

MAPP Alumni Magazine

Published by the Penn Master of Applied Positive Psychology Alumni Association

FALL 2017

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Alumni

 Penn Master of Applied Positive Psychology



JOE KASPER: Igniting a light around co-destiny, positive bereavement and the bereavement growth cycle

By Elaine O'Brien, MAPP 2008

Joe Kasper, M.D., MAPP, is advancing the idea of Positive Bereavement with courage, grace, dedication, and humanity. In August 2011, Joe Kasper lost his son Ryan to a rare form of genetic epilepsy. Here are some excerpts from Joe's presentation as an invited MAPP speaker during Summit 2017. In Joe's words:

"Everything I do here today I do to honor his (Ryan's) memory. It was shortly before his death that I became aware of the concept of Post-traumatic Growth and Positive Psychology, and it was shortly after his death that I decided to apply to the MAPP program. Words cannot describe how much this program has influenced how I view and how I live my life. What I discuss here today will only scratch the surface. My MAPP Capstone is Co-destiny: A conceptual goal for parental bereavement and a call for a positive turn in the scientific study of the parental bereavement process."

Joe described how, "Reb Rebele was my Capstone advisor and the first person to see merit in my work. Reb ended up giving Joe's paper to Adam Grant who forwarded it to Sheryl Sandberg shortly after losing her husband, Dave



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JOE KASPER continued



Goldberg, tragically while on vacation in Mexico. Both Sheryl and Adam really appreciated the concept of co-destiny and decided to include it in their book, *Option B*, which was published earlier this year.”

In his presentation, Joe brilliantly outlined his concepts of Co-Destiny, Positive Bereavement and the Bereavement Growth Cycle. In sharing his story, he gave a heartbreaking personal world account, the experience around the loss of his cherished son, Ryan.

Joe also described meeting another family, the Garske’s, who reached out to Joe after reading about his son, Ryan, and co-destiny in *Option B*. Chris, the Garske’s young son, also died unexpectedly of a rare genetic form of epilepsy in July this year. Joe helped the family, and Chris’s mother, as she was also struggling from the loss of her son. Joe shared how “my motivation to help this woman is indescribable. Our first telephone conversation lasted 90 minutes. The similarity of our son’s personalities, likes and dislikes, disease and our parental experience, raising a child with epilepsy is uncanny. The bond between us was instantaneous.

Joe describes Co-Destiny as both a goal and a process. In his Positive Bereavement model, Joe discusses the Grief Phase and the Growth Phase, the acceptance of death and the awareness of acceptance of Positive Traumatic Growth! He encouraged the idea to Bounce Forward, to give your life and your suffering meaning. He urged and encouraged us to “use your precious life to serve others, something good in that person’s name.” Joe is doing just that.

Joe, whose formal education includes computer programming, biology, and medicine is a self-described “models, cycles and equations thinker.” He introduced his theory, *Post-traumatic Altruistic Motivational Force*, Or PAMF. Joe describes PAMF as “The intrinsic motivational force that is most apparent after a trauma that stimulates altruistic action towards others that have suffered similar traumas. The greater the PAMF the greater the propensity towards altruistic action and the stronger the bond between two individuals and or groups of individuals.” Joe said. “I read this equation as: The post-traumatic altruistic motivational force is directly proportional to the magnitude of the trauma, the similarity of the trauma and the meaning as significance placed on the traumatic event, and is inversely proportional to the emotional distance one keeps from the traumatic event.”

Joe described the main objective of his presentation was “to convince at least some of you here that the bereavement process deserves to be put under the microscope of positive psychology.” Thank you, Joe; I am with you.

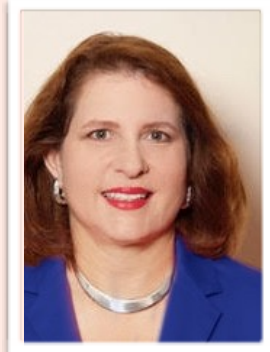
[Ed. Note: During his speech, Joe referenced Dr. Lucy Hone, MAPP 2010, who lost her daughter Abi as the result of a tragic auto crash. Following this life-changing event, Lucy wrote a brilliant book, *Resilient Grieving: Finding Strength and Embracing Life After a Loss That Changes Everything*. Available at Amazon.com.]



