

MAPP Alumni Magazine

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Singapore's First Happiness Film Festival

By Donna Hemmert (MAPP 2015)

Simon Leow (MAPP 2015) and Sherman Ho want to help people better understand the choices they can make to be happier. Their hope is to make Singapore a kinder, more gracious, and resilient society. They both came to this endeavor after their own winding, yet serendipitous paths. In 2011, Simon Leow, a successful educator and administrator, found himself unhappy with thoughts of suicide, despite a successful career. He had status and material comfort, yet he found himself at a crossroad. He quit his job and traveled. In his travels, he realized that everyone just wants to be happy. To help him understand what enables happiness, he searched for a master's degree in happiness and found MAPP at the University of Pennsylvania.

Similarly, Sherman started out as a commodities trader in a multi-national corporation, working on the Africa team. After much travel in Africa, including a three-month stint in Ghana, he saw a world vastly

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different from Singapore. The struggles for developing nations are far removed from the challenges others face in more privileged societies like Singapore. And despite these privileges, there were still many people in Singapore who were unhappy. This shaped his perspective of life and led him to ponder what makes people happy.

Simon and Sherman's individual happiness journeys led to the founding of the Happiness Initiative (just two years after Simon finished MAPP). They shared a common vision and complementary strengths. One of



Simon's top strengths is creativity which was synergistic with Sherman's ability to convert ideas into reality. They appreciate how they are able to bring out the best of each other while covering each other's blind spots. Sherman noted that the team did have their differences but meaning, along with a shared vision, help transcend any disparities.

In 2017, they developed *The Mindset Board Game*. Through the game, participants can discover the differences between Growth and Fixed Mindset and build the skills necessary for developing the former.

To date, the game has been played by over 2,000 people, mostly K-12 students.

Top: Simon and Sherman. **Bottom:** Kids play *The Mindset Board Game*.



A Strong First Impression

I remember my first day of MAPP in the Fall of 2014. Marty Seligman was calling upon classmates to share their reason for pursuing a MAPP degree. I was both nervous and curious. One of the people he beckoned was Simon Leow. My curiosity masked my relief in not being called up as I watched my classmate make his way forward. I'll never forget Simon's story of striving for meaning after a very successful career in education administration in Singapore. I, like I know other classmates, kept an eye on Simon from that day forward. There was something about Simon: so intelligent, articulate and soulful.

Fast forward five years and Simon continues to blow me away with co-founding the first ever — and sold out to boot — happiness film festival in Southeast Asia.



Simon and Sherman in action at the Happiness Film Festival.

After the success of *The Mindset Board Game*, the pair wanted to go bigger. They wanted something impactful with a broader reach. Simon pushed for a film festival. He saw that film had power, the ability to evoke strong emotion while delivering important messages, and importantly audiences might challenge their perspectives on what happiness means to them. Simon knew Sherman had been a long-standing volunteer with the Singapore Film Society and that would help them build the roadmap. The seed was planted!



Films included *A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story*, *Survival Family*, *Finding Hygge*, *The Work*, *On Happiness Road*, and *Minimalism*.

A mere eight months would pass before the inaugural event would launch. Most of the work fell squarely on the pair — only adding staffing the final weeks before launch. Along the way, they secured grants from the MAPP Alumni Association, National Youth Council, and the Singapore government grant (*Our Singapore Fund*).

The film festival was held March 20 – 24, 2019 (coinciding with the United Nations Day of Happiness) in Singapore and attended by over 1,500 people — a completely sold out event — workshops and films alike. The common theme was “Happiness is from Within” and explored different aspects of happiness: kindness, resilience, meaning, purpose, pain, vulnerability,

After the success of *The Mindset Board Game*, the pair wanted to go bigger.

technology, attachment, being present, contentment, and mindful consumption. There were ten events: two 90-minute workshops (one on happiness and one on meaning) and eight screenings. Each screening was followed by a moderated panel discussion. The panels consisted of over 20 professionals including MAPPster Ms. Sulynn Choong, Dr. William Wan (General Secretary, Singapore Kindness Movement) and Ms. Jun Chu (Head of Public Policy and Philanthropy, Greater China, Twitter, Inc.).

Looking at the packed audiences, Simon asked himself, “If happiness can spread in some small way to several hundred people at a screening, might they go home or into their community and spread a bit to others?” He realized that the film festival was bigger than just the Happiness Initiative and those who made the event happen. The power of the event continues. Currently, there is even a well-known producer in Singapore who is researching a new film on happiness as a result of the festival. No less important was the overwhelming response from the audiences. The vast majority felt they gained insights from the event (97%). One hundred percent of those surveyed said they were satisfied with the event. Ninety six percent felt inspired to do something more for their community.

Simon and Sherman have big plans for the future. Next year, the Happiness Initiative is growing the film festival into a much broader international conference bringing in practitioners of positive psychology to inspire a larger dialogue and run workshops. Day hours will be spent in conference with the film festival airing at night. The Happiness Film Festival will run from March 18 – 22, 2020 with the Happiness Conference coinciding March 19 – 21, 2020.

In a recent Skype conversation with Simon, he thoughtfully pondered all the ways that MAPP has enabled his journey. He shared the support of the MAPP community including Sulynn Choong’s assistance with the film festival, the MAPP Alumni grant, MAPPsters sharing the film festival on social media, Lisa Sansom helping tout it in MAPP Briefs, the emotional support of his MAPP classmates, etc. He paused, and then remarked how he has attended other higher education programs including pursuing a Ph.D. in Singapore after MAPP. Ultimately, the program didn’t hold the inspiration and community. He remarked that the Ph.D. program had rigorous statistics, but it lacked the ability for him to get in touch with what truly matters. What makes MAPP so different? Simon said, “I think what makes the MAPP program special is it allows us to get in touch with our heart.”

Making Well-Being Engaging

“In a society where well-being is not necessarily a priority, we had to come up with creative ways to engage people and to start dialogues about improving Singapore’s well-being. *The Mindset Board Game* was one result of that effort. The Happiness Film Festival was another. Film is such an engaging and powerful medium to start conversations and inspire personal reflections.” — Sherman Ho

Find out more about the Happiness Film Festival and the Happiness initiative here:

Website: www.happinessinitiative.sg **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/happinessinitiative.sg/>
Instagram: www.instagram.com/happinessinitiative.sg/



Donna Hemmert, MAPP, is leveraging years of entrepreneurship in the Internet industry to help people thrive. She spent over two decades in executive leadership positions, driving marketing programs and forming strategic multi-million-dollar partnerships in high-tech companies ranging from startups to tech giants. She is co-founder of Positive Voices, a company delivering non-academic science-based content from leading experts via video, audio, online tools, and blogs.

