

Disseminating Positive Psychology Resources Online: Current Research and Future Directions

Authors : Warren Jared, Bekker Jeremy, Salazar Guy, Jackman Katelyn, Linford Lauren

Abstract : Introduction: Positive Psychology research has burgeoned in the past 20 years; however, relatively few evidence-based resources to cultivate positive psychology skills are widely available to the general public. The positive psychology resources at www.mybestself101.org were developed to assist individuals in cultivating well-being using a variety of techniques, including gratitude, purpose, mindfulness, self-compassion, savoring, personal growth, and supportive relationships. These resources are empirically based and are built to be accessible to a broad audience. Key Objectives: This presentation highlights results from two recent randomized intervention studies of specific MBS101 learning modules. A key objective of this research is to empirically assess the efficacy and usability of these online resources. Another objective of this research is to encourage the broad dissemination of online positive psychology resources; thus, recommendations for further research and dissemination will be discussed. Methods: In both interventions, we recruited adult participants using social media advertisements. The participants completed several well-being and positive psychology construct-specific measures (savoring and self-compassion measures) at baseline and post-intervention. Participants in the experimental condition were also given a feedback questionnaire to gather qualitative data on how participants viewed the modules. Participants in the self-compassion study were randomly split between an experimental group, who received the treatment, and a control group, who were placed on a waitlist. There was no control group for the savoring study. Participants were instructed to read content on the module and practice savoring or self-compassion strategies listed in the module for a minimum of twenty minutes a day for 21 days. The intervention was semi-structured, as participants were free to choose which module activities they would complete from a menu of research-based strategies. Participants tracked which activities they completed and how long they spent on the modules each day. Results: In the savoring study, participants increased in savoring ability as indicated by multiple measures. In addition, participants increased in well-being from pre- to post-treatment. In the self-compassion study, repeated measures mixed model analyses revealed that compared to waitlist controls, participants who used the MBS101 self-compassion module experienced significant improvements in self-compassion, well-being, and body image with effect sizes ranging from medium to large. Attrition was 10.5% for the self-compassion study and 71% for the savoring study. Overall, participants indicated that the modules were generally helpful, and they particularly appreciated the specific strategy menus. Participants requested more structured course activities, more interactive content, and more practice activities overall. Recommendations: Mybestself101.org is an applied positive psychology research program that shows promise as a model for effectively disseminating evidence-based positive psychology resources that are both engaging and easily accessible. Considerable research is still needed, both to test the efficacy and usability of the modules currently available and to improve them based on participant feedback. Feedback received from participants in the randomized controlled trial led to the development of an expanded, 30-day online course called The Gift of Self-Compassion and an online mindfulness course currently in development called Mindfulness For Humans.

Keywords : positive psychology, intervention, online resources, self-compassion, dissemination, online curriculum

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