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elaine O'Brien, PhD, MAPP, CAPP is an Educator, Trainer, Author, and Presenter. She is the Creative Director and CEO of Lifestyle Medicine Coaching and Training, LLC, a consultancy, and FitDance: Move2Love training and presentations for whole health and optimal performance. Her areas of research and practice are centered around “The Positive Psychology of Human Movement, Aging Well, and Fitness.”

New MAPP Grant Program Provides \$10,000 To Six Awardees



Katie Snyder

The MAPP Grant team presented an update on this new program at Fete in a Panel Discussion. Katie Snyder, Rosie Hancock, and Chris Major participated as Grant Team Members. Sherri Fisher represented the MAPP VIP on the panel sharing this groups experience as a MAPP Grant recipient. The MAPP VIP program provides an opportunity for our Alumni to gain business and entrepreneurial training at the Harvard Innovation Center and the Penovation Center in a six month program with weekly coaching support.

The MAPP Grant program is a relatively new program in our alumni group. The program was designed in 2016 at the request of the board and launched in 2017 with two successful selection processes. The purpose of the program is to provide seed money to help move alumni forward with positive psychology projects and ventures. It is designed to be hand up, not a hand out, to alumni who often struggle to move forward with passions after graduation. The committee is delighted to share we have awarded six grants for six amazing projects in 2017 for a total of \$10,000 being awarded.

January 2017 Grantees	July 2017 Grantees
MAPP Virtual Incubator Program Conrad Macalalad, Sherri Fisher, Christopher DeSantis, Ming Fu	Resilience Training for Fire and Emergency Medical Responders Karen Deppa
The Billion Dollar Question Sid Efromovich	Real World Positive Psychology Stephanie Ramones
Positive Shift in Law Student Education Lisle Baker	Positive Technology for the Future of Work Darrah Wolfe, Ming Fu

Since “other people’s money matters,” the Grant Committee felt it was important to establish clear criteria (see below) for Alumni Grants and to put a rigorous process in place to evaluate and award grants while keeping it simple for those who apply. The motto: “It’s just one page, not a capstone” guided our work in designing a simple application process. We also integrated the concept of a “shepherd,” a committee member who has a conversation with the applicant to gain deeper understanding about the project and represent the application through the selection process. While this step presents extra work for the committee, we felt strongly that it has helped even the playing field for alumni less experienced in writing grant applications.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to compare and evaluate proposals for funding. It is not necessary for a particular project to meet all criteria to be considered.

- Whether the grant application is complete and clear.
- How well the project is aligned with stated grant program purpose.
- How well the project contributes to a positive public image of the MAPP community



MAPP GRANT continued

and applications of positive psychology.

- Size of impact, for example, number of MAPP Alumni involved, number of people served or depth of service in year 1 and year 3 of the project.
- How well the project involves an efficient use of funds for state impact.
- Whether the project has a “pay it forward” component, such as plans to pay back seed money when a for-profit enterprise becomes profitable, to serve as a springboard for launching new MAPPsters, or to mentor similar projects in the future.
- Whether the project takes positive psychology into a new community or environment, given the goal to spread positive psychology as widely as possible.

What have we learned in our first year? Grants have both tangible and intangible benefits to recipients. The ability to demonstrate funding, even if it is small, from Penn MAPP Alumni has helped several of our recipients gain funding from other sources and bring higher credibility to their work. Grants have opened doors for our alumni in ways we could not have imagined. The selection team reflected on the characteristics of projects that were awarded grants and saw that these projects demonstrated hope, had clarity, and a strong “give back” component to our Alumni community for good things in the future.

Once the 2018 budget is approved, information on application submission and the associated timelines of the process will be communication to all alumni via email. If we continue on the same schedule as 2017, this would be a January 1 and July 1 deadline for applicants. The selection process is completed and applicants are notified within 30 days. If you have an idea in mind, you can learn more about the grant program and project criteria online at www.mappalum.org or reach out to any Grant Committee members before the application deadline. A key mission for our new board will be to define and begin a fundraising program in 2018 to keep this program going strong in 2019 and beyond. Stay tuned for this next step in the ongoing success of the MAPP Grand Program.