An Interview with Dr. Dan Tomasulo: Dare to Be Happy ... & Hopeful

by Elaine O'Brien, PhD (MAPP 2008)

From "RateMyProfessor.com:"

Dr. Tomasulo is AWESOME and so is this class. It's an elective but it's worth taking because you get another side of psychology - the positive side. This course teaches you how to have and keep a healthy life with longevity. He's a great professor with an awesome aura. His teaching doesn't seem like work and overall the class was intriguing. Dr. Tomasulo is easily one of the best professors I've had."

Being in the presence of "Dr. Dan" Tomasulo evokes words like "inspiring" and "amazing!" My top words knowing him are "wicked smart, funny, caring/kind, lovable," and similarly, "amazing" and "inspiring."

I first met "Dr. Dan" in 1984. He was teaching psychology at Brookdale Community College, NJ. I was an adjunct, instructing Fitness Science and Fitness Through Dance. As an undergraduate in psychology, I had studied abnormal psychology, but not developmental. I was newly pregnant and curious about Human Growth and Development with a new baby coming soon.

"Dr. Dan" had a great reputation as a top instructor. Dan's knowledge, upbeat energy, and approach, made his course a delight. His thoughtful assignments gave me insight, and meaningful resources for approaching parenthood.



Dr. Dan Tomasulo

Dan and I reconnected in 2007, when he guest taught for Joel Morgovsky, his best friend. Joel led the first Positive Psychology class at Brookdale and I was a student in his class. It was serendipitous seeing Dan. I earned my MAPP degree in 2008, and later wrote a recommendation for Dan, a great man, scholar and innovator, who needed no introduction. With an impressive background encompassing more than 35 years of successful and award-winning clinical, academic, and literary experience, dedication, and enthusiasm, it is my honor to share this interview with my dear friend, Dr. Dan Tomasulo:

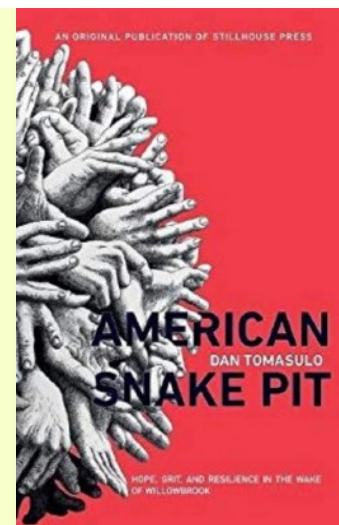
Elaine: What are 3-5 things you'd like people to know about you?

Dan: First, I'd like to thank you for inviting me to be featured in the MAPP magazine. Such a deep honor to be asked! I couldn't imagine talking to a

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more wonderful friend about what has been going on. Your path and journey have been an inspiration to witness and share parts of along the way—and I'm happy to share a bit of mine with you—so here goes!

- I'd like people to know that I'm taller than I appear in person— and that my top character strength is humor. They should also know I'm from Jersey. You got a problem with that?
- Secondly, my new book *Learned Hopefulness* will be out in spring 2020. It offers a host of new evidence-informed experiential interventions to help people deal with depression. It will introduce the Hierarchy of Hope. I'll chat more about this later on.
- I've been working in China helping to develop the use of artificial intelligence in the delivery of well-being interventions, which has been exciting and challenging. There is a lot to learn and much promise.
- My clinical research and work began in the field of concomitant intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. Since my memoir (*American Snake Pit*) came out last year about the early work on transitioning people out of Willowbrook, arguably the worst asylum in US history, I've been invited to bring the principles of positive psychology and positive psychotherapy to the people who may need it most. I consult with the University of New Hampshire's START program delivering clinical and support services to programs serving these people nationally, and we've been using MARTY's PERMA model. We are currently designing a large-scale research project to show the effectiveness of using these principles.



Dr. Dan's memoir, *American Snake Pit*, is about the early work of transitioning patients out of the Willowbrook asylum.

Elaine: Dan, this is GREAT! You are funny, brilliant, inspiring. I know you have been working as Marty Seligman's Assistant Instructor since 2012. What's your ideal vision around the art and science of Positive Psychology? What are you most excited about? What have you learned that means the most to you?

Much of my work ... has been the development of more experiential interventions than the ones we've all studied.

Dan: Marty's visionary approach and the development of the MAPP program has revolutionized psychology as it is conceived and delivered. I feel extremely fortunate to live through the transformation of the science and now to have become part of it. I was in my PhD program back in the day when *Learned Helplessness* came out and became a game changer. It is extraordinary to me that nearly fifty years since his original research, the *Hope Circuit* reveals how his work with Steve Maier has revolutionized the field again by showing the original paradigm for learned helplessness was wrong. To be witness to this extraordinary journey of Marty's is why I'm likely the world's oldest teaching assistant.

Elaine: What were the biggest surprises of your MAPP education?

Dan: The 'magic of MAPP' phenomenon. I thought this would be a type of retraining for psychologists — only to find out I was the first experiential therapist and licensed psychologist trained in psychodrama that Marty let into the program. I was never expecting the rich and deep friendships and collegiality to develop with my classmates and other

MAPPsterS. I was amazed that when I put together the New York Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology I was able to bring in and work with so many friends and top people in the field (like Barb Fredrickson, Bob Vallerand and Ryan Niemiec). There was no way before MAPP I'd be able to have these connections or deep friendships. The list of MAPPsters I feel I can call on and also be called on to help is

such a deep and wonderful resource of well-being. Watching my fellow MAPPsters excel and grow and change the world is a primary source of ongoing inspiration.

Elaine: *I completely agree about the “Magic of MAPP.” Dan, in 2017, at the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) World Congress, Montreal, you won the “Avant-garde Clinical Psychology award for the fusion of Psychodrama and Applied Positive Psychology.” Can you briefly describe the process of creating interventions/designs using Role Play/Enactment so people can “feel” Positive Emotions and Empowerment in the moment? Why does that matter?*

Dan: Many of the interventions in positive psychology involve reading and writing and have evolved from research built on using these modalities. The results are good, but it leaves the more experiential methods untested and therefore unused. Much of my work now at Columbia and in various consulting roles has been the development of more experiential interventions than the ones we’ve all studied. Many of these involve direct experiences that move beyond the use of words and writing to activate positivity.

Words and language are not primary affect activators nor efficient transducers for emotion. As children we are alive for years four to five or six before we have words to describe our feelings. No four-year-old would say to his parents, ‘I’m feeling a bit morose today.’

Experiential methods are designed to work with emotions at their core. My post-doctoral training was almost 13 years in psychodrama where we learn about these transformations as the result of embodied cognition. We study how our body influences our mind through its positioning and stance in the playing of various roles. Try thinking negative thoughts while you are smiling — or imagine a peak experience as you exaggerate a frown and you’ll have some idea of how your body influences — and perhaps determines thoughts and feelings.

When you combine role theory, embodied cognition, psychodrama, and positive psychology, the world opens in new ways. Many academically trained psychologists and clinicians aren’t exposed to these methods and as a result don’t research or employ practices with them.

