The Positive Acorn Way

Coaching is a 2 billion dollar a year industry worldwide. Coaches help their client gain self-awareness, increase confidence and enhance performance. Positive Acorn is the industry leader in providing training in positive psychology coaching.

Positive Psychology

Although scholars have been discussing happiness and other positive topics for thousands of years the formal positive psychology movement didn’t get its start until the late 1990s. It was when then-president of the American Psychological Association—Martin Seligman—argued for the need to pay attention to positive aspects of human psychology. Since that time academic journals, conferences, grants and other scientific infrastructure have been established to help support empirical investigations.

Today, positive psychology stands apart from earlier attention to positive psychology because of its emphasis on science. This means that it preferences empirical study over philosophy or opinion. Scholars use a wide variety of methods to investigate topics such as optimism, resilience, courage, love, and meaning in life. Positive psychology is also an applied science. This means that we endeavor to use the results of scientific study in order to improve life. Positive psychology can be used in education, work, romantic relationships, and other areas of life.

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Why Positivity?

In a world full of poverty, violence, and political problems it may seem naïve to focus on the positive. Although these are pressing concerns, life is not characterized solely by negative events. Appreciating the many legitimate positive events can be useful for personal wellbeing and strong relationships. Developing strengths and learning from successes can also be useful.

Among the most intriguing and counter-intuitive results from positive psychology research is the idea that happiness doesn’t just feel good, it is actually good for you. A wide range of studies point to the conclusion that feeling mildly pleasant positive emotions can lead—causally—to improved immune system functioning, a greater willingness to be social, and a rosier outlook of the future. Positive emotions have also been linked to wearing seatbelts, lower rates of smoking, and increases in volunteering. A number of studies have examined work outcomes and feeling upbeat is associated with better customer and supervisor evaluations, higher income, and helping colleagues. Taken together, these studies suggest that positivity is a worthwhile focus because it can enhance health, relationships, work and community wellbeing.
The Dark Side

Simply because positive psychologists advocate a focus on the positive does not mean that we ignore the negative. The world—and the Internet in particular—are full of “white washing” in which people want to focus exclusively on positivity. This way of thinking leads to adages such as “there is no such thing as failure; there are only opportunities to learn.” Although these sentiments can be inspiring it may be helpful to remember that there are legitimate negative experiences in life.

People are equipped with a palette of emotional experiences ranging from the unpleasant, such as guilt and sadness, to the pleasant, such as joy and contentment. Many people are deeply skeptical of so-called negative emotions because they are painful. These feelings, however, serve an important purpose. Sadness sends a signal that life isn’t going your way and encourages you to temporarily conserve your mental resources. Guilt lets you know that you have violated your own moral code and that a course correction is called for.

Although nobody wants to feel stuck in negative emotions over a long period of time it is helpful to be able to experience and learn from all feelings. The “positive psychology 2.0” movement emphasizes this point, recommending that people concentrate on positives but also accept the inevitability and occasional usefulness of negatives.

Positive Psychology Coaching

Although positive psychology got its start in the late 1990s it wasn’t until 2004 that it was first applied to coaching by Harvard-based psychologist Dr. Carol Kauffman. In 2007, in the first book ever published on the topic, Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener similarly suggested that positive psychology and coaching are natural bedfellows.

Coaches work as facilitators; helping to tease out the best motivation and performance from their clients. The results of positive psychology research can inform this work. For example, studies have shown that hopeful people outperform others academically and in sport. Researchers distinguish types of hopeful mindsets by grouping them into beliefs about personal effectiveness and beliefs about creative solutions. Coaches can use this template to listen to the specific language of their clients and ask powerful questions related to both of these ways of thinking.

Dr. Anthony Grant, a coach and researcher from Australia, has conducted a number of studies into the efficacy of coaching. One intriguing piece of research examined the question of which is a better approach: a problem focus or a solution focus? Dr. Grant found that people who focused on solutions during coaching were happier, felt more self-efficacy, and took more steps to achieve their goals relative to those who focused on dealing with and overcoming problems.
What is Coaching?