As the leader of the MAPP Grant Committee, I would like to extend a special thanks to the hard-working grant team, who have taken this idea through from pilot to established program in essentially a year! Kathryn Britton, Andrew Brady, Marita James, Rosie Hancock, Tricia Fox, Scott Asalone and Chris Major.

— *Katie Snyder* MAPP 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katie is the president of Katie Snyder & Associates, LLC. She has more than 30 years of experience in manufacturing and business leadership with a Fortune 100 company. She is keenly aware of what it takes to create and execute strategy on a daily basis, around the globe. In this corporate environment, Katie became an early practitioner of Positive Psychology, working at the intersection of Positive Psychology and business.



JOHN YEAGER: A Polarity Primer: Both/And Thinking

By Darrah Wolfe, MAPP 2016



Darrah Wolfe

In my previous role as a capital projects engineer, I often found myself in the middle of a game of tug-a-war. One of my stakeholders was pulling with all their might for cost reductions while the other was calling in back-up to pull for improved quality. The battle was never-ending and every other day, I was being dragged through a pit of mud. What we needed was a methodology that kept everyone out of the mud as often as possible. We needed to learn to be intentional about the interdependent relationships (polarities) of cost reductions and improved quality. John Yeager introduced us to one such way of doing this in his workshop: A Polarity Primer – Both/And Thinking.

John introduced us to the Polarity Map® by Polarity Partnerships, a tool that is “not about balance or integration, but an understanding of the relationship between the two.” In exploring the map, John walked us through Polarity Partnerships’ five step Polarity Approach to Continuity and Transformation (PACT™). One of the key objectives was to learn to see more of the “whole reality” by facilitating an appreciation for the interdependence between our values and our goals as they relate to each of the polarities. Through Appreciative Inquiry style questioning, we explored the benefits of each polarity and how it serves us and our goals. One polarity we discussed was physical activity and rest. The upside of both can be beneficial to our wellbeing goals. But, what would happen if we over focused on either activity or rest? Too much activity can lead to burn-out and too much rest can lead to negative health outcomes as well. It is from an understanding of the relationship between the two that we can better navigate the energy available in any given system (individual / team / organization). The Polarity Map® provides a visual framework to better understand these interdependent relationships so that we can develop action plans to better navigate the polarities and progress on our goals.

Positive feedback from the group:

- Great visual representation of the interdependent relationship of polarities
- An approach that easily aligns with other facilitation methodologies

For those interested to learn more, check out the Polarity Partnerships’ website for information on certification, licensing and example applications, including the Illumination Project: Further Strengthening Relationships Between Police and Citizens, as highlighted in John’s workshop.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darrah combines the analytical mind of an engineer, the emotional intelligence of a coach, and the science of a positive psychology pioneer and applies it to her work with individuals, teams and organizations through her company Actuality Coaching and Consulting, based in Calgary, Canada.

Sticky Words On Real Parenting

By Alicia Assad, MAPP 2008

When asked to co-lead what was originally called a “Positive Parenting” Roundtable Discussion, Kathryn Britton (2006) and I unanimously agreed,

“We must change that title.”



We are passionate positive psychology practitioners who bookend the trajectory of parenting (I have 4 under 8, she has two flourishing adults). What unites us across this decades-long divide is wrestling failure, guilt, and shame. Even though we know it is a misnomer, why does the term “positive” when paired with “parent” make us feel like we are failing to measure up?

Kathryn opened our discussion on *Resilient Parenting: Inspiring parents to get passionate about resilience (instead of perfection) to flourish across decades* with a personal note about her son’s struggle with depression. He is now thriving, but her guilt inspired a question about what she might have done to prevent it. He replied with a metaphor of the game Pachinko saying,

“You drop a coin in at the same slot but due to random small factors you can’t see it can end up on either side of the board. It wasn’t a question of well meaning or recognizing signs, just that raising a child is too complicated to approach with a plan.”

Having overcome the stranglehold of guilt from the accidental injury of my son, I was inspired by this exchange. Kathryn’s journey is one that I will hold onto as I lean further into the uncertainty, vulnerability, and surrender parenting requires.