When you combine role theory, embodied cognition, psychodrama, and positive psychology, the world opens in new ways.

The Avant-garde Clinical Psychology award was for my development of the virtual gratitude visit (VGV). The VGV uses a protagonist who delivers a statement of gratitude to an empty chair. Imagined in the chair is someone from their life-past or present-that they want to give gratitude to. Of course, this is an extension and elaboration of Marty’s original gratitude visit. The difference is this can include people who have passed on or are not locatable. This opens up a whole world to the protagonist. It also does not require the protagonist be able to read and write. It was one of the first positive psychology interventions to be used with people with intellectual disabilities. The VIA institute has some articles about this on their site, and Ryan Niemiec and I along with some other colleagues have published together on using the VGV as part of a strength-based approach in psychotherapy.

The key feature in this exercise is role reversal. After the protagonist expresses their gratitude to the empty chair, they can reverse roles and become the very person they’ve been expressing it to.

Words and language are not primary affect activators nor efficient transducers for emotion.

We normally think about catharsis as a purging of emotions — but when Aristotle wrote about this, he was writing about negative emotions. He also spoke of a catharsis of integration. Moreno (the founder of

psychodrama, group therapy and social network theory) saw the catharsis of integration as the dynamic behind psychodrama as it incorporated an understanding of the emotion being expressed.

In positive emotions (like gratitude), you don't want to purge them; you want to integrate them. Through the role reversal you not only get the receiving of the gratitude, you more fully integrate the emotion into your psyche and experience.

My MAPP classmate and dear friend Dan Lerner and his teaching partner, Alan Schlechter, have invited me to do a demonstration of this each semester in their NYU Science of Happiness class for the past 7 years. Every demonstration to nearly 500 students involves the entire class witnessing a deep transformational emotional integration by the protagonist. This is the benefit of role-playing. You can use it in a large-scale environment, and the whole audience is elevated by mirroring what the protagonist feels. One person does the work, 500 get the benefit.

At IPPA World Congress, Montreal, I was asked to lead a 10-minute demonstration during the award ceremony. I was lucky enough to have Tal Ben Shahar's deeply moving VGV to show. It is here for you if you'd like to see it. <http://bit.ly/TalVGV>

Elaine: *What about the role self-compassion in leading people toward healing and thriving?*

Dan: Such lovely timing for this question! Self-compassion is central to almost every type of therapeutic gain. I believe we've only scratched the surface of its power and the work out at Stanford University, and Dr. Kristin Neff's wonderful work hasn't incorporated what is the needed role reversal for integration. Adding an encounter with the benevolent part of yourself through the use of an empty chair embraces the undeveloped aspects of our capacity for self-compassion. I don't think it has been used because most academics are not experientially trained clinicians, and as a result may not know about such things as a role reversal for integration.

As it turns out I've just received an email from Dr. Tayyab Rashid (head of the clinical division for IPPA) that I'll be receiving their award for the division's case study challenge in Australia on July 19th. It is using embodied cognition through role reversal in developing self-compassion as a component of treating unforgiveness. I'll be doing a brief demonstration of this in Australia, along with a workshop on the VGV.

Elaine: *Congratulations, Dan! I've heard you use the words "taking an open dive" and "applying energy to get to the treasure." Can you tell us what you mean?*

Dan: Therapy and coaching use a time-limited format, when compared to parenting and other major relationship building, and this time limit necessarily changes the choices you use and the manner in which you use them.

When time is limited you want to be sure there is enough time to recover and process the use of an experiential technique to allow for adequate integration. I've made the analogy to an open dive in scuba diving. If you only have 1 hour of oxygen, you want to get to the treasure in time to explore it and carry some of the nuggets back to the surface. I always encourage facilitators to leave enough time after any experiential method, in fact *any* positive intervention, for integrating the experience. It's just like diving: If you don't leave enough time to come back to the surface, you can feel woozy. While this is true one-on-one, it is particularly true when leading large groups with experiential methods and positive interventions.

In positive emotions (like gratitude), you don't want to purge them; you want to integrate them.

Elaine: What a great analogy! Can you discuss your favorite experiences designing and teaching the Columbia University Clinical course in Positive Psychology?

Dan: This is the first fully approved positive psychology graduate course in the Columbia curriculum. It is very exciting because the students come in having had multiple other courses in their clinical program, which usually focus on pathology. They view the positive psychology course initially with a bit of skepticism, but then are excited by it. As they embrace the research and transformational exercises, they find that this is a very robust discipline. I have designed nearly two dozen experiential elements for the course, and the students are engaged in personal transformation during the semester. Most report genuine excitement about incorporating these techniques and interventions into their clinical work. It is a joy to watch students move through the course. Honestly, I learn much more from them than they do from me.

Elaine: You are also a core faculty member of Columbia University's "Spirituality, Mind, Body (SMB) Institute" with Dr. Lisa Miller, teaching courses on Optimal Well-Being. What's new on the horizon in advancing Positive Higher Education and Flourishing?



Left to right: MAPP Meet Up Day Celebration organized by Dan Tomasulo at Jon Bon Jovi's SOUL CAFE, Red Bank, N.J. with Amy Rebele, Reb Rebele, Elaine O'Brien, Sean O'Brien, Dan Tomasulo, "Mo" from Soul Kitchen, Scott Asalone and Robert Calabrese

Dan: The SMB program at Columbia has been a natural extension of positive psychology as it includes spiritual growth and development with a heavy emphasis on experiential learning. I think that is one reason my work has fit in their curriculum. Marty was responsible for getting me connected with them, and I will be eternally grateful. I think these more applied style courses for personal growth need to be housed in the right programs. I feel extremely lucky that I found a home with the clinical psych program and Dr. Miller's original SMB program, and I'm working with other venues now to grow these style courses in the community. The New York Certificate course and my work at Kripalu were some of the first efforts, which are being expanded.

I'm in the process of developing a positive psychotherapy course, which will look at the diligent work Marty and Tayyab have brought to the psychotherapy field. This will be a continuing education course for professionals, and will include opportunities to take evidence-informed interventions to needy populations.

Elaine: *You have had a long, sterling, multi-award-winning career, including authoring "Healing Trauma: The Power of Group Treatment for People with Intellectual Disabilities," the American Psychological Association's first text on psychotherapy for people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. In that book, you describe a combination of psychodrama and affirmations to help build a greater understanding. Who were early (and later) influences in your trajectory? How and why?*

I also got introduced to Psychodrama at the same time I was doing comedy and realized that I was more drawn to that than the lifestyle of a comedian.

Dan: My primary trainers in psychodrama were Bob and Jacquie Siroka, who are now dear friends. They took over the institute when Moreno passed, and gave me the clinical background I needed for transition. John Darley, the social psychologist at Princeton, was my mentor during my fellowship year there who helped me expand my understanding of role theory and apply its use with people with intellectual disabilities, and Jerome Singer at Yale encouraged me to publish and then target the work on psychodrama as a specialty. He was the one that helped me shift to a more applied approach with these methods.

