. The disease model is focused on the -5 to 0 section. Interventions that are grounded in this model have the goal of helping people move from -5 to 0. In a clinical context, this could mean that a therapist aims to reduce symptoms and to prevent relapse. The end goal (0-point) is achieved when the client is no longer experiencing diagnosable symptoms of psychopathology as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

MISCONCEPTIONS RESULTING FROM THE DISEASE MODEL

Although the disease model has been the dominant view for many researchers and practitioners, there are some important misconceptions that are often neglected or overlooked. The awareness of these misconceptions has contributed to the development of positive psychology as we know it today. In this section, we discuss some essential misconceptions that are based on the focus of the disease model.

MISCONCEPTION #1: FIXING WHAT IS WRONG LEADS TO WELL-BEING

Underlying the weakness focus of the disease model is the belief that fixing what is wrong will automatically establish well-being. However, as counterintuitive as it may sound, happiness and unhappiness are not on the same continuum. Positive affect is not the opposite of negative affect (Cacioppo & Berntson 1999). Getting

rid of anger, fear, and depression will not automatically lead to peace, love, and joy. In a similar way, strategies to reduce fear, anger, or depression are not identical to strategies to maximize peace, joy, or meaning. Indeed, many scholars have argued that health is not merely the absence of illness or something negative, but instead is the presence of something positive. This view is illustrated in the definition of mental health by the World Health Organisation (2005): "a state of well being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (p. 18).

In support of this view, a growing body of research shows that the absence of mental illness does not imply the presence of mental health; and, the absence of mental health does not imply the presence of mental illness (Keyes, 2005; Keyes et al., 2008; Lamers et al., 2011). Keyes (2005) found that although a higher score on subjective well-being correlates with less psychological complaints and vice versa, this relationship is far from perfect. In other words, there are people who suffer from a disorder, but still experience a relatively high level of subjective well-being, and there are people who report low levels of subjective well-being but experience little psychopathological symptoms. This finding has been replicated in other studies using different measures and populations, for instance, in American adolescents between 12 and 18 years (Keyes, 2005), South African adults (Keyes et al., 2008), and Dutch adults (Lamers et al., 2011).

▶ MISCONCEPTION #2: EFFECTIVE COPING IS REFLECTED BY A REDUCTION IN NEGATIVE STATES

Typically, psychological interventions aim to reduce aversive states, like negative emotions or stress. Consistent with the disease model, such an aim is based on the assumption that a reduction in aversive states reflects both effective coping and enhanced well-being (or fewer problems). Interestingly, previous findings have repeatedly shown that effective coping does not necessarily mean a reduction in aversive states, like stress or negative emotions. An elegant illustration of this principle is found in the literature on dieting; research has revealed that it is not the absence of stress that is related to successful weight maintenance, but rather the ability to effectively deal with stress (see, for instance, Gormally, Rardin & Black, 1980). Similar findings have been obtained in the domain of work, with numerous studies highlighting the negative consequences of stress in the workplace (see, for instance, Fletcher & Payne, 1980). Interestingly, research has also shown that it is not the experience of stress that is responsible for its acclaimed negative effect on health, but the way employees deal with perceived stress. For some individuals, stress can lead to positive consequences. In this case, stress is referred to as eustress, defined as a positive response to a stressor, as indicated by the presence of positive psychological states (Nelson & Simmons, 2003, 2011).

Research on eustress shows that when a stressor is being evaluated as positive in terms of its potential implications for well-being, a different psychological and physiological response follows than occurs with a negative assessment. In this case, stress can result in improvement in, rather than a decline in, well-being (Nelson & Simmons, 2006). Past studies have indicated support for a direct link between eustress and health (cf. Edwards & Cooper, 1988; Simmons & Nelson, 2007). These findings suggest that the way people deal with and perceive difficult experiences (eustress versus distress), rather than their occurrence, is a valuable indication of successful coping.

Further support for the idea that it is not merely a reduction in negative states that reflects effective coping comes from the literature on post-traumatic growth. Post-traumatic growth is the development of a positive outlook following trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004). Positive changes may include a different way of relating to others, awareness of personal strength, spiritual changes, and increased appreciation for life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Post-traumatic growth can be perceived as an effective way of coping with adversity. It can emerge following a variety of traumatic events, including war and terror (Helgeson, Reynolds & Tomich, 2006). Growth following adversity, however, is not the absence of post-traumatic stress reactions, but the presence of positive states.

In sum, these findings suggest that there is clinical advantage in focusing on building people's strengths so that they can cope with difficult experiences as opposed to purely focusing on reducing negative experiences. Rather than solely trying to eliminate negative experiences (moving from -5 to 0), it seems important also to employ coping skills that promote well-being, despite the negative experiences (moving towards +5). In support of this notion, existing research demonstrates that irrespective of the level of stress, personal resources are associated with psychological well-being (Cohen et al., 1982; Holahan & Moos, 1986; Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Nelson & Cohen, 1983).

▶ MISCONCEPTION #3: CORRECTING WEAKNESS CREATES OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

According to Clifton and Nelson (1996), the behavior and mindset of many teachers, employers, parents, and leaders is guided by the implicit belief that optimal performance results from fixing weaknesses. Indeed, to promote professional development, employees are typically exposed to training programs that focus on correcting their weakness. In a similar vein, evaluation interviews often focus on areas that need improvement and aspects of work that employees are typically struggling with. A similar pattern can be found at many schools. Typically, the number of mistakes are highlighted when work is corrected and when report cards are brought home, the lower grades tend to attract more attention. According to Clifton and Nelson (1996), fixing or correcting weakness will not result in an

optimally functioning person or organization. In their view, fixing weakness will at best help the individual or organization to become normal or average.

Research findings show that the opportunity to do what one does best each day (that is, using one's strengths) is a core predictor of workplace engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2002); and workplace engagement, in turn, is an important predictor of performance (see, for instance, Bakker & Bal, 2010; Salanova et al, 2005). These findings indirectly support Clifton and Nelson's (1996) claim that boosting the use of strengths, rather than improving weaknesses, will contribute to optimal performance.

▶ MISCONCEPTION #4: WEAKNESSES DESERVE MORE ATTENTION BECAUSE STRENGTHS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

Another misconception that contributes to an excessive focus on weakness involves the belief that strengths do not need much attention because they will take care of themselves and develop naturally. Just like skills, strengths can be trained and developed deliberately (Borghans, Duckworth, Heckman, & ter Weel, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For instance, research has shown that, through practice, people can learn to be more optimistic (Meevissen, Peters & Alberts, 2011). In general, these studies show that over time, practice and effort can help to build new habits that boost strength use. Boosting strengths means that not only is the frequency of use increased, but also the number of different situations in which the strength is applied. When strengths are not used or trained, their potential impact on well-being remains limited. When a child who is very creative is not at all or is minimally exposed to activities that call upon creativity, the child is unlikely to develop skills, knowledge, and experience that will maximize his creative potential. Although many strengths are already present at a very young age, they need to be nurtured to realize their full potential.

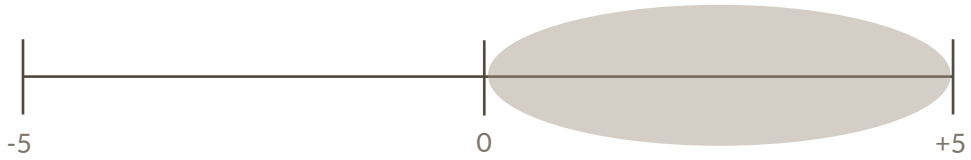
▶ MISCONCEPTION #5: A DEFICIT FOCUS CAN HELP TO PREVENT PROBLEMS

If we keep focusing on repairing weakness, we will increase our understanding of weaknesses. A focus on repairing weakness will bring forward more ways to decrease the gap between -5 and 0 (see fig. 2.1). Indeed, during the past 40 years, many interventions have been developed that aimed to cure mental illness or other problems. These interventions are primarily aimed at fixing things when they already have gone wrong.

Obviously, it is important to have different interventions and treatment programs to deal with problems and setbacks. However, what we have learned over 50 years is that the disease model has not moved us closer to the prevention

of problems. When it comes to prevention, the question is not "How can we treat people with problem X effectively?" but "How can problem X be prevented from occurring?" Working exclusively on personal weakness and disorders has rendered science poorly equipped to design effective prevention programs. We are minimally closer to preventing serious problems like burnout, depression, or substance abuse. It seems that major advances in prevention occur when the view is to systematically build competency rather than correct weakness (see, for instance, Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 1999, for a review of effective prevention programs for youths). To design effective prevention programs, we must also focus on the +5 part (see fig. 2.2) and ask questions like: Why do some people flourish despite difficult circumstances? How do some employees avoid burnout symptoms? Why do some employees show a high level of work engagement? What are the characteristics of resilient and flourishing individuals, and what can we learn from them? How can we use this knowledge to design interventions that help people become resilient so that they are capable of bouncing back when the going gets tough?

Fig. 2.2 a focus on building strengths



THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

In 1998, Martin Seligman strongly encouraged the field of psychology to widen its scope and move beyond human problems and pathology to human flourishing. According to Seligman (2002), positive psychology aims to move people not from -5 to 0 but from 0 to +5 (see fig. 2), and to do this, a different focus is needed. Rather than merely focusing on what is wrong with people and fixing their problems, the focus should also be on what is right with people and boosting their strengths.

The questions that positive psychology aims to answer are: What characteristics do people with high levels of happiness possess? And, what qualities do people who manage their troubles effectively have? In other words, what strengths do these people possess? These questions do not fit the disease model. These questions force us to consider the bigger question of "What is right with people?" If we learn what differentiates happy and resilient people from

unhappy and unresilient people, then we can use this knowledge to increase happiness and boost the resilience of others.

An important mission of positive psychology research is, therefore, to investigate human behavior using a strengths approach. This focus on human flourishing and markers of psychological well-being has been referred to as the health model of human functioning (see fig. 2.2).

CRITICAL NOTES

At first sight, the previously discussed misconceptions about a deficit focus may give rise to the idea that one should predominantly focus on human strengths, rather than weaknesses. While it may be true that correcting weakness will not create optimal performance or well-being, it is also true that only focusing on human strengths while ignoring weaknesses will not automatically lead to optimal performance or well-being. Especially when weaknesses cause problems or hinder optimal strength use, they need to be addressed and managed. While traditional psychologists may falsely believe that taking away negatives will automatically create positives, positive psychologists and practitioners must avoid the trap of believing that creating positives will automatically take away the negatives. As discussed above, the positive and negative are on two separate continua. Attention must be paid to processes for building the positive and to processes for coping with the negative. For this reason, positive psychology can best be considered as an addition to existing psychology, not a replacement. It can best be considered as an enrichment of the field, rather than a rejection of it. Or, to use Seligman's words: "Positive psychology is not just happyology" and "is not meant to replace psychology as usual" (Seligman, 2001).

Although a great amount of research has addressed aspects of human functioning that are linked with lower levels of well-being, it is incorrect to categorize psychological research in terms of positive and negative. These are evaluative terms and raise the false impression that research can be categorized as 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong.' First, psychological research aims to shed more light on human functioning in general; it is not devoted to positive or negative human conditions. Moreover, increasing insight as to aspects that hinder well-being is equally valuable to insights into aspects that promote well-being. Categorizing studies on human dysfunction as 'negative psychology' should therefore be avoided.

When examining psychological research of the past 40 years in the domains of psychopathology and clinical psychology, one could conclude that this research has mainly adopted a 'negative' side of human functioning. However, the field of psychology reaches far beyond the subdomains of psychopathology and clinical psychology. Examples of other fields include health psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology, and organizational psychology. Many

studies in these other domains have focused on well-being for years, even before the introduction of Positive Psychology in 2000. These studies have addressed topics like job satisfaction, safe sex practices, and high self-esteem and primarily focused on the positive side of human functioning.

DEFINING THE FIELD OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology can be described as a field dedicated to the study, development, and application of positive interventions that are aimed at increasing well-being through factors under voluntary control (Pawelski, 2003). Both research and practice are at the core of positive psychology. In this section, we address the contributions of both components to the field.

PROVING EFFECTIVENESS

Since the introduction of positive psychology, countless studies have revealed actions and interventions that significantly improve well-being. These studies are guided by questions like:

- Which personal qualities help buffer against stress and illness?
- How can we increase happiness?
- Which characteristics of people and environments are related to a high level of well-being?
- How can we develop valid measurement tools?
- What is the role of positive emotions and experiences?
- How can we best embrace the existence of and deal with negative experiences?
- How can we create healthy self-esteem?

By addressing these questions, numerous studies have revealed concrete actions that lead to improved human functioning. The results from these studies offer direct proof for the effectiveness of interventions and help us understand the difference between what we believe might contribute to enhanced well-being and what enhances it. For instance, writing about and imagining a best possible self has repeatedly been demonstrated to increase people's mood and well-being (King, 2001; Peters et al., 2010; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Moreover, research on gratitude shows that gratitude can be trained and increased. In a study by McCullough & Emmons (2003), participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups. Participants completed an extensive daily journal in which they rated their moods, physical health, and overall judgments concerning how their lives were going. Each participant kept a brief weekly journal for ten weeks. They either described, in a single sentence, five things they were grateful for that had occurred

in the past week (the gratitude condition); or they did the opposite, describing five daily hassles (irritants) that had displeased them in the past week (the hassles condition). The neutral group was asked to simply list five events or circumstances that affected them in the last week, and they were not told to accentuate the positive or negative aspects of those circumstances (the events condition). Those in the gratitude condition reported fewer health complaints and even spent more time exercising than control participants did. The gratitude group participants experienced fewer symptoms of physical illness than those in either of the other two groups. Lastly, people in the gratitude condition spent significantly more time exercising (nearly 1.5 hours more per week) than those in the hassles condition. In one of our own studies (Smeets, Neff, Alberts & Peters, 2014), we investigated the effectiveness of a 3-week self-compassion group intervention. Participants were randomly assigned to either an intervention designed to teach skills of self-compassion or an active control group intervention in which general time management skills were taught. Both interventions comprised of 3 group meetings held over three weeks. Results showed that the self-compassion intervention led to significantly greater increases in self-compassion, mindfulness, optimism, and self-efficacy, as well as significantly greater decreases in rumination, in comparison to the active control intervention. In summary, these findings demonstrate that research can help differentiate between effective and less effective interventions and thus serve as a valuable guide for practitioners.

▶ UNDERLYING MECHANISMS

In addition to testing the effectiveness of interventions, studies have also provided insight into the working mechanisms underlying these actions. Simply put, these studies have not only shown that well-being can be increased by applying certain strategies but have also offered insight as to why these strategies contribute to well-being. For instance, in one of the author's own studies (Alberts, Schneider & Martijn, 2007), different emotion regulation strategies and their impact on cognitive resources were addressed. Previous studies have repeatedly shown that when people exert self-control, this results in decreased self-control performance on a subsequent task. Thus, when a dieter who tries to quit smoking says "no" to a tempting piece of pie, he is more likely to fail in refusing a cigarette at a later moment. The idea is that controlling oneself, in this case controlling the urge to eat, requires cognitive resources that, after using, are not available for later attempts. In our study, participants were asked to watch a distressing video. Three groups were created. One group was asked to apply self-control; the instructions were to suppress all the emotions felt during the video. One group was asked to apply mindful acceptance; the instructions were to allow the emotions to be present and to observe them. The last group did not receive any instructions and were just asked to watch the movie. After the movie, all participants completed

a computer task that required self-control. We found that participants who suppressed their emotions performed the worst on this second self-control task. In contrast, participants who accepted their emotions outperformed both groups. These findings provide insight into a potential mechanism underlying mindful acceptance, namely that it probably conserves regulatory resources. In a similar vein, other studies have revealed valuable insights as to why certain strategies and interventions might work.

▶ MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Finally, research has offered many valuable measurement tools to address complex constructs like happiness, optimism, and resilience. For example, in 2004, Peterson and Seligman developed the Values In Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), which brings together the six most valued virtues, operationalized into 24 different character strengths. By completing this assessment, respondents gain insight into the extent to which they possess these 24 character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Other examples of measurement tools that have been developed over the years include the Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2009), the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008).

These assessment tools are valuable for a variety of reasons. First, they provide a way to gain insight into the extent to which certain constructs characterize people. Using them, we can, for example, determine the level of optimism of a person, or the ability to deal with difficult thoughts. Second, the scores on assessment tools can be compared to mean scores. Many assessment tools have been used in a wide range of populations, providing information on general means per country, age group or other population characteristics. In this way, the score of one single person can be compared to a mean score, which provides additional information on the relative score of this individual. Third, assessment tools can be used as repeated measures. For instance, by administering a questionnaire at multiple times during an intervention, the progress of a client can be tracked. Moreover, repeated administration can provide information on the stability of characteristics. One may complete the aforementioned VIA-IS now and a year later and discover that the strengths that were identified on both occasions remain very similar. Lastly, insight into the relationship between different constructs can be obtained by comparing the correlation between the scores on different assessment tools. Using this method, research has revealed that people who score high on mindfulness also use their strengths more, for instance (Alberts, Peters, Niemec, Muschalik, 2017).

▶ PRACTICE

The many interventions and actions that are proven to enhance well-being are a rich source for practitioners who aim to apply positive psychology. The insights from positive psychological research can be applied directly in different ways. First, existing treatment programs can integrate positive psychology interventions into the treatment protocol. For example, a cognitive behavioral therapist may use positive interventions like gratitude practice as an addition to the regular intervention program. Many positive interventions are useful as homework for clients. Rather than passively waiting for the next meeting, they can actively work on their personal development. Second, during the past two decades, new interventions have been developed that strongly rely on the insights and principles from positive psychology. A few examples of these interventions are listed below.

- *Appreciative Inquiry*. This approach appeared in the 1980s. Appreciative inquiry (AI) involves 'searching for the best' in people, organizations and communities, through the discovery of 'what gives life' to a system when it is at its most effective and most economically, ecologically, and socially capable (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). AI shares the strengths-based approach of positive psychology (Boyd & Bright, 2007). Similar to strengths in positive psychology, appreciative inquiry focusses on what's already working inside families, organizations or communities.
- *Positive Psychotherapy*. This is an empirically validated approach to psychotherapy that aims to reduce psychopathology by predominantly focusing on building strengths and enhancing positive emotions and engagement (Rashid, 2015). Seligman and colleagues (2006) showed significant, long-lasting decreases in depression after positive psychotherapy.
- *Positive Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*. The focus of positive cognitive behavioral therapy is not on pathology, but like positive psychology itself, on building clients' strengths and what works for them. This form of therapy draws on research and applications from positive psychology and solution-focused brief therapy.
- *Strengths-Based Counselling*. This is a model for conducting therapy based on the premises of positive psychology, counseling psychology, positive youth development, social work, narrative therapy and solution-focused therapy (Smith, 2006). The model was created specifically for use with adolescents and aims to increase growth by helping clients use strengths to overcome problems. Strengths-based counseling uses a strength-perspective and guides the psychologist who "searches for what people have rather than what they do not have, what people can do rather than what they cannot do, and how they have been successful rather than how they have failed" (Smith, 2006, p. 38).
- *Strength-Centered Therapy*. This is a psychotherapeutic approach which heavily

focusses on building strengths in the change process (Wong, 2006). Strength-centered therapy is characterized by the social constructivist notion that the subjective views of clients regarding their own pathology and well-being are more important in therapy than the expert opinions of mental health providers.

- *Solution-focused therapy*. This therapy was developed by de Shazer, Berg, and colleagues (Berg, 1994; Berg & Miller, 1992; Cade & O'Hanlon, 1993; DeJong & Berg, 2001; de Shazer et al., 1986; O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989), and stresses the strengths people possess and how these can be applied to the change process. A key ingredient of solution-focused therapy is the use of positive language. By using language that focuses on possibilities and positive exceptions, the therapist influences the way clients perceive their problems, assists them in seeing the potential for solutions, and creates an expectancy for change (Berg & DeJong, 1996).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Many have argued that Martin Seligman, in his 1998 APA Presidential Address, introduced positive psychology to the American Psychological Association. Although Seligman should definitely be credited for his renewed introduction of a positive outlook in psychology, other researchers have adopted a similar approach by studying mental health rather mental illness (see, for instance, Jahoda, 1958), and maturity and growth (e.g., Erikson, 1959) even before the introduction of positive psychology. For instance, in 1979, Antonovsky coined the term salutogenesis to describe an approach focusing on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease. In fact, the very foundation of positive psychology dates back to 500 BC. Below we present a very global timeline.

▶ +/- 500 BC ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS

Many of the questions that are addressed by positive psychologists were also raised by ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and eastern philosophers like Confucius and Lao-Tsu (Dahlsgaard, Peterson & Seligman, 2005). At around 500 BC, these philosophers were already concerned with questions like: What does happiness mean? How can happiness be achieved? What is a virtuous life?

▶ 1842 – 1910 WILLIAM JAMES

The psychologist William James was interested in the study of optimal human functioning and considered the consideration of subjective experience as highly

important. He argued that objectivity is based on subjectivity. His interest in optimal human functioning was reflected by the questions he raised during the American Psychological Association in 1906. He believed that to maximize human potential, we must gain insight into both the limits of human energy and ways to stimulate and optimally use this energy (Rathunde, 2001, p. 136). Some have argued that William James should be considered "America's first positive psychologist," (Taylor, 2001, p.15).

▶ 1950 - HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Humanistic psychology started in the 1950's in Europe and the United States. Many of the views and concerns of humanistic psychology are similar to those of positive psychology. Both humanistic psychology and positive psychology are concerned with the quality of human experience and the ability to self-actualize; to reach the highest potential (Moss, 2001). Humanistic psychology has been defined as "... an orientation toward the whole of psychology rather than a distinct area or school ... concerned with topics having little place in existing theories and systems: e.g., love, creativity, growth, self-actualization, peak experience, courage, and related topics" (Misiak & Sexton, 1966, p. 454). Two of the most influential humanistic psychologists were Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

The term positive psychology was first used by Maslow in his book Motivation and Personality (1954). In this book, he wrote a chapter called "Toward a Positive Psychology." In this chapter, Maslow wrote: "The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side; it has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illnesses, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology had voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that the darker, meaner half" (Maslow, 1954, p. 354).

Humanistic psychology was a reaction to the view of human functioning reflected by psycho-analysis and behaviorism. According to humanistic psychology, individuals are shaped by an innate drive to make themselves and the world a better place. Moreover, whereas psycho-analysis was predominantly concerned with the negative side of human functioning, addressing topics like neurosis and psychosis, humanistic psychology mainly focusses on the positive side of human functioning. The field of humanistic psychology has been criticized for its lack of scientific rigor. Critics state that the field has relied too much on introspective, qualitative research methods. Positive psychology shares the same view on human functioning but uses quantitative and reductionistic methods to address its claims.

▶ 1998 - MARTIN SELIGMAN

Martin Seligman is often referred to as the "father of positive psychology". Seligman was the founder of the theory of 'learned helplessness'. He argued that clinical depression and other related mental illnesses are caused by non-control over the outcome of a situation. Later, Seligman became interested in how to minimize or reduce depression. He realized that he and other psychologists were guided by a disease model that was focused on repairing damage rather than promoting well-being. After being elected President of the American Psychological Association in 1996, he chose positive psychology as the central theme of his term. With the introduction of positive psychology, he wanted to start a new era of psychology that focusses on the factors that contribute to well-being.

▶ BARBARA HELD

Back in 2004, Held (2004) wrote a critical paper on the viewpoints and ideas of positive psychology. In this paper, she argued that the current movement of positive psychology has presented itself as a separate field of psychology which is characterized by a negativity about negativity itself. In her opinion, it would benefit both psychology in general and positive psychology in particular for it to become more integrated into psychology as a whole rather than separated out. She advocates the importance of an "open acknowledgment and appreciation of the negative side of human existence/nature, a side that has heretofore been denied or dismissed by promoters of the movement's dominant Message" (Held, 2004, p.40). She labeled this more nuanced approach to the notions of 'positive' and 'negative' as the 'second wave' of Positive Psychology. Others have referred to this integration of the positive and negative of human experience as Positive Psychology 2.0 (see for instance Wong, 2011). Recently, scholars within Positive Psychology have begun to adopt a more nuanced approach to the notions of 'positive' and 'negative' and have worked on a new mature synthesis of positive and negative within the field.

■ CRITICAL NOTE

The above described timeline provides a very general overview of the people and developments that have influenced positive psychology as we know it today. Obviously, this overview represents just a very limited selection of influential people. There have been many more pioneers who greatly influenced the development of positive psychology. Examples include, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi with his work on flow, Carol Dweck with her theory and research on mindsets and Ed Diener with his essential work on well-being.

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3

SECOND WAVE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

In the previous chapter, the viewpoints and aims of Positive Psychology were discussed. Back in 2004, Held (2004) wrote a critical paper on the viewpoints and ideas of positive psychology. In this paper, she argued that the current movement of positive psychology has presented itself as a separate field of psychology which is characterized by a negativity about negativity itself. In her opinion, it would be advantageous to integrate positive psychology into general psychology rather than separate it out. She advocates the importance of an "open acknowledgment and appreciation of the negative side of human existence/nature, a side that has heretofore been denied or dismissed by promoters of the movement's dominant Message" (Held, 2004, p.40).

