

# → SouthGlosConnect ←



## The DNA of the South Glos Connect programme

Initially, the programme is aimed at year 6s and 7s, with the option of engaging some older teens who are leaving the care sector.

The content is shaped around the internationally recognised [PERMAH](#) model (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment and Health). Although its DNA has a strong academic underpinning, we've given our programme a deliberately light touch.

The aim is to deliver a fun and interactive programme that includes a host of practical and do-able wellbeing strategies that are applicable at school, home and in life generally. PERMAH is a relatively new model in a brand new science. 'Psychology', as a subject area, has been around for nearly 150 years. In that time, psychology has been almost exclusively a 'disease model', meaning that psychologists examined phobias, anxiety and clinical disorders with a view to administering therapy, counselling and medication that might 'fix' people.

*Positive Psychology* is a recent addition that builds on that body of knowledge but comes at the subject from a totally different angle. Instead of looking at what's wrong with people, positive psychologists seek to discover what's *right* with people; what makes us come alive, what makes a great day, how can we generate more good feelings, how can we find meaning and purpose in our lives (etc).

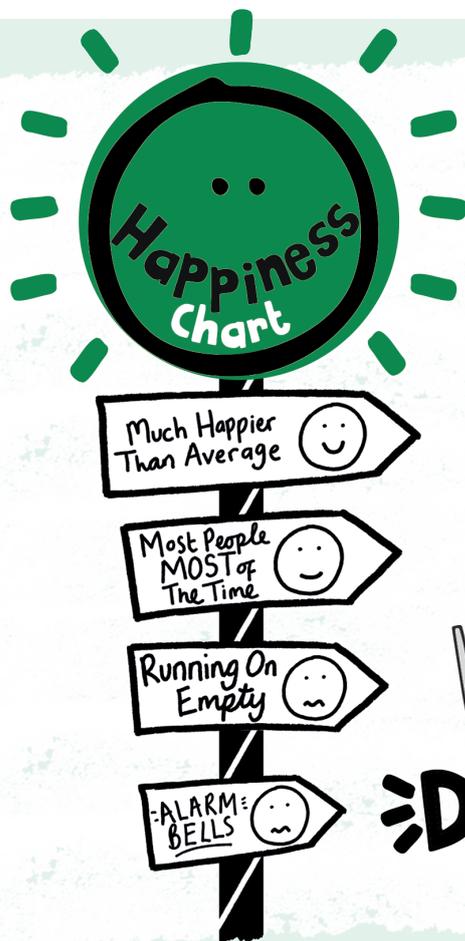
Positive Psychology is not positive thinking, blind optimism or 'happy clappy'. It is grounded in research and reality. Positive Psychology acknowledges that life can be exhausting, relentless and unforgiving. Everyone will experience setbacks and lows. Positive Psychology seeks to apply the same academic rigour to the science of wellbeing that traditional psychology continues to apply to mental ill-health.

The aim is that we take the learning from happiness and wellbeing and apply the lessons to the wider population. Once people understand how to take better care of their own mental health they are able to inoculate themselves against the pressures of the modern world.

The [PERMA](#) model was created by American psychologist, Dr Martin Seligman. (Other researchers added an extra 'H' for 'Health' so Seligman's original framework is often expanded to PERMAH).

Meantime, in the UK, the Art of Brilliance company was busy designing and delivering its own happiness and wellbeing programmes.

Our original workshops and keynotes sprang from Dr Andy Cope's PhD findings, in which he interviewed and reported on those who are living happy and engaged lives. His findings map neatly across the PERMAH model and the learning is encapsulated in the following '2%ers' graphic.



**2%ers**

**Perfectly fine**

**Languishing**

**DANGER ZONE**

Broadly speaking, if we measure levels of happiness and wellbeing, most people in the Western world inhabit the 'perfectly fine' zone. In terms of happiness, most people are 'mildly happy most of the time'. However, the last few years have been particularly challenging so even those who were 'fine' are beginning to run on empty. People who've been running on empty for a long time can slip into negative moods and prolonged negativity can start to ring the psychological alarm bells.

People in the danger zone are able to turn to professional solutions such as therapy, counselling or medication.

Positive Psychology is about those at the other end of the wellbeing spectrum – the handful of people that we can all think of who have something extra [positivity, energy, spring in their step, enthusiasm, passion for life...] The Art of Brilliance team nickname them the '2%ers' on the basis that there aren't very many of them. The 2%ers spend more time towards the top end of their wellbeing spectrum and have been ignored by psychologists on the grounds of them 'not being ill'.

The **South Glos programme** blends the PERMAH model with Dr Andy Cope's research into the 2%ers - the happy outliers, the flourishing few - and seeks to answer 3 questions:

1. The people who are feeling good on a regular basis, who exactly are they?
2. What are they doing that allows them to flourish?
3. What can we learn from them that they can apply to our own lives so we have a better chance of flourishing too?

Positive Psychology is a young science, but the breakthroughs have been significant. There are three pieces of good news about being a 2%er.

⇒ First, and most obviously, inhabiting the top end of your wellbeing spectrum (i.e., being your 'best self' more often) will fundamentally change the rest of your life. Research suggests that happy people are more creative, motivated, energetic, healthy and connected.

Second, research points to the fact that being a 2%er is actually a set of learned behaviours. The flourishing few – they are not feeling amazing by accident. They are feeling amazing because they share a set of learned behaviours. There are simple principles that, when applied, will nudge you in the right direction. Introducing these messages into the curriculum therefore makes obvious sense.



Third, and best news of all, is that your wellbeing is bigger than you. Human emotions are contagious so when you're functioning at your best, you create an emotional uplift in those around you.



**South Glos** have gone for a 3-pronged approach. The year 6 and 7 children will be receiving the first input (workshops and videos), with the same messages also reaching the teachers and parents. It's about using a common set of language and principles, across an entire community, that provides an uplift for everyone.

### NUMBERS THAT MAKE YOU THINK:

- 1 in 4:** the number of people who will suffer from depression
- 80 million (and rising):** The number of [anti-depressants prescribed](#) in the UK per annum
- 62%:** increase in [self-harm](#)
- One-seventh:** The proportion of your life that is spent on Mondays
- 15:** The number of people who form the core of your life. These relationships will nourish and sustain you
- 41, 43, 24 & 25:** the percentages of people who experience 'a lot' of worry, stress, anger and sadness (respectively) ([Gallup survey 2021](#))
- 11%:** the percentage of people who love their job
- 89%:** the percentage of people who experience 'presenteeism' or hate their job (Gallup, above)
- 80,000 (approx.):** the number of thoughts you have per day. About 75,000 will be the exact same thoughts you had yesterday
- 4,000:** The number of weeks in the average UK lifespan
- Number 1:** Someone you should really look after