The form of therapy discussed in that book is called Positive-Interactive Behavioral Therapy, P-IBT and has become the most widely used form of group therapy for people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. The model was developed over 30 years ago and after MAPP was updated to include strength spotting.

Elaine: *How great is that! Dan, can you talk about your early days in stand up? Did you find a relationship between comedy and uplifting mental health? How, if so, did your first book, "Confessions of a Former Child, a Therapist's Memoir," tie into your strength of humor?*

Dan: I was on the comedy circuit for a couple of years working mostly out of the Improv in New York City. The best part of this is working with comics like Andy Kaufman and Bill Maher as they were coming on the scene. Such a wonderful time and it help craft some sense of presentation,

engagement, and spontaneity. One night I had a drink with Andy Kaufman where he explained how he developed his character "foreign man." It is quite a story I hope to write about someday .

I also got introduced to Psychodrama at the same time I was doing comedy and realized that I was more drawn to that than the lifestyle of a comedian. I thought my character would be better suited in teaching, therapy and writing. But it gave me such an education! Once you've done 20 minutes of comedy in front of the New York audience at the Improv you feel you can handle pretty much anything. *Confessions of a Former Child, a Therapist's Memoir*, was the first time I was able to employ my comedic style with therapy. It was not only fun to write — it was fun reading from it on the book tours.

Elaine: *What's next? Personally? Professionally? Can you talk about your newest book, "Learned Hopefulness?"*

Dan: The new book looks at hope through the lens of the new research and not through any particular theory. Several new experiential

The new book looks at hope through the lens of the new research and not through any particular theory.

interventions have been designed for it, and the Hierarchy of Hope has emerged as a way of understanding how the different models of hope and the various findings fit together. It puts the tools for transformation directly into the hands of the reader. It has been so wonderful to be deeply immersed in its development.

Elaine: *What would you like your legacy to be? What accomplishments mean the most to you?*

Dan: My daughter, Devon, coming to MAPP feels like the real reason I must have come here. Marty and James asked us to be their Assistant Instructors this year and we were deeply honored to be MAPP's first father-daughter AIs. At one point during the end of the semester, Devon (who is pregnant and due at the end of this month) and I were sitting together in class as James identified us as the first legacy team to go through MAPP. I realized in that moment that there were three generations in that MAPP class, and that really gives me goose bumps.

The book, *American Snake Pit: Hope, Grit, And Resilience in the Wake of Willowbrook*, is available for cost through the publisher to agencies who wish to use it as a fundraiser. Any human service agency can either contact me directly or Stillhouse Press to receive the books and use them to raise money. If you buy the book through Amazon or Barnes & Noble, my proceeds get donated to the National Institute for People with Disabilities—this was the organization that gave me the original job back in the day.

Elaine: *Wonderful! Thank you, congratulations, and cheers, Dr. Dan Tomasulo!*



Elaine O'Brien, PhD, MAPP, specializes in motivation, positive aging determination, fitness science, and positive emotion in motion, helping people reduce the risk of inactivity, depression, loneliness, and disease. Producer, speaker, author, educator, Elaine is an IPPA Positive Health and Wellness Leader who works with corporations, universities, governments, AARP, seniors, families, the medical and health communities, National Aerobics Championship, and the U.S. Army. Elaine creates strategies for positive energy management and for creating more love at home, work and play.

Recent MAPP Capstones

Interviews by Andrew Soren (MAPP 2013)

With each passing year, the tonnage of applied positive psychology that gets generated in the form of MAPP capstones increases. Many capstones and all of the abstracts are available on the University of Pennsylvania's Scholarly Commons, but it's hard to stay caught up. So we're profiling a handful of recent capstones in more personal terms in the MAPP Magazine. Like the idea or know of a capstone that has inspired you? Let us know and we'll make it a regular feature: andrew@eubd.ca.

Andrew: *How would you describe yourself?*

Joseph Glaser-Reich (MAPP 2018): I enjoy jumping out of helicopters to help other people for a living as a rescue swimmer with the U.S. Coast Guard and am fascinated by the intersection of performance and well-being.

Jennifer F. Beatty (MAPP 2018): I am deeply interested in developing meaningful research and exploring creative ways to share insights to help all communities thrive, particularly



Left to right: Joseph Glaser-Reich, Laura DelPrato, Jennifer F. Beatty, and Henry Richardson at MAPP Graduation 2018.

those who are often marginalized. I'm currently the research coordinator at Wharton People Analytics.

Henry Richardson (MAPP 2018): I am the Founder and CEO of DEFINE, a body and mind fitness studio with over 20 locations in the USA and abroad, where I bring yoga and positive psychology to co-create positive environments for individuals, families, businesses, and communities.

Andrew: What was the title of your Capstone and what was it about?

Joseph: *So Others May Live: Enhancing Resilience and Performance for United States Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Swimmer Candidates to Help Close the AST Body-to-Billet Gap.*

My capstone was a proposal to include mental training, specifically mindfulness meditation and sports and performance psychology skills, into the Coast Guard's helicopter rescue swimmer training. We do a great job of providing candidates with resources to help develop their physical abilities, but we neglect the mental component of their training. Before my capstone, the only guidance regarding mental training for prospective rescue swimmers consisted of the following statement: "There is a multitude of informational tools available concerning mental toughness. Search the good ones out and utilize them...your mind will break before your body." We could do a much better job equipping candidates with a balanced set of both physical and mental skills.

Jennifer: *Intentions: The Beginnings of an Empirically Derived Typology.*

My capstone was about motivation. My aim was to explore the categories of intentions that individuals display in instances where they were at their best. I began with a review of the literature on motivation and then presented some qualitative research I had conducted. I developed the categories of intentions by analyzing infinitives from the Corpus of Contemporary American English - a free open-sourced repository of all the words currently being used in the English language. From those categories, I coded the positive introductions from my MAPP classmates, with their consent and IRB approval. I wanted to begin to understand more of what drives individuals in these moments of elevation and pride at a more granular level of motivation.

Henry: *The Spiritual Business: Breathing life Into the Body, Mind, and Spirit of Organizations.*

My capstone was a passion project that gave me freedom to intertwine my love of yoga, Ayurveda, positive psychology, and positive organization scholarship. I took inspiration from yoga being a powerful tool for bringing vitality to individuals, and I connected yogic frameworks and vedic principles to help bring this same vitality into families, communities, and organizations. The vedic sciences look at the physical body, the subtle body (mind), and the causal body (spirit) to give us guidance on where we tend to lose our energy and how to regain it. The Spiritual Business is focused on how businesses and community leaders can help achieve the same within their own setting.

I took inspiration from yoga being a powerful tool for bringing vitality to individuals...

Andrew: How did you land on your topic?