**Becoming a Certified Positive Psychology Coach**

Positive psychology coaching is life or executive coaching that is also informed by the science of positive psychology. This means that positive psychology coaching looks a lot like other forms of coaching—sessions begin with an agenda, they include brainstorming and questions, and they end by establishing accountability. In addition to these common coaching practices positive psychologists also focus on strengths development, motivation, and optimism.

Although these areas are typical to coaching, positive psychology coaches draw their practices from counter-intuitive scientific insights and empirically validated interventions.

Becoming a certified positive psychology coach is a serious undertaking. It involves hard work, effort, and time to practice. The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the world’s largest professional body of coaches. The ICF sets standards for ethical practice, professional development and—most importantly—training. Many coach training programs are not associated with the ICF and this leaves the door open to a lack of accountability and oversight.

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For anyone to be considered a positive psychology coach he or she would have to have two distinct but related skill sets: one in coaching and another in positive psychology interventions. High quality programs share in common certain approaches to teaching basic coaching skills. They focus on core competencies such as the ability to establish a sophisticated agenda for coaching or asking clients powerful questions designed to promote new insights. Quality programs also offer opportunities for learners to practice coaching skills as well as formal observation sessions where students can receive written and oral feedback on their performance. Finally, high quality programs all emphasize ethical practice and offer opportunities for discussion of ethics codes and common coaching dilemmas.

Once students have established a foundation of basic coaching skills it is time to add an additional layer of skill related to using positive psychology theory and intervention. These include, but are not limited to, the strategic use of positive emotion, a focus on mindset, and identifying and developing strengths. As with basic coaching instruction high quality programs side-step lectures in favor of practical demonstrations and opportunities for students to practice these skills.

### Positive Psychology in Coaching Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Psychology skills overlaid on the coaching session:</th>
<th>Strengths Development</th>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Curiosity</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Hope</th>
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**The Coaching Session**

Skills: Agenda Powerful Questions Brainstorming and Planning Accountability

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<th>Themes that form the focus of a positive psychology coaching session:</th>
<th>Goals and Motivation</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics form the foundation of all coaching sessions:</td>
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The Positive Acorn Approach

At Positive Acorn, you won’t find copyrighted phrases (e.g. “Empower Yourself Level 2 ©”) nor will you find us pushing a proprietary coaching model. We are deeply skeptical of these types of approaches to coach training. Instead, we’ll share the latest science and teach you how to apply it. Our skills are designed to be “coaching agnostic,” meaning that they fit well with almost any approach to coaching. In fact, that also work well as adjuncts to management, education and—in some instances—psychotherapy.

Positive Acorn is an ICF-approved positive psychology coach training program built on two simple principles: First, we want to use the most effective teaching tools possible to enhance learning. All of us spent years in school and developed intuitions about how learning occurs. Unfortunately, science reveals that many of the most popular strategies—rereading, highlighting, taking notes on computers, cramming—are ineffective. Our instructors keep abreast of developments in the science of teaching and learning to make certain that students benefit from proven techniques such as spaced practice, anticipation, and interleaving.

Perhaps the most visible aspect of our commitment to effective pedagogy can be seen in our use of the “flipped classroom.” Traditional classes are filled with lecture with some small time for questions and answers at the end. Then, students are sent to do homework where—supposedly—additional learning occurs. The flipped classroom reverses this process. Real time classroom interaction is a terrific opportunity for discussion and demonstrations and shouldn’t be used for lecture. That is, what would normally be considered “homework” is done in class and lectures can be listened to or watched in a recorded digital format.