Furthering my hope that I’ll survive the ominous task of raising kids with increasingly “bigger” problems was the wise and eclectic group of parents who shared their personal experiences:

Morgan McCarthy Tully (2007) confessed she is not afraid to say to her kids, “I’m sorry I yelled today.”

Jen Grace Baron (2013) noted how the guilt we feel as parents can end up in our children’s laps.

Eleanor Chin (2008), now a grandmother reflected, “I found myself wanting to keep my daughter from feeling bad, because it’s hard to be with the sad. I often had to remind myself it’s not my job to fix it and make it better.”

Chris DeSantis (2009) suggested how our childhood experiences influence our parenting and Lisa Buksbaum (2013) said she modeled resilience for her boys during a difficult time. Joe Kasper (2013) was there to remind us all, “wellbeing is not always pleasant” but perhaps possible, because he exemplifies post-traumatic growth in the wake of loss.



STICKY WORDS *continued*

We might not have found the perfect term to pair with parenting (some of us are even “allergic” to “resilience”), but the general consensus is that any expert talking about parenting needs to be “real.”

Regardless, growth mindset, strengths, post-traumatic growth, resilience, active constructive listening, self-compassion, and forgiveness play an important role in maintaining wellbeing across the grueling yet joy-filled decades of parenting. Positive psychology proves effective and important, but our burning question was,

“Where does the pressure to be perfect come from?” We pointed an accusatory finger towards social media, because comparing your “real” parenting experience to a positively curated feed is NOT healthy.

Hence, our conclusion to go social media dark for the sake of well-being, which left me unconvinced when hearing the Positive Technology Roundtable’s passionate advocacy for a digital future. Now I am thinking, *Maybe next year there needs to be a roundtable about how to reconcile technology and parenting?*

In the meantime, we concluded that self-care is crucial. Don’t wait for permission to take the breaks you need. Attending the Fete after a decade as “Just Mom” was one big self-care experience I am grateful for. Our authentic words exchanged suggest I’m not the only positive psychology enthusiast who struggles to keep the “positive” in parenting.

This “Real Parenting” discussion now sustains me in the trenches, for our words were transformed into powerful phrases that stick by marketing genius Donna Hemmert (2015):

Put your oxygen mask on first.

Be with your kids in the fire.

Savor in real time.

Fail forward.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alicia Assad, HC, MAPP is a mom of four. A storyteller on resilience, she strives to be WHOLE in motherhood and writes about the 7 science-based choices that make her a resilient mom on www.aliciaassad.com. For daily musings on resilience and motherhood, find her on social media, @AliciaAssadWrites.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Scott Asalone, MAPP 2008

In 1973 I was elected president of my church youth group. In hindsight, I don't think anyone wanted the job. Arriving home after the vote I told my father about the election and asked him "I've just been elected president. What do I do?" He told me, "choose something you believe in for your group and then move toward it with all of the passion and energy you have."

That is the legacy left by the previous board. They were amazing and provided a stronger, richer alumni association because of their passion and energy. We owe them a great debt of thanks. And the best way to repay that debt is to continue their work. So, what next?

I have always been in awe of MAPPsters ever since my first day at MAPP. That awe only increases every time alumni get together and I hear about the great things that all of you are doing to help the world.

"We are committed to examine ways we can make it simpler for MAPPsters to work together to create large-scale, meaningful change."

That should be why we exist; not to schedule Fetes and Summits, or provide access to more learning, even though all of that is great (and will continue). But we need to be the group that puts the "applied" in MAPP. That is not up to Penn or Marty or James, it is up to us.

Having spoken with your new exec team we believe that it is our job to provide opportunities and platforms for MAPPsters to work together to change the world for good. Many of you are already doing great work individually. It is time that we take our collective power and bring the force of positive psychology to bear to enrich people's lives and unleash their best.

We are committed to examine ways we can make it simpler for MAPPsters to work together to create large scale, meaningful change. To do that we need your ideas and your willingness to try some new things. Over the next few months we will reach out to you to gather your ideas about how we might bring groups of MAPPsters together and use them as a positive force for good. This is an exciting time and I'm thrilled to be part of this community and look forward to what we can accomplish together.

