



# 12 Ways to Weave Positive Emotions into Health and Wellness Coaching



## 1 Co-create a VISION

A positive vision of the client being and feeling their best. In the areas of weight management or stress management or tobacco cessation, we can invite an *approach* versus an *avoidance* orientation, clarifying what the client wants to move *toward* - and connecting with a deeper why.

Evoking inspiration, interest/curiosity, hopefulness...

## 2 Bring awareness to *what's going well*

The negativity bias makes clients more attentive to what *didn't* go well. As coaches, we can reinforce current positive habits.

We can highlight and build on current/past successes:

"Tell me more about the days you WERE able to be more active."

Connecting with inspiration, pride, hope...

## 3 Build PERMA into the action plan

Connect the action plan to:

- Positivity - playfulness, joy, inspiration, curiosity, discovery...  
"What kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ do you most enjoy".  
"What will make this more fun?"  
"What inspires you to stay on track?"  
"What kinds of things are you discovering about yourself?"
- Engagement/challenge
- Supportive relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment - and REWARDS along the way!

The five pillars of PERMA can be thought of as *pathways to motivation*.

Activating joy, inspiration, amusement, interest, love, pride...

## 4 Ask into **BENEFITS** clients are noticing – beyond the goal itself

Let's say the client met their goal of getting 7-8 hours sleep most nights over the past week. We can celebrate that success and we can inquire more deeply, i.e., *"You mentioned that you are feeling more rested...what else are you noticing?"*

Connecting with optimism and serenity...

## 5 Empower clients through **knowledge**

Knowledge can counter discouragement and build confidence and hopefulness: *"Did you know that losing just ten percent of body weight can make a tremendous difference?"*

In this example, we're redefining success - losing 25 instead of 70 pounds.

Strengthening interest and hope...

## 6 Call out **STRENGTHS**

We all light up when talking about our strengths – and hearing someone else reflect our strengths is especially powerful in evoking positive emotions.

We can support clients in seeing themselves in a new light:  
*"That shows a lot of courage... Do you see that in yourself?"*

Activating confidence, joy, and pride...

## 7 Offer a more **expansive vocabulary**

The language of emotions is often limited. We feel "good" or "bad" or "okay".

Just as it's helpful to have more precise words for colors - *"Is it more of an olive green or a lime green?"* – expanding our emotional vocabulary supports new awareness and a more nuanced understanding. We're able to ask and more accurately reflect the client's experience. Is the client feeling *surprised... relieved... inspired... pleased... curious... defeated... engaged... enlivened...?*

Allowing clients to feel understood and validated – supporting self-understanding as well.

## 8 **SAVOR** positive experiences

*"Wow, how does that feel to have taken that step?"*

*"How did you feel at the end of the 5K?"*

Savoring helps counter the negativity bias by bringing attention to positive experiences, including those that might otherwise slip by unnoticed – *a smile, a kind word, a great cup of coffee, a walk in nature...*

*Activating joy, love, serenity, pride, awe...*

## 9

### **Explore supportive self-talk**

Over time, clients *internalize* positive statements.

These become part of their inner dialogue and part of who they are.

*"Yes I can." "I am moving forward." "I have everything it takes to succeed."*

The inner critic becomes a friend and an ally.

*Building hope and self-love...*

## 10

### **Bring positivity resonance into the coaching relationship**

We can create "*micro-moments of positivity*" by connecting with lightness and humor; sharing in the client's excitement of having reached a goal; celebrating steps along the way; by sharing an inspiring story or quote.

We can convey warmth and caring. We can connect from the heart.

*Activating inspiration, amusement, joy, gratitude, love...*

## 11

### **Acknowledge that change is not easy**

There will be challenges and disappointments and setbacks.

We can honor the struggle.

*"I know it's hard. And...you will get there."*

We can convey confidence in the client's ability to succeed.

*"You're going to do well and here's why..."*

*Generating pride and hope...*

## 12

### **Share ways to GENERATE positive emotions**

Clients may not realize that they can CHOOSE to activate positive emotions - that they can *intentionally* shift their emotional state.

Not only do emotions influence our behaviors... Our behaviors and lifestyle choices - sleep, movement, stress management etc. - *greatly* impact our emotional wellbeing.

### **The language of positive emotions:**

*I feel... motivated, inspired, amazed, amused, in awe, excited, proud, aroused, cheerful, astonished, dazzled, eager, energetic, enthused, invigorated, lively, impassioned, surprised, alert, vibrant, exhilarated, loving, affectionate, trusting, friendly, open-hearted, tender, warm, confident, emboldened, centered, grounded, empowered, animated, secure, engaged, alert, curious, engrossed, enchanted, encouraged, interested, intrigued, fascinated, spellbound, blissful, ecstatic, elated, enthralled, exuberant, radiant, thrilled, grateful, appreciative, moved, thankful, touched, hopeful, expectant, strong, optimistic, joyful, delighted, glad, happy, pleased, tickled, positive, calm, peaceful, clear, content, supported, affirmed, fulfilled, mellow, relieved, satisfied, relaxed, serene, tranquil, rested, refreshed, renewed, restored, fortified, revitalized, enlivened, revived, buoyant, light, uplifted, free, hopeful...*

### **Questions for self-reflection:**

*What most inspires you and lights you up?*

*Which positive emotions do you most commonly experience?*

*When, where, and with whom do you feel your best? What do you need in order to thrive?*

*What emotions do you want to cultivate or experience more often?  
(For example, joy, gratitude, awe, humor, playfulness, curiosity, love...)*

*What strategies can you engage to cultivate or strengthen these emotions?  
What will that look like? What will you be doing – or not doing?*

*What connections do you notice between your lifestyle choices (i.e., sleep, stress, movement, etc.) and your emotional wellbeing?*

*Is your self-talk unsupportive or self-critical? Are you more likely to praise or criticize yourself and your actions?*

*What could you say to yourself that would feel more supportive?*

*What three words will serve as anchors or reminders of positive emotions?*

## Ways to cultivate positive emotions:

- Connect with others
- Laugh
- Show kindness
- Dispute negative thinking
- Think about what's going well
- Find nearby nature
- Apply your strengths
- Practice mindfulness
- Learn emotional shifting
- Find gratitude
- Savor positive experiences
- Envision the future
- Move your body
- Listen to uplifting music
- Dance
- Get a massage
- Play with a child or a pet
- Write a love letter to yourself
- Engage your creativity
- Smile
- Breathe
- Sleep

We can amplify the positive experiences in life simply by paying attention, and by being open and receptive to the good things that come our way.

Allow yourself to pause and take in the good. Allow yourself to savor the experience and absorb the positive emotions you feel. Let yourself feel excited or amused or awe-struck... or bathed in love.

*"You can generate positivity anytime, anywhere...  
By making more moments glisten with positive emotions, you  
make the choice of a lifetime: you choose the upward spiral  
that leads to your best future – and to our best world."*

Barbara Fredrickson