Joseph: I came to MAPP with the rather lofty goal of bringing resilience training to the Coast Guard at large. During immersion week, I realized that I might need a slightly more manageable project, at least when it came to my capstone. I love the brother (and sister) hood with whom I work, and it just so happens that the Coast Guard is currently suffering from a fleet wide shortage of rescue swimmers. My love for my job in the Coast Guard and the folks with whom I am privileged to work combined with a very real need for more rescue swimmers helped focus and shape the scope of my work during my year in MAPP.

Jennifer: The questions I had been asking in class all year led me to the work of my capstone. I used it as a place to capture and explore my recurring questions. I spent a lot of time consulting others about these questions and how I might begin to structure them into a capstone.

My aim was to explore the categories of intentions that individuals display in instances where they were at their best.

Henry: The capstone was truly a summary of my entire year of learning and processing with MAPP. With each class I saw an overlap of positive psychology with vedic principles, an area I have been learning about for over two decades. Everything from the layers of life (body, mind, spirit) the *koshas* (the veils of illusion), to the PERMA construct and how it gets applied into our daily life through the eyes of yoga. All of these concepts were constantly running through my brain. With the guidance of my amazing capstone advisor, I was able to take the foundation from each class and really apply my understanding to an area where I have a lot of interest.

Andrew: *What's one huge take-away from your capstone you wished every MAPPster knew?*

Joseph: If you want to drive institutional change, justify the change and provide a blue print for the change. One additional thing that I wish I had done in my capstone was generate sample lessons / a curriculum that could be incorporated directly into the rescue swimmer training.

Jennifer: I see tremendous value in using qualitative data to inform the development or expansion of theory. I am of the belief a diversity of perspectives can lead to an inclusive, rich output. Although my capstone used a convenience sample, I value deliberately seeking out as many viewpoints as possible.

Henry: Although I always give respect to the advice I am given, I also know when I must "swim" in my own lane and listen to my heart. In describing my capstone to several people, I received several looks of uncertainty, well as best as a MAPPster could do that. It wasn't fully fleshed out by the time I started writing, however, I was convinced that I had something unique to say and wanted to share it. I benefited from all of my conversations with every MAPPster and staying in my own lane gave me the ability to nurture my idea into something I ended up loving.

Andrew: *How might you apply what you learned in the "real world"?*

Joseph: I want to see my capstone become a part of the Coast Guard's rescue swimmer training. As you know, the government moves at a lightning pace so that should happen within – oh say – the next ten years. Through my capstone work, I met Dr. Scott Salvatore, the chief of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Psychological Health and Readiness Division. Recently, I have managed to finagle my way into being assigned to work for him part time, while still standing duty as a rescue swimmer. Together, we are rolling out a mindfulness pilot program for all interested DHS components, developing a wellness and performance subsection of the DHS web-site, and consulting with various agencies regarding their resilience training efforts.

If you want to drive institutional change, justify the change and provide a blue print for the change.

Jennifer: In the last year, my interests have developed in new ways. I will always be interested in the topic of motivation, but I'm now less interested in the mechanisms that drive behavior and am growing increasingly passionate about working with others to test interventions to change behavior, specifically those that can reduce prejudice and oppression. Before I was a MAPPster, I was an urban school teacher. Before that I was a minority student on scholarship whose mother immigrated to America after a time of great tragedy. These experiences inform my outlook and galvanize my passion for research and teaching. I recognize that there are things that need to be done before everyone can flourish, and I want to be involved in the work that can directly help these efforts.

Henry: In spring 2019, I started developing a weekly class called Positive+Yoga. I started each class with an overview of a monthly theme following Barbara Fredrickson's top 10 positive emotions (joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love). I added "define positive" and "celebrate" to round off all 12 months of the year. At the beginning of each yoga class we use the emotional theme to discuss topics from positive psychology. From there we set a powerful intention for

I came to MAPP with the rather lofty goal of bringing resilience training to the Coast Guard ...

the yoga class, offering participants a focused opportunity to bring more joy (for example) into their yoga practice and into their life. One of the most amazing things about the event is the venue: with 25-foot ceilings and 100-foot long projections, it creates gives participants an awe-inspiring experience.

Andrew: *How might the MAPP community help you in your mission?*

Joseph: I am interested in continuing my academic work through a PhD exploring the intersection of performance and thriving (specifically relationships between mindfulness, resilience, mental toughness, and performance). If you know of someone doing work in this area looking for a candidate with ties to the Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security, let me know.

Jennifer: Right now, I am most looking to continue to find connections to people who are researching and or applying work in behavior change and shifting social norms.



Andrew Soren has been an Assistant Instructor with MAPP since 2013. He is also the founder of Eudaimonic by Design, an advisory firm that brings together a global network of seasoned professionals, consultants and systems thinkers who share a passion and understanding for two things: the philosophy of eudaimonia and the belief that organizational systems should be designed to enable it.

Vision, Hope, Action: MAPP Magazine 2019, Volume 3

By Elaine O'Brien, Editor in Chief



Positive Psychology and Joy at the Movies: Friendships, Smiles, Memories, Aspiration at the Happiness Film Festival.

Marek, creator of the *Daily ARFFirmations to Unleash Your Inner Fido* series (<http://arffirmations.com>). We hope you will take a deep dive into *MAPP Magazine* to find enjoyment, meaning, and the power of MAPP love on these pages.

We are excited to welcome you to an exploration of vision, hope, and inspiration. There is so much goodness and MAPP Magic in this issue of *MAPP Magazine*: **Donna Hemmert** highlights Simon Leow, MAPP, and the first Happiness Film Festival. **Andrew Soren** presents fascinating MAPP Alumni and their Capstones. **Kathryn Britton**, called by many a “goddess of writing,” gives us strategies for building a growth mindset for writing. **Jan Stanley** inspires us to create rituals and celebrations for well-being in our life. **Elizabeth Elizardi** shares the framework around Emotional Beginnings. **Scott Asalone** offers his thoughtful President’s Message. **Luis Pineda** presents research, applications, and personal experiences around Positive Travel. **Kathryn** announces an important new book, *Thriving Women Thriving World*, and I share an interview with “Dr. Dan” Tomasulo: Dare to Be Happy... and Hopeful.” We are thrilled to welcome Graphic Artist, **Alison**

— Elaine

A Growth Mindset Around the Skill of Writing

By Kathryn Britton (MAPP 2006)



Kathryn Britton's Monday writing workshop, online.

Writing is a wonderful way to bring positive psychology to the world. Whether people want to write books, blogs, articles, proposals, or dissertations, being able to convey clear messages that are rooted in research but alive with story helps writers reach a broader audience than the people they see face to face.

Many people run into immense road blocks as they try to write. Sometimes they sit with a blank piece of paper and no words come. Sometimes they fail to sit down at all. Sometimes they fear that they don't have anything new to say. Some hear disparaging voices from the past telling them that they can't write.