Initially, the strong focus of Positive Psychology on the positive side of human functioning was introduced as a necessary step to restore the misbalance that was created by the negative view that dominated psychology. However, the strong focus on positive experiences, traits, thoughts, and emotions carries the implicit message that people should mainly strive for positive experiences and should avoid negative experiences. While "psychology as usual" was criticized by positive psychologists for developing an almost exclusive focus on repairing weakness, positive psychology has been criticized for adopting an almost exclusive focus on well-being and positive outcomes. The excessive embrace of the positive can be conceptualized as "first wave positive psychology". Although this second generation of PP remains focused on increasing wellbeing, it appreciates the ambivalent and complex nature of the field, by:

- recognizing that seemingly negative experiences can contribute to positive aspects of human functioning and transformation
- recognizing that seemingly positive qualities and experiences can be detrimental to well-being under certain circumstances
- acknowledging the importance of coping with negative thoughts, experiences and behavior
- Second Wave Positive Psychology is at the heart of this handbook, incorporating the assessment of both positive and negative factors of human functioning. In the following sections we describe some important psychological considerations that underlie the second wave perspective.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Many clients wish for a life that is predominantly characterized by the presence of positive experiences and the absence of negative experiences. On the very basis of this desire lies the view that negative experiences are 'bad' and positive experiences are 'good'. This perception creates a contrast that neglects the fact that both are in fact part of the same coin of life. Good versus bad, beautiful versus ugly, small versus large, etc. Opposites exist only in relation to each other and cannot exist

independently. Good can only exist if there is bad. Light can only be there if there is darkness. A teacher can only exist if there are students. Opposites are always part of the same coin. This coin thus consists of two halves; two opposites. The moment that one of these halves falls away, the other half ceases to exist. One could say that both can only exist in relation to each other. The existence of one half (bad/student/grief) makes the experience of the other half (good/teacher/pleasure) possible. In other words, we need the bad to appreciate the good life. When positive psychology is viewed as a way to avoid the negative, we lose touch with reality. The study of stress, coping, and adaptation provides many rich examples of the interrelation of positive and negative phenomena. A psychology of human flourishing is not the study of how negative experience may be avoided or ignored, but rather how positive and negative experience are interrelated.

PARADOXES

Perceiving 'negative' events and experiences as 'bad' in an absolute sense can trigger the need to avoid and control them; 'bad' should become 'good'. The literature on self-regulation has revealed many examples in which the attempt to control states paradoxically leads to an increase of these states (also referred to as the ironic process of control; Wegner, 1994). For instance, in a well-replicated classic study by Wegner, Schneider, Carter, and White (1987), participants were told that the goal of a task was to not think of a white bear. Every time, participants did think of a white bear, they were instructed to ring a bell. Participants who attempted to reach the goal of not thinking of a white bear rang the bell significantly more often than participants who were not instructed to reach this goal. Similar findings have been found in the context of sleep (Harvey, 2003) and eating behavior (McFarlane, Polivy, & McCabe, 1999). These findings show that trying too hard to control or avoid certain experiences can backfire, causing the very thing that one is attempting to avoid to become stronger. In a similar vein, trying to control positive feelings by focusing too much on 'achieving happiness' can paradoxically lead to reduced feelings of happiness. This effect is suggested to be caused by increased awareness of the discrepancy that exists between the current state (not happy enough) and the desired state (happy) (Mauss et al., 2011). In light of this, it is important to realize that positive thinking per se is not always beneficial. Especially when positive thinking is used to avoid or control negative experiences; this is a form of experiential avoidance (Hayes et al., 1999), a phenomenon that has been linked with a great diversity of negative outcomes (see Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996, for a review).

Third wave therapies like mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat- Zinn 1990) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, 1999) recognize the paradoxical nature of control and avoidance and focus on the development of acceptance-based coping. Acceptance-based

coping means embracing both positive and negative experiences, rather than fighting them. Second wave positive psychology integrates insights from these third wave therapies to enhance well-being. Or, to use King's (2001, pp. 53–54) words: flourishing does not mean being a "well-defended fortress, invulnerable to the vicissitudes of life," but appreciating and even embracing the complex and ambivalent nature of existence.

WHEN NEGATIVE BECOMES POSITIVE

People can report major positive changes as a result of challenging life events such as severe illness or trauma. This process is referred to as benefit finding. Helgeson and colleagues (2006) define benefit finding as "the positive effects that result from a traumatic event" (p. 797). In other words, it is the process of deriving positive growth from adversity.

In general, research has revealed positive long-term effects of benefit finding. For instance, some individuals report a new appreciation of their own strength and resilience, an enhanced sense of purpose, greater spirituality, closer ties with others, and changes in life priorities (for reviews see Linley & Joseph, 2004; Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006). Others feel that their relationships are stronger and that they have become more compassionate or altruistic (e.g., Affleck & Tennen, 1996; Davis et al., 1998; McMillen et al., 1997). The research on post-traumatic growth, lifespan development (e.g., Elder, 1998) and benefit finding (Helgeson et al., 2006) demonstrates that experiencing and mastering challenging and traumatic situations, in the long run, can contribute to the development of personal growth. In sum, these findings demonstrate that difficulties or negative experiences can have positive outcomes if we approach them in a certain way and should therefore not be perceived as 'negative' in an absolute sense.

WHEN POSITIVE BECOMES NEGATIVE

Positive traits can also be associated with drawbacks. Research has shown that certain positive traits enacted at very high levels can decrease well-being. Consider the extreme optimist whose excessive positivity means that he has lost touch with the potential pitfalls and dangers of his choices. He sees things only as he wants them to be rather than as they are. Or, consider the person who is so optimistic about a project that she has unrealistic expectations about its feasibility, and consequently fails to finalize it. Indeed, extreme levels of optimism have been linked to under-appreciation of risk and maladaptive risk-taking (see, for instance, Weinstein et al., 2005). Another illustration of the downside of 'too much' comes from the literature on choice. The positive effects of having personal choice are well supported by numerous studies demonstrating a link between the

provision of choice and increases in intrinsic motivation, perceived control, task performance, and life satisfaction (Deci, 1976, 1982; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Glass & Singer, 1972a, 1972b; Langer & Rodin, 1976; Rotter, 1966; Schulz & Hanusa, 1978; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Interestingly, research has also found that too much personal choice can decrease well-being. An elegant demonstration of this was provided in a series of experiments by Iyengar and Lepper (2000). The researchers showed that participants who chose a chocolate from a display of 30 options were more dissatisfied and regretful of the choices they made than participants who choose from a display of 6 options. In other words, 'the more choice the better' is not necessarily true. In sum, these findings suggest that for many, if not all, constructs, moderation is the keyword. Or, to use the words of Publius Terentius Afer, an ancient Roman dramatist: Ne quid nimis: "In all things moderation".

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SECTION II

THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

4

INTRODUCING THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

"I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship."
- Louisa May Alcott

This quote beautifully summarizes what could be considered the most important practical aim of Positive Psychology: enhancing autonomy and resilience. The goal of every helping professional is to eventually become redundant by helping the client realize that he is the captain of his own ship and can take effective action. This realization allows the client to align with personal values and take responsibility for his own behavior, and thus reality.

A key step in this process is the development of a balanced and complete perspective of the self; a perspective that takes into consideration the many factors (positive and negative, controllable and uncontrollable) that determine daily behavior and experiences. Through becoming aware of personal strengths and weaknesses, of factors that can be controlled and those that are beyond control, and of positive and negative social forces, autonomy emerges. In this chapter, we introduce the sailboat metaphor. This metaphor compares human functioning to a sailboat and its journey and offers a multi-faceted, yet easy to understand perspective of the self. A graphical representation of the metaphor is shown in fig 4.1 on the next page.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR OF HUMAN FUNCTIONING

In the following sections, a detailed description of each element of the sailboat metaphor is provided.

01. WATER

No boat moves in isolation from the water. The water can be compared to what we could call the 'playground of life'. Just like the water encompasses the space in which the boat is held afloat and moves, this is the direct environment that we live in and interact with. This environment is divided into many different domains, for example; our job, the relationship with our partner, our friends, our financial situation, and so on. In short, it is our direct physical reality.

02. COMPASS

A compass is an instrument used for navigation and orientation that shows direction relative to the environment. It provides feedback on the current direction in which we are heading. In a similar vein, experiences like feelings, emotions,

bodily sensations and intuition serve as a tool for navigation and orientation. Both positive and negative experiences are signals that provide feedback on the route we are taking in life. They can serve as a valuable guide on our journey. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to them and allow them to be present. Positive experiences such as joy, relaxation, and energy signal personal well-being and inform us that we are on the right track. These experiences can serve as a direct reinforcer and over time, build long-lasting resources (sails: element 5). Negative experiences, such as fear and pain, inform us that attention is required.

Fig. 4.1 A graphical representation of the eight elements of the Sailboat Metaphor

Rather than suppressing these negative experiences, allowing them to be present without acting upon them can reveal valuable information that may assist us on our journey. Fear, for instance, may signal that we are approaching the edge of our comfort zone. Since we are uncertain about what the other side of the ocean looks like, we experience fear. Fear may indicate that we have a chance to broaden our horizons and expand our comfort zone. Possibly, we may also conclude that the thing causing us fear seems important to us (after all, why would we experience fear if we did not care about it?) and may give us insight into a personal value.
Note that the emotional experience itself is never the problem. In terms of the sailboat metaphor, the compass is not the problem; it simply provides information and feedback. The problem arises when the person uses his or her compass in an ineffective way. For instance, many clients to attempt to control or avoid the negative experiences that their compass indicates. However, paradoxically, such avoidance can lead to an increase in negative experiences.

▶ 03. STEERING WHEEL

The steering wheel represents personal values. In the same way, the steering wheel determines where the boat will go to, values determine how we want to live our life. They are the answer to the question: what do you find important in life? When we live according to our true values, there is an accompanying sense of fulfilling our deepest purpose in life. Values provide the direction and meaning that we need to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

Just like the steering wheel determines a certain direction, values are best compared to directions, rather than destinations. Whereas goals (destinations: element 8) can be achieved, values cannot be achieved. For example, a value of being creative can never be completely fulfilled. Even if the person creates a painting (a concrete goal), it would be silly to say, "Now that I have created this painting, I've accomplished creativity. Now I'll proceed to the next thing." Therefore, values are best formulated as verbs, in that they are not something that is ever fully achieved. A value might be "being creative" or "contributing to other's well-being".
Note that the steering wheel represents our current values, whether they are adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive values contribute to our well-being while maladaptive values reduce well- being. When clients have lost connection with their adaptive values, it is often because one or more of the other elements of the boat receive a disproportionate level of attention. For instance, a client who experiences fear (compass: element 2) may spend a lot of time trying to control and reduce the fear. He is constantly monitoring and trying to control his inner experiences. In other words, undue attention is focused on the compass and "safety," and "control" become the main direction of his boat. Paradoxically, sailing in this direction may cause fear to increase. The values "safety" and "control" thus affect his well-being in a negative way. Another client may focus too much on the

values of other people (other boats: element 6). This focus may be the result of a need for approval; a value that is currently guiding his behavior, but which does not contribute to his well-being in a positive way.

▶ 04. LEAK

A leak in the boat represents a weakness: a personal characteristic that reduces well-being. Weaknesses can be present at the physical, cognitive, and/or behavioral level. At a physical level, the individual may experience pain, hunger, fatigue or other body related issues that reduce well-being. At a cognitive level, the individual may, for instance, suffer from rumination, worry, self-blame or unrealistic standards. At a behavioral level, the individual may engage in behaviors that result in lower levels of well-being such as aggression, pleasing others, acting impulsively and procrastination. Just like leaks are considered 'internal' problems for a boat, weaknesses can be considered internal stressors: they come from the individual's personal goals, expectations, standards, perceptions, desires, etc. In other words, they come from within and are self-induced. In contrast, external stressors are generated outside the individual. In many cases, these concern uncontrollable circumstances, such as loss of employment or death in the family. In the sailboat metaphor, these external stressors are represented by bad weather (events: element 6).

Adopting a weakness focus is to focus solely on the leak. Although the leak is not the only defining characteristic of the boat (e.g., the boat has sails, a steering wheel, etc.), we focus our attention only on this specific aspect of the boat. The idea behind the weakness focus is clear and well-meaning: by fixing the weakness, we aim to increase well-being. In terms of the boat metaphor: by fixing the leak, we expect the boat to be able to sail again. Indeed, if we do not fix the leak, then the boat will sink and the client will not be able to sail anywhere. However, aiming to increase well-being by only focusing on repairing the leak of the boat is unlikely to result in success or reaching a destination or goal. This approach ignores the fact that the absence of problems or illness does not automatically imply well-being (see, for instance, Keyes, 2005). Regarding the sailboat metaphor, even if you would be able to repair the leak, your client may still not be able to get anywhere. It is his sails—the next component of the metaphor—that actually give the client's boat momentum. In summary, it is important to address weaknesses to prevent the boat from sinking; but one must also hoist the sails to catch a favorable wind (i.e., opportunity) and move forward.

▶ 05. SAILS

The sails of the boat represent personal strengths: factors that facilitate valued living and goal achievement and increase personal well-being. These factors are

positive traits reflected in one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Strengths include ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are authentic and energizing to the individual. Using strengths enables optimal functioning, development, and performance (Linley, 2008). Examples of strengths are effective coping styles, like optimism or acceptance, but also activities that provide energy and enthusiasm, like writing or painting.

▶ 06. WEATHER

The weather can be compared to events in life. Just like we cannot control the weather, both positive and negative events will take place that cannot be controlled. Sometimes the wind is blowing in our sails and we encounter situations that allow us to use our strengths optimally. At other times, the wind and the rain make it difficult to keep traveling in our preferred direction. Real life examples include the loss of a loved one, getting stuck in traffic, winning the lottery, falling in love, etc. Although these circumstances are completely beyond our control, especially in the case of many difficult circumstances, the way we deal with them can have a serious impact on our well-being. The ability to deal with difficult circumstances effectively can build resilience and help us to stay on track, despite any challenges that emerged from such circumstances. In this way, we can utilize our strengths fully and have an understanding of what we can or cannot control.

▶ 07. OTHER BOATS

The other boats in the sea represent the people that surround us. These boats can be compared to our social network. Other boats can influence us in many ways, both positively and negatively. For instance, when we decide to turn the steering wheel and take a different course, we may experience support from peers who motivate us to pursue our new direction. At the same time, there may be others who disapprove of the new direction and provoke feelings of self-doubt and fear within us (compass: element 2). In the latter case, it is important to stay true to our values and direction, rather than letting others determine the course of the boat. Our social network may also offer support in difficult times. In times of stormy weather, other boats can help us stay on our course and remind us of what is truly important on our journey (our core values).

▶ 08. DESTINATION

Just like a boat can sail to certain destinations, people can reach goals. While a value is the general direction of the boat, a goal is a specific and concrete destination of the boat. Goal setting and achievement are important processes that can help to concretize values. Goals can help to translate abstract values like "creativity" into

practice. Moreover, achieving personally meaningful goals can help to build self-confidence and self-efficacy.

THE CAPTAIN

The earlier described eight elements of the sailboat all represent key aspects of human functioning. It is important to note that these key aspects influence the well-being of the individual but are not the same as the individual. The best way to consider the individual in the sailboat metaphor is by comparing him or her to the captain of the boat. As the captain, the individual can turn the steering wheel in a certain direction. Rather than a leak in the boat, the individual is the captain; he or she can become aware of this leak and do something about it. In a similar vein, the individual is not the destinations he or she reaches, but the captain who chose to pursue these destinations in the first place.

How the captain relates to the eight elements of the boat represents the relationship the individual has with himself and others. Imagine a captain believing his boat is worth nothing because of a leak it has. No matter how beautiful past journeys have been and how powerful the sails of the boat are, the myopic view of the captain regarding the leak heavily influences his relationship with his boat; he may consider it worthless. This example resembles the relationship many people have with their personal weaknesses. Many people are afraid to fail or make mistakes, and when they do, they beat themselves up for their failings. Rather than allowing themselves to be human and accepting themselves for making mistakes and failing, they show very little self-compassion. It is important to note that it is not the individual's weaknesses in the first place that effects their well-being, but the relationship with their weaknesses. Therefore, it is important to not only address the eight different components of the sailboat but to identify the captain's perspective on these elements as well. In the sailboat metaphor, the captain's relationships with each of the eight sailboat elements are determined by four key elements: attention, thoughts, motivation, and action (see fig. 4.2).

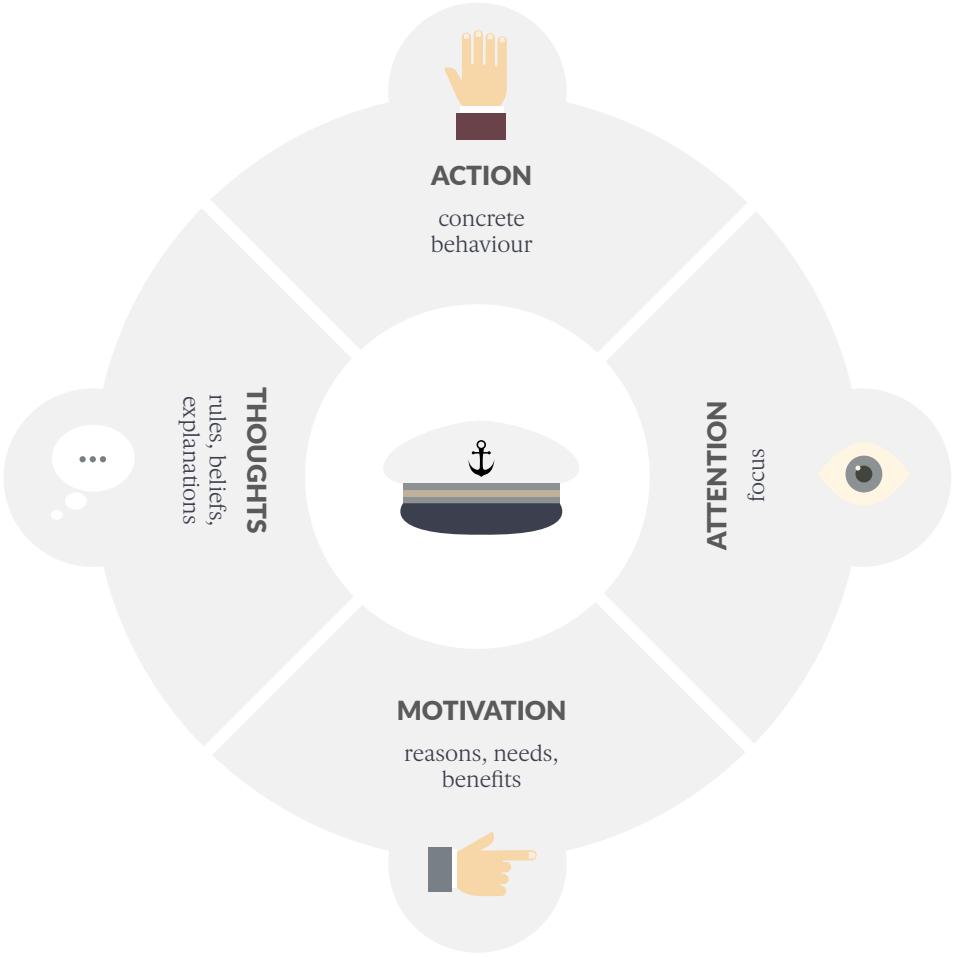
ATTENTION

Attention can be compared to a telescope. A telescope is a powerful instrument through which we can select, bring into focus, and magnify the stimuli we experience in our world (Wallace, 1999). In Principles of Psychology, William James (1890) writes, "My experience is what I agree to attend to" (p. 402). As James suggests, our experiences are largely determined by the way we pay attention to ourselves and our surroundings.

Attention is the faculty that allows the captain to concentrate on a particular element of the boat. Two ingredients of attention are important here.

First, consideration for the amount of attention that is paid by the captain to a certain element. For example, how much attention is devoted to the destination of the boat? Is the captain constantly looking forward, perhaps paying too much attention to the future destinations, and forgetting to pay attention to the journey as well? How much attention does the captain pay to the direction of the boat? Is he checking sufficiently whether the boat is still on track? And, how much attention does the captain devote to the captains of other boats during his journey? The second ingredient is consideration for the nature of attention given. How does the captain of the boat direct attention to the different elements of his boat? Is there a rigid, judgmental and scattered way of paying attention? Or is there an open and non-judgmental singularly focused way of paying attention?

Fig. 4.2 A graphical representation of the four key elements of the captain of the sailboat



▶ THOUGHTS

The thoughts of the captain represent cognitive processes that accompany interactions with different elements of the boat. For example, thoughts may include expectancies regarding the ability to cover the leak of the boat, thinking patterns that are present when using the sails of the boat, or beliefs about how to use the feedback from the compass. Although thoughts may to some degree reflect reality, they can also be distorted and although never tested, strongly determine the behavior and actions of the captain. It is important to note that it is not the thought itself that is problematic, but the fact that the captain perceives certain thoughts to be true and is often unaware of their direct impact on well-being.

▶ MOTIVATION

The motivation of the captain represents the motivational orientation underlying the different elements of the boat. Why are the chosen destinations of the boat important to the captain? Why are the leaks of the boat still not covered? What are the benefits to the captain of using the sails of his boat? Examining the motivational orientation of the captain regarding his sailboat provides insight into the boat's past, current, and future journey.

▶ ACTION

The actions of the captain represent the direct way the captain interacts with the different elements of his boat. For example, how does the captain deal with leaks on the boat? Is the captain able to cover the leak? Is the captain able to turn the steering wheel? Is the captain able to hoist the sails and sail in a valuable direction? Fostering the client's autonomy, which is one of the most important outcomes of any intervention, can best be translated as a client embodying the role of a captain; he is in charge of his boat and the journey he is on. Rather than living in a mindless, passive state where one is strongly influenced by forces outside the self, one is holding the steering wheel firmly, looking ahead, and planning carefully for a journey that he or she believes is worth taking.

IMPORTANT NOTE

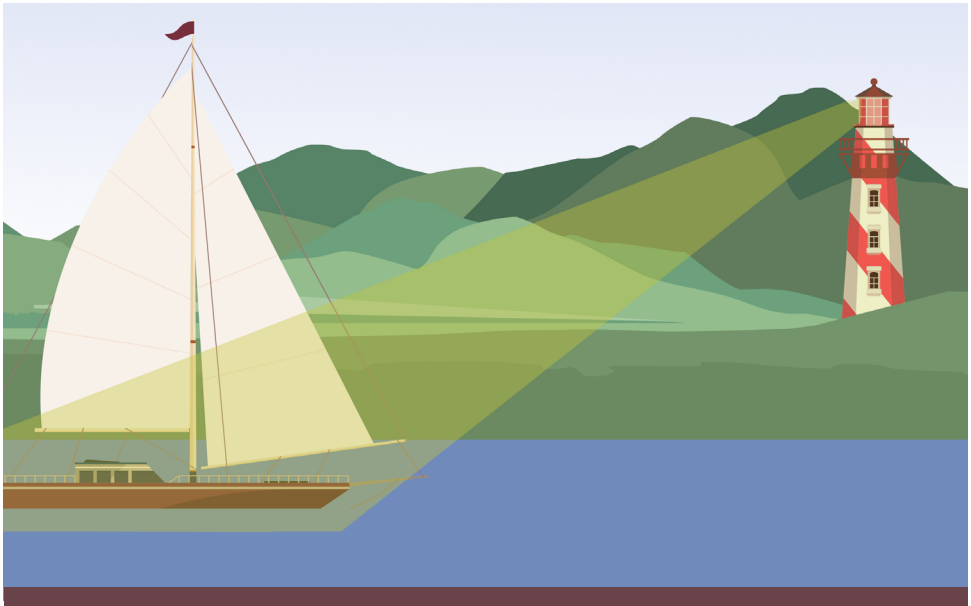
The captain that is shown in the illustrations of this handbook is a white male. It goes without saying that every person is a captain, regardless of sex, skin color, background, religion, etc.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

When considering the sailboat metaphor in a practical context, the function of the practitioner can be compared to the function of a lighthouse on the sailboat's journey. Where the client represents the captain of his or her sailboat, the practitioner can best be compared to the lighthouse keeper, using his or her skills to ensure that the light of the lighthouse becomes a navigational aid for the sailboat. The similarities between a lighthouse and a practitioner are summarized in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The similarities between a lighthouse and a practitioner

Lighthouse	Practitioner
assists in navigation by signaling safe entries to harbors but also by marking dangerous coastlines and hazardous reefs	assists the client in achieving his aspirations/valued living by highlighting possibilities and potential pitfalls
does not dictate the direction or destination of the boat	does not determine which values and goals the client should have
is a temporary aid on a journey, not a permanent one	is a temporary support for the client, with the ultimate goal of achieving independence of the client
is particularly valuable in case of bad weather circumstances/turbulent sea	is particularly valuable in case of difficult life circumstances
always operates in service of the journey of the boa	always operates in service of the preferred goals and values of the client
helps to clarify the current position of the boat	helps the client increase awareness of his current values, goals, strengths, weaknesses, etc.
illuminates the current environment of the boat	sheds (new) light on current circumstances



The function of the practitioner can be compared to the function of a lighthouse on the sailboat's journey.

INTERACTION BETWEEN ELEMENTS

The different components of the boat metaphor do not exist in isolation, but in constant interaction with each other. Some examples of how the elements of the boat work together synergistically are described below.

