PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES FOR POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PRACTITIONERS

2024

Professional Guidelines for Positive Psychology Practitioners

The Positive Psychology Guild (PPG) is dedicated to the development of Occupational Standards for Positive Psychology in Practice. Our professional guidelines provide a minimum standard of ethical conduct before, during, and after client engagement for PPG members and practitioners on the PPG register.

Key Terms & References

What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is a scientific approach to wellbeing and educating people, organisations, and communities on how to thrive (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Sheldon & King, 2001). It encourages people to connect with their inner strengths and cultivate happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment, growth, and better relationships (Seligman, 2011). It is also a humanistic approach to supporting the wellbeing and flourishing of people and communities and draws on multi-disciplinary perspectives from Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology (PPG Matrix, 2021) alongside its scientific approach.

Who is a Positive Psychology Student?

A Positive Psychology student is an individual who is enrolled within a structured piece of training, such as a course, training session, or workshop, whether taught or online. Owing to the introspective nature of Positive Psychology; the student may also spend time within a "client" dynamic, and as such - the client rules and boundaries may also apply.

What is a Positive Psychology Practitioner?

A Positive Psychology Practitioner is someone who applies Positive Psychology in a professional practice using a modality such as coaching, training, facilitation, and research. They are educated on the subject areas of Positive Psychology (e.g. Strengths, Authenticity, Resilience, Positive Emotions, Motivation) and are able to psychoeducate their clients and facilitate positive interventions with their clients in one or more of these areas. They should hold at least a UK level 3 qualification in Positive Psychology Practice (or the equivalent) and posses the research skills required to draw on evidence-based client engagement. They should also possess the observation, listening, reflective, and critical thinking skills required for case study work (i.e. needs analysis, case formulation, thematic analysis), and hold a recognised and reputable qualification in their area/s of Positive Psychology Practice (e.g. certificate, diploma, or degree).

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Are there specialised fields of practice?

Research is a specialised field of practice. A Positive Psychology Research Practitioner is someone who has engaged in and engages in Positive Psychology research using qualitative and/or quantitative methods.

Training is a specialised field of practice. A Positive Psychology Training Practitioner is someone who educates their clients on Positive Psychology using a strengths-based approach to education and assessment.

Coaching is a specialised field of practice. A Positive Psychology Coaching Practitioner is someone who supports their client's personal development using a strengths-based approach to wellbeing and flourishing.

Facilitation is a specialised field of practice. It may be applied to the facilitation of people, organisations, policy, and research depending on the client's needs and the practitioner's skills.

The above fields are non-clinical. Practitioners work with clients who are deemed functioning in everyday life and do not present complex psychological needs that may require a therapeutic or clinical referral process.

Are there auxiliary fields of practice?

Yes. An auxiliary field of practice in this context is where a practitioner uses Positive Psychology-informed approaches to engage their clients. For example, a counsellor or coach or trainer might use a strengths-based approach to help a client find their authentic self. If you are working in an auxiliary field, please be clear on your scope of practice and any insurance requirements, and explicit during contracting that Positive Psychology is one of your approaches.

What is a Positive Psychology Client?

A Positive Psychology client is an individual or organisation who engages with a qualified Positive Psychology Practitioner whether paid or otherwise. The relationship is contracted with respect for the below Code of Ethics.

What is a Positive Psychology Research Participant?

A Positive Psychology research participant is an individual who engages with a qualified Positive Psychology Research Practitioner in a research study. The relationship is contracted with respect for the below Code of Ethics. In addition, the participant should have the right to withdraw their participation at any point of the research without giving a reason and their data destroyed.

Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct

As a Positive Psychology Practitioner, I hereby commit to:

- Honestly presenting my skills, experience, and qualifications in Positive Psychology to my clients and potential clients, and to any other audience engaging in my work;
- Agreeing on a contract outlining service costs and expectations, and the nature of a professional relationship with my clients in advance of any service delivery;
- Disclosing any existing conflict or known potential for conflict with my clients in advance of any service delivery, or as soon as the knowledge of this arises;
- Providing knowledge to my clients on aspects of Positive Psychology that are relevant to their personal and/or professional growth so that they may develop an awareness and basic understanding of this field;
- Supporting my clients in developing a resilient and positive outlook while allowing space for processing of negative situations and emotions that can accompany the reality and challenges of life and work;
- Supporting my clients in the development of Positive Psychology life skills such as critical thinking, being present and authentic, and developing personal character strengths;
- Leading authentically in these above two areas as a positive role model and example to my clients;
- Respecting client confidentiality at all times unless I believe a client is an immediate threat to themselves, or to other people, in which case I will report the situation in an appropriate manner to the relevant authorities;
- Respecting client diversity and cultural differences;
- Respecting client boundaries and avoid using my clients for any kind of personal gain, sexual gratification, or other exploitation;
- Respecting my own professional boundaries and cultivating a practice that includes care for myself as well as care for my clients;
- Maintaining clear, correct, and confidential records of my client work;

- Referring clients to appropriate service providers should I be unable or unwilling to offer my professional support;

- Running a strengths-based practice and correctly referencing any sources I use in my research and/or to support the promotion or visibility of my work;

- Committing to my ongoing professional development in Positive Psychology and other related fields.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

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