—Scott

MIND MAP

By Kari Gormley



It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. How about a mind map created through MindMup?

Below is a link for a map for MAPPsters, created by a CAPPster, outlining the plenary sessions, alumni presentations and the Sig Luncheon on positive psychology and technology at Summit 2017. The link: <http://tinyurl.com/KGSummitMindmap>

I am a recent graduate of the Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP) 37 program in Philadelphia taught by Louis Alloro (MAPP.3) and co-created with Emiliya Zhivotovskaya (MAPP.2). When I'm not facilitating positive psychology based workshops, coaching or studying for accreditation by the International Coaching Federation, I'm hosting The Running Lifestyle Show Podcast. The podcast has nearly two hundred episodes with medical practitioners, runners, authors and lifestyle experts.

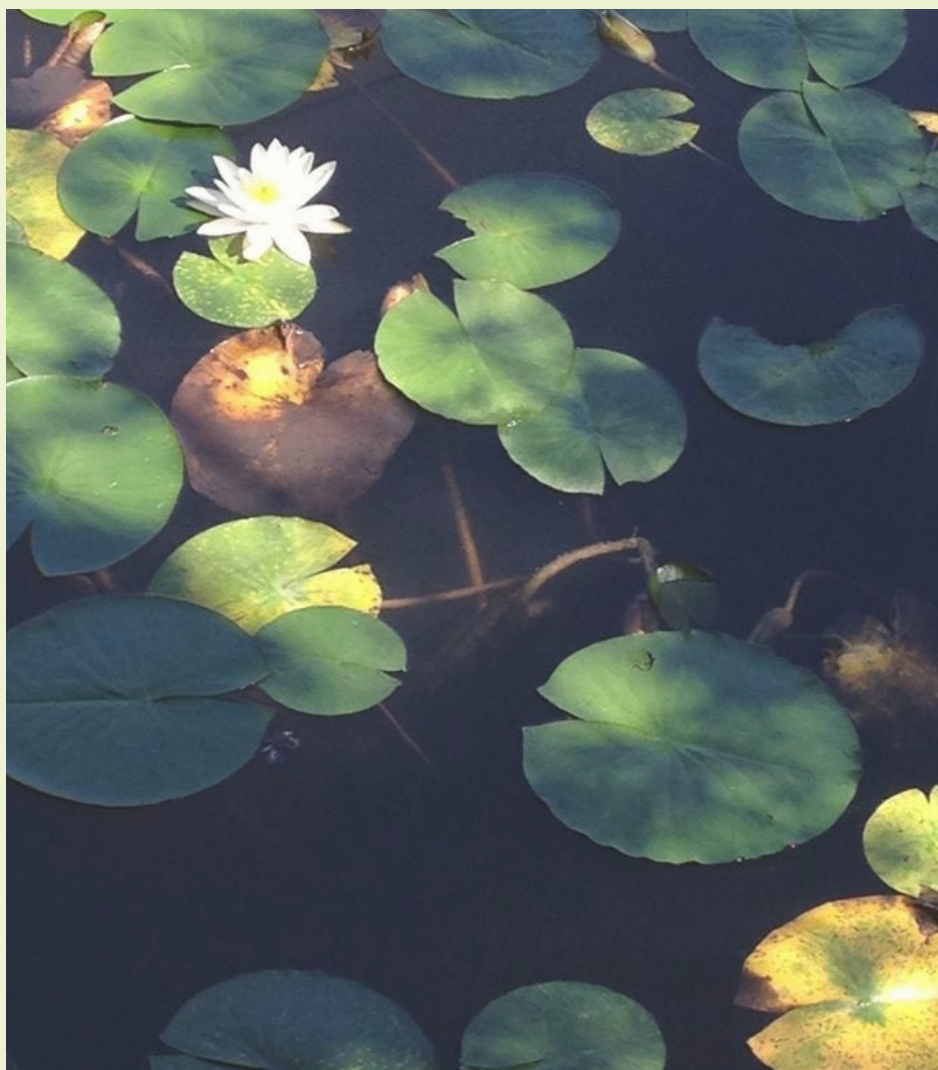


Photo by Jim Rink

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver