

# Positive Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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## Expanding mental health assessment to include psychological strengths: Advantages and disadvantages for patients and clinicians

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Traditionally when mental health is assessed, what is actually being measured is psychopathology. However, psychological health is more than the absence of psychopathology. This paper explores the application of the two continua model of mental health developed by Keyes, 2002 to individuals with both chronic and acute mental health conditions. Several studies are reported with different groups of individuals suffering from mental health problems. The acceptability to clients of assessing their psychological strengths is explored. Quantitative and qualitative data are presented. In a sample suffering from recurrent depression (N=112), higher levels of gratitude, self-forgiveness, hope and spirituality were found to be predictive of greater life satisfaction. Self-forgiveness, spirituality and gratitude were found to be predictors of happiness. While in a student sample (N=214) higher levels of hope and gratitude were predictors of lower levels of psychopathology. Gratitude and hope predicted life satisfaction in this sample with hope, exploratory curiosity and gratitude predicting positive affect. Assessing strengths was seen by most participants as positive, although the need for support in implementing their strengths was identified as an issue. From interviews with clinicians (N=10), it was clear that while many therapists welcomed this development they felt that further training would be necessary for them to fully embrace this new way of working. Concerns were also raised about educating clients about positive psychology and new ways of thinking and being. Cognitive Behavior Therapists envisaged this as being less problematic than did therapists coming from the Rogerian, Humanist Psychology tradition.

### Biography

Ann Macaskill is a Professor of Health Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom and Head of Research Ethics for the University. She is trained as a Health Psychologist and a Psychotherapist. She has obtained her PhD from Aberdeen University and then worked as a Post doctorate at Edinburgh University. She then moved to the University of Sheffield and currently works at Sheffield Hallam University, where she established a psychology degree. She has published over 70 papers in peer-reviewed journals, 3 books and 9 book chapters and serves on the Editorial Board of several journals.

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