



Positive Psychology Think Tank 2010

Funded by APS Melbourne Branch & powered by people passion

Positive psychology (PP) is a movement that focusses on the practice and science of wellbeing and optimal human functioning in individuals and communities. The movement started in 1999 in America and has since generated a lot of attention in academic and applied psychology, the popular press and broader community. In Australia there have been some fantastic initiatives that have helped to put PP on the map (eg, two successful APPA conferences in 2008 & 2010; establishment of the PP Interest Group free seminar program at Monash and Melbourne Universities; and a PP Interest Group website <http://pospsychmel.ning.com/>) but there is a lot more potential to be tapped.

To help maintain momentum in PP we (Dr Jo Mitchell & Jacci Norrish) had an idea to run a residential retreat to bring together early career psychologists with a demonstrated passion for PP alongside more established academics and practitioners to see what could be achieved at both an individual and community level. The key aims were to develop the research and application of PP locally and nationally and to facilitate communication and collaboration between researchers and practitioners. The APS Melbourne Branch were immediately supportive of the idea which meant that not only did we have a passionate group of people to make it happen but also access to APS Melbourne Branch funding and support to bring the project to fruition.

The residential retreat – PP Think Tank¹⁰ – started with advertising for and selecting ten scholarship recipients (a mix of student, associate and full APS members). We were able to build an amazing leadership group of international (A/Prof. Todd Kashdan, USA, Aaron Jarden and Denise Quinlan, both from NZ) and local talent (Dr Jo Mitchell, Jacci Norrish, Dr Kaveh Monshat and Romi Kaufman) who donated their expertise, time and effort. We made the most of A/Prof. Kashdan's time by also hosting a public workshop immediately preceding the residential retreat. We then spent three days (over the auspicious weekend of 10-10-10) on the Mornington Peninsula sharing knowledge, experiences and ideas.

How did we do? It was a fabulous, inspiring weekend in itself but the real evidence for success will be in the actions that are implemented over the coming months and years. Some practical ideas that emerged from the weekend included the creation of a national mentoring network, more grass roots involvement in the national body APPA, and creation of an APS PP interest group. Most importantly the participants came away with an individualised plan for their own development as a psychology professionals and the confidence to collaborate and take on a leadership role in the development of PP in their communities. Here is what the scholarship recipients had to say about PP Think Tank¹⁰:

"The retreat not only inspired me to get actively involved in the field of positive psychology, but also instilled the confidence I needed to pursue this passion." Luke Henderson

"A rare chance to meet and connect with other current researchers and practitioners. I came away feeling I'd made my own contribution too." Annabel Battersby

"I feel privileged to have spent the weekend with a group of talented people who share my interest in wellbeing and I am left inspired by the possibility of future collaboration." Chris Horan

"...an opportunity to discuss and plan how we can make the science of well-being accessible to everyone, how we can fulfil our own life purpose and above all how we can make positive psychology a common language." Danielle Buckley

"I left imbued with the strength and confidence to pursue my quest to make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of well-being, success and meaning." Gabriel Strauss

(The other five scholarship recipients were Emily Toner, Tim Mahlberg, Molly Nicholson, Lisa Ritchie and Rohita Atri).

Further information:

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PP Interest Group, <http://pospsychmel.ning.com>

APPA (Australian association), <http://positivepsychologyaustralia.org/about.htm>

IPPA (International association), www.ippanetwork.org

How to create a movement in 3 minutes, http://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement.html