The second principle that guides the Positive Acorn approach is research. We pride ourselves on the most up-to-date approaches in positive psychology. Our instructors are not only consumers of this science, we create it! We are at the forefront of positive psychology intervention and cover cutting edge topics. Many training programs introduce students to the 24 VIA strengths and gratitude and mindfulness exercises to improve happiness. We feel that these topics are easy to learn, and so widely covered on the internet that you shouldn’t have to pay for them. We prefer to focus on new approaches to strengths development, courage enhancement, and other topics not covered elsewhere.

Positive Acorn offers training via distance. This means that you can use a computer to connect to class from anywhere in the world. In fact, expect to be interacting with peers from as far away as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. We use premium classroom software designed specifically for teaching. This platform allows students to chat with one another via typing, to hear each other’s voices, to raise their hands, to share files, to practice skills in break out rooms and to see instructor notes on a white board. We
record these live sessions for students who might not be available to attend in person. We also hold regular office hours to deepen learning. Our power point lecture materials, readings, and other resources are available to students in our private web site. Our support staff is also available to help students troubleshoot technical difficulties.

Our program prepares people for an ICF credential and we conform to ICF ethical and practice standards.

**Why Certification?**

Certification is proof of both a solid knowledge base and skills competency. It is a sign to employers, colleagues and clients that you have invested effort, that you have connected to peers in your field, and that you have a background in ethical practice. Of equal importance, a certificate helps to distinguish you from other coaches who may have attended less than reputable or low quality training programs. Certification reflects the fact that you have been formally assessed. Positive Acorn offers assessment in a variety of ways including 5 observed coaching interactions. We use high standards for assessing skills and learning. Positive Acorn is not a “certificate mill.” In instances where students need additional support we gladly offer comprehensive feedback and work with them to create a plan to develop their skill set. Although we have high standards for learning we give each student the individual attention they need to succeed in our program.

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**CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

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<tr>
<th>ICF ACC Certification Requirements ASCTH Path:</th>
<th>Positive Acorn Coach Training Program Positive Psychology Coach Certification:</th>
<th>Positive Acorn CCE Positive Psychology Coach Certification:</th>
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<tr>
<td>60 hours of course work</td>
<td>60 hours of course work in three courses:</td>
<td>32.5 hours of course work in two courses:</td>
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<td>Coach Knowledge Assessment</td>
<td>Coaching Skills Applied Positive Psychology Coaching Wellbeing</td>
<td>Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 hours of coaching experience</td>
<td>Optional: 7.5 hours of mentor coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receive 10 hours of coaching with a coaching mentor</td>
<td>Optional: Coaching hours</td>
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<td>Submit a Session Recording</td>
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The Program Specifics

Positive Acorn has a two-track system to becoming a certified positive psychology coach.

The Credential Track

One track is the “credential track” and it is intended for people with little or no coaching experience. This program is completed in 8 months and provides coursework in foundational in coaching including opportunities for practice and the study of ethics. It also includes a deep dive into applied positive psychology and wellbeing. This credential track confers the training credits that the ICF requires for their ACC credential (the “Associate Certified Coach” is ICF’s basic level of certification).

People who register for this program also have the opportunity to accumulate coaching hours required for ACC certification (see inset). This track results, upon successful completion of all requirements, in Positive Acorn’s “Certified Positive Psychology Coach” endorsement. It also fulfills all course requirements for ICF certification. The courses run on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10:30 am Pacific. Attendance on both days is required.

Course 1: Coaching Skills
Course 2: Applied Positive Psychology
Course 3: Coaching Wellbeing

Total Credit Hours: 60
Total Price: $3,500

Optional Partner Practice:

For those in the ACC credential track who like to participate in partner practice, we can set up connections with fellow students. It is up to individuals to schedule their partner practice sessions; we recommend setting a regular meeting schedule to maximize the number of hours you receive.
**The Continuing Education Track**

The “continuing education track” is intended for people with formal training and professional experience in coaching. This fast-track program is completed in 5 months and provides coursework in applied positive psychology. This track results, upon successful completion of all requirements, in Positive Acorn’s “Certified Positive Psychology Coach” endorsement as well as 32.5 continuing education credits from the ICF. The courses run on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10:30 am Pacific. Attendance on both days is required.

