

Pathways for Positive Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: Positive mental health education is an educational approach that applies the latest research findings from positive psychology to students' mental health education, aiming to cultivate students' positive character traits and enhance their capacity to create a fulfilling life. To enhance the efficacy of students' mental health education, it is possible to strengthen the dissemination of positive mental health knowledge through multiple channels, improve students' positive psychological experiences through diverse approaches, and cultivate character strengths and virtues through various methods.

Keywords: College students; Positive mental health education; Practice path

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Currently, institutions of higher education have established a mental health education system aimed at fostering students' healthy development. However, in practice, excessive emphasis is placed on addressing and resolving students' psychological issues. The primary focus of full-time and part-time mental health personnel is on crisis monitoring, early warning, and intervention. The implementation of psychological education is often relegated to secondary importance, and the proactive measures of preemptive engagement, utilizing offense as a form of defense, and initiating preemptive actions are not executed in a timely or comprehensive manner. Positive mental health education represents a paradigm shift in psychological approaches, transitioning from addressing "pathology" to addressing "skewedness." This approach offers a methodology for resolving potential psychological issues through the application of positive psychological principles.

1. What is Positive Mental Health Education?

The concept of positive psychology was initially proposed by the American psychologist Martin Seligman in 1998, subsequently initiating a shift in the direction of psychological research and practice. Furthermore, the values espoused by positive psychology align closely with the value orientation conducive to students' healthy development and academic success(Zeng Guang, Zhao Yi Kunpeng, 2018). Consequently, the integration of positive mental health education with the school's moral education system can potentially facilitate positive development and enhance the psychological resilience of the entire student body. Positive mental health education constitutes a theoretical and practical framework that aims to enhance the mental well-being of students and individuals by building upon and integrating concepts and methodologies from positive mental health, positive psychotherapy, positive psychology, and positive education. Positive mental health education is an educational activity that is based on the physiological and psychological development characteristics of the education object, takes people's goodness as the value orientation, and uses positive content, methods and means to develop and cultivate the positive psychological quality of the individual from the positive side, prevent and treat various psychological problems, and promote the comprehensive and harmonious development of the individual's body and mind(Meng Wanjin, 2008).

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Positive mental health education reflects the concept of "treating diseases before they occur" advocated by traditional Chinese medicine in China, and there are also specific guidance in practice. It is an effective way to serve the healthy growth and all-round development of students, while learning how to live a more worthy, meaningful and happy life.

2. The Practice of Positive Mental Health Education

The work of psychological education in colleges and universities should be based on serving all students, helping students use their own advantages to solve difficulties, to forming a state of positive development, and truly "helping others to help themselves"(WU JiuJun,LIAO Qinglin,HAN Liguang,2019). Positive mental health education try to build a positive social support system and supportive environment for students to grow, it try to let students fully mobilize and develop their potential in a situation where they feel safe to thrive.

(1) Enhance the dissemination of positive psychological knowledge through multiple channels

Positive mental health education attaches great importance to the popularization of positive mental health knowledge and helps students form appropriate cognition and health awareness. In 2011, Seligman proposed a PERMA model for a thriving life: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement. In 2018, Zeng Guang and Zhao Yukun summarized the practical experience of positive education in China and proposed the "6+2" positive education model theory, which has six modules: positive self, positive emotion, positive engagement, positive relationship, positive meaning and positive achievement. as well as two major systems: physical and mental health regulation and character strength cultivation(E. Silged, R.C. Atkinson, et al). At present, the theoretical basis and application technology of these six modules and two systems have specific content, and these resources can be fully utilized. At the same time, the perspective of focusing on diseases can be shifted more to the cultivation and development of students' positive resources. Colleges and Universities can introduce positive mental health education resources to students through different channels, such as WeChat public accounts, mental health courses, special lectures, themed class meetings and so on. Guide students to pay attention to positive self, form a positive mental health awareness, and develop positive qualities and cultivate a positive attitude. at last, learn to use their own strengths to overcome and face crises in all stages of life and improve adaptability.

(2) Enhance students' positive psychological experience through multiple approaches

In positive mental health education, it is essential to focus on students' positive psychological experiences in the development of various tasks, and emphasize the cultivation of students' positive behaviors while facilitating their academic and personal well-being. Ultimately, this approach aims to cultivate positive psychological resources for youth of the new era. For instance, it is necessary to prioritize adaptation education for freshmen, assisting them in experiencing, understanding, and accepting themselves through group psychological counseling, while simultaneously establishing positive interpersonal support networks. Institutions should organize various forms of practical course resources, such as mindfulness and meditation, to improve students' concentration and enhance their engagement in learning and life. Additionally, implementing diverse community service activities can help students experience dedication and meaning through altruistic behavior. Concurrently, based on students' actual needs, colleges and universities should strengthen academic guidance, enhance students' academic confidence, and improve self-efficacy. Through the continuous integration of positive experience education, this process ultimately aids students in developing the capacity for positive experiences and cultivates a positive and optimistic attitude.

(3) Cultivating character strengths and virtues across multiple stages

Researchers have identified that the 6 virtues and 24 character strengths possessed by all human beings are reflected to varying degrees in each individual, which facilitates the cultivation of positive qualities in students.

However, positive mental health education is a process, as the formation of positive character strengths and virtues requires time. The psychological, ideological, and behavioral characteristics of college students necessitate that positive mental health education should span students' entire academic career. The student strength personality test can be incorporated into the psychological assessment of freshmen, enabling students to recognize and discover their strengths and potential while strengthening their self-concept, concurrent with investigating students' psychological challenges. In daily mental health education activities, a positive psychological orientation should be adopted to guide students in discovering their own and others' virtues and strengths, and learning to utilize their virtues and advantages to engage actively in life and learning.

3. Safeguards for the Implementation of Positive Psychological Education

Positive mental health education enhances the content of mental health education, contributes to improving the subject-object relationship of mental health education, facilitates the expansion of mental health education methodologies, and provides valuable insights for institutions of higher education to further enhance students' mental health education. In practice, a robust guarantee mechanism is a prerequisite for the efficacy of positive mental health education. Higher education institutions can improve implementation in the following three aspects. Firstly, colleges and universities should further emphasize the importance of psychological education, strategically organize various tasks, and promote the implementation of positive mental health education in specific work. Secondly, the mental health status and professional competence of mental health education practitioners are prerequisites for conducting mental health education. Therefore, to implement students' positive mental health education, it is essential to strengthen teacher training and instill the attitudes and concepts of positive psychology in every mental health education instructor. Lastly, it is necessary to conduct relevant research on the practice and effect evaluation of positive mental health education, and refine the positive mental health education model with Chinese characteristics through continuous assessment in conjunction with the political and cultural characteristics of the country.

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