Even people who thoroughly believe in growth mindsets, that we can get better with effort, tell themselves, "I am not a writer."

How do I know? I have been working with writers since I graduated in 2006, first as the editor of *Positive Psychology News* (PPND) and then, since 2013, as the leader of writers' workshops that turn the lonely work of writing into a hive activity, that is, a collective activity where people provide each other mutual support.

At this point, I've edited more than 1500 PPND articles and led more than 800 workshops that have reviewed more than 1500 submissions. I've also worked with a few solo authors as a writing coach. Working with about 100 authors has taught me the following lessons about people and writing:

People do not necessarily see what is strong in their own writing until other people point it out. One writer this week was nonplused to hear that the short draft that she disparagingly called "a last-minute bit of something," prompted another workshop member to say she was a great writer.

Writing is a communication activity, but it's often performed in solitude. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it! Participating in a writers' workshop invites other people to contribute to the creative process. They help

People do not necessarily see what is strong in their own writing until other people point it out.

Writing is a skill that gets better with practice and paying attention.

writers see whether their audiences are likely to understand the intended message. They help writers see what should be retained, whatever else is changed. They humbly submit suggestions for making pieces even stronger. I find it fun when two participants disagree about a suggestion. This reminds writers that there are all sorts of readers out there.

People think the first draft should be good to go, so they are often nervous about submitting their work. I've found that first drafts are just the necessary first step for a process of revising first for content, then for structure, and finally for the little distractors that we call "twinkies" that are not worth mentioning unless the piece is nearly finished. Workshops help people get over this fear of not being good enough both because everybody else is submitting in-process drafts and because we pay attention to what's already strong in the piece submitted.

Writing is a skill that gets better with practice and paying attention. We are all surprised to experience the paradox of workshops: Paying attention to somebody else's writing builds the reviewers' skill as much as paying attention to their own writing. Reading a piece multiple times to prepare to summarize the key takeaway, point out the strengths, and make suggestions, people see things that otherwise might go past them: new ways of organizing, new ways of using vibrant language, new ways to hook the reader, new ways to cite research that will make people curious, new ways to end on a strong note.

Having an external deadline is crucial for people who don't (yet) love writing for its own sake. Otherwise, writing is often considered important but not urgent, and thus stays on the back burner. Sometimes with practice, people get over the dread of writing and grow to look forward to the time spent capturing thoughts. But until then, deadlines such as workshop commitments help them keep practicing.

Many people already have major writing pieces, such as capstone projects to meet degree requirements. Sometimes these can be translated for the general public. Caroline Miller developed her MAPP capstone into the book, *Creating Your Best Life*. Andrew Brady is almost finished turning his capstone into a book, *The Evolution of Business*. Frawn Morgan has written several blog pieces targeted at the working mothers that she studied for her capstone.

Sometimes writing is the way to deal with a major life crisis, to turn pain and terror into a helping hand for others facing the same difficulties. Alicia Assad has written numerous blogs and articles about how she pulled through the scald burn injury of her toddler son. Karen Warner has almost completed the book that will give others the guidance she craved when she suddenly became the caregiver of her husband who had terminal cancer.

Life is full of story seeds. It's common knowledge that stories make messages sticky, but writers often struggle to make up the stories they need. But some writers pay attention to the stories that are happening around them or on the news. They keep story logs in notebooks or Evernote of interesting things they experience or observe. Planted in the right place, these story seeds become powerful illustrations.

Working with others to get better at writing can be a great way to practice positive psychology principles, such as pointing out strengths and nurturing growth mindsets in each other.



If you feel you are not a good writer, remember to say, "Yet."

Kathryn Britton, MAPP, is an executive coach who works with technology managers, leaders, and creative writers. Her coaching is shaped by her leadership experience in software engineering, work with over 100 authors, and teaching management skills at the University of Maryland. She has published four books, including *Character Strengths Matter*, and numerous chapters and articles.

Designing Rituals for Well-being

By Jan Stanley (MAPP 2010)



Creating Lunchtime Rituals, led by Jan Stanley, MAPP FETE, 2018

open our hands to fully receive all that is given.” And there was a simple but meaningful ritual that moved me to tears. This group spoke opening words in unison, “In these troubled times and in our busy lives, I see you.” Group members then made direct eye contact slowly and silently with one another, an action that offered each person at the table a chance to feel as if they truly mattered.

Throughout our lives, some of our most meaningful moments include the use of ceremony and ritual to mark milestones. Think about the ceremonies that accompany graduations, birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Ceremonies and rituals, when thoughtfully designed and well-orchestrated, can help us navigate the thresholds we encounter on our journeys through life. But, as demonstrated by my MAPP colleagues at our recent gathering, we can find many ways to employ ritual in service of our individual and collective well-being.

Each October, MAPP graduates gather in Philadelphia for an alumni day. At our most recent event, we met in a rustic camp setting to enjoy being in community on a brisk autumn day. At lunchtime in the cafeteria, tables were set for teams of eight.

Before eating, each group was asked to create a meaningful ritual based on mindfulness and gratitude – two well researched elements from the science of well-being. What resulted were more than a dozen creative rituals that evoked the spirit of celebrating one another and time together.

There was a round-robin ritual that had each person sharing a gratitude after reciting all those that had been shared before. There was the gratitude ritual where team members enacted mindful actions like, “We

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If...you crave connection to what's most important to you, to experience your values through actions aligned with elements of well-being science, a ritual might be just right.

Rituals for well-being could be described as activities we pursue to connect deeply to what's most meaningful to us. These intentional well-being rituals can connect us with our values, with life's meaningful everyday moments, and with the people, places and things that add depth and richness to our existence.

Rituals are unlike habits, the more commonly cited vehicle for achieving well-being. Habits are, by definition, automated. Habits become second nature, affording us the mental space to do them mindlessly, if we so choose. Their power is in this habituation. We reap the benefits of repeatedly performing our go-to habits of well-being. Rituals, on the other hand, are about deeply immersing in an activity, being fully present, and savoring the meaning of what we are doing.

There's a shorthand for deciding whether a habit or a ritual is in order: If you know what activities elevate your well-being but you struggle to do them consistently, create habits. If, however, you crave connection to what's most important to you, to experience your values through actions aligned with elements of well-being science, a ritual might be just right.

The research in using rituals for well-being is new, even though rituals are an ancient form of behavior. While we don't have validated studies of every type of ritual we can imagine, we do know from the emerging science that rituals can enhance feelings of positive emotion, lessen the impact or duration of grief, and reduce anxiety and build confidence before a stressful event. Even with an ever-increasing variety of rituals being studied, we also know that in well-being there is a person-activity fit. That is, a well-being activity that might work for some, doesn't work for everyone. Experimentation to find just the right ritual for you is key.