Course 1: **Applied Positive Psychology**

Course 2: **Coaching Wellbeing**

Core Competency credits: **29.5**

Resource Development credits: **3**

Total Credit Hours: **32.5**

Total Price: **$2,105.00**

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**A la carte option**

For people on a budget, for those with less time, or for those who simply want a sample we also offer an a la carte option of taking courses. To give preference to students from one of the two tracks mentioned above we limit the number of a la carte registrations for each course and take them on a first-come first-served basis. That said, you are more than welcome to join us in any of our courses subject to availability.
**Mentor Coaching with Robert Biswas-Diener**

Perhaps the most vital aspect of learning to coach effectively is receiving feedback on your coaching. This is why the International Coach Federation (ICF) requires 10 hours of Mentor Coaching for certification. Mentor Coaching is working with a certified and experienced coach to gain insight into your own coaching skills.

It is often said that mentoring is an opportunity to show someone how good they can be. In this group, mentees, will receive personalized feedback and encouragement regarding their professional coaching skills. The sessions will focus on core competencies and ethical practice. This group is limited to 5 members so that each person receives individualized attention. There will be 5 sessions. Each group session will be 1.5 hours in length and will be divided between a thematic group discussion and feedback on recorded coaching sessions that participants submit.

5 group sessions for 7.5 total group mentor hours: $650

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**Group Mentoring Dates and Topics**

- **September 4, 2018:** Mastering the Core Competencies
- **September 11, 2018:** The Agenda Balancing Act
- **October 16, 2018:** Coaching in the Moment
- **October 28, 2018:** The Reflective Practice
- **November 6, 2018:** Wrapping up
Course Descriptions

**Coaching Skills**

Coaching Skills introduces students to the coaching relationship and provides an experiential learning environment in which they develop basic coaching competencies. This 6-week course meets three hours per week and requires additional time for reading and engaging with the pre-recorded lecture. Each live class session includes time for skills practice in breakout rooms.

**Instructor: Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener**

**Session One:** The bookends of coaching: Setting agenda and establishing accountability  
**Session Two:** Introduction to the ICF core competencies  
**Session Three:** Creating client awareness  
**Session Four:** The psychology of goals and motivation  
**Session Five:** Developing coaching presence  
**Session Six:** Working with metaphor  
**Session Seven:** The stages of change  
**Session Eight:** Asking powerful questions  
**Session Nine:** Solutions Focus coaching  
**Session Ten:** Values clarification  
**Session Eleven:** Using the Tree-of-Life Activity  
**Session Twelve:** Hope Diagnosis

Coaching Skills runs on Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00-10:30 Pacific  
November 6- December 18, 2018, with the exception of November 22nd.  
Coaching Skills is 22.5 credits
Applied Positive Psychology

The science of positive psychology is our sweet spot. Positive psychology is an empirical approach to understanding what goes right, rather than what goes wrong, with people. Topics in this science include well-being, optimism, resilience, courage, flow and many others. We leverage our expert knowledge in this field to introduce practical skills that are nuanced and effective. This 6-week course meets twice a week for 1.5 hours a class.

Instructor: Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener

**Session One:** Introduction to the science of positive psychology  
**Session Two:** Strengths spotting  
**Session Three:** Strengths development  
**Session Four:** Assessment-Strengths Profile  
**Session Five:** The Positive self  
**Session Six:** Increasing courage  
**Session Seven:** Solutions focus  
**Session Eight:** Positive work  
**Session Nine:** Emotion in coaching  
**Session Ten:** Curiosity and interest as problem solving tools  
**Session Eleven:** The science of happiness  
**Session Twelve:** Savoring

Class times are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10:30 am Pacific  
Applied Positive Psychology is 22.5 credits.
Coaching Wellbeing

In this 6-week course Dr. Laura Lewis Mantell takes you on a tour of one of the fastest growing sectors of the coaching industry. Course participants will be exposed to a wealth of research-- both classic and brand new-- related to stress, happiness and the mind-body connection. This will serve as the scientific foundation of the practical skills taught in this course. Course meets on Tuesdays for 1.5 hours per class.

