



POSITIVE ACORN

THE POSITIVE ACORN WAY

Coaching is a multi-billion dollar a year industry worldwide.

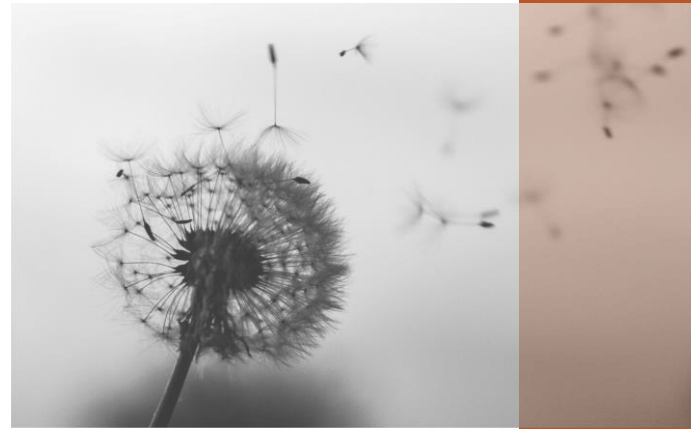
Coaches help their clients gain self-awareness, increase confidence, and enhance performance. Positive Acorn is the industry leader in providing training in positive psychology coaching.

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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. 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 infrastructures have been established to help support empirical investigations.

Today, positive psychology stands apart from earlier positive philosophies because of its emphasis on science, which means that it preferences empirical study over anecdote or opinion. Researchers 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. We endeavor to use the results of scientific studies to improve life. Positive psychology can be used in education, work, romantic relationships, and other areas of life.



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 good for you. A wide range of studies points 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 on the future. Positive emotions have also been linked to wearing seat belts, lower smoking rates, and increases in volunteering. Several 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. There are many instances in which people are encouraged 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. 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 moral code and that a course correction is called for.

Although nobody wants to feel stuck in negative emotions over a long time, it is helpful 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 sports. 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 their client's specific language and ask powerful questions related to both of these ways of thinking.

Dr. Anthony Grant, a coach and researcher from Australia, conducted 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?



COACHING	THERAPY	CONSULTING
Coach is facilitator	Therapist is expert facilitator	Consultant is expert
Coach asks questions	Therapist asks questions and educates	Consultant informs
Emphasizes insight and action	Emphasizes insight and action	Emphasizes learning and action
Healthy clients	Clients in distress	Organizations
Focus on goals, motives, and values	Focus on pain, support, and healing	Focus on policy, culture, and efficiencies



Becoming a Certified Positive Psychology Coach

Positive psychology coaching is life or executive coaching that is also informed by the science of positive psychology. 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 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 Coaching 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.

For anyone to be considered a positive psychology coach, he or she would need to have two distinct but related skill sets, one in coaching and another in positive psychology interventions. High-quality programs share certain common 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 verbal 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 a layer of skills 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 student opportunities to practice these skills.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN COACHING SESSIONS

Positive Psychology
skills overlaid on the
coaching session:

Strengths
Development

Courage

Curiosity

Happiness

Hope

THE COACHING SESSION

Skills

Agenda

Powerful Questions

Brainstorming and Planning

Accountability

Themes that form the
focus of a positive
psychology coaching
session:

Goals and Motivation

Values

Relationships

Emotions

ETHICS FORM THE FOUNDATION OF ALL COACHING SESSIONS



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 will share the latest science and teach you how to apply it. Our training is designed to be "model agnostic," meaning that it fits well with almost any approach to coaching. The skills we train also work well in management, education, and—in some instances—psychotherapy.

Positive Acorn is an ICF-accredited 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. Research reveals that many of the most popular strategies— rereading, highlighting, 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 a lecture with a short time for questions and answers at the end. Then, students are sent to do homework where more active learning occurs. The flipped classroom reverses this process. Real-time classroom interaction is the best place for active learning. We pre-record our lectures so that they can be listened to or watched at the learner's convenience.