- Ignoring weaknesses (leak: element 4) while boosting use of strengths (sails: element 5) will give the boat momentum but will gradually cause the boat to sink. In other words, it is important to address both weakness and strengths.
- A boat that sails in a personally valuable direction (steering wheel: element 3) will be more likely to stay on track during stormy weather (element 6) compared to a boat that is sailing in a direction that is not perceived to be personally meaningful.
- A boat that is not willing to choose a different direction (steering wheel: element 3) because of fear (compass: element 2) of leaving the "comfort zone" will be unlikely to sail in new waters (water: element 1). Using more psychological terms, this means that structural changes of the client's environment are unlikely to emerge when avoidance-based coping is used to deal with negative emotions.
- The nature of the water (quiet, turbulent, etc.) is not only influenced by

uncontrollable circumstances, like the weather (element 6), but also by the deliberate choice of the boat sailing in another direction (steering wheel: element 3). This new direction might cause the boat to enter a new zone that is characterized by (temporary) turbulent or quiet waters, rocky or dangerous areas, etc. Likewise, other boats (element 7) can block the sail route, making it difficult to sail in a certain direction. These examples illustrate that the daily reality a person is facing is influenced by many factors, internal and external, all varying in the degree of controllability. Not only uncontrollable events like the loss of a friend or the negative influence of other people influence daily reality, but also the deliberate choices we make in life. By making the deliberate choice to live by the influence of your personal values, the changes we typically experience (both behavioral and circumstantial) will tend to align with those values. Regarding the sailboat metaphor, this means that we deliberately choose a different route and will encounter different waters. This new route will be characterized by easy and difficult parts.

- It is often helpful to consider the parts of the new route that will be potentially challenging and evaluate the degree of controllability. By doing so, the individual can prevent himself or herself from trying to influence uncontrollable events. For instance, a person who decides to quit drinking may anticipate ex-fellow drinkers (other boats: element 7) to be unsupportive of the new direction. Rather than attempting to gain control by trying to convince other captains to choose the same direction, the captain may wisely decide to focus on controllable elements of the boat, like the direction of the boat or the sails. The captain may decide to steer the boat in a direction that allows more frequent encounters with supportive boats or may decide to deliberately use his personal strengths to deal with the challenges.

THE BENEFITS OF THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

There are several important reasons for using this metaphor in a practical or educational context. First, the metaphor can be used to explain complex psychological constructs in a relatively simple way. For instance, effective coping can be compared to a boat that stays on course despite stormy weather or effectively gets back on course after stormy weather. Rumination (dwelling on negative thoughts about past failures) can be compared to spending a lot of time looking at the wake (water pattern) behind the boat. Second, the metaphor can be used to untangle many different constructs in the field of (positive) psychology and bring them together in one cohesive framework. Finally, the metaphor can be used to communicate complex interactive psychological processes (see for instance the previous section “Interaction between elements”).

ENCOURAGING CLIENTS TO USE THE METAPHOR

Clients can use the metaphor to explain their current state. For some clients, the metaphor offers a "safe" way to describe personal feelings by providing them with emotional distance from a problem. It allows them to talk about their private experiences in a more indirect and less vulnerable way, without losing the essence of the message. Another related advantage of using the boat metaphor is its flexibility with different interpretations. Allowing the client to explain their understanding of the different elements can help the practitioner to better grasp the reality of the client. Encouraging clients to develop their own way of using the metaphor, promotes a personal connection to the metaphor.

Examples of potential client use:

- "I don't feel like my boat is moving. It is floating in one place, bobbing on the waves": the client may experience a lack of meaning and/or autonomy.
- "I feel like I am sailing in a direction that other sailors want me to sail": the client is experiencing a high level of social pressure and lack of autonomy.
- "I feel like all I can see is the leaking boat – I keep taking on water": the client indicates that he experiences an excessive focus on his problems.
- "I am afraid that my boat will not withstand the stormy weather that is coming": the client is experiencing low levels of self-efficacy and has doubts about his own coping skills.

Using the sailboat metaphor can also stimulate more creative problem-solving. Because the metaphor allows the client to take a meta-perspective on himself and his functioning, he may perceive problems from a bigger and perhaps different perspective. Often, clients are so identified with a certain problem (i.e., a leak in the boat) that they fail to see the bigger picture. A significant part of their daily life is focused on controlling the problem. This "zooming-in" on the problem often happens at the expense of valued living. Or, in terms of the sailboat metaphor, because the client is so focused covering the leak of the boat, he forgets to ensure that the boat is sailing in a valuable direction. Allowing the client to see the bigger picture and connect to personal values, strengths, etc., provides new ways to deal with challenges that arise.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Before using the sailboat metaphor, it is important to consider the following notes. First, an important aim of the sailboat metaphor is to offer a structured framework that incorporates essential factors that have been found to influence well-being. Obviously, given the immense complexity of psychological functioning, it is impossible to address all factors that influence human behavior and well-being. Although the sailboat metaphor can be used to explain and map many of these factors, it is unlikely to be able to cover all of them.

Second, it important to note that we chose one particular way of translating the different elements of the sailboat metaphor to psychological concepts and processes. For instance, in this metaphor, the compass represents feelings and emotions. Alternatively, one may argue that the compass represents the individual's values, as values can also be considered a guide for action.

Third, like any model, the sailboat metaphor offers a representation of reality, not reality itself. Per definition, every model reduces the endless complexity of reality. Therefore, the sailboat metaphor is best regarded as a general guide to address various key elements of well-being and their interrelations rather than an attempt to fully explain the whole spectrum of human functioning.

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5

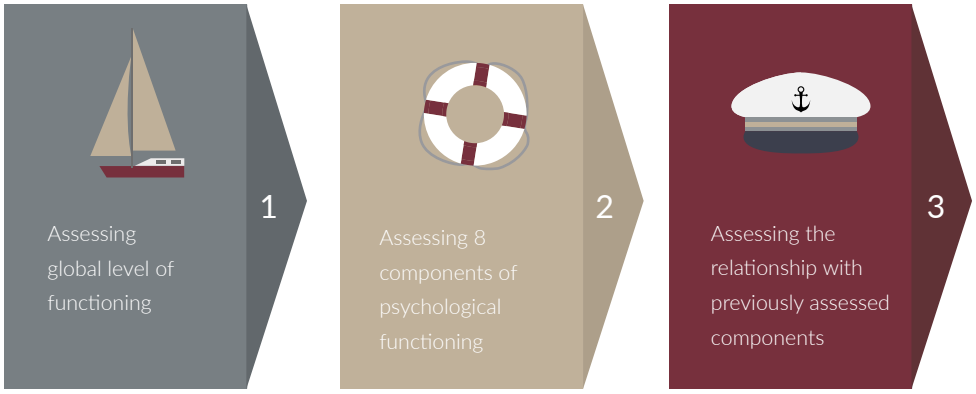
USING THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR IN PRACTICE

The sailboat metaphor can be used for educational purposes, offering a framework for Positive Psychology concepts and their interrelations, and as a framework for coaching or clinical practice. In this chapter we discuss possible ways to use the sailboat metaphor as a tool for coaching or psychological treatment.

THREE PHASES OF ASSESSMENT

To translate the different elements of the sailboat metaphor into a structural assessment or protocol, it can be helpful to make a distinction between different phases. Translating the sailboat metaphor in different phases means that each element of the sailboat becomes a unique step in the assessment sequence. Below, we provide a possible way to translate the sailboat into a structural assessment procedure by making a distinction between three different phases (see also fig 5.1).

Fig. 5.1. Summary of the three different assessment phases



PHASE I: GLOBAL ASSESSMENT

The first phase can best be regarded as a general diagnostic measure of the status of the sailboat and its journey as a whole. This phase is a form of 'meta-assessment', where overarching psychological constructs such as life satisfaction and meaning are assessed. Example questions include: "In general, how happy is the client with his life?" or "In general, to what extent is life experienced as meaningful?"

PHASE II: ASSESSING THE STATUS OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS

The second phase includes eight different steps. These steps are based on the previously described eight elements of the sailboat. In this second phase, the practitioner addresses the current status of the different elements. Simply put, he focusses on the question: "what". What life domain needs the most attention? What are the values of the client? What are the strengths of the client? Etc. The core questions of this second phase are summarized in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Core questions that are addressed in the second phase

Sailboat element	Core question
water (life domains)	What are the most important domains in the client's life?
compass (feelings and emotions)	What kind of emotions and physical sensations does the client experience in this life domain?
steering wheel (values)	What are the values of the client in this life domain?
leak (weaknesses)	What is preventing the client from reaching his goals and living in line with his values?
sails (strengths)	What are the qualities of the client that allow him to reach his goals and deal with difficulties?
weather (events)	What are the positive and negative events that happened/are happening/may happen in the future?
other boats (social relationships)	What does the social network of the client look like?
destination (goal)	What are the most important goals of the client?

PHASE III: ASSESSING THE CLIENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS

In the third phase of the assessment, the practitioner addresses how the client relates to the different elements. In other words, the relationship of the captain with the different elements of the sailboat is assessed. Simply put, the second phase focusses on the questions "why" and "how". Why does the client want to address this life domain? How does the client translate his values into action? How does the client relate to his emotions? How motivated is the client to reach his goals?

While the second phase is all about what the client wishes to change, the third phase is designed for the practitioner to examine the deeper psychological mechanisms behind these changes. This third phase allows the practitioner to develop a deeper understanding of the client's motives to make the desired change, of deeply ingrained beliefs and thinking patterns guiding the change, and of behavioral patterns that are present now and have been present in the past. Addressing these psychological mechanisms allows the practitioner to gain insight into the relationship the client has with himself.

The following key components are addressed in this third phase (see fig. 5.2) :

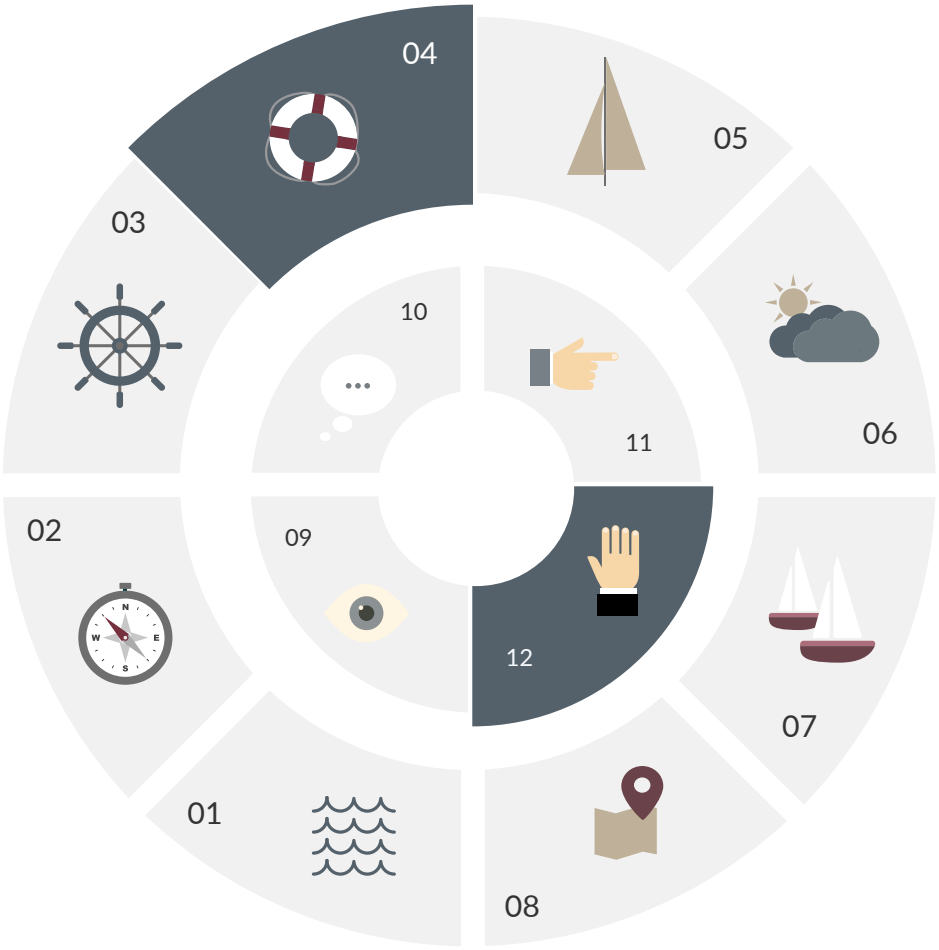
1. Attention: the amount and nature of the attention devoted to an element
2. Thoughts: the thoughts of the client about an element
3. Motivation: the motivational forces behind an element
4. Action: how an element has been manifested through the client's behavioral actions

ATTENTION

Attention involves the process of focusing on a certain element. There are two central components to attention: the amount of attention and the way attention is directed. The amount simply means how much attention a certain element typically receives. For example, how much time does the client spend on the life domain 'work'? How much attention is paid to goals? Does the client tend to reflect on his personal values or are they often neglected?

The way attention is directed refers to the quality of attention. Is the client rigidly trying to force himself to focus on a certain element? Is the client able to narrow his attention when needed or is the client often distracted, doing multiple things at the same time? These questions all address the nature of attention, which has repeatedly been found to be a key predictor of well-being.

Fig. 5.2. In Phase 3 of the assessment, the relationship of the captain with each of the eight elements of the sailboat is being addressed. The illustration provides an example of a specific focus in the assessment procedure, namely the actions of the captain regarding the leak of the boat (how the client deals with weaknesses).



Sailboat Elements

01. Water - *Life Domains*
02. Compass - *Feelings, Emotions*
03. Steering Wheel - *Values*
04. Leak - *Weaknesses*
05. Sails - *Strengths*
06. Weather - *Events*
07. Other Boats - *Social Relationships*
08. Destinations - *Goals*

Capatain Elements

09. Attention - *Focus*
10. Thoughts- *Beliefs, Explanations*
11. Motivation- *Reasons, Needs*
12. Action- *Concrete Behaviour*

▶ THOUGHTS

The client's thoughts in this context include all mental constructs that guide his behavior, consciously or unconsciously. Examples of thoughts include:

Beliefs

A belief is a mental attitude or disposition that predetermines the client's responses to and interpretations of situations. Beliefs are habitual ways of thinking about something and (a) are not easily changed (stable), (b) are a matter of degree (held more or less weakly or strongly), (c) guide the goals and actions of the client, and (d) are habitually or tenaciously held in a manner that indicates a strong commitment to defend it (Walton, 2010). Examples of beliefs are "I have what it takes to reach my goals," "no matter how hard you try, you cannot change how intelligent you are" or "asking other people for help is a sign of weakness."

Rigid beliefs have also been referred to as "rules" (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). Rules are strong beliefs about how things should be. Due to their rigid nature, rules can have a significant impact on behavior and feelings. Examples of rules are: "I should work hard," "I should be kind to other people," "I should always be on time," "I must not show that I am afraid," etc. Although rules can help the client make choices and take action, they can also cause negative emotions, like shame and stress, when the client breaks them. It is important for the client to be able to use rules flexibly.

Evaluations

Evaluations are assessments. An evaluation involves a judgment about the amount, number, or value of something. For instance, how does the client evaluate the quality of his or her relationships with others? Or, how satisfied is the client with the life domain 'work'? It is important to note that evaluations reflect the perceived rather than the actual value or status of something.

Explanations

Explanations are self-constructed mental stories regarding the causality of events. Explanations may concern oneself, others, or life in general. Explanations typically include assumed cause and effect relationships ("I developed compulsive behavior because my parents were very controlling") and general attributions of other people's behavior ("If she would have done X, he would probably not have left her"). Mental explanations can be true, partly true/partly untrue, or false. An important part of many interventions is for the client to become aware of the difference between the stories he tells himself (consciously or unconsciously) and the facts.

▶ MOTIVATION

The motivation of the client addresses the 'why' of behavior. For example, "why does the client want to address a certain life domain?", "Why does the client wish to reach certain goals?", "Why are certain values important to the client?", etc. In other words, addressing the motivation of the client involves addressing the underlying reasons for his choices. Evaluating the motivation of the client is important because research has consistently demonstrated that people strive for different reasons, and the nature of the reason for striving strongly affects well-being. The key to healthy motivation is autonomy. Behavior can be guided by strong autonomous reasons ("I really like what I am doing" or "I sincerely believe it is important to reach this goal") or guided by less autonomous reasons ("My partner wants me to do this" or "I fear that others will make fun of me if I don't do this"). The former type of motivation is associated with positive outcomes in a wide variety of life domains, including relationships (e.g., Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990), work (e.g., Deci et al., 2001), religion (e.g., Baard & Aridas, 2001), political behavior (e.g., Koestner, Losier, Vallerand, & Carducci, 1996), and environmental practices (Pelletier, 2002).

Moreover, motivation is about needs. Needs are essential elements of growth. Examples of needs include the need for shelter, the need for connectedness with others, the need for freedom of speech, etc. Needs are an important source of human motivation. For instance, our need to belong motivates us to stay in touch with others, our need for autonomy motivates us to make our own choices, and so on. By assessing the client's motivation for action and the needs underlying the motivation, the practitioner can increase the chance that the client's desired changes will effectively promote well-being.

▶ ACTION

Action refers to the behavior of the client. In order to increase well-being, it is not sufficient to be aware of the elements of the sailboat and their current status. For well-being to increase, one needs to accompany awareness with action and translate insights into concrete behaviour. Ultimately, it is the captain of the boat who turns the steering wheel in order for his boat to sail in a more valuable direction; it is the captain who starts to collaborate with other boats to minimize the impact of his personal weaknesses.

During the assessment, the practitioner is encouraged to address past, present and future actions of the client. First, analyzing past actions provides insights into former patterns that have been proven to be helpful or unhelpful. Second, addressing present actions can shed light on positive and negative discrepancies regarding the clients current and past actions. For instance, comparing the client's past unhelpful behavior with the client's current behavior

may reveal that positive change is already happening. Likewise, a comparison of past behavior with current behavior may reveal that past behavior was more effective in contributing to well-being. In either way, comparing past and present behavior can provide valuable insights into potential pathways for growth. Finally, by addressing desired future behavior, both the client and practitioner develop a clear view of what the desired change in one or more of the elements would look like. For example, what kind of behavior is displayed by the client when he treats his "leaks" with more care and self-compassion? What kind of behavior is involved in using the strength "creativity" more at work? Translating abstract processes like "developing more self-compassion" or "developing strengths" into concrete future actions increases clarity and allows for more tangible results. It is important to note that the order in which the four elements of the second phase are being addressed can vary depending on the specific element of the sailboat that is addressed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THIRD PHASE OF ASSESSMENT

It is important to note that the third phase of assessment may shed new light on the client's desired changes. This deeper understanding of the client's behavior, thinking patterns, and underlying motives, offers a valuable starting point for an intervention. It is this third phase that allows the practitioner to help the client focus on the element that needs the most attention. For example, a client may wish to address the life domain 'physical appearance'. The main objective is to lose weight. Phase II can help shed light on the emotions the client experiences when confronted with his own body, the obstacles that prevent him from losing weight, and the strengths he possesses to make weight loss happen. If the practitioner does not proceed to phase III and simply helps the client lose weight, there is a reasonable chance that even when weight loss is achieved, the client's well-being has not been structurally improved. Successfully losing weight may result in short-lived positive experiences. For instance, receiving compliments from others may result in pride, and being able to buy new clothes that were previously out of reach may give rise to feelings of joy and excitement.

However, when the client's desire to lose weight is driven by a lack of self-acceptance and a need to be "worthy" in the eyes of others, losing weight does not change anything about this deeply ingrained issue. Part of the real issue is that the client defines himself largely regarding his appearance.

In this instance, over-identification with appearance is the primary motivation for change. Such over-identification causes compassionless self-criticism, and negative emotions like fear, shame, and regret, and triggers a constant need to compare oneself to others and receive their approval.

By not addressing the client's thoughts about "attractiveness" and "worthiness," and neglecting the fact that the client treats himself badly when he fails to lose weight, the intervention will unlikely bring forward any long-term positive effects on well-being. In fact, focusing too closely on weight control may paradoxically cause the client to further strengthen his rigid beliefs about how important it is to look good and be attractive to others. This case example illustrates how important it is to include the third phase of the assessment, for it enables sustainable behavioral change at a more fundamental level. While the client may visit the practitioner to lose weight and expect a rigid pattern of self-control and dieting, the practitioner may decide to focus first on building a healthy relationship with the self and may even start by enhancing the client's level of self-acceptance first.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR USING THE METAPHOR

In this chapter, we discussed how best to approach the three assessment phases of the sailboat metaphor in a practical context, such as coaching or clinical work. Here, we discuss some general guidelines for using the metaphor in practice.

ADOPTING A MODULAR APPROACH

Rather than moving through the three phases systematically, addressing one sailboat element before commencing another, we suggest a flexible approach whereby the different phases and elements are addressed idiosyncratically, to align with the specific needs of the client. For instance, if the client's primary purpose for visiting a practitioner is to find out more about his strengths, the practitioner may decide to focus primarily on the sails of the sailboat, and work from there. It is also often helpful to switch between the three phases of assessment. Depending on the current situation of the client, the practitioner may decide to 'zoom out' and consider a meta perspective on the client's life (phase 1), or 'zoom in' and address

how the client relates to a specific element of the sailboat (phase 3). To summarize, in a practical context, it is recommended to use the sailboat metaphor in a flexible way, by carefully choosing which phase and element requires the client's attention most at a given moment.

▶ CHOOSING FOR A TRANSLATION

It is important to note that, the combinations of captain elements with the sailboat elements in this manual represent only one way of linking the two. For instance, here, we chose to translate the "thoughts" of the captain regarding the "leak" of his boat as the client's level of self-criticism when confronted with personal shortcomings. However, there are many different ways of translating this relationship. For example, one may also address this relationship by focusing on the client beliefs about his shortcomings. It is beyond the scope of this book to address all possible relationship translations, and thus the exercises in this training can best be regarded as starting points. The practitioner is encouraged to look beyond the specific way the interaction between elements is addressed here and choose for a translation that best fits the client's situation and needs.

▶ ADDRESSING FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

The sailboat metaphor can be used to review the past and current experiences of a client, but may also serve as valuable tool for addressing future aspirations. For instance, the metaphor can be used as a valuable starting point for an intervention. A client may respond to questions like: What aspect of your boat has the highest priority at the moment? In an ideal world, what would your boat look like? What kind of destination would you like to reach with your boat?

▶ A STANDARD PART OF EVERY SESSION

It can also be valuable to introduce the sailboat metaphor as a standard part of every session. During every session, the helping professional may reserve some time to allow the client to talk about the current status of his sailboat. In this way, multi-dimensional self-reflection of the client is stimulated. In addition, updated information on the status of the client's sailboat can assist the helping professional to prioritize actions steps.

▶ THE INTERACTION BETWEEN ELEMENTS

In this handbook, the elements of the sailboat and the captain are addressed separately, without taking into account all the possible interactions between the different elements. For instance, the social network of the client may influence the

way he deals with difficulties. Or, using the sailboat metaphor, the other boats can influence the captain's actions when confronted with bad weather circumstances. In support of this notion, research has found that when individuals suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis were more satisfied with their social support, they had significantly more adaptive coping abilities than those unsatisfied with their social support networks, who were more prone to maladaptive coping (Holtzman, Newth, & Delongis, 2004). These findings support the idea that the different elements of the sailboat and the captain do not operate in isolation but work together synergistically. It is the complex interaction between all the elements that ultimately determines overall status (well-being) of the boat.

▶ USING THE METAPHOR IN A GROUP CONTEXT

The sailboat metaphor can be used in a group context as well. Teams can be perceived as a fleet of boats that, in an ideal situation, sail in the same direction. In other words, the team members are on the same mission. Note, however, that this does not mean that all the boats are similar; it can be better to have different boats (that is, team members with different strengths) that can work together in a complementary way.

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6

WELL-BEING AND THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR WELL-BEING

In the previous chapter, the sailboat metaphor was introduced as an analogy for human functioning. The same metaphor can be used to understand what contributes to personal well-being. Some considerations are discussed below:

ACTION

For well-being to increase, awareness of the different elements of the sailboat metaphor is not sufficient. A person who becomes aware of the fact that his boat is sailing in a direction that does not promote personal well-being must take action and turn the wheel in a valuable and adaptive direction to increase well-being. In other words, in addition to becoming aware of one's values, one must take specific behavioral steps in order to benefit from this awareness. Likewise, it is not enough to look at the sails of the boat (element 5). One must also hoist the sails in order for them to catch the wind. So, in order to increase well-being, merely becoming aware of one's own strengths is not sufficient; in addition to (increased) awareness, behavioral and circumstantial changes that allow strengths to be used are required.

BALANCE BETWEEN ELEMENTS

A balanced amount of attention to the different elements can be considered a fundamental condition for well-being. Too much focus on any component is unlikely to result in well-being. For instance, a client may focus too much on the destination of the boat (goals: element 8) and, consequently, fail to enjoy the view during his journey (positive emotions: element 2). Another client may focus too much on how the weather in out of his control (events: element 6) and experience learned helplessness (leak: element 4).

TAKING ALL ELEMENTS INTO CONSIDERATION

Ignoring certain elements is likely to result in low levels of well-being. For instance, the destination of a boat (element 8) that is too strongly determined by the destination of the other boats (element 7) may ignore its compass (element 2). Consequently, the boat lacks a sense of autonomy (steering wheel: element 4) and feels like it is being controlled by outside elements. A boat that ignores its sails (strengths: element 5) will have a hard time traveling through stormy weather (element 6) and may lack a sense of energy and enthusiasm (compass: element 2).

▶ CONTINUOUS ATTENTION

Each element of the boat metaphor requires ongoing attention. For example, even if a client manages to repair a leak and focus on strengths, the water will still create strong pressure on that leak; clients will repeatedly be tested in their weaknesses. Therefore, it is not sufficient to temporarily repair or patch the leak. The client needs to consistently check the leak (reflect) and strengthen the repair (consciously work on weaknesses). Weaknesses do not simply vanish in a day; they require continuous attention, typically. The same holds for the steering wheel of the boat. As stated previously, values are chosen actions that cannot be obtained like a goal but can be concretized from moment to moment. This means that valued living is an ongoing process that requires continuous attention.

Moreover, continuous attention is also the key to strength development. Through effort, challenging oneself, learning how to deal with failure, and taking risks, the client can enhance his sails. By increasing the size of his sails, and learning how to effectively use these sails, the client forces more wind to hit the sails. Subsequently, the boat will become faster and stronger. In other words, continuous attention on one's strengths also increases their beneficial effects.

▶ FLEXIBILITY

Rather than perceiving the elements of the boat as static and in operation to maintain one's current state, they should be considered as highly dynamic. One can always change direction (values: element 3) and destination (goals: element 8) at any given moment. Likewise, the compass, the weather, and other boats are constantly changing. The importance of flexibility is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the sails (strengths: element 5) of the boat. The sails are dependent on external factors, like the weather (events: element 6). The wind may not blow in a direction for the sails to catch it. In this case, the captain must be flexible enough to change the direction of the boat, adjust the sails to catch the wind or wait until the wind turns in a favorable direction again. In other words, optimal strength use requires careful consideration of the situation and context one is facing. Rather than just blindly using a strength to its fullest degree, one must be able to flexibly interact with the environment.

■ SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

In the scientific literature, the complex construct of well-being has been conceptualized in different ways. Two of the most common conceptualizations

of well-being in the field of Positive Psychology are subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB) (Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne, & Hurling, 2009). Both constructs and their relationship with the sailboat will be discussed in the following sections.

▶ SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

SWB refers to the evaluation of one's life (Diener, 1984). These evaluations are both affective and cognitive. High levels of subjective well-being are experienced when people feel more pleasant and less unpleasant emotions, are more engaged in interesting activities, experience more pleasures and fewer pains, and are generally satisfied with life. SWB involves three components: life satisfaction (cognitive component), positive affect, and negative affect (affective components). In an informal context, SWB is often referred to as "happiness".

According to Diener (1984), SWB involves three key concepts. First, the concept, like the term suggests, is about subjective experiences and thus resides within the experience of the individual. Second, it is not just the absence of negative factors, but also the presence of positive factors. Third, rather than only a narrow assessment of one life domain, like for instance work or friends, it involves a global assessment of the individual's life.

▶ PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING (PWB)

While the terms Subjective Well-being (SWB) and Psychological Well-being (PWB) are often used interchangeably; they are derived from two separate traditions: hedonism and eudaimonism (Joseph & Liney, 2005). The SWB construct focusses on the hedonic aspect of well-being, which is the pursuit of happiness and a pleasant life. The PWB construct, on the other hand, focusses on eudaimonic well-being, which is the fulfillment of human potential and a meaningful life. PWB involves perceived thriving in the face of existing life challenges, such as pursuing meaningful goals, growing and developing as a person, and establishing quality ties to others (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Keyes 1995). In this view, well-being is the outcome of positive goal pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Using developmental, humanistic, and clinical psychological insights, Ryff (1989) developed a model of PWB that includes six related, yet distinct components:

- positive evaluation of oneself and one's past (self-acceptance)
- a sense of continued growth and development as a person (environmental mastery)
- the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful (purpose in life)
- quality relations with others (positive relations with others)
- the capacity to manage one's life and surrounding world effectively (personal

growth)
- a sense of self-determination (autonomy)

UNDERSTANDING SWB AND PWB IN TERMS OF THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR

The sailboat metaphor can be used to gain insight into the different factors that influence well-being. Involving the captain in the sailboat is crucial for understanding both SWB and PWB. The captain of the sailboat represents the agent that is in charge of the boat and its course. It is the captain of the boat who interacts with the different components of his sailboat. Ultimately, it is the captain who decides to steer the boat in a certain direction, hoist the sails, avoid dangerous storms, etc. In sum, it is the captain who is responsible for the level of well-being experienced. Table 6.1 and table 6.2 show how both SWB and PWB can be translated regarding the sailboat metaphor.

Table 6.1: Subjective well-being in terms of the sailboat metaphor

subjective well-being dimension	optimal level of subjective well-being	optimal Level of subjective well-being in terms of the Sailboat Metaphor
Cognitive evaluation of life	The client evaluates his life as positive; he is satisfied with life.	The captain of the sailboat is satisfied with the past and present journey of his sailboat.
Affective evaluation of life	The client experiences many pleasant emotions and relatively few unpleasant emotions.	The compass of the boat is often providing positive feedback and infrequently providing negative feedback.

Table 6.2 Psychological well-being in terms of the sailboat metaphor

psychological well-being dimension	optimal level of psychological well-being	optimal Level of psychological well-being in terms of the Sailboat Metaphor
Environmental Mastery	The client has both a sense of mastery and competence in controlling the environment; regulates external activities; makes effective use of opportunities; and, develops or selects contexts that are most appropriate to personal needs and values.	The captain of the boat is able to cope with difficult weather, steer the boat in a direction that allows the sails to catch wind, and sail to areas that enable the boat to reach valuable destinations.
Personal Growth	The client has a sense of continuous improvement and growing; is ready for new ideas; understands his own ability and is conscious of self-advancement and behavior over time.	The captain feels that the journey of the boat contributes to the development of the boat; the sails may become bigger, the destinations may become clearer, and the ability to deal with difficult weather may improve.
Purpose in life	The client has a sense that both the present and the past have meaning.	The captain feels the current and past journeys of the boat were worth traveling.

Autonomy	The client shows a sense of self-determination and being independent; is able to counter social pressures.	The captain of the boat is sailing in a direction and reaching destinations that reflect personal wishes rather than those of the captains of other boats.
Self-Acceptance	The client not only has a positive attitude toward himself but accepts his good and bad qualities.	The captain has a positive attitude towards the boat; accepts the leaks and the sails of the boat.
Positive Relations with Others	The client has warm and trusting relationships with others; his interaction with others is characterized by empathy, affection, and intimacy.	The captain has warm and trusting relationships with the captains of other boats; his interaction with other captains is characterized by empathy, affection, and intimacy.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SWB AND PWB

In this handbook, we will focus on both SWB and PWB. Different tools to assess and increase SWB and PWB will be examined. The reason that both types of well-being will be addressed relates to finding that they are in fact strongly related. For instance, many methods and techniques that will be dealt with in this handbook have been found to influence both SWB and PWB. Mindfulness, for instance, has been associated with both SWB (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Brown Kasser, Ryan, Linley & Orzech, 2009; Schutte & Malouff, 2011) and PWB (Baer et al., 2008; Carmody & Baer, 2008; Hollis- Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Howell, Digdon, Buro & Sheptycki, 2008). Moreover, specific dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance (Jimenez, Niles, & Park, 2010; Thompson & Waltz, 2008), autonomy (Bowlin & Baer, 2012; Brown & Ryan, 2003), positive relationships (Coatsworth, Duncan, Greenberg & Nix, 2010; Jones, Welton, Oliver & Thoburn 2011), and personal growth (Benn, Akiva, Arel, & Roeser, 2012) are also positively correlated

with mindfulness. In other words, the many techniques and methods that will be discussed in this course are likely to influence both SWB and PWB.

A second reason why both types of well-being are being addressed in this training is that the second wave movement of Positive Psychology is also concerned with the 'darker side' of life. As discussed previously, an important characteristic of this new perspective is that it embraces negative experiences and mental states and considers the growth that can result from them. Because PWB is concerned with thriving in the face of existing challenges of life, it is believed that addressing the core foundations of the second wave perspective is of particular value. The deepness that PWB adds to the human experience moves beyond 'feeling good'. The sense of autonomy and authenticity that emerges from valued actions and coping with difficulties is not some fleeting feeling, but a profound experience of meaning and self-efficacy. A life that is characterized by high levels of PWB is likely to be distinguished by many positive and pleasurable feelings, as well as difficult and uncomfortable ones. Focusing on only SWB would undermine the very foundations of the second wave of Positive Psychology.

Finally, research findings suggest that the relationship between SWB and PWB is bi-directional. At first glance, SWB may seem the primary result of higher levels of PWB. For instance, a person who has positive relations with others and experiences a high level of autonomy is likely to experience positive feelings like joy, excitement, and so on. Research, however, has found that SWB can also influence PWB. Experiments have shown that induced positive mood leads to higher purpose in life (Hicks & King, 2009b; King et al., 2006). Moreover, receiving negative feedback from another participant caused participants to rate their lives as less meaningful than those who received neutral or accepting feedback (Stillman et al., 2009, Study 1). In sum, components of PWB like meaningful commitments and purpose in life can promote opportunities for satisfaction and happiness. At the same time, positive affect can facilitate advanced cognitive functions and behavioral repertoires, thus fostering psychological growth and meaning-making (Fredrickson, 2001).

It is important to note that scholars do not entirely agree on the conceptual distinction between SWB and PWB. Some argue that both concepts address distinct components of well-being (Keyes et al. 2002). Others stress the similarities between both constructs. In this view, SWB and PWB are not two separate concepts of well-being but reflect two different research traditions, in that they are more similar than different from each other (Kashdan et al. 2008).

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SECTION III

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

7

EMOTIONS

What is an emotion? While there exist numerous definitions of 'emotion', most researchers agree that emotions, both positive and negative, are best conceptualized as multicomponent response tendencies— incorporating muscle tension, hormone release, cardiovascular changes, facial expression, attention, and cognition, among other changes, that unfold over a relatively short time span. In other words, an emotion is a complex state, involving many different physical and mental processes at the same time.

Although the words mood and emotion are often used interchangeably, most academics agree that they are closely related but distinct phenomena. The first and most obvious distinction is related to duration. Whereas emotions are typically short-lived, moods are more long-lasting. Second, people can usually specify the event that called forth an emotion. There is a clear trigger of the emotion, like an argument with a friend or a compliment. In contrast, a mood is more free-floating and can occur without apparent cause (Brehm, 1999). Third, emotions are often hard to miss; they occupy the foreground of consciousness. Moods typically occupy the background of consciousness (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996).

AVOID MAKING A COMPLEX DISTINCTION

Clients may have difficulty distinguishing between feeling an emotion versus a mood, given they can feel very similar. Thus, from a practical point of view, the value of being able to distinguish between moods and emotions remains questionable. Making a distinction between both constructs is arguably most relevant in a theoretical context, rather than in a coaching or clinical context.

POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

A commonly held misconception is that positive and negative emotions are on the same continuum. Past research findings suggest that positive emotions are separate and distinct from negative emotions (e.g., Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). For instance, negative events are associated with increases in negative emotions (e.g., fear), but not necessarily decreases in positive emotions (e.g., joy). Likewise, positive events are strongly linked with increases in positive emotions, but not with decreases in negative emotions (Gable et al.,

2000). Simply put, the experience of positive emotions does not automatically imply the absence of negative emotions or vice versa. Positive and negative emotions are different in many ways and have repeatedly been argued to serve a different function. Below we describe the function of emotions in more detail.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

Emotions are feedback mechanisms. Through changes in mental and physical processes (e.g., fearful thoughts and an increased heart rate), emotions provide feedback about the individual's state. In the sailboat metaphor, emotions are represented by the compass of the boat. In the same way that emotions provide feedback about the current state of the individual, the compass provides feedback about the current state (position) of the boat.

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Behavioural theorists argue that negative emotions play a vital role in survival. In their view, a major function of negative emotions is to orient people toward threats, dangers, and other environmental problems (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). The emotion of fear, for example, assists a person to narrow their attention onto how to escape the current threat. Negative emotions thus induce focused thought and corresponding directed action. The body prepares to take this action by increasing cardiovascular reactivity, thus shifting blood flow to the musculoskeletal system (Levenson, 1994). Although negative emotions play a vital role in the human species,

high intensity of negative emotions can become harmful and increase the risk of heart disease (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan & Tugade, 2000). Their narrowing effect can trigger self-perpetuating cycles of thinking, feeling and behaving that reduce wellbeing over time. For instance, sadness may cause an individual to focus excessively on the negative side of an event (narrowed attention). This focus may result in rumination (thinking) which can trigger other negative emotions (feelings), such as anger, insecurity, and frustration. In turn, these emotions can lead to social withdrawal (behavior), producing subsequent sad feelings, leading to further rumination, withdrawal, and so on. Over time, this negative spiral of thinking, feeling, and behaving can result in pervasive self-limiting beliefs about the world and the self ("I am worth nothing", "I have no control", "others ignore me", etc.), causing the negative spiral to further intensify.

It is important to note that the negative spiral following a negative emotion is not the inevitable consequence of the emotion itself. Rather, this spiral reflects the individual's inability to effectively deal with the negative emotion at hand. The narrowing effects on behaviour and cognition that are triggered by negative emotions, such as focusing only on the negative aspects of a situation, can be counteracted. For instance, according to Teasdale, Segal and Williams (1995), mindfulness practice can help to "zoom out" again, taking a meta-perspective on thoughts and feelings. This mental shift, in which the individual starts to observe, rather than get completely absorbed by the emotion, has been referred to as decentering (Safran & Segal, 1990), cognitive defusion (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009) and deautomatisation (Deikman, 1982). By taking a step back from the feelings and thoughts that are produced by the emotion, the individual creates room for a different response than the narrowing response induced by the emotion.

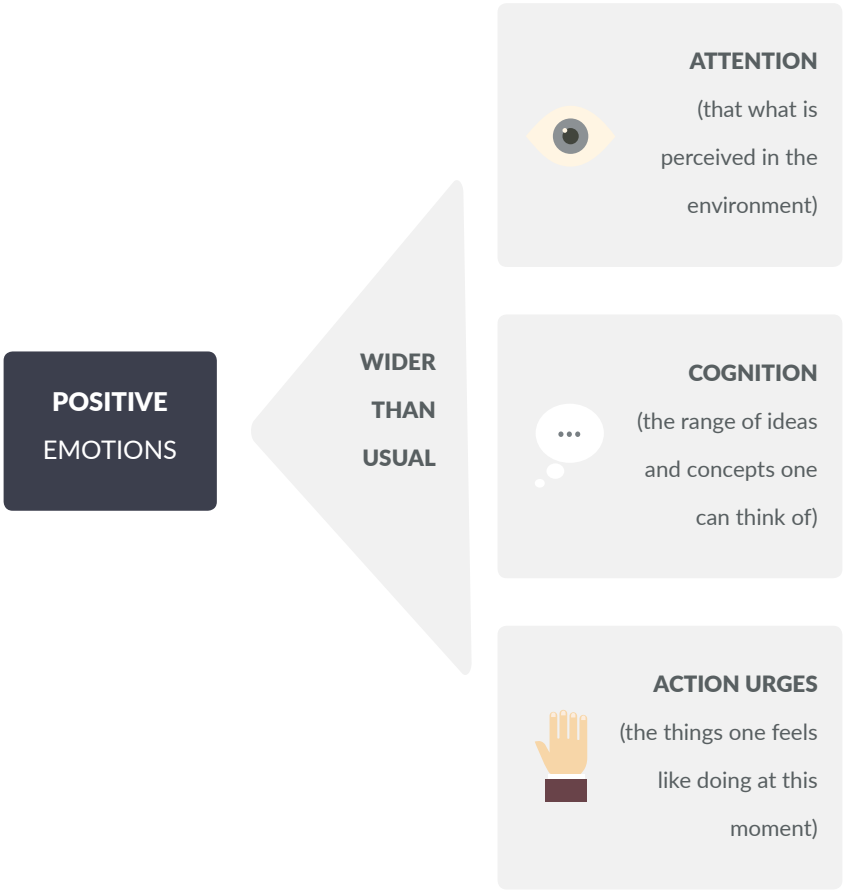
POSITIVE EMOTIONS

A large body of research indicates that positive emotions are correlated with health and well-being (for a review, see Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). This correlation cannot be simply explained by the absence or decrease of negative emotions (e.g., Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2000), but is more likely to be caused by the function of positive and negative emotions. According to Fredrickson's Broaden and Build Theory (1998), the function of positive emotions seems to differ fundamentally from the function of negative emotions. Just like negative emotions cause narrowing thoughts to focus on the specifics of a problem, positive emotions expand thought-action repertoires and encourage an upward spiral of positive emotions. The Broaden-and-Build Theory is based on two hypotheses:

▶ THE BROADEN HYPOTHESIS

According to broaden and build theory, positive emotions allow the individual to choose more ways of thinking and responding than in a neutral or sad state. Positive emotions cause people to experience wider-than-usual attention (that what is perceived in the environment), cognition (the range of ideas and concepts one can think of), and action urges (things one feels like doing) (see fig. 7.1).

Fig. 7.1 Positive emotions broaden people's attention, cognition and action urges



Imagine, for instance, waking up with positive emotions like excitement or contentment. On a morning like this, one is more likely than usual to notice a beautiful sky while walking to work (broadened attention), come up with novel ideas during a meeting with colleagues (broadened cognition), and have different ideas for what to do after finishing work (broadened action urges). In contrast, on a day where one experiences negative emotions like anger or resentment, one is more likely to walk to work in tunnel vision, noticing little other than the pavement cracks (narrowed attention), thinking of little other things than repaying the person who is believed to be the cause of the anger (narrowed cognition) and not feel like doing anything after work (narrowed action urges). As these examples illustrate, emotions can have a direct impact on the way we perceive and relate to the world. While negative emotions tend to narrow our way of responding, positive emotions tend to broaden our interaction with the environment. In support of this rationale, past research findings have demonstrated different ways in which positive emotions expand people's options for thinking and acting. First of all, positive emotions have been found to literally broaden people's awareness. Several studies have shown that positive emotions broaden the scope of people's visual attention (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Rowe, Hirsh, & Anderson, 2007; Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2006). When people experience positive emotions, they are able to detect more information in their visual field.

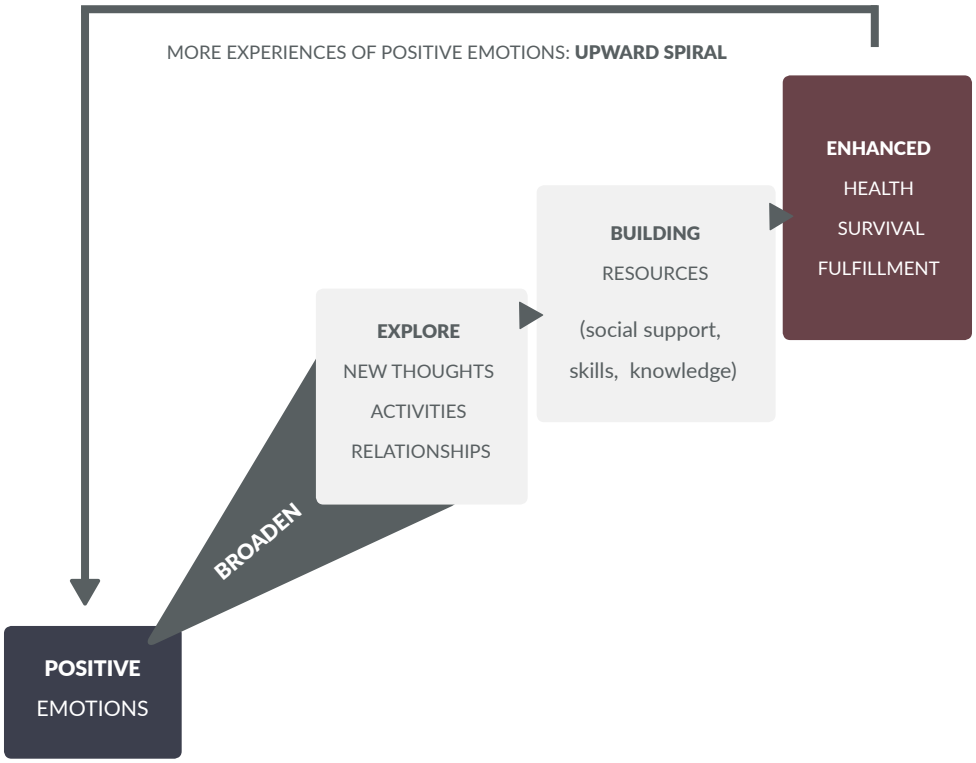
Positive emotions have also been found to expand people's repertoires of desired actions. In a study by Fredrickson and Branigan (2005), participants were exposed to 5 different film clips (joy, contentment, neutral, fear, anger) and were then asked to describe the strongest emotion they felt during the movie. Participants were then exposed to the following instructions: "...take a moment to imagine being in a situation yourself in which this particular emotion would arise. Concentrate on all the emotion you would feel and live it as vividly and deeply as possible. Given this feeling, please list all the things you would like to do right now." The results showed that when participants imagined experiencing joy and contentment, the number of things they felt like doing outnumbered the things they felt like doing when imagining fear or anger.

Further evidence from the broadening effect of positive emotions comes from studies showing that positive emotions increase creativity (Rowe et al., 2007; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987) and expand people's openness to new experiences (Kahn & Isen, 1993) and critical feedback (Raghunathan & Trope, 2002). In a social context, positive emotions have been found to increase people's sense of "oneness" with close others (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006) and their trust in acquaintances (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). In sum, these findings show numerous ways in which the experience of positive emotions helps people to "open up" and engage in a more dynamic way with their environment.

▶ THE BUILD HYPOTHESIS

Research has shown that positive emotions influence cognition and behavior. These immediate effects have long-lasting effects as well (see fig. 7.2). The broadening of attention, thoughts, and action urges helps the individual to explore new ideas or novel actions. For example, the experience of positive emotions may cause a person to try out a new activity, such as joining a soccer team. In turn, by engaging in these new actions, the person builds individual skills and resources, which could be either physical, social and/ or intellectual in nature. By joining the soccer team, the individual expands his social network, learns to deal with setbacks after losing a match, improves his physical skills, etc. These become a resource centre which can be accessed at a later time to assist in coping with a difficult situation, leading to greater resilience. When facing stress, the person may contact one of his soccer mates, or draw upon the lessons learned when dealing with setbacks during soccer. In turn, this enhanced level of resilience increases positive emotions by generating a continued cycle of positive emotions.

Fig. 7.2 a graphic representation of the broaden and build effects of positive emotions



Past studies have provided evidence consistent with the notion that over time, positive emotions build durable personal resources (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Stein, Folkman, Trabasso, & Richards, 1997; Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006). An elegant demonstration of the build hypothesis was offered by a field study by Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, and Finkel (2008). In this study, half of the participants were asked to practice loving kindness meditation (LKM) for 9 weeks. LKM is a technique used to increase feelings of warmth and caring for self and others, directly evoking positive emotions, such as love, contentment, and compassion. The results showed that engaging in LKM resulted in an increase in daily experiences of positive emotions over time. Although the increase in positive emotions was not large in magnitude, over the span of 9 weeks, it was linked to increases in a variety of personal resources, including mindful attention, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and good physical health. In sum, these findings support the build hypothesis by demonstrating the long-term gains that can result from repeated experience of positive emotions.

THE UNDOING HYPOTHESIS OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Research findings suggest that positive emotions counteract the effects of negative emotions. Whereas negative emotions prepare the body and mind for specific actions (e.g., fight, flight, freeze), positive emotions have been found to "undo" this preparation. In an experiment by Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, and Tugade (2000), stress levels were raised by informing all participants that there was a 50% chance that they had to deliver a prepared speech, which would be evaluated. After receiving this news, all participants were informed that they were lucky and did not have to deliver the speech. Next, participants were divided in four groups. Two groups watched a movie eliciting positive emotions (contentment and amusement), one group viewed a neutral movie and one group was exposed to a movie inducing negative emotions (sadness). Recovery from stress was measured by registering participants' cardiovascular changes throughout the whole experimental procedure. Participants who were exposed to the films that evoked contentment and amusement showed faster cardiovascular recovery than those who watched the neutral or sad films. These findings support the undo-hypothesis, by demonstrating that positive emotions can speed cardiovascular recovery from negative emotions such as anxiety and fear (see also Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998).

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8

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand and manage emotional encounters. Individuals who score highly on emotional intelligence tend to be better able to handle everyday stress, foster a greater number of meaningful close relationships, and be more socially competent in general (see Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009, for a review). Consequently, individuals who are high in emotional intelligence may also be more likely to experience higher levels of well-being, or "optimal psychological functioning and experience" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142). In this chapter, we provide a scientific definition of EI and address the different processes that underlie the construct. We also introduce the sailboat metaphor as a tool to understand the various processes underlying EI. By comparing the skills of an emotionally intelligent person to the actions of a captain, we aim to further clarify the complex nature of EI.

THE CHALLENGE OF EI

Despite the positive effects associated with higher levels of EI, the construct has been a topic of scientific debate. Some researchers have argued that EI is an elusive construct (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998). The precise nature of EI remains unclear, as demonstrated by the different definitions, models and supposed dimensions of the construct in the scientific literature (see Murphy, 2014, for a critical review).

To complicate the matter further, the scientific definition of EI seems to deviate from the definition often used in popular media, such as self-help books. Because EI is associated with greater social competency, definitions in popular media typically include personality attributes linked with social functioning that may not be directly related to skills and abilities in the emotional domain (Mayer et al., 2000). For instance, in their popular self-help book, "Emotional Intelligence 2.0", Bradberry and Greaves (2009) identify relationship management skills as one of the four key ingredients of EI. The authors highlight a range of social competencies that they claim are characteristic of emotionally intelligent individuals. This differs from the scientific literature where EI is typically defined in terms of mental abilities rather than social competencies.

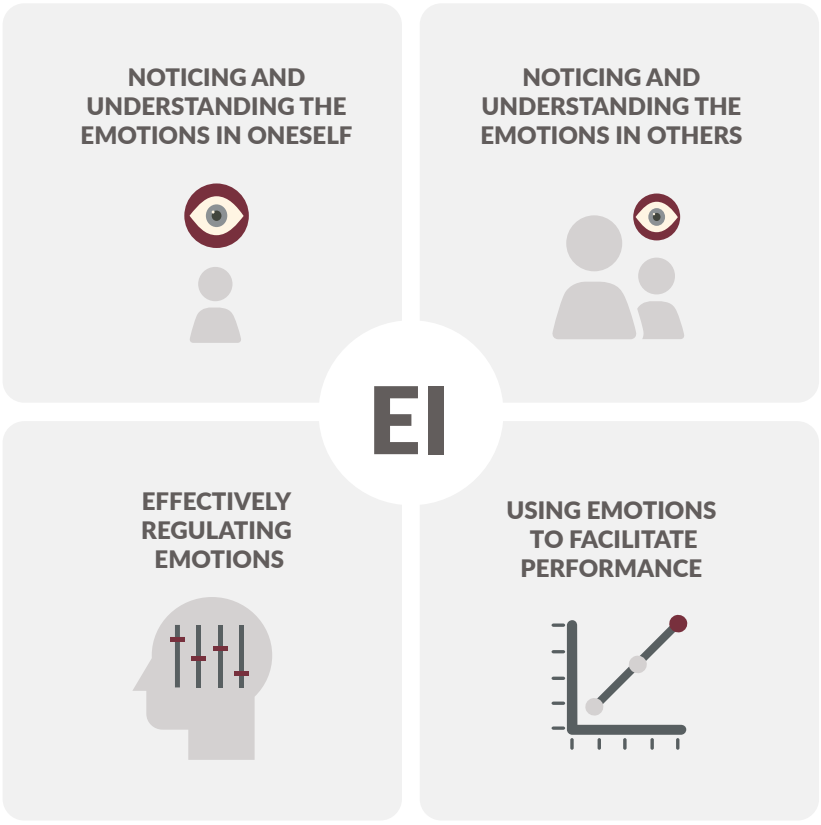
DEFINING EI

While the lack of consensus on the definition of EI has been critiqued in the literature, proponents of the construct have argued that it is distinct from traditional personality traits and general mental ability. Moreover, they stress that the concept of EI can be useful as an organizing framework in diverse contexts. For instance, in the context of education, EI has allowed educators to design educational programs to improve children's social and emotional functioning

(Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). In an organizational context, EI has been used to identify and train skills important in the workplace other than specific job-related competencies (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

In this chapter, we use Davies, Stankov and Roberts' (1998) four-dimensional definition of EI, because it is most representative of the entire EI literature. This definition bears great similarities with two other frequently used definitions of EI in the scientific literature; that of Mayer and Salovey (1997) and Ciarrochi et al. (2000). According to Davies and colleagues (1998), EI comprises four dimensions (see fig. 8.1):

Fig. 8.1 The four dimensions of EI



1. **Noticing and understanding emotions in oneself.** This involves the ability to understand one's deep emotions and to be able to express them naturally. A person with high ability in this area will be better than most people in sensing and acknowledging his or her emotions.
2. **Noticing and understanding emotions in others.** This relates to the ability to perceive and understand emotions in other people. A person with high ability in this area will be better than most people at noticing and understanding other people's emotions.
3. **Effective regulation of emotion in oneself.** This involves the ability to effectively deal with one's own emotions. A person with high capability in this aspect will be better than most people in preventing his or her emotions from automatically influencing his behavior. For instance, when a person with high emotion regulation skills experiences anger, he will be able to manage the anger in such a way that he does not say or do anything that he may regret.
4. **Using emotions to facilitate performance.** This relates to the ability to make use of emotions by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance. A person who is highly capable in this aspect is able to encourage him- or herself to continuously do better. He or she is able to direct his or her emotions in positive and productive directions.

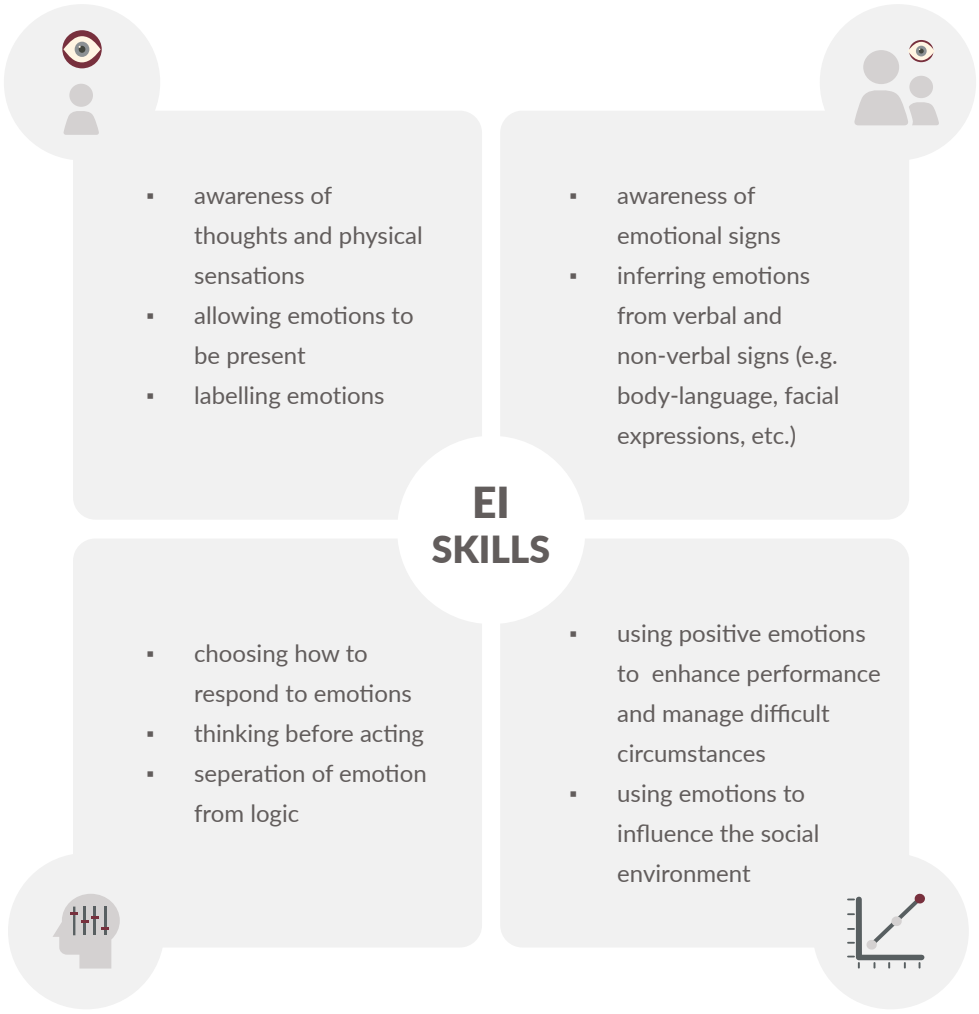
SAILBOAT METAPHOR

An emotionally intelligent person can be compared to a captain who uses the compass of his boat wisely. For a compass to be of most value, the captain must be able to read it and use its feedback in a way that it ensures a prosperous journey. Likewise, the emotionally intelligent person knows how to "read" emotions and manage them in a way that promotes well-being.

SKILLS UNDERLYING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotionally intelligent people have mastered different emotional skills, where each skill contributes to one or more aspects of emotional intelligence. For instance, emotionally intelligent people have developed a great emotion vocabulary and have learned to use this vocabulary to accurately describe their emotions. Using Davies, Stankov and Roberts' (1998) four-dimensional model of EI, we present an overview of the most important skills for each of the model's four dimensions (see fig 8.2 for an overview of these skills).

Fig. 8.2 Essential EI skills per dimension



UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS IN ONESELF

Per definition, an individual who understands his emotions is aware of his emotions (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990; Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995). Emotional awareness requires an individual to pay attention to the physical sensations, thoughts and action tendencies that accompany the emotion (see chapter 10 for a more detailed discussion on this matter).

Emotional awareness also involves the ability to discern emotional intensity (Frijda, 2007). When people talk about their emotions, they often not only describe the nature of the emotion but also the intensity or duration (e.g., I was very happy, I felt sad all day long). Emotions display marked variability in their intensity and duration (Sonnemans & Frijda, 1994; Verduyn, Delvaux, Van Coillie, Tuerlinckx & Van Mechelen, 2009; Verduyn, Van Mechelen, Tuerlinckx, Meers, Van Coillie, 2009; Verduyn, Van Mechelen & Frederix, 2012). What determines the intensity of emotion? A study by Sonnemans and Frijda (1994) revealed five factors that determine the intensity of emotions: (1) the duration of the emotion and delay of its onset and peak; (2) the magnitude of perceived bodily changes; (3) the frequency of recollection and re-experience of the emotion; (4) the strength and severity of action tendency, ; and (5) magnitude of belief changes and influence on long-term (see table 8.1). Insight into the intensity of one's emotions is important given emotional disturbances are often characterized by inappropriately strong (or weak) and long (or short) emotions (Verduyn et al, 2012).

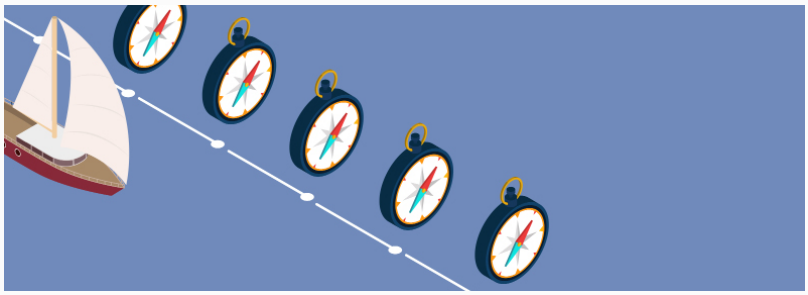
EXPAND THE CLIENT'S EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Many clients have difficulty identifying and labeling their emotions (e.g., Vine & Aldao, 2014), which may reduce their awareness of what emotions might need to be regulated in the first place. Helping clients expand their emotional vocabulary can be an important step in increasing their emotion regulation skills as well as their ability to communicate about emotions. If clients lack the words that are able to communicate the nuances of what they are feeling, it will be hard for others to understand specifically what they are feeling.

Table 8.1.Five factors that determine the intensity of an emotion

Factor	Key question(s)
duration	How long does the emotion last and how long does it take for the emotion to start and become most noticeable?
bodily changes	How strongly does the body react in response to the emotion?
re-experience	How often does the emotional episode come to mind? If this happens, do you re-experience the emotion and if so, how strongly?
action tendency	How drastic are the action tendencies? (e.g., killing someone is more drastic than calling names; embracing someone is more drastic than holding someone's hand.)
belief changes and long-term behavior	To what extent did the emotion and the events change your opinion about or feelings towards things, certain people and/or yourself? To what extent did the emotion and the events change your long-term behavior?

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



A person who is generally aware of emotions can be compared to a captain who spends sufficient time reading his compass during the journey.

Because reading the compass is part of the captain's daily routine, he is better trained in discerning the feedback from the compass than a captain who only occasionally checks it. Likewise, a person who is not used to attending to his emotions is less skilled in identifying and labeling them.

It is important to note that although spending too little attention to one's emotions is not predictive of emotional well-being, spending an excessive amount of attention to one's emotions is not either. Just like a captain who focuses too much on his compass' feedback may lose track of the direction of the boat, a person who constantly focuses on his emotions may get so absorbed by them that they interfere with daily functioning.

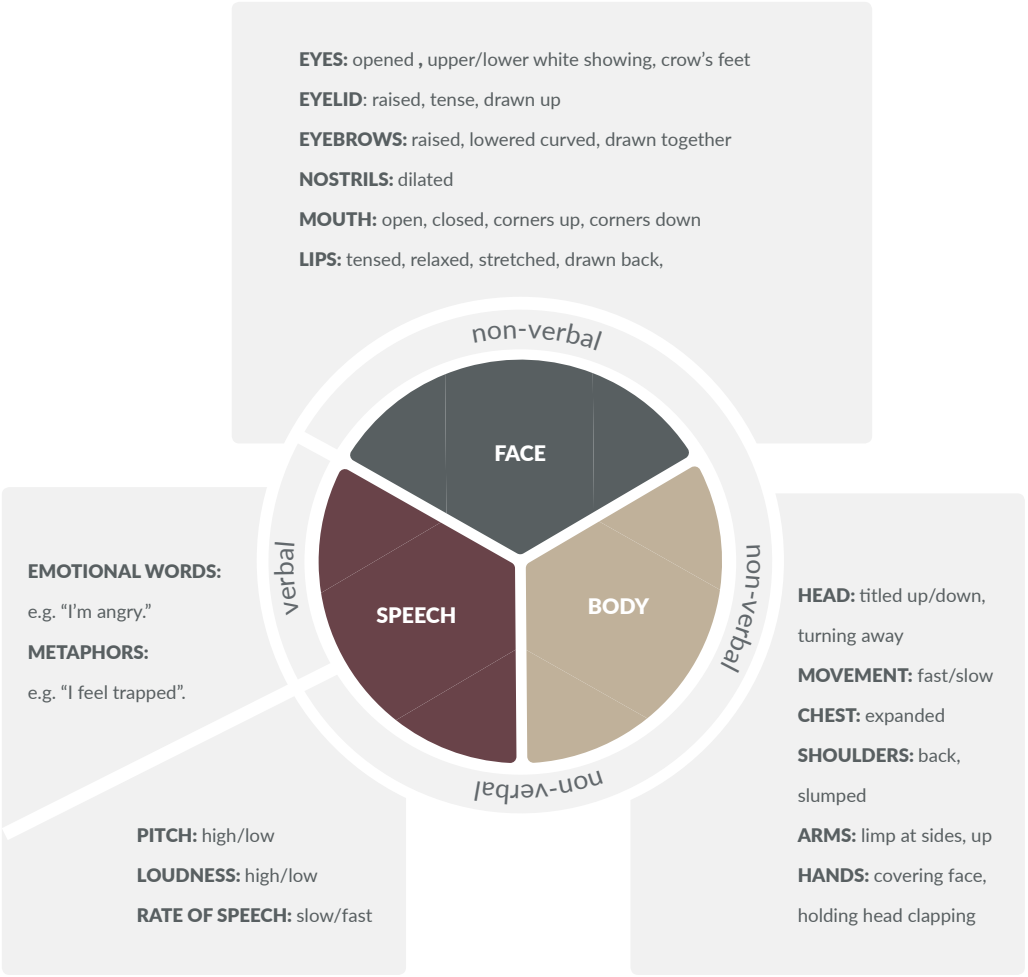
UNDERSTANDING EMOTION IN OTHERS

Appraisal and recognition of emotion in others relates to the ability to perceive and understand the emotions of the people around us. Past research has provided strong evidence for the universal facial expressions of seven emotions – anger, contempt, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise. For instance, a study by Friesen (1972) found that the same facial expressions of emotions were produced spontaneously by members of very different cultures in reaction to emotion-eliciting films. Further, a meta-analysis of 168 datasets examining judgments of emotions in the face and other nonverbal stimuli showed that emotions are universally recognized at better-than-chance levels (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002).

Interestingly, although emotions are recognized at above-chance levels, there is also evidence for an "in-group advantage". Research findings suggest that people more accurately recognize others' emotions when they judge emotions expressed by members of their same national, ethnic, or regional group (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). This finding suggests that above and beyond the universal aspects of emotional expression, there may be subtle differences in the way people express their emotions across cultural groups.

The ability to accurately decipher emotional expressions plays a key role in social interaction (Kilts, Egan, Gideon, Ely, & Hoffman, 2003) as it facilitates appropriate responding and bonding (Isaacowitz et al., 2007). There are different ways to "read" other people's emotions, including paying attention to speech (i.e., vocal inflections, tone of voice, word use) and body movements and facial expressions (see fig 8.3). In the following section, we discuss these three different forms of emotional expression in more detail.

Fig. 8.3 Decoding emotions by deciphering three different forms of emotional expression



▶ FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

The face is a dynamic canvas on which people display their emotional states, and from which they decode the emotional states of others (e.g., Willis & Todorov, 2006). For instance, a person who is surprised may raise his eyebrows, open his eyes wide, and drop his jaw. When a single emotion emerges and the individual does not attempt to modify or conceal it, facial expressions typically last between 0.5 to 4 seconds and involve the entire face (Ekman, 2003). These expressions have

been referred to as macro expressions; they take place both when people do not try to conceal their emotions. Macro expressions often take place when people are alone and with close others (i.e., family and friends). Macro Expressions are relatively easy to detect. Micro expressions, on the other hand, are expressions take place in a fraction of a second, sometimes as fast as 1/30 of a second. Because of their speed, they are more difficult to detect. Micro expressions can take place when the individual tries to conceal his emotions. In an attempt to control the emotional expression, the individual fails to conceal the immediate (uncontrollable) facial reaction, causing a quick, fleeting leakage of microexpressions. For example, a person who tries to hide anger when her manager makes a snide remark, may very briefly press her lips firmly together (immediate reaction), but quickly cover up this reaction by smiling. The existence of microexpressions is based on the hypothesis that facial actions that cannot be controlled voluntarily may be produced involuntarily, even if the individual is trying to control his or her expressions. Research by Porter and ten Brinke (2008) showed that microexpressions occur when participants attempted to be deceitful about their emotional expressions. Micro-expressions may also be signs of rapidly processed but unconcealed emotional states.

Interestingly, research has found that people are more accurate in recognizing facial expressions relative to other kinds of expressive information (Boyatzis & Satyaprasad, 1994; Fridlund, Ekman, & Oster, 1984). Studies have shown that the ability to correctly perceive and understand other people's emotions is associated with better personal and social effectiveness. For instance, sensitivity to non-verbal cues and for facial expressions, in particular, has been associated with better academic performance (e.g., Halberstadt & Hall, 1980; Izard, C., Fine, S., Schultz, Mostow, Ackerman & Youngstrom, 2001; Nowicki & Duke, 1994). Moreover, even at a very young age, the ability to read emotions predicts social and academic outcomes years later (Izard, et al., 2001). In a clinical context, difficulties in facial emotion recognition have been associated with a range of psychiatric disorders, including depression (e.g., Surguladze et al., 2004), schizophrenia (e.g. Kohler, Walker, Martin, Healey, & Moberg, 2010), autism (e.g. Humphreys, Minshew, Leonard, & Behrmann, 2007), and borderline personality disorder (e.g. Domes, Schulze, & Herpertz, 2009). These findings suggest that the ability to recognize emotions in other people is an important aspect of optimal human functioning.

▶ BODILY EXPRESSIONS

There is evidence to suggest that numerous emotions, including pride, shame, anger, fear, and disgust (e.g., de Gelder & van den Stock, 2011; Keltner, 1995; Tracy, Robins, & Schriber, 2009) can be accurately deciphered from nonverbal bodily displays. Pride, for instance, is typically signaled by an expanded chest, upward

head tilt, and arms akimbo—either spread out from the body with hands on hips or raised above the head with hands in fists (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Past research has identified consistent bodily expressions for the emotions, joy and happiness, pride, shame and embarrassment, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness (see Witkower & Tracy, 2018 for a review).

It is likely that bodily expressions of emotions are universal, as studies have shown generalization across race and disparate cultures (Edelmann et al., 1989; Haidt & Keltner, 1999;Tracy & Robins, 2008) reliable recognition by young children (Tracy, Robins, & Lagattuta, 2005; Zieber, Kangas, Hock, & Bhatt, 2014), and spontaneously displays by the blind (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008).

▶ SPEECH

People use hundreds, if not thousands, of semantic terms to express a wide variety of emotional states (Russell, 1991; Sabini & Silver, 2005). In some cases, the words that are used point directly to the emotion one is experiencing. For instance, the experience of fear may be expressed by saying "I am afraid". Likewise, experiencing sadness may be communicated by stating "I feel sad". It is interesting to note that not every language contains words for expressing a certain emotional state. For instance, some languages (e.g., Polish) lack exact equivalents to the English word disgust (Wierzbicka, 1992; 1997).

In addition to using corresponding words to express one's emotional state, people often use figurative expressions. Rather than literally naming the emotional state one is in, figurative expressions rely on metaphors or analogies to express one's subjective experience. In the English language, there are several hundred linguistic expressions that are commonly used to talk about emotions. For example, people may say they "tremble like a leaf", "feel trapped" or "hit a low". Obviously, in order to accurately decode emotion from language, one must know the meaning of the words or expressions used to communicate an emotion. Obviously, deciphering emotions in a non-native language is harder than doing so in one's own language.

Aside from the verbal information in speech, emotions are also expressed by the non-verbal qualities of speech, such as pitch, volume, and rate of speech. In a review, Scherer (1981) suggested that happiness, confidence, anger and perhaps fear are signaled by increased pitch, increased loudness, and a fast rate of speech. Indifference is characterized by low pitch and a fast rate. Contempt, boredom, and grief are correlated with low pitch and a slow rate. Note, however, that these correlations are not always found. For example, in some cases, anger does not correlate with increased pitch (Costanzo, Markel & Costanzo, 1969; Scherer, 1974), and sometimes contempt does not correlate with decreased pitch (Scherer & Oshinsky, 1977).

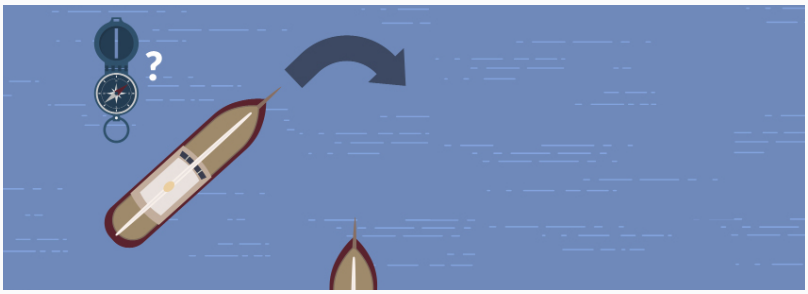
▶ SYNERGY

Many scholars agree that facial, bodily and verbal expressions of emotions work synergistically together (see table 8.2). For instance, Jorgensen (1998) argued that "in essence, by focusing on one element (i.e., verbal) of the emotional appeal at the exclusion of the other dimensions of the message (i.e., nonverbal), researchers are no longer studying valid communication processes, but rather disassociated parts of the whole," (p. 407). Focusing on words alone to decode the emotions of another person is unlikely to be accurate, given nonverbal cues modify, augment, illustrate, accentuate, and contradict the words they accompany (Burgoon, 1994). In support of this notion, past research findings suggest that faces and bodies are processed holistically and both sources of information are perceptually integrated (Aviezer, Trope, & Todorov, 2012; Meeren, van Heijnsbergen, & de Gelder, 2005). Moreover, facial and bodily expressions share several underlying neural mechanisms (for a review, see de Gelder et al., 2010).

Table 8.2. Two examples of how facial, bodily and verbal expressions of emotions work synergistically together

Emotion	Body	Speech	Face
Joy	• head tilted up • chest out • arms out • upwards movement • fast and energetic movement • Jumping	• increased pitch • increased loudness • increased rate of speech	• corners of the lips are drawn back and up • teeth exposed • raised cheeks • crow's feet near the outside of the eyes
Anger	• head tilted down • arms forward • fist clenched • hitting motion • forward lean • stomping • fast movements	• increased pitch • increased loudness • increased rate of speech	• tensed lower eyelid • bulging eyes • firmly pressed lips • corners of lips down • flared nostrils • lower jaw jutting out

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



No captain travels alone. On every journey, a captain is likely to meet other captains. The journey of every captain is influenced by how the compass of the boat is used. Although there are differences in the precise way that a captain is influenced by his compass, it is possible for a captain to accurately "read" the feedback from another captain's compass above chance levels. Just like there are universal expressions for emotions, there are universal ways captains respond to the feedback from a compass. There are universal "compass expressions" so to say. In the same way that we can extract emotional information from carefully observing another person's verbal and non-verbal behavior, a captain can gain information about the compass of another boat by observing the "behavior" (i.e., the movement) of the other boat. Imagine a person who quits his job after having another argument with his boss. This rather drastic choice reveals information about the emotions that may have given rise to this choice, such as anger or disappointment. In the same way, a boat that is making a drastic turn may indicate that the compass informed the other captain that his boat is not moving closer to an intended destination ("negative feedback"). Talking rapidly and with a lot of energy in both voice and body movements may be indicative of positive emotions, such as passion, excitement, curiosity, etc. In the same way, a boat that is sailing at full speed may indicate that the compass informed the other captain that his boat is moving closer to an intended destination ("positive feedback"). Whether another boat is moving slowly, quickly, or not at all, in order to gain insight in the other captain's compass, the question is always: What information from the other captain's compass may be causing him to sail in this particular manner? Obviously, the better the captain can read his own compass, the better he can read another captain's compass. A captain who is well aware of how his own compass affects his choices is more likely to correctly infer how other captains' choices are linked to their compass.

▶ CHALLENGES IN DECODING EMOTIONS

One of the biggest challenges of emotional decoding is that there are different types of emotional communication, each with a different focus and level of complexity. In general, a distinction can be made between expressive, conventional and rhetorical communication.

The main goal of expressive emotional communication is to express oneself. Communication is directly influenced by the emotion that one experiences. It can be regarded as "unfiltered expression". The focus is primarily on the self. Examples include shouting because of anger, lifting arms because of pride, or crying because of fear. The emotions in this type of emotional communication are relatively easy to decode.

In conventional emotional communication, the goal is to understand one another. By communicating emotions, one tries to make sure the other person knows how he or she feels. Here, the focus is on the other person. Examples include telling someone you are disappointed because they did not show up or informing another person that you are afraid that the collaboration may fail. Obviously, the ease of decoding emotions in this type of communication is strongly dependent on the ability of the other person to clearly communicate the emotion he or she experiences.