Designing with the "I AM" Model

Fortunately, researchers in the field of positive psychology are turning out good research in the many factors that contribute to thriving individuals and groups. The evidence for activities to increase well-being, also called positive interventions, is growing (though never quickly enough for those of us who rely on it as practitioners). For example, we now know that things like using our strengths and connecting with others can help us to flourish. So why not take a validated element of well-being that you'd like to enhance and create a meaningful ritual for yourself?

One simple model for designing rituals of well-being is an acronym:

I AM.

I: Intention. What is your intention? What element of well-being do you want to enhance?

A: Action. What is the action you will take in your ritual, tied to your intention?

M: Meaning. What personal meaning will you ascribe to this intention/action?



Peonies and rose quartz, a symbol of unconditional love and reconciliation. Jan Stanley, MAPP FETE, 2018



Celebrate accomplishments.

A ritual for well-being is an action performed with intention from which you create meaning. There have been studies that show even seemingly meaningless rituals can have a positive effect. But why not make your rituals a bit more personal by designing-in meaningful elements, things like doing the ritual in surroundings you love, using favorite materials, or adorning yourself with clothing that marks the moment as special or sacred? Here's an example of a simple ritual for marking accomplishments, one aspect of well-being:

Ritual for Celebrating Accomplishments

In our busy lives, we are often on to the next task before we take a moment to celebrate what we've just accomplished. Why not use a beautiful vessel (glass jar, vase, or bowl) and colorful beads or smooth stones that remind you of a favorite place? Each time you take a step toward your goal, place a bead in the vase, and take a moment to reflect on what you've accomplished.

Before long the vase will become not only a touchstone for reminding you to celebrate your achievement, but also a beautiful symbol of progress toward goals.

Rituals cause us to take a step back, even for a short moment, and to reconnect to that which most fulfills us. When combined with the science of well-being, there is opportunity to create rituals that could help us do things like use a character strength, adopt a growth mindset, connect deeply to one another, or to savor our positive emotions, just to name a few. You can make a ritual of known positive interventions like writing down three good things, dancing, or sitting in meditation. Adding an intention before the activity and reflecting on its meaning afterwards can deepen the experience. Can you think of a ritual you could do right now, perhaps a ritual related to reading well-being literature?

Rituals cause us to take a step back, even for a short moment, and to reconnect to that which most fulfills us.

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Jan Stanley is strategist and facilitator who has developed leaders within Fortune 100 companies, Silicon Valley, universities, the US Army, NASA and the Harvard Business School, among others. Jan uses strengths-based coaching, well-being practices and modern rituals to help others find meaning and joy in work and in life. Jan helps leaders live their values while placing purpose and ethics at the center of their leadership actions. The result is leaders who inspire those around them to excellence in all they do. In addition, Jan is a thought leader in using ceremony and ritual to enhance personal and organizational well-being.

Emotional Beginnings

By Elizabeth Elizardi (MAPP 2010)



Parenting young children feels a little like nuclear fission. Take a child and an unpleasant stimulus and one has instability, complex emotion and possible entropy. Wounded ones, terrible twos, threenagers and fournadoes are how we describe this state of being in relationship with young children. Yet, what looks like entropy on the outside is just the brain doing what it can on the inside. If they could, they would, but they can't.

Children have big emotions and they lack the memory, language and cognition to make sense of it all. Freya is adapting to life with a new baby sister, George's mom is traveling for work this week, and Maya is working through a

transition from a crib to a toddler bed. These situations and many others produce simple and complex emotions that can be unwieldy and uncontrollable to young children.

Like learning to read, children acquire a shared language of emotions and develop strategies for perceiving, decoding and expressing feelings. As children negotiate emotions, they create internal working models to help them regulate, interpret, filter and predict behaviors of the self and others in relational experiences (Murphy & Laible, 2013).

A baby is born with all of the neurons he will ever need, but they are very poorly connected.

Emotional competence — the regulation of emotional expressiveness, and knowledge of one's own and other's emotions — is crucial for social and academic success (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser, 2012). A baby is born with all of the neurons he will ever need, but they are very poorly connected. As his brain builds from the bottom up, it will take time to open up the windows of opportunity to connect emotion and cognition. Brain research concludes that emotional responding in early childhood is impulsive, involuntary and primal and more thoughtful and deliberative when children begin to connect lower and higher regions of the brain through complex thinking at around age three. (Nagel, 2008).

Given the premature impulses that drive young children, the lion's share of the work in developing their emotional competence comes from adult caregivers. Parents and teachers alike are socializers of emotion. They

What looks like entropy on the outside is just the brain doing what it can on the inside.

teach children how to perceive, regulate and express the emotions they feel. As Rachel Simmons writes in her book *Enough As She Is*, “There is no one with more access to her enoughness than you.” Modeling emotional expressiveness, regulating reactions to emotions, and explicit teaching about emotion (Denham, 1998) have been found to be the most effective strategies for building emotionally competent children. Children observe the emotional states of their influencers, therefore, parents implicitly teach children about acceptable emotions, expression and regulation. This is in essence teaching children an alphabet from which they will string together a language as a base for future communication. Additionally, adults’ expressiveness shows children which situations evoke certain emotions and the corresponding behaviors related to those emotions. These observations lead children to a knowledge of emotions that will serve as a resource for understanding their own language of emotions.

If you are looking for a place to start, contemplate your own memory patterns and consider replacing them with a new script. When fission is festering, repeat “behind every behavior is a healthy impulse.” This may keep you from looking for a deliberate root cause, when in fact, your child is only doing what he is capable of in that moment in time. Phrases such as these will help to temper your reactions. Next, model emotion regulation. Consider a strategy developed from Rogerian theory: Problem Ownership.

- 1) **Figure out who owns the problem**, the child or the adult (Whose needs are thwarted? Who is upset? Who is afraid?)
- 2) **Listen actively** when the child owns the problem
- 3) **Deliver an I-Message** when the adult owns the problem. An I-Message includes four elements: give observable data (what you saw, heard, smelled touched), state the tangible effects, say how you felt (not how the child MADE you feel), focus on change.

A young child’s development is not always explained by ontogeny or the universal truths of science. Social constructs, cultural influences, family systems and school systems are protons with great magnitude.

Remember that children are not broken nor are they deficient adults. They are self-organized, competent learners. Walk alongside them for a while and be their traveling companion. As Rudolf Dreikurs cautions us, “Children are keen observers, but poor interpreters.” They need parents, teachers and caregivers who are emotionally available and ready to give language and meaning to the complexities in their developing world.

Remember that children are not broken nor are they deficient adults.

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Elizabeth Elizardi is an educational leader and newly appointed Director of Lower School at The Agnes Irwin School on the Main Line in Philadelphia. She is a doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University researching how school systems impact children’s individuation.

