



## Positive Psychology approach for working with older adults

**Evidence-based techniques for health professionals to assist in decreasing depressive symptoms and increase wellbeing in older patients.**

Focusing on the negatives in life is a hallmark characteristic of depression that reduces subjective wellbeing in people of all ages. By contrast, expanding this problem-centered focus to one that also includes a person's strengths, and the things that are going well in their life, reduces depressive symptoms for the individual and increases their subjective wellbeing. Positive psychology is a strength-based, well-researched branch of psychology (i.e. it is not positive thinking) that provides strategies to catalyze such a shift in focus. Numerous studies over the last ten years have shown that positive psychology interventions significantly reduce depressive symptoms in teenagers and adults. Only recently has the use of positive psychology strategies with older adults been investigated. Results clearly indicate that positive psychology interventions reduce depressive symptoms and increase subjective wellbeing in older adults as well. These research results, coupled with the ease of dissemination and application of positive psychology strategies, place positive psychology interventions in a prime position to be used by a broad range of health professionals and allied health professionals working with older adults.

The first half of the session will explore key concepts in positive psychology, including signature strengths, savouring, gratitude, forgiveness, optimism, and positive emotions. The session will include audio-visual material and practical examples, and encourage participant contributions. The second half of the session will look at the practical application of evidence-based positive psychology interventions with older adults, including techniques related to the use of signature strengths, savouring, autobiographical memory, gratitude, and forgiveness. Participants will have the opportunity to practice some of the techniques in role-plays. The afternoon will conclude with time for questions and discussion of how positive psychology techniques can be incorporated into participants' practice.

### Learning objectives of this training:

1. Understand key concepts of positive psychology.
2. Relate these concepts in the lives of older adults.
3. Use evidence-based positive psychology techniques that have been shown to decrease depressive symptoms and increase subjective wellbeing in older adults.



**Renata Porzig-Drummond PhD** is a lecturer at the Australian College of Applied Psychology in Sydney, specialising in the fields of mental health and psychology. She uses an interactive presenting style that encourages participation, and focuses on the practical relevance of the topic for a clinical context.

Renata holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology and a BSc Psychology (Hon) from Macquarie University; a Grad Dip in Psychology and a BA from the University of Sydney; and a Certificate of Holistic Counselling from Nature Care College. Renata's research has focused on behaviour change and her research has been published in leading academic journals, including Behaviour Research and Therapy, Australian Social Work and Social Science & Medicine.

**This training may qualify for Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) CPD. Please refer to the Dept. of Health <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-ba-focus#cpd> for more information.**

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A certificate of attendance for 3 or 6 hours of face-to-face training is issued in the week following attendance at this

**Session Outline**  
**3 hours**  
**(or 6 hours with**  
**practicum included)**

Very brief overview of positive psychology  
Key concepts of positive psychology, including savouring, gratitude, forgiveness, optimism and positive emotions  
Overview of positive psychology techniques used with older adults  
Using signature strengths interventions to increase subjective wellbeing in older adults

*break*

Using savouring, autobiographical memory, gratitude and forgiveness strategies to decrease depressive symptoms and increase positive emotions in older adults

Questions

Reflections on how positive psychology techniques can be incorporated into participants' practice

Evaluation and closing.

***“Positive psychology provides useful and evidence-based strategies to help older adults widen their focus from being problem-centred to include their personal strengths and aspects that go well in their lives.”***

Renata Porzig-Drummond

**How will you benefit from attending this training?**

- Understand the key concepts of positive psychology, a strength-based and well-researched branch of psychology.
- Appreciate the importance of positive psychology concepts in the lives of older adults.
- Have an opportunity to practice evidence-based positive psychology techniques that can be used with older adults in a number of professional settings.

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**This training workshop is suitable for medical and allied health professionals, counsellors, psychotherapists and social workers working with aging patients and those working in aged care.**

**Feedback form Renata's recent presentations to health professionals:**

*“Renata's enthusiasm, attention to detail, going over and beyond expectations made it an absolute pleasure.”*

*“The enthusiasm, knowledge on this subject and in general, and engaging teaching ability to teach made this an enjoyable and valuable training. Thank you!”*

*“Renata's enthusiasm makes such a difference to the training. She is a very knowledgeable and positive trainer.”*

*“Renata was very encouraging of us to ask questions and engaging with her in a way that knowledge was fantastic and contributed to everyone's learning. She was approachable and fair. Just great!”*

*“Renata's knowledge and experience is impressive! She was well prepared, approachable and helpful throughout.”*

*“A very interesting topic – Renata was so helpful in terms of information and responding to questions.*

*Renata answered questions and managed the room skilfully. She created a wonderful learning environment and I learned so much to take into my practice.”*