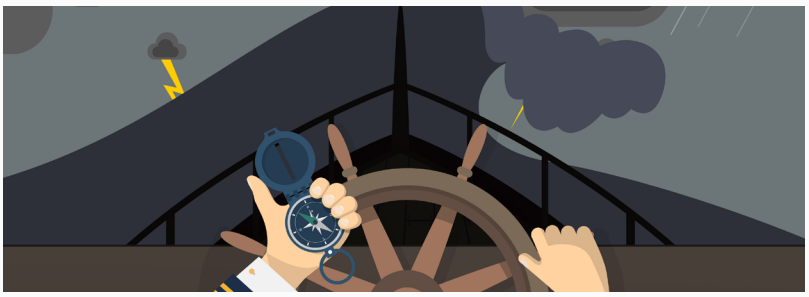
Finally, the goal of rhetorical emotional communication is to strategically communicate emotions to accomplish social goals. In this type of communication, the focus is on the interaction between sender and receiver. Examples of this type of communication include impression management (e.g., appearing strong or genuine), relationship management (e.g., communicating appreciation), and managing the other person's feelings (e.g., comforting, aggravating, or provoking). Particularly in this type of emotional communication, accurately "reading" the other person's true emotions can be challenging if not impossible. People can suppress or exaggerate the emotions they experience, and deliberately send emotional messages that do not correspond with their actual emotions. It is not uncommon for people to decide to sacrifice the goals of expression and accuracy in the interest of other social goals, such as deceiving others about one's true feelings in order to spare them hurt ("I just love your new work!") or using ambiguity to avoid taking a stand ("I cannot say I am really impressed by his work so far") (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1990).

■ REGULATING EMOTIONS

Emotion regulation refers to an individual's attempt to increase, maintain, or decrease positive and negative emotions. The ability to effectively regulate one's emotions can be considered a crucial skill, as chronic deficits in emotion regulation

have been found to contribute to all major forms of psychopathology (Kring & Werner, 2004). Moreover, effective emotion regulation has been associated with positive outcomes in the domains of mental health (Gross & Muñoz, 1995) and physical health (Sapolsky, 2007), relationship satisfaction (Murray, 2005), and work performance (Diefendorff, Hall, Lord, & Strean, 2000).

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



In terms of the sailboat metaphor, emotion regulation can be translated as the captain's ability to manage the direction of the boat in a way that the feedback from the compass remains in line with the intended destinations. At times, the compass may indicate that the boat is heading away from an intended direction (i.e., negative emotions). Just like difficult situations in life may trigger negative emotions such as fear or anger, difficult weather circumstances may cause the boat to sail off track. A person who is unable to handle his emotions is like a captain who is unable to respond to the feedback from the compass. He is not using the feedback from the compass in an adaptive way. Rather than using this feedback to adjust the course of the boat, the captain may become unable to take any action (no emotion regulation), causing the boat to divert even more from the intended destination. Or, he may steer the boat in a direction that is different from the current direction, yet still not bringing the captain closer to his intended destination (ineffective emotion regulation).

Why do people regulate their emotions? According to functionalist theories of emotion, people regulate their emotions to help them reach their goals. For instance, people may regulate an emotion to reach an accomplish an emotional goal, such as feeling happy or reducing anxiety. In addition, people may also

regulate emotions to realize instrumental goals, such as avoiding conflict with others (Parrot, 1993; Tamir, 2009). Emotion theorists generally claim that people regulate their emotions in ways that will facilitate achievement of these different goals (Gross, Sheppes, & Urry, 2011; Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007). For example, a person who feels sad may focus on things that he or she is grateful for in order to feel happy again. Likewise, a person who experiences anger during a job interview may attempt to hide this anger in order to maintain a favorable impression.

▶ DIFFERENT FORMS OF EMOTION REGULATION

Past research has identified numerous strategies used by people to deal with the experience of emotions (see Gross, 2007, for an overview). The different emotion regulation strategies can be categorized based on what they attempt to change. First, some strategies focus directly on changing the intensity of the emotion. Common examples of this type of strategy are suppression, distraction, and progressive muscle relaxation. For instance, in order to reduce the intensity of fear, a person may try to suppress the thought of an upcoming stressful event. Second, emotion regulation strategies can focus on changing the individual's relationship with the emotion at hand. Acceptance-based coping and meditation are two examples of strategies that do not aim to reduce the intensity of the emotion, but rather focus on the person's ability and willingness to allow an emotion to be present. Third, some strategies primarily focus on altering the individual's perspective. Cognitive reappraisal, cognitive restructuring and cognitive dissonance reduction are all examples of strategies that focus on looking at the emotional state or trigger from a different angle. For example, after making a mistake, the individual may reframe the mistake and associated regret as something 'to learn from'. Likewise, a person may learn to look at emotional thoughts as beliefs, rather than facts. An overview of these three categories including examples of emotion regulating strategies is provided in table X.

▶ EFFORT

While some emotion regulation strategies are effortful, such as suppression, other forms of emotion regulation are relatively automatic and effortless (Bargh & Williams, 2007; Koole & Kuhl, 2007; Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007). Among the vast array of different emotion regulation strategies, some strategies have been found to be more effective than others. Some types of emotion regulation, such as suppression, ironically result in the very emotional outcomes that people aim to avoid (e.g., Wegner, Erber, & Zanakos, 1993).

Table 8.3. An overview of common emotion regulation strategies categorized by their main focus

Focus: Changing intensity of emotion		
Strategy	**Description**	**Empirical demonstrations**
thought suppression	trying to not think particular thoughts	Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000
distraction	distracting oneself from the emotional experience/trigger	Joormann & Siemer, 2004
expressive suppression	trying not to show what one is feeling	Gross, 1998
Attentional counter-regulation	focusing attention on information which is in contrast to one's own current state	Rothermund et al., 2008
stress-induced eating	eating food in order to reduce stress	Greeno & Wing, 1994
response exaggeration	responding in a way that is more intense than what one is actually feeling	Schmeichel et al., 2006
positive imagery	thinking pleasurable thoughts	Langens & Morth, 2003
venting	verbally expressing negative emotions	Bushman et al., 2001
diaphragmatic breathing	deep belly breathing to activate the parasympathetic nervous system	Chen et al. (2017)
progressive muscle relaxation	tightening one muscle group at a time followed by a release of the tension in order to reduce stress	Esch et al., 2003

Focus: Changing relationship with emotion		
Strategy	Description	Empirical demonstrations
meditation	being aware of the emotion as an attentive and non-attached observer without judgment or analysis	Cahn & Polich, 2006
acceptance	allowing experiences to be present without acting upon them	Brown et al., 2007

Focus: Changing perspective on emotion or emotional trigger		
Strategy	Description	Empirical demonstrations
cognitive dissonance reduction	trying to resolve an inconsistency between two cognitions	Harmon- Jones & Mills, 1999
cognitive restructuring	distracting oneself from the emotional experience/trigger	Joormann & Siemer, 2004
expressive writing	writing about past emotional experiences, including one's thoughts, feelings, and perceived facts	Pennebaker, 1997
cognitive reappraisal	reframing an event to reduce its negative impact	Ochsner & Gross, 2008

▶ LEARNED RESOURCEFULNESS

According to Rosenbaum (1990), peoples' general repertoire of learned self-regulation skills is essential for goal attainment. He uses the term "learned resourcefulness" to indicate the acquired regulatory skills that help people regulate their behavior. Highly resourceful people have over their lifetime learned to use a diverse range of self-regulation strategies that help them pursue their goals in daily life (Rosenbaum & Ben-Ari, 1985; Kennett & Ackerman, 1995). In contrast,

low resourceful people use only a limited number of self-regulation strategies and are more likely to abandon self-regulation in the face of frustration. Emotionally intelligent people can be perceived as highly resourceful as they are able to select and use the most effective self-regulation strategies for the situation at hand.

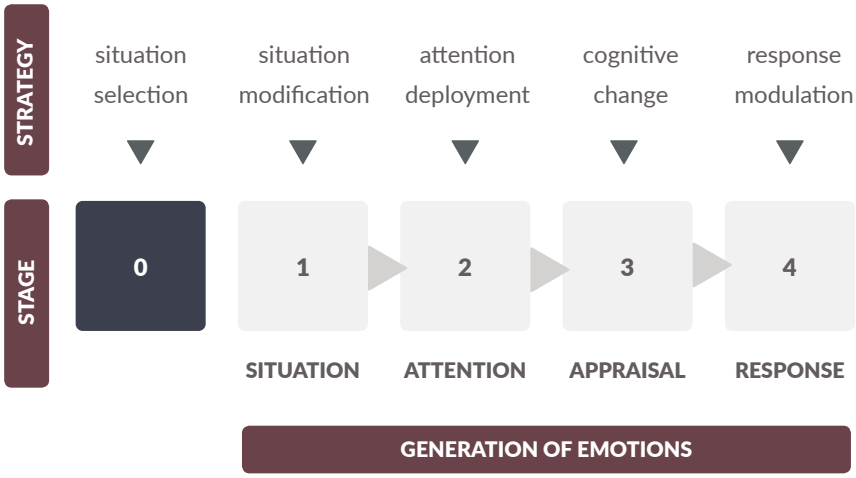
ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

Interventions like dialectical behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993) and treatments for binge eating (Clyne & Blampied, 2004) and generalized anxiety disorder (Mennin, Heimberg, Turk, & Fresco, 2002) focus on building emotion regulation skills. These interventions have been found to effectively reduce a wide variety of complaints associated with low self-regulatory skills, supporting the view that people can become better at regulating their emotions. Although clients may differ in the degree to which they can improve their emotion regulation, these findings justify a positive outlook on the client's ability to develop better emotion regulation.

▶ THE PROCESS MODEL OF EMOTION-REGULATION

According to the process model of emotion regulation (for a review, see Gross & Thompson, 2007), emotions develop and become more intense over time (See fig 8.4). More specifically, first a situation (imagined or real) triggers an emotion (stage 1). Then, the individual attends to this situation in a certain way (stage 2). Next, the individual interprets the situation in a way (stage 3) that results in an attempt to deal with the emotion (stage 4). Take, for example, a person who receives a critique about his performance at work (situation; stage 1). This critique causes the person to focus all his attention on the content of the feedback and on the person providing the critique (attention; stage 2). Next, the critique is interpreted as unfair and as a personal attack (interpretation; stage 3), causing the person to try to suppress feelings of anger towards the other person (response; stage 4). The progression from one stage to the next represents the way that emotions develop in intensity. In other words, the higher the stage, the more intense the emotion is experienced.

Fig 8.4 The process model of emotion regulation (adapted from Gross & Thompson, 2007)



▶ DIFFERENT FAMILIES OF EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES

According to the process model of emotion regulation, emotion regulation strategies can be applied at multiple moments throughout the aforementioned four stages (DeSteno, Gross & Kubzansky, 2013). It is assumed that down-regulating emotions is easier done in the earlier stages of emotional progress. There are five points at which an individual can regulate their emotion (see Figure 8.4). Each point on the model represents a specific type of emotion regulation strategy; situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation. Below we describe these in more detail.

1. Situation selection
Situation selection involves placing oneself in a situation where either an unwanted emotion is unlikely to occur or a desired emotion is likely to emerge. For example, a person who is afraid of being rejected by strangers may avoid social situations where they may encounter new people. Likewise, a person who wants to experience joy may decide to hang out with a good friend.

2. Situation modification
Situation modification means refers to modifying one's current surrounding

environment in order to change his or her emotional response to this environment. For example, one may put on a different record to lighten the mood or walk away from an unpleasant conversation at a party.

3. Attentional deployment
Attentional deployment refers to directing attention in order to influence one's emotional responding. There are many ways in which attention can be used to change the course of an emotion. For example, one may close their eyes when watching a scary scene in a movie, ignore a person that one does not like to talk to, or shift attention from a negative thought ("I did not perform well on this task") to a positive thought ("I did well the last time on this task") .

4. Cognitive change
Cognitive change involves altering the way one thinks about the trigger of an emotion. By thinking differently about the emotional situation, the meaning of the situation changes. A typical example of a cognitive change strategy is reappraisal, which involves reframing an event to reduce its negative impact. For example, after making a bad decision, one may think "What can I learn from this mistake?" Or, after forgetting to bring lunch to work, one may think: "This will help me to lose some weight."

5. Response modulation
Response modulation means that one tries to deal with the emotion once it is fully activated. For example, one may try to suppress anger when an irritating customer keeps asking the same question or try to observe feelings of fear mindfully to prevent oneself from acting upon them.

USING EMOTIONS TO FACILITATE PERFORMANCE

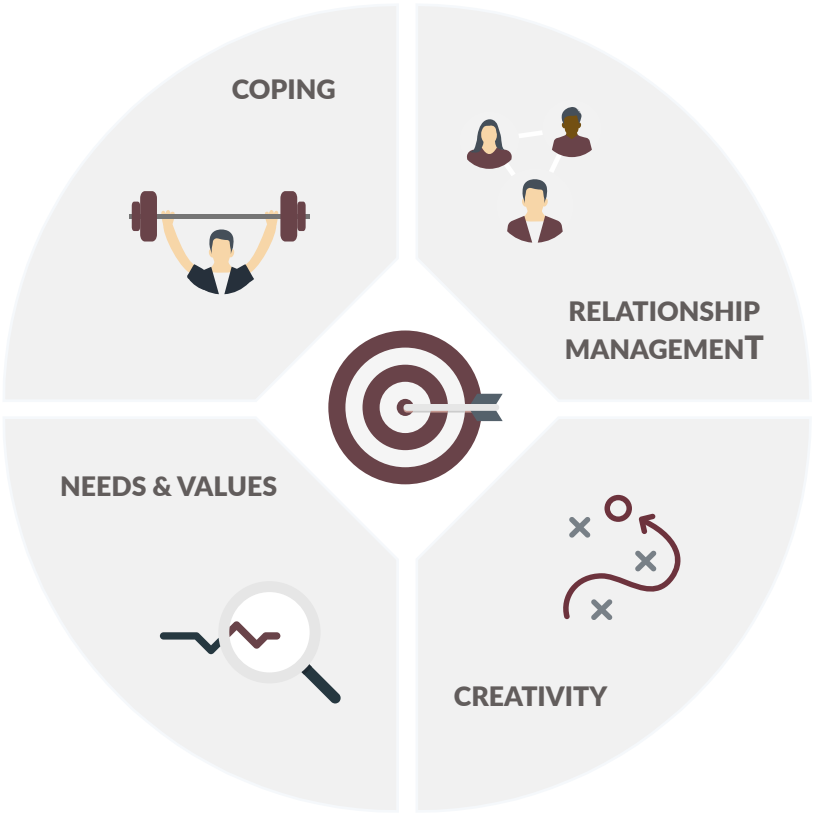
Emotionally intelligent people know how to use their emotions in ways that allow them to successfully live in line with their values and reach their goals. Here, we describe four different ways in which emotions can be used to facilitate performance (see fig 8.5).

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Emotionally intelligent people understand how the expression of their own emotions influences others. Past research findings suggest that expressing an emotion can cause other people to experience the same emotion so that the emotion spreads from one person to another (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994).

Emotions can also induce complementary emotions in other people. For instance, a person who expresses anger may lead the person witnessing the anger to feel fear; a person who expresses gratitude may evoke feelings of pride in the receiver of the gratitude (e.g., Dimberg & Ohman, 1996). Thus, emotions can be "used" to influence one's social environment, and emotionally intelligent people utilize this skill to move toward personal goals.

Fig. 8.4 four different ways in which emotions can be used to facilitate performance



▶ NEEDS AND VALUES

Another way in which emotionally intelligent people use their emotions to promote goal achievement is by extracting and using motivational information from emotions. Many theories of emotion posit that emotions serve a signaling function (see Frijda, 1986, for reviews). Emotions can be perceived as "data" and

when interpreted correctly, can inform the individual about how well he or she is living in line with personal values and goals. For instance, negative emotions like fear inform the individual that something valuable is under threat. Likewise, shame or regret may inform the individual that his actions were incongruent with his values or goals. In contrast, positive emotions like joy or gratitude may signal that the individual is living in alignment with personal values and goals. The ability to extract this information from emotions allows the individual to use his emotions as "signals" at the service of his values and goals (for a more elaborate discussion on this matter see chapter 13).

▶ CREATIVITY

A third way in which emotions can be used to facilitate goal achievement is by understanding the function and consequences of positive and negative emotions. The function of positive emotions seems to differ fundamentally from the function of negative emotions. Just like negative emotions cause narrowing thoughts to focus on the specifics of a problem, positive emotions expand thought-action repertoires and encourage an upward spiral of positive emotions (for a more elaborate discussion on this matter see chapter 9). Understanding the benefits and using positive emotions to one's advantage exemplifies emotional intelligence. The generation of positive emotions may directly promote goal achievement by enhancing creativity (Foder & Greenier, 1995). Past studies have repeatedly shown that the experience of positive emotions facilitates creative responding (Ziv, 1976) and creative problem solving (Isen, Daubman, Nowicki, 1987). Positive emotions may enable the emotionally intelligent person to either generate creative solutions to goal-related challenges or consider alternative pathways to the goal he or she is striving for.

▶ COPING

The generation of positive emotions can also help one cope with setbacks on the road to one's goal. In line with this idea, Tugade and Fredrickson argued "[emotionally intelligent] individuals may possess complex understandings of their positive emotions and use this knowledge to adapt resourcefully in response to negative stimuli (2002; p. 335). Indeed, research findings suggest that resilient people better understand the benefits of positive emotions and harness these benefits to their advantage to effectively cope with negative emotional experiences. For example, resilient people have been found to use coping strategies that elicit positive emotions to regulate negative emotional situations, such as humor (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990), relaxation, exploration of behavioral alternatives, and hopeful, optimistic thinking as means of regulating negative emotional experiences (Werner & Smith, 1992). In sum, these research findings suggest that positive emotions can

be "used" to facilitate goal progress by enhancing coping with roadblocks on the way to one's goal. Whether this knowledge is used consciously or not, emotionally intelligent people better use positive emotions to optimize their performance.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

An emotionally intelligent person knows how his emotions can be used to move closer to personal goals. In terms of the sailboat metaphor, this can be compared to a captain who uses the feedback from his compass in order to stay on track. First, he may use the feedback to know whether he is still sailing in the right direction. Just like an emotionally intelligent person adjusts his course of action because negative emotions are experienced, the captain uses feedback from the compass to adjust the course of the boat. Second, just like an emotionally intelligent person uses positive emotions to speed up the creative process, the captain uses his compass' feedback to hoist the sails and allow the boat to move at a higher speed.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Although the different skills that are essential for EI were presented separately here, in reality, they work together synergistically. For instance, expressing emotions is impossible if one is not aware of one's emotions. How can we express what we do not feel? Likewise, in order to use emotions to facilitate goal achievement, one must be able to regulate them. How can a person move closer to his goals when feelings of frustration and anger dominate the pursuit of these goals? There are countless links between the different skills presented here, suggesting that training a given EI skill may automatically influence another skill. In line with this,

preliminary evidence suggests that training individuals to expand their emotion vocabulary and use it in a flexible way can help to them to regulate their emotions more effectively (Kircanski, Lieberman, & Craske, 2012).

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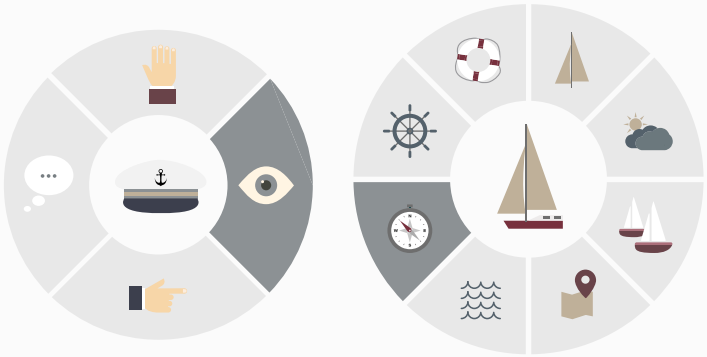
9

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Emotional awareness is arguably the skill most fundamental to emotional intelligence (Lane, 2000). Emotional awareness refers to the ability to recognize and describe one's own emotions, and those of other people (Lane & Schwartz, 1987). Put simply, it is the ability to accurately answer the question: How am I feeling right now? Past research has shown that emotional awareness is associated with other areas of emotional functioning, such as the ability to recognize and categorize emotional stimuli (Lane, 2000; Lane et al., 1996).

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



Emotional awareness results from the individual's ability to pay attention to emotions. Therefore, in the sailboat metaphor, emotional awareness can be translated as the captain's attention for the compass.

IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

Past research has shown that the ability to recognize one's emotions is an important skill. Problems in emotional identification are associated with a variety of maladaptive behaviors, including binge drinking, aggression, and self-injury (Kashdan, Barrett, & McKnight, 2015). Emotions provide people with information about their environments and their progress toward goals and thereby influence their judgments, decisions, priorities, and actions (Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). The ability to attend to and identify one's own emotions can, therefore, be considered an important prerequisite for adaptively using emotional information.

In order to identify emotions, one must pay attention to emotions. An important question involves the way one should pay attention to emotions. Past research has repeatedly shown that both avoidance and over-engagement with emotions are associated with worse psychological and health outcomes (Gross, 2002; Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2002; Segerstrom, Stanton, Alden, & Shortridge, 2003). A potential answer to this question comes from research in the field of mindfulness.

Rather than avoiding emotions, mindfulness involves the willingness to allow them to be present. Emotions are approached with curiosity and acceptance. The basic stance is: "it is ok for me to experience whatever I experience." This allows for elaborate self-observation without judgment or attempts to control or change the experience. In contrast to over-engagement, in which the individual becomes completely absorbed by the emotion, mindfulness cultivates an observing distance to the emotion. This distanced or "decentered" relationship with emotions helps the individual to recognize their transient nature. Emotions come and go and we can engage with them, without avoiding or becoming entangled.

ADOPT A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

It is important to realize that developing the ability to allow emotions to be present may take time and require caution. Welcoming difficult emotions can be very challenging, especially for clients who have long used avoidance-based coping strategies, like suppression, as a default strategy for dealing with negative affect. The mere thought of allowing these emotions to be present can trigger fear. This fear is often related to the belief that they will not be able to handle the consequences after giving room for emotions. Being "flooded" with negativity is a commonly used reason for blocking emotions. Moreover, with depression and borderline personality disorder, focusing on and staying with negative emotions can overwhelm the client and trigger strong avoidance and disengagement, the most serious forms of which are self-harm and suicide. When applying mindfulness meditation to coaching or clinical practice, it is of primary importance for the practitioner to carefully assess clients' abilities to allow negative emotions to be present. In addition, for many clients, it can be helpful to adopt a step-by-step approach. By allowing emotions to be present, they can experience that it is possible to experience and observe emotions, without being carried away by them. This can strengthen the client's self-efficacy and the belief that he is able to deal with emotions by turning toward rather than turning away from them.

> Moreover, it should be noted that experiential avoidance is not problematic in and of itself. If a client occasionally avoids experiences that are relatively discrete and time-limited, this may not be harmful. So, for instance, when one receives a phone call with upsetting news just before entering a meeting at work, one may distract oneself by focusing on the meeting. This distraction may temporarily reduce possible worries about the news and later, at home, one may decide to pay attention to any feelings and emotions connected to the news. Typically, experiential avoidance is most problematic when the strategy is used as a default way to block experiences in the long run.

THREE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONS

Below we describe three important characteristics of emotions; bodily sensations, thoughts, and action tendencies. Emotional awareness involves awareness of these three characteristics.

BODILY SENSATIONS

Prior research suggests that emotions are felt in the body (Flaskerud, 2016; Nummenmaaa, Glereana, Harib, & Hietanend, 2013). The ability to become aware of bodily sensations and reactions can, therefore, be considered an important aspect of emotional awareness. Moreover, the recognition of painful physical signals can help people intervene at an early stage before complaints worsen. For instance, paying attention to physical signals such as tension or restlessness is important for the prevention of stress and burn-out (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005). Likewise, early detection of physical pain allows people to take appropriate action (e.g., visit a doctor) rather than persist with activities that increase the physical pain (for instance, by damaging tissue). In other words, the ability to "listen" to one's body may not only provide information on one's emotional status but may at the same time help to prevent complaints from getting worse.

RESTORE THE CLIENT'S CONNECTION WITH EMOTIONS

Identifying the client's emotions is an important step in the diagnostic process. On a physical level, a client may notice physical sensations like back pain after a long day of work. On a cognitive level, a client may notice stress-related feelings after many working hours. This awareness of the feeling of "stress" is necessary for identifying appropriate steps to effectively deal with the emotion. Many clients have lost connection with their emotions. Consequently, their ability to effectively regulate them and make behavioral changes based on their feedback is limited. Restoring the client's connection with emotions is therefore often a crucial first step in therapy. Awareness of emotions unveils essential information about the future steps that are needed for optimal development. Put simply, you cannot heal what you cannot feel.

▶ THOUGHTS

Thoughts and emotion are usually fused in nature (Folkman, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1979). Many scholars share the view that thoughts are an inherent part of an emotional experience.
In most cases, it is difficult if not impossible to identify whether a thought precedes an emotion or vice versa. In general, studies show evidence for both directions.

In classic studies by Horowitz and colleagues (Horowitz, 1969, 1975; Horowitz & Becker, 1971, 1973), participants were either exposed to an emotion-inducing movie or to a neutral one. Next, participants were asked to signal the occurrence of movie-related thoughts or mental images while completing a mental task. Compared to a neutral movie condition, participants who had seen an emotionally arousing film evidenced significantly more frequent thoughts and mental images, supporting the notion that emotions can provoke thoughts. Research has also consistently shown that thoughts can provoke emotions. For instance, past findings support the notion that depression is maintained by negative thoughts. Here, a vicious circle can arise in which a negative emotion gives rise to negative thoughts, and negative thoughts in turn increase negative emotions (see fig. 9.1) (Teasdale & Barnard, 1993).

