

# Creating a Strength-Based Culture in a Counseling Psychology Program

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# Building on our History of a Strength-Based Identity

Donald Super (1955) offered the distinction that counseling psychology is concerned with hygiene (i.e., the preservation of health) in comparison to clinical psychology.

Super espoused a philosophy in which counseling psychology focuses on “what is right and how to help use it” in contrast to the predominant view of focusing on “what is wrong and how to treat it” (p. 171; cited in Gelso & Woodhouse, 2003).

Gelso & Fassinger (1992) called counseling psychology's lack of attention to healthy functioning as counseling psychology's "unfulfilled promise."

Counseling psychology also falls short in providing strength-based training to our students. How can we expect our students to be strength-oriented if we do not incorporate strength-oriented training experiences into our core training components covering science, practice, and social justice training?

*Strength-based training* is the dissemination of knowledge and engagement in activities involving the promotion of human strengths and assets; and the encouragement of optimal human functioning

(Cole & Scheel, 2014).

# Fundamental changes at UNL in teaching and in research/practice training

Several key developments in research and practice training, and in teaching.

Offered the first graduate elective course (summer ) affectionately named the 4 P's (EDPS 995: Positive Psychology, Personality, and Psychotherapy).

This provided a way to disseminate to our graduate students the foundational principles of a strength-based practice and positive psychology.

Conducted strength oriented research in collaboration with students (e.g., Scheel, Klentz, & Henderson, 2013; Bartholomew, Scheel, & Cole, 2015)

# 4 P's course

Positive Psychology – paradigm shift from physical science metaphor to psychological metaphor for therapeutic change.

Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)

Positive personality traits (i.e., strengths)

PPI's (e.g., positive empathy, self compassion, gratitude, approach goals, capitalization, entity vs. incremental theory of change)

## ***EDPS 320: Happiness and Well-Being***

- 1) Undergrad teaching opportunity
- 2) Generation of SCH
- 3) Prevention, contributing to a healthier campus environment
- 4) Broadens view of counseling psych in the eyes of a college of education
- 5) Recruitment to our program
- 6) Opportunity to conduct PP research
- 7) Opportunity for our students to gain experiences leading groups (self compassion, flow, social connections)
- 8) Approval of our proposal for an undergrad minor

# ***Positive psych practices infused in CP training***

Four Front assessment approach –

1) Client deficits, 2) strengths, 3) environmental barriers & 4) assets (Wright & Lopez, 2002)

Complete State Model of Mental Health –

Flourishing, Struggling, Languishing, Floundering) (Keyes & Lopez, 2002)

Approach Goals (Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006)

Virtues in Action (VIA, Seligman)

Hope for Change through Counseling Scale

(HCCS; Bartholomew & Scheel, 2015)

The Broaden-and-Build theory of

positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)