

A key component to the effective use of positive psychology interventions is the 'person activity fit' (Nelson Lyubomirsky 2012), the degree to which the activity matches the personality and goals of the individual.

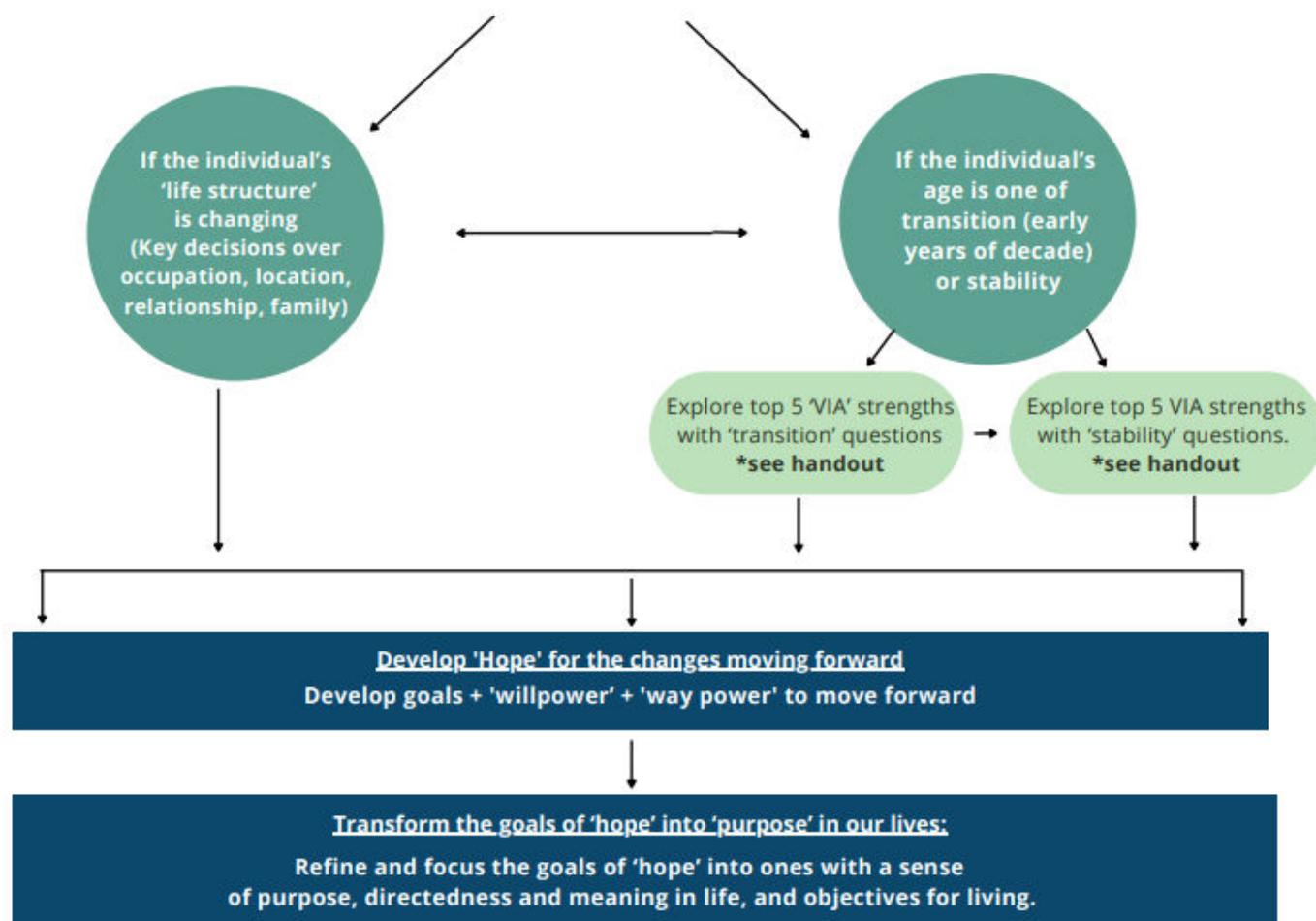
In positive psychology practice, this appears to be found or seen in two ways.

In the first, assessed by Lyubomirsky's (2008) PAF questionnaire, the aim is to establish which, out of a possible ten happiness-oriented exercises an individual feels most naturally related to and for them to explore those exercises and that experience. Naturally, that process can be repeated over time.

In contrast, there is the recognition that the characteristics of a particular user group (such as young people, the elderly, those who are ill, or depressed) should influence the choice and nature of positive psychology support (Nelson & Lyubomirsky 2012). Each group have different needs that would require a PPI to nuance or refine its delivery towards those needs. Therefore, any practitioner would need to be sensitive to differences occurring across individuals and groups.

Therefore, this poster offers an example of a process and sequence of exploration aimed at focusing PPI needs and experience at different ages.