MAPP Alumni Association President's Message:

Dealing with a VUCA World

By Scott Anthony Asalone (MAPP 2008)

Have you ever heard of VUCA? I never did until on a conference call recently with some MAPPsters when one of them used this acronym and I had to ask for its meaning. VUCA is a way of describing the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of conditions and/or situations. The acronym was initially used by the military to describe the world after the end of the Cold War, but it has been adopted by organizations and especially consultants to describe certain situations or cultures. VUCA could be used to describe an organization in time of turnover. Yet as I thought more about it, VUCA could be used to describe a country in time of unrest or even a family in the midst of a crisis.



Many of the areas where we work as positive psychology practitioners could be described using this acronym. We try to help people make sense of what is going on, get through it in one piece and thrive on the other side of it. That is positive psychology at its best.

Right now, so many systems and individuals are facing a VUCA reality — from countries, to political systems, to organizations and even families. How can we assist? We can learn from the positive deviance of our sisters and brothers. Look around at the amazing work posted in *NewsBriefs*, in this MAPP Magazine, and online in the various social media where MAPPsters post. The alternative or antidote to VUCA is seen there in the inroads so many of our members have already made to assist others in either alleviating some of the worst effects of VUCA or providing a positive alternative.

For those who accept VUCA as their new normal, we help them through everything we offer from mindfulness training, to resilience, to optimism and so many more interventions. For those who want a positive alternative from VUCA we offer positive education, positive organizational scholarship and “broaden and build.” There is so much we are already doing and yet, so much more that needs to be done.

No matter what, to do nothing is to allow our world to become even more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. We don’t choose to sit back and allow that to happen. We can’t sit back with the knowledge and privilege we’ve been given.

So, ask yourself, in this VUCA world, what is the smallest thing we can do that will make the biggest difference?

– Scott

POSITIVE TRAVEL

By Luis Pineda, MBA (MAPP 2014)



MAPP 2014 Field Trip to the Mayan Riviera and Akumal, Mexico, a birthplace of Positive Psychology in modern times, led by Luis Pineda.

How often are we eager to escape from our exhausting professional duties in order to get energized? How often do we wish we could take time to learn new skills that bring us better personal and professional outcomes? How many times have we tried without getting the results we hoped for?

As a professional who has spent several years working in the tourism and professional development fields, I know from experience that this often happens. We want to find ways to re-energize, be happier, or create better versions of ourselves, but we do not necessarily know how to go about it.

Science-based concepts from the field of positive psychology, experiential education, and studies of the effective use of leisure time can be intermingled to cultivate well-being in individuals through

We want to find ways to re-energize, be happier, or create better versions of ourselves ...

“positive travel” that leads to the active involvement of the senses (mind, body, and heart). Traveling is, most of the time, a pleasurable and enjoyable activity. Applying positive psychology principles to travel often delivers even better results.



MAPP 2014 Alumni, Family and Friends, celebrating together, Mayan Riviera.

In order to promote personal development, travel should be an exciting, enjoyable, and (moderately) challenging experience.

Drawing on a growing body of research, I came up with six goals to guide the development of travel experiences in order to enhance well-being. To illustrate each, I show how we brought each goal to life in 2014 when I put together a “positive travel experience” in the Mayan Riviera, Mexico, for some of my MAPP fellows and their relatives:

1) *Recover from the stress of day-to-day lives* – We detached psychologically from work stressors through activities such as floating down the lagoons of the gorgeous and isolated Biosphere Reserve of Sian K’aan.

2) *Gain more confidence* – We challenged ourselves by trying out activities such as snorkeling and scuba diving in the open sea. We were guided by professionals in these domains, of course.

3) *Create more meaning* – We immersed ourselves in a Mayan community to learn about some of their ancient traditions (“gum making” for instance) and found an opportunity to observe turtle nesting.

4) *Give back to the community you visit* – We had “MAPP talks,” 10-minute presentations by each one of us to share our positive psychology knowledge with the local community.

5) *Cultivate positive emotions* – “MAPP Talks” took place in an amazing underground cave that served as our auditorium. The space heightened our senses and created a sense of awe.

I will share with you part of what Susan, mother of my dear MAPP friend, Sandra Adkins, wrote to me a few weeks after her positive travel experience:

Luis, I want to thank you for making our trip to Mexico something we will never forget. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to not only see but experience it. Words can't describe how amazing it was to sit at the edge of a sea turtle's nest and watch her lay her eggs then cover them with sand and head back out to sea. I smile every time I think of it or tell the story to family and friends.

I dearly love the ocean (especially turtles) but also have a great fear of drowning that goes back to my childhood. I have always wanted to snorkel, and the thought of snorkeling with sea turtles made me want it more. I knew my fear could stop me, and it just about did. Had it not been for our guide, I would have never

made it. With my trusty life preserver and our guide I was able to see sea turtles swimming beside me and under me.

Eating traditional Mayan food, seeing how gum is made, visiting Mayan ruins, climbing to the top of the observation tower, floating down the lagoons, and listening to our guides explain Mayan traditions with such passion was fantastic!

This was by far the best vacation ever! I was so taken with Akumal, its culture and people that I am seriously considering the possibility of becoming a turtle conservationist when I retire.



Paraphrasing words from a poem by José Emilio Pacheco, an icon of Mexican literature, I would like to give you a final piece of advice: If you travel, do not go back home the way you were. It would be such a waste. Take it as an opportunity to create a better version of yourself!

Luis Pineda, MBA, MAPP, is a speaker and corporate trainer who strives to help people and organizations to feel better, perform better and do good. He is also a passionate traveler and a food and mezcal lover!

Thriving Women, Thriving World

By Kathryn Britton



Caroline Miller and the book, *Thriving Women Thriving World*.

“This book is an invitation to journey from #metoo to thriving women via inquiry, dialogue, and stories.”

So begins the new book, *Thriving Women, Thriving World*, newly available from Amazon in paperback and eBook formats. In the style of the *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions*, the book provides Appreciative Inquiry (AI) questions for 92 topics to help people work together to turn problems into positive possibilities. The AI questions are supported by stories, poems, reflective essays, and practices, some by members of the MAPP community.

Caroline Adams Miller was one of the original authors who figured out what should go in the book. She contributed personal stories to the chapters titled *Healing from Relational Abuse* and *Women Supporting Women*. Kathryn Britton joined later, shaping, writing, and editing. She contributed a story to the chapter titled *Working for the Greater Good*. Elaine O'Brien contributed a positive movement practice to the chapter titled *Claiming Ownership of Our Bodies*. Shannon Polly wrote about her admiration for first ladies in the chapter *Women Supporting Women*.

Appreciative Inquiry is a close partner for positive psychology based on the fundamental belief that our reality is shaped by the questions we ask. From the book's introduction, “[The questions] begin by inviting you to Discover what is already strong and beneficial in your life. Subsequent questions ask you to Dream about ideal futures, to Design new ways of being, and to Deliver inspired actions.”

The URL for the book in both eBook and paperback formats is <https://amzn.to/2WqWy2F>.