Awareness of (emotional) thoughts is a key-process in third-wave therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999) and Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (Kabat- Zinn, 1990). In these therapies,

clients learn to observe thoughts. Rather than being fully identified with thoughts, believing them to be true, the individual is able to stand back and simply witness them.

Fig 9.1. an example of the vicious cycle of thoughts and emotion

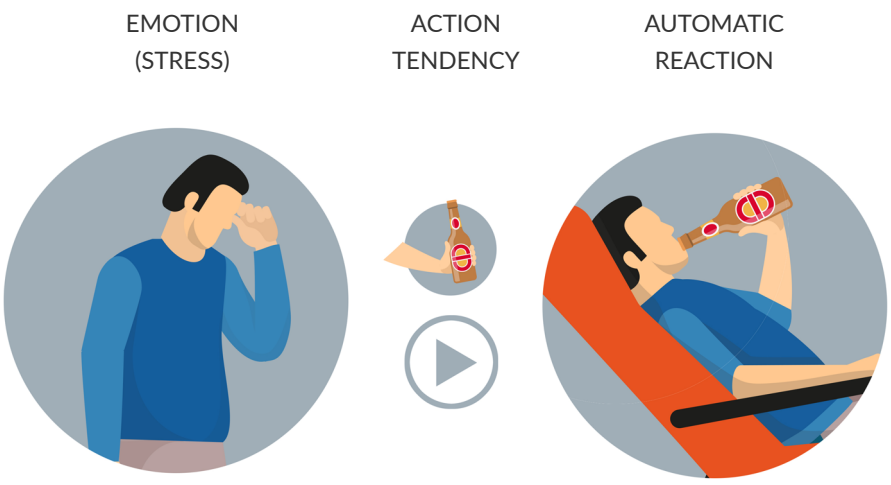
▶ ACTION TENDENCIES

Many current models of emotions state that emotions are associated with urges to act in particular ways; these urges have been referred to as action tendencies (Frijda, 1986; Frijda, Kuipers, & Schure, 1989; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). For instance, anger can create the urge to attack, fear the urge to avoid or escape, disgust the urge to expel, and so on. It is important to note that action tendencies are dependent on the situation one is in (Barrett, 2006). Fear, for instance, may create the urge to flee, but also the urge to take the car and race to the hospital after hearing that a friend had an accident. Likewise, anger may result in a strong urge to shout, but may also create the desire to silently turn away. Although people do not necessarily act upon these urges, ideas about possible courses of action

narrow in when these specific urges are present. When people do follow these urges, before consciously having decided to do so, we speak of impulsive behavior. In these cases, the behavior is the immediate result of the emotion, not the of the deliberate choice of the individual (Strack & Deutsch, 2004).

Impulsive behavior can be regarded as opposite to autonomous, self-regulated behavior in which the individual consciously makes choices and takes responsibility for his or her actions. Impulsive actions that result from emotions underly a wide range of problems, including eating problems, violence, and addiction. For instance, in response to negative emotions, a person may automatically start to eat, a process called emotional eating (Van Strien, Frijters,Bergers & Defares, 1986). Emotional eating has been identified as an essential aspect of binge eating (e.g., Arnow, Kenardy, & Agras, 1995). In a similar vein, when experiencing a high level of stress, a person may start to automatically shout and offend people or start drinking (see fig 9.2).

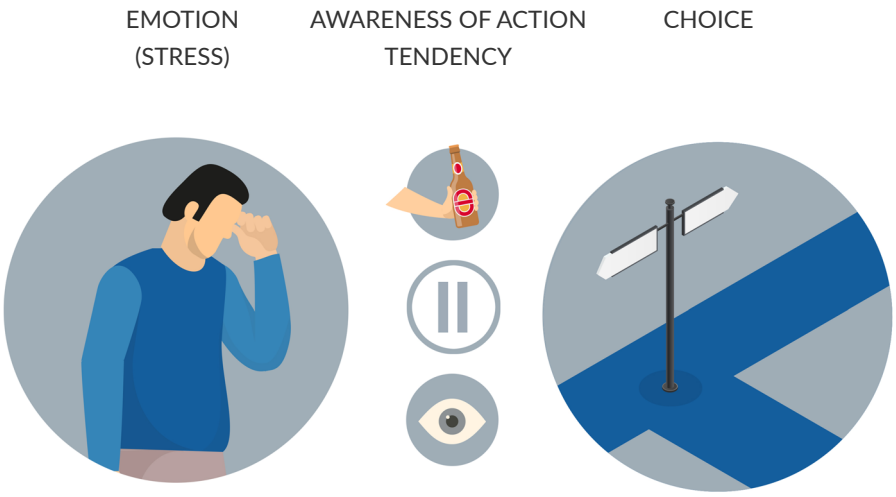
Fig 9.2. An example of how action tendencies can accompany emotions: A high experience of stress may be accompanied by a strong urge to start drinking, which may automatically result in drinking



Given the negative consequences of many impulsive actions, it is important to reduce their impact. Becoming more aware of the action tendencies that are generated by an emotional state appears to be a powerful way to reduce impulsive acting. Using mindful attention to become aware of the urges that are created by an emotional experience can help to create space between the experience and the reaction that follows. Rather than impulsively acting upon the emotion, the

awareness of the action tendencies that accompany the emotion creates room for conscious reflection and disrupts a habitual pattern of responding (see fig 9.3). This room for choice can be used to engage in behavior that is more likely to promote rather than reduce well-being.

Fig 9.3. Mindful attention for the action tendencies that accompany can disrupt their potential negative impact by creating a pause between the emotion and the behavior following the emotion. This pause offers room for self-reflection and choice



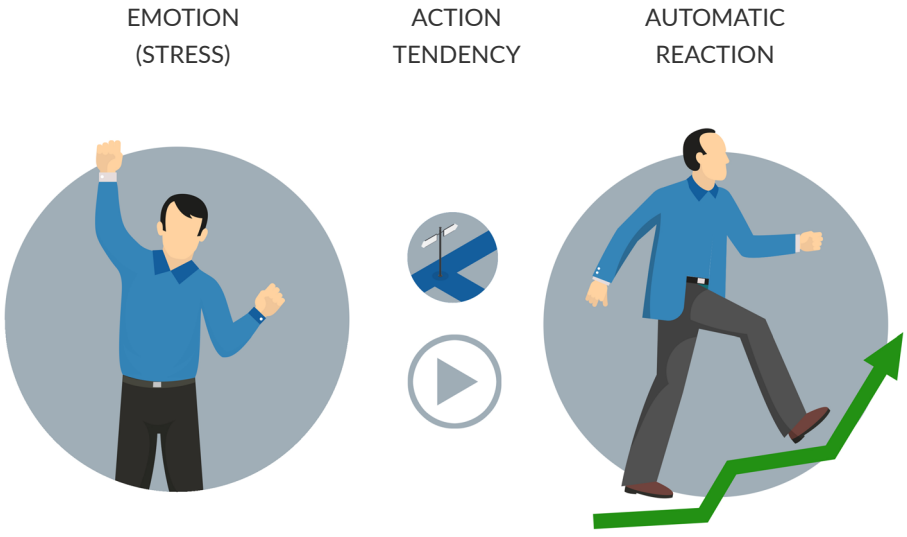
In support of this notion, past research findings revealed that mindfulness is negatively associated with impulsivity and positively associated with self-regulation (Fetterman, Robinson, Ode, & Gordon, 2010; Peters, Erisman, Upton, Baer & Roemer, 2011). For instance, Brown and Ryan (2003) demonstrated that people who score higher on mindfulness reported significantly greater self-regulated emotion and behavior (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

So far, we have focused on discussing the importance of becoming aware of action tendencies. In doing so, we have focused mainly on urges resulting from negative emotions, like fear and stress. But what about positive emotions? According to Fredrickson (1998), positive emotions differ from negative emotions in terms of the action tendencies they produce. She argues that positive emotions are less prescriptive than negative emotions about which particular actions should be taken. Indeed, research findings have shown that the action tendencies resulting from positive emotions are far too general to be called specific. For example, joy has been associated with aimless activation, interest with attending,

and contentment with inactivity (Frijda, 1986). In contrast to specific tendencies, such as attacking or escaping, these tendencies are more generic urges to do anything or do nothing.

A possible reason for the difference in action tendencies is the differential function of positive and negative emotions. The main function of negative emotions is to narrow a person's momentary thought-action repertoire. Fear, for instance, causes the individual to prepare for a fight or flight reaction, an ancestrally adaptive action. This function of negative emotions is undoubtedly adaptive in life-threatening situations that require quick and decisive action in order to survive. However, this function may not be adaptive in a non-threatening situation that results in positive emotions. In contrast to negative emotions, positive emotions are suggested to broaden a person's momentary thought-action repertoire. Accordingly, experiences of positive emotions prompt individuals to discard automatic (everyday) behavioral scripts and to pursue novel, creative, and often unscripted paths of thought and action. In sum, positive emotions create more room for choice and introduce an action tendency to explore new options (see fig, 9.4).

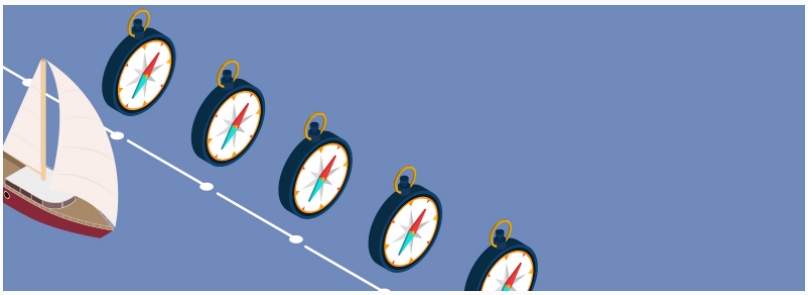
Fig. 9.4. Positive emotions prompt individuals to explore new ideas or novel actions and over time, promote positive growth, both in terms of positive experiences as well as resilience



INTRODUCING A DAILY PAUSE

Increasing emotional awareness requires clients to direct attention inward. A potentially helpful tool for clients to increase emotional awareness is by introducing a brief pause regularly throughout the day. By interrupting the activity at hand, the client may focus on his or her breathing to connect to the present moment and then reflect on some brief introspective questions like: What is the emotion I am experiencing? What kinds of thoughts are present? What do I feel in my body? What am I inclined to do because of this emotion? When communicating about emotions, it is advisable for the client to use language that supports observation: "In my body, I notice ...", "I am having the thought that...", etc.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



In the sailboat metaphor, a high level of emotional awareness can be translated as the captain's ability to check the compass regularly during the journey. The captain who devotes sufficient attention to the compass is able to use its feedback during the journey. Given the compass provides valuable information about the current course of the boat, it is arguably the most important tool for determining the boat's future directions. The captain who does not pay sufficient attention or even ignores the compass is likely to feel lost during the journey. In a similar vein, people who are unable to connect to their emotions miss the inner guide that provides invaluable information about the comings and goings of the outer-world.

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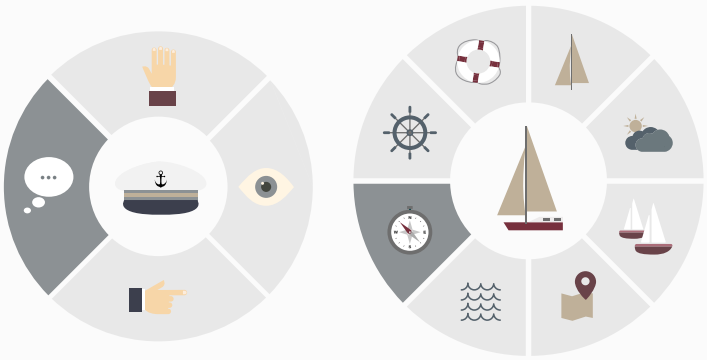
10

BELIEFS ABOUT EMOTIONS

Many people have implicit beliefs about emotions. These beliefs operate outside conscious awareness, and strongly determine the relationship people have with their emotions. Here, we discuss two important types of dysfunctional beliefs about emotions and suggest ways to change them.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

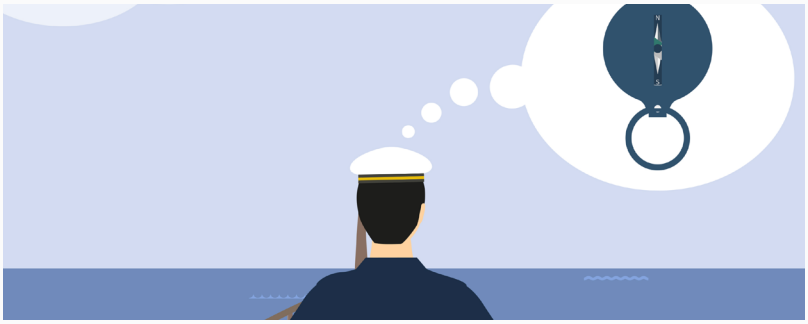


In the sailboat metaphor, the way that people think about their emotions is represented by the captain's thoughts about the compass. What kind of thoughts does the captain have about the feedback from the compass? What does the captain think when the compass indicates that the boat is heading in an undesired direction? Does the captain believe that his actions (changing the course of the boat) will change the feedback from the compass? Or does he think he is unable to adjust the feedback from the compass?

BELIEFS ABOUT THE ACCEPTABILITY OF EMOTIONS

First, people hold beliefs about the "acceptability" of emotions. People vary in the degree to which they believe that experiencing and expressing negative feelings is acceptable. Beliefs about the unacceptability of experiencing or expressing negative thoughts and emotions have been suggested to play a key role in the development and maintenance of clinical problems (Surawy, Hackmann, Hawton & Sharpe, 1995) and can be associated with a worse prognosis and treatment outcome (Corstorphine, 2006). Beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions can be perceived as dysfunctional assumptions (see table 10.1).

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



In the sailboat metaphor, beliefs about the acceptability of emotions are reflected by the thoughts that the captain has about the feedback from his compass. What does the captain think when the compass indicates that the boat is heading in an undesired direction (negative emotions)? Does the captain believe that this feedback "proves" that he is not worthy of being a sailor? Does the captain think that this type of feedback should at all times be avoided? A captain who believes that unfavorable feedback from the compass is unacceptable may deliberately ignore particular feedback from the compass (illustrated by the closed compass in the picture). Consequently, he misses out on the opportunity to turn his boat into the desired direction when he is diverting from his intended journey.

In general, beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions have been found in people with a range of different problems, such as depression (Jack, 1991, Cramer, Gallant & Langlois, 2005), eating disorders (Corstorphine, 2006), social phobia (Clark & Wells, 1995), post-traumatic stress disorder (Ehlers & Clark, 2000), and borderline personality disorder (Linehan, 1993). These beliefs may lead to the avoidance of emotions, which prevents the individual from developing self-awareness and self-understanding and, hence, the ability to take care of oneself appropriately (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001). Growing up in an environment where the expression of difficulties or negative feelings was met with punishment or a lack of sympathy has been suggested as a potential cause for the development of beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions (Linehan, 1993).

Table 10.1. Reasons why beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions are dysfunctional

Beliefs about the unacceptability of emotions are dysfunctional because:
▪ they do not reflect the reality of human experience ▪ they are often rigid, over-generalized and extreme ▪ they prevent rather than facilitate goal attainment ▪ their violation is associated with extreme and excessive emotions ▪ they hinder the formation of open and honest social relationships ▪ they promote avoidance-based coping ▪ they hinder the individual's ability to extract information from emotions

BELIEFS ABOUT THE MALLEABILITY OF EMOTIONS

People may also hold beliefs about the malleability of emotion. For instance, one may believe that no matter how hard one tries, one cannot really change emotions. This belief that emotions are outside personal control is likely to result in fewer efforts at regulating the emotion (Dweck, 2000; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Because the individual does not engage in active attempts to regulate emotions, and will therefore not experience that emotions can be regulated, the belief will remain unchallenged. Moreover, research has shown that people who believe that emotions are less changeable experience fewer positive emotions and more negative emotions, decreased psychological wellbeing, lower perceived emotion regulation self-efficacy, and higher levels of depression (Kappes & Schikowski, 2013; Tamir, John, Srivastava, & Gross, 2007). By contrast, a person who believes that emotions are changeable will display a more assertive and active pattern of coping (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Tamir et al. 2007). Over time, this active pattern of coping with emotions will confirm that emotions are indeed changeable and thus strengthen the very belief regarding the changeability of emotions (see fig 10.1).

Fig. 10.1 The self-affirmative cycle of positive beliefs regarding the changeability emotions

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

A person who believes that there is nothing he or she can do to change emotions is like a captain who believes that the feedback from the compass cannot be changed. This captain perceives himself as powerless. Obviously, when the boat is turned a different direction, the feedback from the compass will automatically change. In the same way that emotions can be changed by taking action (e.g., by expressing them), the captain has the power to change the feedback from the compass by turning the steering wheel of the boat. A captain who believes that his actions can change the feedback from the compass uses the compass as it is intended: as a navigational aid designed to adjust the course of the journey when needed.

HELP CLIENTS TO DEAL WITH UNHELPFUL BELIEFS

Addressing unhelpful beliefs about emotions is a fundamental component of many therapies. Though therapies differ in the way they address these beliefs. Most therapies use psychoeducation and teach clients to question their judgments and beliefs. The idea is that by critically examining emotional beliefs, their impact can be reduced. For instance, practitioners can help clients examine the long-term consequences of their assumptions, consider how assumptions can become self-fulfilling, and identify the advantages and disadvantages of holding on to these assumptions. Moreover, by acting against their assumptions, usually through behavioral experiments, clients learn that their beliefs are not in line with reality and that they have the power to act in a different way than dictated by their beliefs. In mindfulness-based therapies, the impact of dysfunctional beliefs is reduced by teaching clients to observe them from a distance rather than accept them as truth. In these therapies, clients learn to see the difference between beliefs and reality. Rather than challenging irrational beliefs about emotions, mindfulness practice involves reducing the identification with these beliefs.

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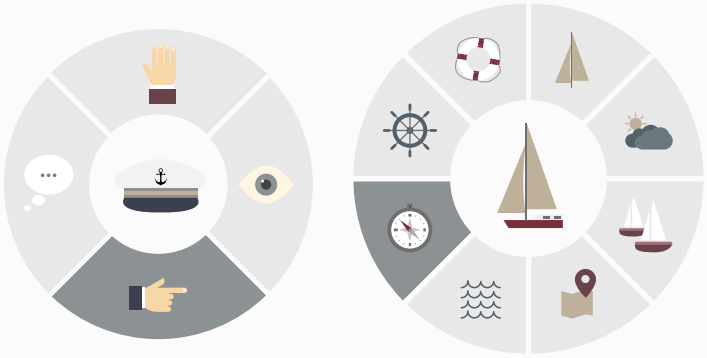
11

EMOTIONAL KNOWLEGDE

Emotions and motivation are linked in many ways. First, the experience of an emotion can motivate an individual to take a certain course of action. Anger, for instance, may motivate a person to harm a transgressor. The experience of joy may motivate a person to continue engaging in a certain activity.

At a deeper level, emotions also reveal information about two important motivators of behavior; needs and values. In this chapter, we address the connection between emotions and motivation and discuss the impact of extracting motivational information from emotional states on well-being.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



In the sailboat metaphor, the relationship between motivation and emotion is illustrated by the link between the motivation of the captain and the compass. What does the feedback from the compass motivate the captain to do? What does the compass' feedback reveal about the aspirations of the captain?

APPROACH, AVOID OR WITHDRAW

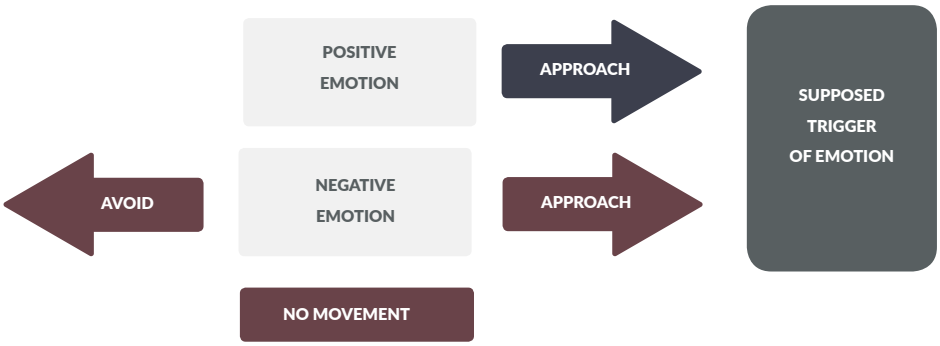
Emotions move and motivate us (Rolls, 1999). All these words—emotion, move, and motivate—share the same Latin root emovare, meaning "to move". In general, positive emotions, like pride or joy, motivate us to approach the supposed trigger of the emotion. For instance, when we experience positive emotions, like gratitude and enthusiasm during a football game (emotional trigger), we may become very motivated to continue playing (approach) this game.

Negative emotions are more complex in terms of the motivational orientation they produce. Emotions such as anger and contempt typically motivate to move towards the supposed trigger of the emotion by opposing or attacking it. For instance, when a colleague offends us by making a snide remark (emotional trigger), the anger that results from this remark may motivate us to insult the colleague (approach).

In contrast, negative emotions such as shame, disgust, and embarrassment involve a tendency for social withdrawal. For instance, the embarrassment we feel after being corrected by a colleague for making a silly mistake (emotional trigger) may motivate us to avoid future encounters with this particular colleague.

Emotions such as sadness and sorrow often do not motivate the individual to approach or avoid the emotional trigger, but rather result in inactivity; a state where the individual is giving up any attempt to actively interact with the emotional trigger at hand (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989). For instance, the sadness that results from loss of employment (emotional trigger) may result in no active attempts to search and apply for a new job position. In sum, emotions can motivate people to approach, avoid, or withdraw from the trigger that is believed to have caused the emotion.

Fig. 11.1 Different motivational orientations resulting from positive versus negative emotions



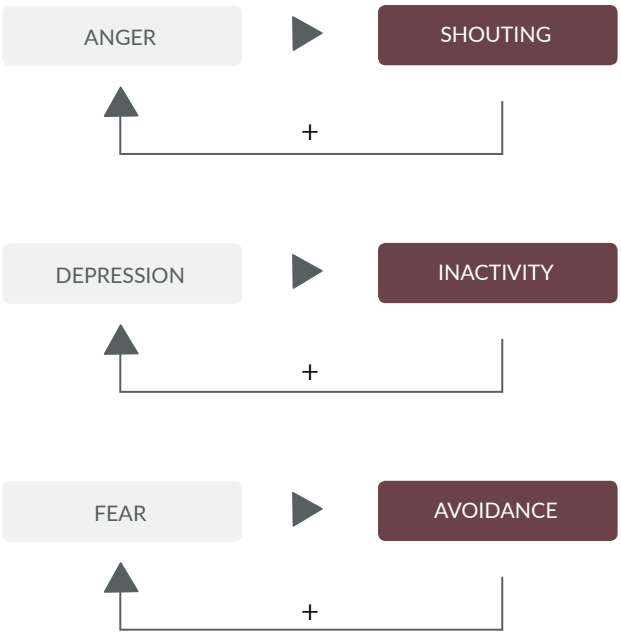
EMOTION-DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR

Emotion-driven behaviour means that we behave in the exact way the emotion motivates us to behave (see also the section “action tendencies” in chapter 9). For instance, fear of rejection results in avoiding contact with others and feelings of sadness cause withdrawal from activities. In other words, emotion driven

behaviour means that the emotion dictates the course of action.

Hardwired emotion-driven responses are part of our evolutionary survival programming and may help in crisis situations. The motivation to avoid and escape that is fuelled by fear can be helpful in life threatening situations, but may be far from adaptive in most day-to-day circumstances. In fact, when used habitually, emotion-driven behaviors have the paradoxical effect of keeping the emotions alive or even exacerbating them. For instance, when a person who fears rejection follows his fear and avoids socialising, he may face a lonely future and may eventually feel completely rejected when his social life is no longer active. The fear caused him to create the very situation he initially feared. Likewise, by becoming more and more inactive, the depressed person increases depressed feelings and emotions (see fig. 11.2). In line with this, research has shown that aggression intensifies anger (McKay, Rogers, & McKay, 2003), avoidance can create anxiety disorders (Allen, McHugh, & Barlow, 2008), and withdrawal is the prime driver of depression (Zettel, 2007). Over time, repeated engagement in emotion driven behaviour can trigger a negative spiral where people manifest the very emotions they are trying to avoid or diminish.

Fig. 11.2 Emotion-driven behaviors keep the emotions alive or increase them



HELP CLIENTS ENGAGE IN OPPOSITE ACTIONS

It is important for clients to learn that acting on the urge that accompanies an emotion strengthens the emotion. Emotion-driven behavior, regardless of how right or natural it feels, is often counter-productive. A technique that is used in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to help clients get unstuck from ineffective behaviors that arise from certain emotional states is "Use Opposite to Emotion" or "Opposite Action." This technique directs clients to act in ways that are the opposite of the behaviors toward which their difficult emotions pulled them. For example, a client who feels guilt because he did something hurtful to another person may try to hide from this person or try to avoid accepting responsibility for his actions. Using "Opposite to Emotion" means that this person approaches rather than avoids the other person. He apologizes and tries to make the situation better if possible. In sum, opposite to emotion is intended to unstick clients from prolonged and overly intense emotional states by recognizing behaviors that do not work and instead choosing those opposite behaviors that are more effective. Put simply, opposite action helps clients to do less of what does not work and more of what does in order to change their emotions.