The purpose of this process: Using PPIs to explore Lifespan developmental factors to facilitate and support change at specific ages





Tailoring Positive Psychology Interventions to a Recipient's Age and Context

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INTRODUCTION

This poster develops ideas contained in Chapter 9 of “Positive Psychology Across the Lifespan’ titled ‘Existential Positive Psychology Interventions In and Over Time’. We suggest that many approaches to positive psychology interventions (PPIs) focus on the ‘content’ of our lives and sometimes overlook the ‘context’ in which they occur. This poster proposes to summarise how PPIs may be used to refine and focus on the changing context of our lives. **What is offered are examples. Our hope and intention are to offer further additional examples on:**

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This handout describes a possible process, illustrated on the conference poster, to be used to focus on lifespan developmental needs of an individual or group at a point in time and to go through a sequence of steps to focus and sharpen an understanding of what might happen.



The purpose of this process: Using Lifespan developmental information & prompts to choose and refine PPIs / EPPIs at specific ages:

This step asks if the individual's 'life structure' is changing at this time?

Levinson et al (1978) propose that the personal 'life structure' is a small number of key decisions we make, between 1 and 4, that focus on the nature and organization of our lives in a period of time. These decisions tend to involve occupation, location, relationships, and family.

The life structure is "the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (Levinson et al 1978; Levinson & Levinson 1996). It is a tool to explore and analyse the fabric of one's life. Through it, we see the interrelatedness of our self and the world.

Periods in our lives will involve shifts in our priorities

- Relationships with others. Marriage and family. Friends. Colleagues.
- Work focus / occupation
- Location in which we live and work.
- Our relationship with our self.

The developmental periods of our lives are the periods in the evolution of the life structure.

How do we go about describing and analysing the life structure? The most useful focus is to consider the choices a person makes and how s/he deals with their consequences. The important choices in adult life have to do with work, family, friendships and love relationships of different kinds, where to live, leisure, involvement in religious, political and community life, immediate and long-term goals (Levinson et al 1978; Levinson & Levinson 1996).

We must consider the meaning and functions of a choice within the individual life structure. The life structure becomes a vehicle for living out certain aspects of the self and for engaging in certain modes of participation in the world.

The components of the life structure are not random items. Instead, they are like threads in a tapestry that are woven into a design. Remember, for every choice we make, there is almost certainly a choice not made, and these will often need revisiting as our lives evolve (Levinson et al 1978; Levinson & Levinson 1996).



Reflective Questions

As we change decades, what is changing within our life structure?
What do these changes and choices reflect in priorities evolving in our lives?
How will these changes be developed over time?
What changes do we choose not to make?

If this is occurring, we propose that goals could be created and strengthened via a focus on McDermott and Snyder's format for 'hope' (see below).

Character strengths adapted to support ages of transition or stability.

In parallel to an exploration of our life structure, it is possible that our character or 'signature' strengths may help us navigate periods of transition and stability.

Lifespan developmental psychology suggests that our lives go through phases over approximately ten years in which we will encounter periods of transition (from a previous phase in our life) to one of stability living out the tasks and experiences appropriate to the time. In simple or approximate terms, the time in which a decade of life changes from one to another is often one of transition. Periods of stability will often occur in the remaining time of the decade.

Drawing on positive psychology research and resources we recommend any individual considers finding an understanding of their character strengths, particularly the 'signature strengths', and then exploring how these might be used to face a period of either transition or stability.

The 'Values in Action' questionnaire on character strengths can be taken at: viacharacter.org

The website is extensive and will offer a lot of resources for understanding the nature of character and signature strengths.

Please note the hierarchy of strengths mirrored by the questionnaire feedback reflects our prioritisation of the strengths in our lives and does not measure their quality or development.



We propose that the leading strengths prioritised, the 'top five' which are often called our 'signature strengths', might be used or expressed differently in periods of transition or stability. This is illustrated below by an example, of one of the poster's authors. Questions such as these might be asked by someone like a coach practitioner supporting change, or reflectively by the individual about to experience change.

When you have completed the 'VIA', note which are the top five of your strengths that you prioritise?

- Do you see the expression of the individual strengths in your life?
- Consider whether there are ways in which two or more of your strengths interact to influence your own expression?
- Consider how you express your strengths when you are experiencing periods of change?
- Consider how you express your strengths when your life is stable and growing?



An example of how certain strengths could be seen through the 'lens' of transition or 'stability' is contained in the table below:

Note how expressions of strengths in both periods of transition and stability might have a quality of a 'weave' of different experiences coming together, being lived, and expressed together in your overall experience.

