Positive Psych Exercises

1. Gratitude Visit
   1. Write and deliver (in person) a letter of gratitude to someone you have never properly thanked for an act of kindness. Be as specific about what exactly you are grateful for and why.
2. Three good things
   1. Write down three things that went well today, and provide the causal explanation for why it went well (i.e. what did you do that made it go well?).
3. Use your strengths in a new way
   1. Use one of your top strengths in a new way today.
4. You at your best
   1. Write about a time when you were at your best, and then reflect upon your personal strengths displayed in the story.
5. Kind acts
   1. Reflect upon a kind act you did or witnessed today. Write out what happened.
6. Three Funny Things
   1. Write down the three funniest things that you experienced or participated in each day; also, write about why the funny thing happened (e.g. was it something you created, something you observed, something spontaneous?)
7. Gift of time
   1. Off the “gift” of your time to someone today. This might be in the form of time spent helping someone around their house, or sharing a meal with someone who is lonely. These “gifts” should be in addition to your planned activities.
8. One door closes, another door opens
   1. Consider a moment in your life when a negative event led to positive consequences you were not expecting (or, consider how a current negative event may have positive consequences). Write about it.
      1. Most important door that closed on me was\_\_\_\_\_\_. The door that opened was\_\_\_\_\_.
      2. The door that closed on me through bad luck or missed opportunity was\_\_\_\_\_. The door that opened was\_\_\_\_\_\_.
      3. The door that closed on me through loss, rejection, or death was\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The door that opened was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Count your blessings
   1. List three things you are grateful for, and explain why you are grateful for them.
10. ABCs
    1. Think of something in the past week that made you feel sad or mad or bad. What was the activating event? What negative belief did you have about the situation that led you to feel bad? Challenge that negative belief. How does that make you feel now?
11. Motivational Awareness
    1. Reflect back on your activities in the past day. What was you motivation for the activities? Which ones were more autonomous and which ones were more external? Write about the activities and your motivation.
12. Recollecting senses
    1. Reflect back on your day. For each of your senses, reflect on a pleasant experience for the day. Did you see something beautiful? Did you smell something good? Did something you touch feel interesting or pleasant? Write about each sense.
13. Self-compassion
    1. What is something you have done that made you angry or disappointed with yourself? What is the negative (often critical) self talk that you are telling yourself that is contributing to your frustration with yourself? After writing these down, now write to yourself as you would write to encourage your friend in the same situation.
14. Best Possible Self
    1. Envision yourself in an imaginary future in which everything has turned out in the most optimal way. What are you like? What is your life like? Write it out.
15. Beautiful work day
    1. Pick a day this week that is busy and full of obligations, and/or expected to be stressful or otherwise unpleasant. Plan out an ideal way to spend day (write out the full schedule and times for each activity), infusing the busy day with pleasant activities or aspects. When will you wake up? Will you have your favorite food for lunch or make your favorite drink for the commute?? Will you get to spend a few minutes talking to someone between meetings? Maybe you’ll plan to spend 5 minutes here and there in silence?
16. Breathing Meditation
    1. Close your eyes. Try to clear your mind, being non-judgmental as thoughts inevitably come and go. Focus on your breathing for 10 minutes.
17. Savor
    1. When good or pleasant things happen today, savor them. Reflect on what is good. Give it your full attention longer than you normally would. Appreciate the good things longer. Think about why they happened (did you work hard for it? Or, is there someone else to whom you are grateful for it?). Really reflect on why the experience is pleasant, and don’t let the experience slip through the cracks.
18. Help another person Savor
    1. When someone has something good happen, help them to savor. Ask for all kinds of details about the event. What made it so good? How are they feeling? Why are they feeling that way? Rather than saying “yay, good, congrats,” really unpack the situation and have the two of you share in the excitement. Watch their mood lift as they tell you about it.
19. Flow Activities
    1. Identify some of your flow activities. This activity should be challenging (i.e. this is not watching a movie or eating cupcakes), yet make time fly for you. Choose a day this week when you can be involved in your flow activity, and do it.
20. Self Esteem Journal
    1. Monday
       1. Something I did well today…
       2. Today I had fun when…
       3. I felt proud when…
    2. Tuesday
       1. Today I accomplished…
       2. I had a positive experience with…
       3. Something I did for someone…
    3. Wednesday
       1. I felt good about myself when…
       2. I was proud of someone else…
       3. Today was interesting because…
    4. Thursday
       1. I felt proud when…
       2. A positive thing I witnessed…
       3. Today I accomplished…
    5. Friday
       1. Something I did well today…
       2. I had a positive experience with (a person, place, or thing)…
       3. I was proud of someone when…
    6. Saturday
       1. Today I had fun when…
       2. Something I did for someone…
       3. I felt good about myself when…
    7. Sunday
       1. A positive thing I witnessed…
       2. Today was interesting because…
       3. I felt proud when…
21. Positive traits
    1. Below is a list of positive traits. Pick out three that you displayed today and write about how you displayed them.
       1. Kind, intelligent, hardworking, loyal, attractive, down-to-earth, goofy, creative, accepting, strong, friendly, flexible, nurturing, thoughtful, confident, optimistic, respectful, determined, skilled, helpful, motivated, insightful, funny, patient, realistic, honest, generous, modest, serious, independent, trusting, resilient, cheerful, self-directed, reliable, relaxed, listener, brave, decisive, enthusiastic, forgiving, humble, sensitive, organized, selfless, practical, mature, focused, courteous, grateful, open-minded, positive, responsible, cooperative, frugal, tolerant, innovative, balanced.
22. Gratitude Walk
    1. Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minute focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.
23. My partner’s qualities
    1. One of the qualities that initially attracted me to my partner was:
    2. One of my favorite memories with my partner is:
    3. My partner shows me appreciate by:
    4. I value my partner because:
24. Cognitive distortions
    1. Think about a recent upsetting event. Challenge your thinking by identifying the irrational belief that leads to the negative emotions. Identify what cognitive distortion it involves:
       1. Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.
          1. Catastrophizing: Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.
       2. Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. “I felt awkward during my job interview. I am always so awkward.”
       3. Magical Thinking: The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. “I am a good person—bad things shouldn’t happen to me.”
       4. Personalization: The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. “My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her.”
       5. Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.
          1. Mind Reading: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. “She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I’m ugly.”
          2. Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.
       6. Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. “I feel like a bad friend, therefor I must be a bad friend.”
       7. Disqualifying the Positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.
       8. “Should” Statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. “I should always be friendly.”
       9. All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as “always”, “never”, or “every”. “I never do a good enough job on anything.”