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Positive Clinical Psychology: A new vision and strategy for integrated research and practice

Alex M. Wood ... Nicholas Tarrier

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Abstract

This review argues for the development of a Positive Clinical Psychology, which has an integrated and equally weighted focus on both positive and negative functioning in all areas of research and practice. Positive characteristics (such as gratitude, flexibility, and positive emotions) can uniquely predict disorder beyond the predictive power of the presence of negative characteristics, and buffer the impact of negative life events, potentially preventing the development of disorder. Increased study of these characteristics can rapidly expand the knowledge base of clinical psychology and utilize the promising new interventions to treat disorder through promoting the positive. Further, positive and negative characteristics cannot logically be studied or changed in isolation as (a) they interact to predict clinical outcomes, (b) characteristics are neither "positive" or "negative", with outcomes depending on specific situation and concomitant goals and motivations, and (c) positive and negative well-being often exist

on the same continuum. Responding to criticisms of the Positive Psychology movement, we do not suggest the study of positive functioning as a separate field of clinical psychology, but rather that clinical psychology itself changes to become a more integrative discipline. An agenda for research and practice is proposed including reconceptualizing well-being, forming stronger collaborations with allied disciplines, rigorously evaluating the new positive interventions, and considering a role for clinical psychologists in promoting well-being as well as treating distress.



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Keywords

Positive psychology; Positive psychology interventions; Well-being; Gratitude; Optimism ; Depression; Happiness; Measurement

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