The second principle that guides the Positive Acorn approach is research. We pride ourselves on the most up-to-date approaches to 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. Rather than focusing on concepts such as gratitude and mindfulness that are freely available elsewhere, we prefer to focus on new approaches to strengths development, courage enhancement, and other topics not covered elsewhere.

Positive Acorn offers training via distance; using a virtual classroom, students can connect to class from anywhere in the world. Expect to be interacting with peers from around the globe including Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. We record these live sessions for students who might not be available to attend in person. Our PowerPoint lectures, materials, readings, and other resources are available to students on our private website. Our support staff is also available to help students troubleshoot technical difficulties.

Clinical programs, such as medicine and clinical psychology, include a practicum component as an opportunity for students to practice and refine skills. In this tradition, we have included an optional practicum for our students. The intention is to provide a safe and low-stakes environment in which people can practice coaching and receive supportive feedback. This is a chance to practice and discuss specific skills and to experiment with guiding frameworks and personal styles. The course instructor will be present to facilitate the session. Although the practicum is optional, we strongly encourage everyone to participate. In our experience, practice and feedback accelerate learning. We offer the practicum at two different times to cater to people living in diverse geographic regions.



WHY CERTIFICATION?

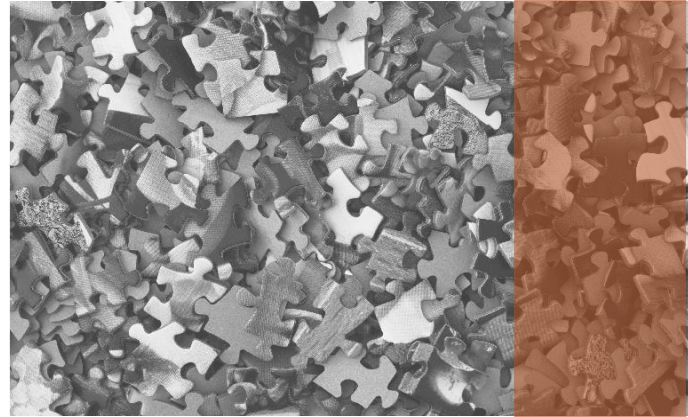


Certification is proof of both a solid knowledge base and skills competency. It is a sign to employers, colleagues, and clients that you have invested effort, that you have connected to peers in your field, and that you have a background in ethical practice. Of equal importance, a certificate helps to distinguish you from other coaches who may have attended less than reputable or low-quality training programs. Certification also reflects the fact that you have been formally assessed. 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.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

ICF ACC Certification Portfolio Application Path:	ICF ACC Certification Level 1 Application Path	Positive Acorn Training Program Offering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 hours of course work • 10 hours of mentoring • 100 hours of coaching experience • Submit a Session Recording • Coach Knowledge Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Level 1 training including mentoring and coaching assessment • 100 hours of coaching experience • Coach Knowledge Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option to take full Level 1 training- including mentoring and assessment • Option to take courses individually for use in Portfolio Path





THE PROGRAM SPECIFICS

The ICF ACC Credential Track

To become a Certified Positive Psychology Coach, you need to take two core courses that span six months.

This credential track is appropriate for people with little or no coaching experience, as well as for working coaches. This 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 some of the coaching hours required for ACC certification (see inset). Upon completion, this track results in Positive Acorn’s “Certified Positive Psychology Coach” endorsement.

People who are already certified and working as coaches can earn ICF continuing education credits (CCE) in this package as well. CCE credits can also be received by taking either course individually.

Course 1: Coaching Skills

Course 2: Applied Positive Psychology

Total Credit Hours: 75

Total Price: \$4,300

Partner Practice:

Those registered in the ACC credential track will be participating in partner practice. We will provide contacts with fellow classmates. 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 accumulate and to solidify your learning.