Instructor: Dr. Laura Lewis Mantell

Dr. Laura Lewis Mantell created the first pain management service in New York City and has served as President of the Eastern division of the American Pain Association. She has trained in mind-body medicine, stress management, and acupuncture. Laura is an ICF certified coach and a leading authority on Positive Diagnosis.

Weekly Topics:

Session One: A fresh look at theories of well-being
Session Two: Happiness, health, and your clients
Session Three: Mind-body: Belief, placebo, and mindset
Session Four: A new view of stress as a resource
Session Five: Leveraging willpower for client success
Session Six: Positive psychology interventions and positive diagnosis

Coaching Wellbeing runs from April 30 - May 16, 2019.
Class times are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10:30 am Pacific
Coaching Wellbeing is 10 credits.
**Powerful Practice**

This 4-session distance learning course is intended for coaches who want to develop their own presence. We will meet twice a month for two months for 1.5 hours each session.

**Instructor: Dr. Robert Biswas-Diener**

**Session 1** - Reflecting on definitions of coaching and the tools that make is powerful  
**Session 2** - Ways of Being: The overlooked aspect of professional development  
**Session 3** - Questioning: Enhancing your ability to ask the most powerful questions  
**Session 4** - You, as a brand: marketing without over-selling

Course dates are May 23 and 30, and June 20 and 27, 2018.  
Class meets from 9:00-10:30 am Pacific time.  
Powerful Practice is 7 credits.

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**Payment Options**

Upon registration on our Positive Acorn website you can choose three payments plans:

- *Payment in full*  
- *Three monthly payments*  
- *Five Monthly payments*
Student testimonials

“The Coaching Skills Course was instrumental in increasing my confidence as a coach through the demonstration of the most sophisticated coaching techniques and the creation of an environment to practice and receive constructive feedback. The skills I have learned have not only shaped my practice as a coach, but have also permeated into my everyday life - friends and family notice my ability to ask powerful questions and listen in an active and engaged manner now more than ever. I highly recommend the course to anyone who is thinking about becoming a coach or is considering using coaching techniques in their work.”

--- Christina Echevarria

“I thoroughly enjoyed the course and this is one of the best courses I’ve attended. This course is a combination of theory and application of practical coaching tools and methods which are immediately applicable to my job. The instruction materials, lectures and coaching sessions were excellent. The course exceeded my expectations and significantly expanded my knowledge in Applied Positive Psychology Coaching. It even accelerated my career move upon completion of course – this is the most significant and positive impact I can ever imagine!”

--- Cheri H.Y. Ho

"I'm so grateful to have participated in Positive Acorn’s inaugural 'Coaching Wellbeing' course with Laura Mantell. Laura so generously shared her scientific wisdom to create a super-rich learning experience - through live sessions, coaching demonstrations, presentation recordings, downloadable slides, journal articles, assessment tools and many other references. As a result, my wellbeing toolkit is bursting with evidence-based practices and materials that build confidence in clients as they experiment with new ways of being in the world.”

--- Bernita

“I highly recommend Positive Acorn’s coach training courses. Dr. Robert Biswas Diener is a widely-respected researcher in happiness and Applied Positive Psychology, and a Master Teacher. He models best practice coaching and provides excellent resources and examples (both empirical and anecdotal), to assist students in reaching his high expectations. Weekly practice partners allow for practical application of the tools and techniques that are presented.”

--- Carole Mackewich, M.Ed

For more testimonials please visit our website.