EMOTIONS ARE DATA

According to the feelings-as-information theory (Schwartz, 2012), people attend to their feelings as a source of information, with different feelings providing different types of information. This assumption that emotions serve a signalling function is shared by many theories of emotion (see Frijda, 1986; for a review). As Frijda (1988, p. 354) states, "emotions exist for the sake of signaling states of the world that have to be responded to, or that no longer need response and action." In other words, emotions reveal important information about our interaction with the environment. For example, feelings of regret may inform us that we not have acted in line with how we believe we should or want to act. Likewise, feelings of loneliness may inform us that we need to engage more actively with our social environment. As such, emotions serve as a great source of information. By carefully listening to the information that an emotion signals to us, we can use this information to make choices and judgments that promote well-being. In contrast, an inability to use such emotional information when making judgments should be

maladaptive (e.g., Damasio, 1994). Here, we discuss two key types of information that emotions provide information about; needs and values.

▶ NEEDS

Emotions have long been recognised as means to communicate information about people's needs. Rosenberg (2003) defines the concept of needs as follows:

"[Needs] can be thought of as resources life requires to sustain itself. For example, our physical well-being depends on our needs for air, water, rest, and food being fulfilled. Our psychological and spiritual well-being is enhanced when our needs for understanding, support, honesty and meaning are fulfilled. As I'm defining needs, all human beings have the same needs. Regardless of our gender, educational level, religious beliefs or nationality, we have the same needs. What differs from person to person is the strategy for fulfilling needs. (...) (2003, p.4).

Examples of needs include: choice, freedom, relatedness, competence, love, and closeness. In general, negative emotions indicate that a certain need is not being satisfied. Negative emotions signal to a person that it is necessary to pause and attend to this need (Frijda, 1993; Simon, 1967). For instance, a person who is unexpectedly not invited to a dinner party may feel excluded. This feeling is a signal that he or she has a need for connectedness, a need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Likewise, high level of stress may indicate that there is a need for rest and relaxation. Positive emotions, on the other hand, signal that one's needs have been met and that an activity ought to be continued. For instance, a person who is able to complete a complex task without help from others may experience pride. The pride signals that one's need for autonomy and competence are being satisfied. Emotions and feelings can thus provide valuable information on need satisfaction.

▶ VALUES

Emotions usually emerge when something valuable to an individual is at stake. The human body is not making an effort to produce an emotional response unless there is something important for the individual to be aware of. As such, emotions reveal information about our values. Values represent the things we consider to be important in life. There are many different values. Examples include: accountability, achievement, altruism, ambition, creativity, enthusiasm, equality, exploration, and autonomy.

The relationship between values and emotions is more complex than the rather straightforward relationship between emotions and needs. Whereas negative emotions generally indicate a lack of need fulfilment, negative emotions

do necessarily inform us that our action do not align with our values. Although emotions like regret and shame may inform us that we have not acted in line with our values, fear may indicate that our current actions do align with our values. Consider for example a person who experiences fear because she is about to give a presentation to a large audience. She is afraid that she might fail in delivering this presentation. What does this fear tell her? First, the fear may inform her that for some reason, the presentation is important to her. After all, if the challenge would not be that important, it probably would not have caused any fear. Obviously, a big part of fear is the fear of the unknown, the fact that this person does not know what will happen. In most cases, fear is about a potential future. It is not about the here and now, but about what might happen. Fear can be defined as the thought that we are not going to be able to have something we think we need. In other words, fear involves the individual believing that he or she may not have something in the future that is considered to be important to have. As becomes apparent in this definition, fear involves two key words: missing (not having) and important. When experiencing fear, the key question that reveals insight in personal values is: What is so important that I am afraid of missing? In this example, the fact that the challenge evokes fear informs this person that something valuable that can potentially be gained by giving the presentation, may not be gained. What is there to be gained in this example? Perhaps the person finds it important to reach many people and inform them about her ideas. Or, the person may wish to receive a certain amount of respect by the audience.

PREVENT TOO MUCH SELF-REFLECTION

The fact that emotions may provide information about personal needs and values does not mean that clients should always reflect upon the potential meaning of an emotion. In some cases, it is unclear what an emotion really wants to tell us. Rather than trying to uncover the potential meaning of an emotion by constantly thinking about it, it is sometimes better to let go of the desire to understand the emotion. Reflecting on the meaning of emotions too much or too early in the process can easily cause clients to "get stuck in their heads" which prevents them from connecting to the emotion at an experiential level (see the chapter "emotional awareness"). In other words, clients should find a healthy balance between emotional self-reflection and emotional experience.

As the previously described example illustrates, fear contains information about personal values. By moving beyond the direct experience of fear and by reflecting on the value that is expressed by the fear, fear can become a guide, rather than an emotion to be avoided. Fear shifts attention to potential loss and danger. It serves a function in this way. Fear can keep us sharp. However, blindly following fear may cause the individual to miss important opportunities for growth. In fact, if the fear rather than the value behind the fear guides the individual's actions, the very thing that one is afraid of not having may, paradoxically, will not be obtained.

It is important to note that not only negative emotions, such as fear, can signal information about values. Positive emotions, such as joy, hope, and gratitude, can also reveal information about personal values. In general, positive emotions typically emerge when the actions of the individual align with personal values. In the earlier mentioned example, positive feedback from the audience after successfully delivering the presentation may result in feelings of pride and gratitude. In the same way the fear pointed towards the perceived importance of the presentation, so do these positive emotions.

In sum, emotions can automatically motivate us to pursue certain actions, but these actions may not contribute to personal well-being. It is therefore important to take a step back from emotions and reflect upon them, rather than to automatically act upon them. Rather than blindly basing one's actions on emotions such as fear, careful self-reflection in terms of the link between the emotion, needs and personal values may be a powerful way to engage in behaviour that will enhance, rather than reduce well-being.

ANALYZE THE CLIENT'S TYPE OF VALUES

When examining the link between emotions and values with clients, it is important to make a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values. Intrinsic values reflect the inherent human desire to grow and develop. Intrinsic values are freely chosen and directly contribute to the well-being of the client. Examples of intrinsic values include self-acceptance, affiliation, and creativity. Extrinsic values on the other hand, can best be described as a means to an end. An extrinsic value may reflect a desire to be appreciated, approved, or accepted by others, or to meet certain standards. Emotions can reveal information about both intrinsic and extrinsic values. For example, a client may notice that she is afraid that others will make negative comments about her appearance.

This fear may point to an extrinsic value; looking attractive in the eyes of others. This very same value may underlie positive emotions, such as joy, that may arise when others compliment her for looking good. Alternatively, a client may experience fear and insecurity when applying for a dream job. Here, the fear may point towards an intrinsic value. Perhaps the clients feels that this new job will allow her to grow and develop in an area of interest. The fear informs the client that something valuable is at stake here. Once the client is working at her new job, feelings of pride and joy may point to the very same intrinsic value that the fear was referring to: self-development. Emotions thus provide an important "gateway" to the values of the client that promote and reduce well-being.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

One could state that emotions provide information about the extent to which people are "on track"; whether their current actions align with what they need and believe is important in life. In the same way, the compass of a boat helps the captain to check whether the boat is still on track. At regular intervals, the captain should ask himself: What does the current feedback from the compass tell me about my current direction? Is this feedback telling me that I am sailing in the desired direction? Will continue sailing in this direction bring forward the journey I long for?

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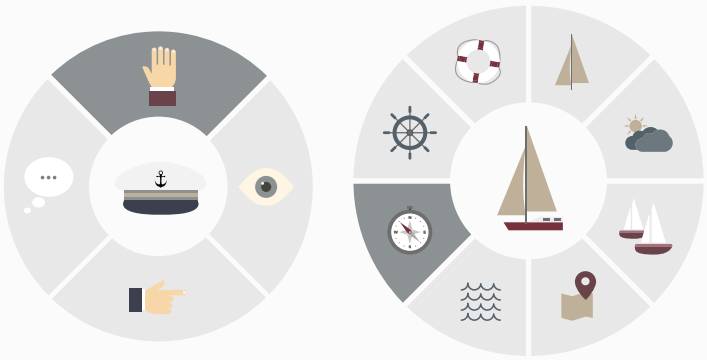
12

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Emotional expression refers to the ability to name and express what is happening emotionally. Emotionally intelligent people are skilled at expressing their emotions (Gunderman, 2011). Here, we discuss different forms of emotional expression and address the underlying mechanisms of emotional disclosure.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR



Emotional expression is a form of action. The individual makes an effort to translate the emotion in concrete ways, such as through writing or talking. Therefore, in the sailboat metaphor, emotional expression can be translated as the captain's actions regarding his compass. How is the captain naming and expressing the feedback from the compass? The captain may, for example, share the feedback with other captains, use the feedback to update his logbook, shout out loud because the feedback is unfavorable, etc.

FORMS OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Below we describe the most common forms of emotional expression.

SOCIAL SHARING

Research suggests that sharing emotions with other people is a very common reaction to the experience of emotions. In 80 to 95 percent of cases, people talk about their emotions when they experience them (for a review, see Rimé, Herbette, & Corsini, 2004). Talking about emotions with others occurs during the

hours, days, and even weeks and months following an emotional episode. It is common for people of all ages and in contrast to well-known stereotypes, men and women are equally prone to share their emotions (for a review, see Rimé, Herbette, & Corsini, 2004). Both positive emotions like happiness and love, and negative emotions like fear, anger, and sadness, have been found to be shared with similar degrees.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

In the sailboat metaphor, social sharing can best be translated as the captain sharing the feedback from his compass verbally, by talking to another captain.

▶ WRITTEN EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS

A large body of research has addressed the effects of written disclosure of emotion on well-being. In most of these studies (e.g., Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988), participants write about past stressful or traumatic events in their lives for short sessions (15 to 30 minutes) on a daily basis for several consecutive days. They are instructed to write about the emotional aspects of the event, rather than the factual aspects (Pennebaker & Beall ,1986; Zech & Rimé, 2005). Control participants write about trivial topics.

In general, these studies consistently demonstrate that compared to control participants, participants in the trauma writing condition show both less frequent illness-related visits to a health center and fewer self-reported illness symptoms at follow-up (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). Other studies have extended the range of outcomes and showed that writing about traumatic events is also

beneficial for one's psychological health, physical health, and overall functioning (for a review, see Frattaroli, 2006). A statistical review of studies involving the written expression of trauma-related emotions revealed that the overall magnitude of improvements associated with expressive writing (across various measures of well-being) is 23%, which is comparable to or larger than the general magnitude of improvement found with other psychological interventions (Smyth, 1998). This implies that writing as a means of expressing one's emotions can be considered a potentially powerful intervention for increasing well-being.

SHARE THAT EXPRESSIVE WRITING IS NOT A QUICK FIX

It is important to note that the benefits of written expression of emotions appear to emerge in time, rather than immediately. In fact, directly after expressing, participants typically report feeling worse and are more physiologically aroused. For instance, Pennebaker and Beall (1986) found that writing about emotions associated with a traumatic event was associated with increased arousal on the first day, but decreased arousal on three consecutive days. Moreover, Pennebaker (1990) suggests that "repeatedly confronting an upsetting experience allows for a less emotionally laden assessment of its meaning and impact" (p. 106). Possibly, the repeated process of self-reflection is a way to expose oneself to the emotion and thereby reduce its impact. Clients should be made aware of the fact that the benefits of self-expressive writing develop over time. Written disclosure of emotions is not a "quick fix."

▶ MUSICAL EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS

Some authors (e.g., Cooke, 1959) have described music as the "language of the emotions". In line with this, research findings show that music listeners perceive music as being expressive of emotions (for a review, see Gabrielsson & Juslin, 2003). Moreover, studies have revealed that performers can communicate emotions to listeners. In a meta-analysis of 41 studies Justin and Laukka (2003) showed that professional performers are able to communicate five emotions (happiness, anger, sadness, fear, tenderness) to listeners with an accuracy approximately as high as in facial and vocal expression of emotions.

In a systematic comparison of 104 studies of emotional speech and 41 studies of emotion in music performance, Juslin and Laukka (2003) showed that performers use emotion-specific patterns of acoustic parameters that are similar to emotional speech. For instance, just like people who are happy tend to speak faster, happy music is characterised by a higher tempo. Likewise, just like the expression of sadness is characterized by a softer voice, sad music tends to have a lower sound level. These findings support the view that music can be used to express one's current emotional state. One may express an emotion by creating music that mimics the characteristics of that emotion. Anger, for example, can be translated in loud and fast percussive sounds. Likewise, joy may be expressed by playing uplifting and cheerful melodies.

SAILBOAT METAPHOR

In the sailboat metaphor, an example of a written expression of emotions would be the captain using the feedback from the compass to make notes in his logbook. The captain uses his logbook to write down the most important observations from his compass. In his logbook records, the captain may respond to questions such as "What did the feedback from the compass teach me about the current part of my journey?" and "According to the compass, is my boat sailing on track?".

REASONS FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPRESSION

Here, we present three possible reasons for how emotional expression can improve well-being: emotional expression can (a) reduce the negative consequences of emotional avoidance, (b) increase self-insight and create meaning, and (c)

positively influence relationships with others. Please note that the reasons presented here can be regarded as rudimentary as there is little direct evidence supporting these claims. Nevertheless, they may help to shed light on the potential reasons underlying the adaptive functions of expression.

▶ REDUCING THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF AVOIDANCE

People who experience a strong negative emotions are often afraid of these emotions (see for instance Krystal, 1978). A common fear is that one is not able to control the emotions once they are allowed to be present and that one will be overwhelmed when expressing them. This fear may intensify feelings of stress and can result in a negative spiral whereby the individual fears to be overwhelmed, which causes further stress, which in turn increases the fear of becoming overwhelmed.

A fear of intense feelings can cause people to actively suppress or avoid emotions. Although avoidance may result in short-term relief, it will not help to deal with emotions in the long run. There is a constant fear that emotions take over, and if they do take over, the individual may interpret this as a sign that he is not coping well, feel even more distressed, and try even harder to avoid these feelings. A large body of research has revealed the negative consequences of emotional suppression (for more information on suppression, see chapter 9). Paradoxically, research has repeatedly demonstrated that trying to control and avoid negative experiences often increases their intensity, this is called the paradox of control (see for instance Wegner, 1994).

Rather than avoiding or suppressing emotions, expressing emotions can be a way to approach emotions. Moreover, expression provides an opportunity to learn that one's distress is painful but not unbearable (Greenberg, Wortman, & Stone, 1996). For example, a person can learn that the expression of difficult emotions may cause him to cry, but it does not mean he will never be able to stop crying. In other words, emotional expression can be a way to allow people to directly experience that the fear of negative emotions is unjustified.

▶ INCREASING SELF-INSIGHT

A second reason for the positive effects of emotional expression on well-being is because expression can increase understanding of the emotions themselves or the trigger of the emotions. Put simply, expression can lead to better understanding of what one is feeling and why. Indeed, the large majority of participants who expressed traumatic emotions in the various studies conducted by Pennebaker mentioned that their writing resulted in long-term benefits involving insight. During the debriefing, these participants made statements such as "It made me think things out," "It helped me look at myself from the outside," and "It was a

chance to sort out my thoughts" (Pennebaker, 1993, p. 110). In turn, the insights that result from emotional expression can help people better cope with these emotions (Kennedy-Moore, 1999; Mayer & Gaschke, 1988; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

It is important to note that there are two important caveats concerning expression-related insight. First, although emotional expression can increase self-insight, this insight does not necessarily lead to immediate reductions in distress. Self-insight can also intensify and prolong negative feelings. For example, rehearsing the assumed cause of anger can be a way to sustain anger, rather than reduce it. Second, not all forms of expression lead to insight. Emotional expression that involves rumination, or passive brooding about an emotional experience, will not lead to new insights but will rather intensify and prolong the negative emotion (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Rather than labeling experiences with a high degree of specificity, ruminative expression is characterized by vague and diffuse language. Ruminative statements like "I just feel horrible" and "I always feel miserable" will not increase active coping but exacerbate negative states.

▶ POSITIVELY INFLUENCING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

A final reason for the observed positive effects of emotional expression pertains to the interpersonal impact of expression. First, sharing difficult emotions with others can alleviate self-doubts. Often, distressed people have a high level of inner criticism, perceiving their own stress as a sign of weakness. They may feel that, unlike others, they are unable to handle things properly and feel disconnected from the world around them (Neff, 2003). The feeling of self-doubt and disconnectedness can reduce if the listener responds with empathy, acceptance, and containment after sharing the negative emotional experience (cf. Kosmicki & Glickauf-Hughes, 1997). Hearing that the other person have had similar experiences, or at least is not repelled by the expresser's feelings, enables the expresser to appraise his or her emotions in a more positive light. Rather than feeling isolated, the supportive reaction of the other person allows the expresser to realize that negative emotions are part of the human experience (also referred to as common humanity; Neff, 2003).

Second, sharing painful emotions can improve well-being by creating a sense of trust in a relationship. Expressing negative emotions informs the other person that one feels safe enough to disclose vulnerable information about the self. Thus, sharing emotions can be an indirect way of telling the other person that he or she is trusted, which can strengthen the bond between both parties. When disclosure of emotions is followed by a constructive response, the other person confirms the mutual nature of trust in the relationship.

Third, expression can also directly resolve distress stemming from interpersonal conflict. Constructive expression of negative emotions during conflict can be an effective way to prevent the escalation of these emotions.

Expressing emotions that are experienced after a stressful encounter with another person can be the starting point of a constructive resolution if the communication is characterized by empathy (Rosenberg, 2005). Empathy has been defined as the ability to understand and share in another's emotional experience or situation (Blake, 2002; Cohen & Strayer, 1996; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004). Evidence from research findings suggest that empathy is associated with the establishment and maintenance of relationships (Del Barrio, Aluja, & García, 2004), improves the quality of intra-familiar relationships (Henry, Sager, & Plunkett, 1996), and increases the levels of satisfaction in close relationships (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Thomson, 2010).

Finally, the social expression of difficult emotions can also elicit social support. The expression can serve as a cue for significant others to provide assistance in coping.

So far, we have outlined the possible benefits of expressing difficult emotions to another person. It is important to note that all of the aforementioned benefits require that the recipients of emotional expression respond with warmth and understanding. Obviously, in real life, this is not always the case. In fact, recipients of emotional expression who respond in unsupportive ways can cause greater distress in the expresser than when no emotions were shared at all (Major et al., 1990). Recipients may respond in unhelpful ways to emotional disclosure for many different reasons. They may misread the intent of the expresser (e.g., offering advice while the expresser merely wants to "gripe"), dismiss or minimize the emotion out of caring for the expresser or because of their own discomfort with difficult emotions, or get carried away by emotions themselves (e.g., when the expresser starts yelling, the recipient starts yelling too). In sum, a prerequisite for the positive effects of emotional expression is the recipient's responses being experienced as accepting and understanding.

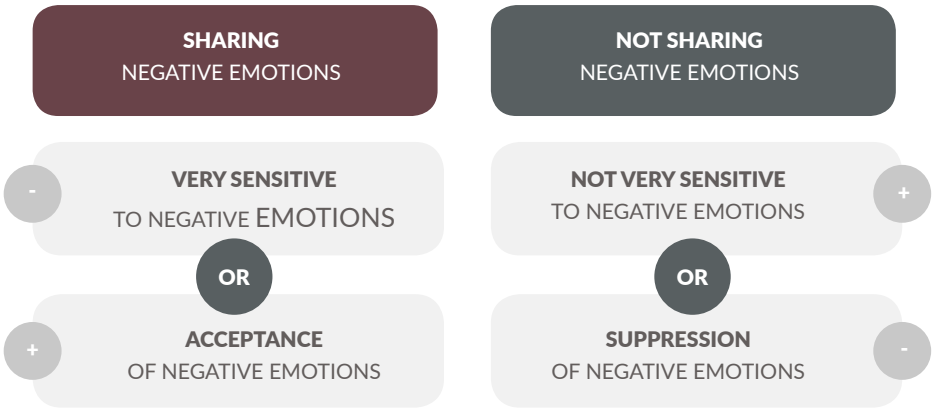
THE PARADOX OF EXPRESSING NEGATIVE EMOTION

Paradoxically, research has shown that the expression of negative emotions can be both a sign of positive and negative psychological functioning. On the one hand, expression of negative emotions has been found to increase distress (e.g., Ebbesen, Duncan, and Konecni, 1975), interfere with active coping efforts (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991), and have a destructive impact on interpersonal relationships (Tavris, 1984). On the other hand, the expression of negative emotions has been linked with a diverse range of positive outcomes. In a survey study among Western countries, 80% of the respondents endorsed the view that talking out emotions is helpful and this was then replicated in Hong-Kong (Zech, 2000). Moreover, a study by Nils and Rimé (2012) revealed that expressing negative emotions can lead to enhanced social integration (i.e. greater proximity to the listener; less loneliness) and an impression of feeling better.

THE CAUSE OF THE PARADOX

A possible reason for the existence of the above-described paradox is related to the different causes underlying emotional expression. While emotional expression can be a sign of a natural and healthy tendency to express emotions, it can also be a sign of hypersensitivity to emotions and reflect an inability to regulate one's own emotions effectively. An example of high sensitivity to emotional stimuli comes from research on negative affectivity (NA). Some people appear to have a higher than normal tendency to experience a wide variety of negative moods, including anxiety, frustration, sadness, irritability, and anger, even in the absence of obvious stressors (see Clark & Watson, 1991; Watson, 2000 for reviews). Because of a negative outlook on events and themselves, they are highly sensitive to negative information, resulting in the frequent experience of negative emotions. High-NA individuals are highly sensitive to daily hassles and frustrations and tend to dwell on their personal failures, as well as negative aspects of other people and the world in general. Consequently, high NA-individuals also tend to express negative emotions frequently. However, this expression is not contributing to their own or other people's' well-being. High-NA individuals often behave in hostile and demanding ways and experience a lot of social conflicts (Clark & Watson, 1991). Their tendency to express more negative than positive emotions often results in negative reactions from peers. Rather than expressing their emotions, the goal for high-NA individuals is to increase their ability to tolerate these emotions first.

Fig. 12.1 Both sharing and not sharing of negative emotions can be caused by adaptive and non-adaptive processes



While some people may express emotions too soon and too often, other people may be less prone to expressing their emotions. In the same way that sharing emotions does not necessarily promote well-being, not sharing negative emotions does not necessarily imply negative consequences for well-being. Again, this has to do with the different causes underlying the infrequent expression of negative emotions. On one hand, some people may be inexpressive because they are not very sensitive to negative emotions. For these people, there is little need to express negative emotions, simply because these emotions are not experienced very often or because they are not troubled by them.

On the other hand, other people are inexpressive because they tend to suppress or control their expression. The reason why these people are not showing negative emotions is not that they are not present, but because they do not want to show and/or feel them. Although there may be a desire to express emotions, the individual refrains from doing so. This reason for not expressing emotions has been found to be linked with poor psychological and physical well-being. Past research on traits like emotional control (Rogers & Jamieson, 1988; Rogers & Nesshoever, 1987) and self-concealment (Larsen & Chastain, 1990) has consistently demonstrated that deliberately holding in one's feelings and emotions are unhealthy. Rather than inhibiting their emotions, the goal for individuals who deliberately hold in their emotions is to allow them to be present and express them (see fig. 12.1).

ADDRESS THE REASONS FOR EXPRESSION

On the surface, one may think that it is always good to talk about emotions. If this were true, the message for clients would be straightforward and simple: always express emotions and talk about feelings. For practitioners, it is important to realize that when a client is talking about an emotional experience, this can both reflect the good and poor adjustment. Clients who strongly believe that talking about an emotion will reduce the intensity of the emotion can be very motivated to talk about feelings. In some cases, this tendency can reflect a negative relationship with difficult emotions. The client may use the verbal expression of feelings as a way to get rid of or avoid certain emotions. Rather than allowing oneself to experience the difficult emotion, the client feels compelled to reduce through talking. For instance, after experiencing a negative emotional event, a client immediately calls a friend to share the emotional experience in the hope

that the friend will reassure him or her so that the negative feeling will resolve. Instead of taking some time to connect to the emotional experience (emotional awareness), the client immediately enters into problem-solving mode, with the main purpose being getting rid of the negative feeling as soon as possible. Note that in this example, the person who is listening to the story of the client is expected to serve a function, namely saying things that will allow the negative feeling of the client to reduce. In sum, it is important to address the reason for why clients are compelled to share their emotional experiences with others rather than simply encouraging them to do so.

EXPRESSION OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS

So far, we have focused on the expression of negative emotions. However, both research and theory suggest that the expression of positive emotions is important as well (e.g., Bonanno & Keltner, 1997; Fredrickson, 1998; Keltner & Bonanno, 1997). Positive emotions can counterbalance negative emotions: love and humor can reduce sadness, hope and acceptance can help to bear trauma-related feelings, and empathy can defuse anger. Research by Pennebaker and Francis (1996) showed that expression of both negative and positive emotions was linked to health outcomes. In this study, positive words were a stronger predictor of health than were negative words. In another study, Pennebaker (1997) showed that a moderate number of negative emotion words and a relatively large number of positive emotion words reflected the best results from writing about traumatic experiences. This finding may imply that optimal healing involves the combination of an acknowledgment of problems with a sense of optimism.

In the past, several studies have addressed the impact of expressing positive emotions only. For instance, a study by King and Miner (2000) revealed that writing only about the positive aspects of a traumatic experience was associated with the same health benefits as writing about trauma. In another study by Burton and King (2004), participants either wrote about either an intensely positive experience (IPE) or a neutral topic for 20 min each day for three consecutive days. Mood measures were taken before and after writing. The results showed that writing about IPEs was associated with enhanced positive mood and significantly fewer health center visits for illness, compared to controls. In sum, these findings suggest that the positive effects of emotional expression are not limited to the

expression of negative emotions, but apply to the expression of positive emotions as well.

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