Character Strength	Possible contribution to a period of transition
Curiosity	What aspects of your life may change in the coming period? What might become new in your life?
Love of Learning	What might this period of change teach you? What might you most wish to learn in this period?
Spirituality, sense of purpose and faith	In what ways might your sense of purpose change in this period? Are you comfortable with this? Would you wish for something more or different?
Fairness, equity, justice	Which aspects of your life may change in this period? Are there ways in which – as an expression of fairness or equity – you would wish that to occur?
Judgement, critical thinking, open mindedness	As you face a period of change, in what way can you hold a quality of open-mindedness on what may occur? What aspects of this change might you want to understand more precisely?



Character Strength	Possible contribution to a period of stability
Curiosity	As this period of your life becomes more stable and open for development, what would you wish to know more about, or learn?
Love of Learning	What and how might you learn more about the key aspects of your life in this period of stability? What is a priority for you to learn in this time?
Spirituality, sense of purpose and faith	How might you develop your sense and expression of purpose in this period of your life? What is a priority for you? Is there an aspect of faith and spirituality you find particularly relevant to this period? How would you wish to express it?
Fairness, equity, justice	Are there ways in which – as an expression of fairness or equity – you would wish the structure of this period of your life to occur?
Judgement, critical thinking, open mindedness	In what way can you hold a quality of open-mindedness on what may occur within this period of stability? What aspects of this period might you want to understand more precisely?

Make notes on what you have learned from these reflections.



Develop 'Hope' for the changes moving forward:

C.R. (Rick) Snyder proposed a psychological structure to the nature of 'hope' – that it comprised 'goals', 'will power' and 'way power'.

The practical use of this vision of hope is summarised in McDermott and Snyder (1999) – see the details for this reference at the end of the document.

Utilise the McDermott and Snyder (1999) structure of articulating and growing 'hope'.

Develop goals + 'will power' + 'way power' to move forward.

These are reflective questions to support growing insights into your particular expression of 'hope'. McDermott and Snyder acknowledge that our experiences of each of these three parts may vary or change, personally to us.

Goals

What area of your life may change in the time period you are reflecting on? Is it one area of your life, or several? E.g. family, occupation, work, leisure, health and fitness, social or spiritual (McDermott & Snyder 1999)?

You may find your choices reflect your priorities or perceptions of importance in these areas at this time of your life. And what, within these areas, might increase your life satisfaction.

In their review of different areas of life McDermott and Snyder highlighted various qualities or characteristics influencing our goals:

- Alternative ways of expressing goals.
- The energy we can bring to our goals
- Identifying ways in which we can adapt in the face of difficulties or the unexpected.
- The ways in which past experiences may (or may not) have prepared you to reach the goal.

In shaping your goal, consider:

- What would improve your life satisfaction in this area of your life?
- How feasible is it for you to achieve?
- What steps may be needed to bring about your goal?



Will Power

Will power is more than most of us realise.
Our energy for a goal is affected by:

- Rest, and the amount and quality of our sleep.
- Diet and appropriate food.
- Our willingness to turn to others in the event of difficulty.
- Our willingness and ability to identify alternative ways to a goal in the event of difficulty.

Way Power

Reflecting on the 'way' to your goal, consider:

- The steps needed to reach your goal?
- The skill needed to bring about your goal, and whether you have that skill?
- Are you willing to learn skills needed?
- Help you may need, or benefit from to bring about your goal?
- One or more alternative ways in which you might reach your goal in the event of difficulties.



Transforming 'Hope' into 'Purpose' in our lives

Hope within positive psychology, is a representation of what matters most to us, and the energy we may bring to make this happen. Psychologically, this overlaps with the nature and function of 'purpose' in our lives. We propose that the goals of hope become or transform into purpose in our lives. What is 'purpose'? A summary of definitions are listed below.

- 'Has goals in life and a sense of directedness'.
- 'Feels there is meaning to present and past life'.
- 'Holds beliefs that give life purpose'.
- 'Has aims and objectives for living'.[1]
- ·Aims in life[2]
- Aims beyond today
- Commitment to goals – purpose drives 'higher order' goals.
- A sense of meaning and 'direction' in life.[3]
- Having goals in life – a sense of directedness – a belief that gives life purpose. [4]
- A broad, stimulating motivational component towards goals.

[1] Ryff 2014 Psychological Well-Being Revisited.

[2] Hill and Turiano 2014..

[3] Zioli et al 2015

[4] Pinquart 2002

·Ultimate goals or aims for life.[1]

·'...a sense that one's life has direction and that their actions are guided by some over-arching life aim'.[2]

·"A self-organizing life aim that stimulates goals, manages behaviour and provides a sense of meaning".[3]

·Identified types of purpose include – creative – prosocial – financial – and achieving personal recognition[4]. ('Prosocial' is the one type that influenced personal relationships the most.)

[1] Hill and Burrow 2012.

[2] Ryff 1989.

[3] Cohen et al 2016

[4] Hill, Burrow 'et al' 2010



The reference list at the end of the poster will include resources marked by an ' * ' to support readers in a more detailed exploration.

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