



A Case Study: Power of Gratitude and Positive Psychology

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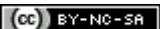
ABSTRACT

‘Power of Gratitude and positive psychology’ is a case study of a young chap of 28 years old. He narrated his story in his own words. He is the only child of a well-established and functional family. Despite the education and various luxuries, he wasn’t satisfied. He was heading towards moderate to severe depression. The counselor thought GQ-6 test would be appropriate for such a person. Unsurprisingly, he scored poorly on it. The problem seemed to be a lack of gratitude for what he had and a lack of direction in life. The attempt at a solution for the former is the premise of this paper. A kind of meditation, derived from the idea of ‘12 virtues’ and the theory of induction or more precisely, nudging of feelings through ambient color was picked up from Matrimandir, Puducherry. Light green color was found appropriate for the task. The total practice went on for 4- 5/7-day weeks. The score had improved positively. Guided meditation on gratitude which focused on noticing the good things already at hand helped him, and might help more like him, in feeling more positive, hopeful, and willing to take responsibility for improving what can be improved.

Keywords: Gratitude, Positive Psychology, Virtue, Guided Meditation

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INTRODUCTION

The world is passing through a tough time. Most people find it difficult to cope with the rough, sometimes deadly challenges. The rise in cases of depression is increasing day by day. The subject of this paper, Mr 'X', as we'll call him, is just another one among them. He has struggled, for the twenty-eight years of his life to live honourably and the pandemic has made all the harder to do so. He approached the counsellor (the author of this case study) to get some help with the anxiety and uncertainty he was feeling. He expressed it as such: "I am an Engineer, the only child in my family. I cannot figure out what's wrong with me, my parents are ok, they live with me and don't bother me too much. I live in a rather decent house with no lack of basic facilities, yet I feel this heaviness, and claustrophobic like feeling for the last few months. I've lost interest in what I previously liked, don't reply to my friends and sometimes even my parents. Sometimes I sit idle for hours, not sleeping at night. I'm even reluctant to brush my teeth in the morning (Losing interest in activities of daily life (ADL)). I'm on the verge of losing my job and I just don't know why this is happening. I feel this sense of inferiority, like I've done nothing in my life, as if I've been sucked off of all I had. Is it that I couldn't to the change in society or something?" He stopped and tears started rolling down his eyes. The following is how the counsellor tried to find out, with him, exactly what went wrong.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The counsellor tried picking out the emotions from the narration. Help was taken from concept practised in Matrimandir Puducherry[1]. The theory was: There are twelve virtues, where the first eight (sincerity, humility, gratitude, perseverance, aspiration, receptivity, progress and courage) represent attitudes towards the Divine and the last four (kindness, generosity, equality, peace) represent attitudes towards Humanity. The counsellor had a hunch that gratitude was probably what went most wrong in our subject's arsenal of emotions. Since the subject was well educated, was with his parents peaceably, had financial security and most of everything a commonly thought of as markers of stability and wellness at his age. Clearly, it wasn't that he lacked physical facilities; rather, he lacked the right attitude and perception of them. To help garner it, the same literature (of Matrimandir Puducherry) seemed to be of help. Different shades of green are prescribed as different parts of the same guided meditation procedure, that is, the one that helps develop gratitude. As part of therapy, the counsellor tried measuring the initial degree of gratitude he had using a gratitude questionnaire. It was a six items

form (GQ-6, a self-report questionnaire [2].The grateful disposition:

Instruction: Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to show how much you agree with it [3]

1. Strongly disagree = 01
2. Disagree = 02
3. Slightly disagree. = 03
4. Neutral. = 04
5. Slightly agree. = 05
6. Agree. = 06
7. Strongly agree. = 07

The corresponding statements were:

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events and situations that have been part of my life history.
6. Long amounts of time can go by, before I feel grateful to something or someone.

This questionnaire was presented to the subject for his answers.

The subject answers were recorded as follows

1. Strongly disagree = 01 mark
2. Disagree=====02 marks
3. Strongly agree =====07 marks
4. Disagree =====02 marks
5. Disagree=====02 marks
6. Agree=====06 marks

20 out of a total of 42 meant he was a poor scorer in this virtue. To try the fix, a room was made light green-coloured for meditation. As gratitude is one of the attitudes towards the Divine, he was asked about his faith and he told that he was agnostic, not believing in any specific figure. The subject was guided to imagine a picture of light green colour in his mind, to focus on his breath and to get involved with the ambience. A single session lasted about twenty minutes. The counsellor and Mr. X held a therapeutic conversation every time, for as long as it was required, usually between 20-30 mins. The subject visited the meditation room five times a week and the course went on for four weeks. On redoing the test, the results were positive, and his score had increased to 36. He felt that he was in a better position, and expressed that he had started to be able to be engaged in daily life a bit more normally. The client was kept under follow-up for the next two months. He had actually set up a similar meditation room and in his house and used it for the same duration.

DISCUSSION

Guided meditation through the method prescribed in Matrimandir, Puducherry, in the experience of both the counsellor and Mr. X made the following therapeutic conversation easier, and radically more productive. The subject was coping badly with the conditions around him and had fallen into a negative spiral of isolation, which many psychologists including the counsellor would call part of negative psychology. In negative coping the person adopts the path of escapism and hence get entangled into a web of thoughts and actions that anybody can observe as self-destruction. In positive coping, a problem solving attitude and honesty with self and helper (the counsellor in this case) is practiced. Matrimandir, Puducherry literature was helpful in systematically undertaking and explaining the procedure of therapy to the subject Mr. X. Guided meditation was used as augmentation to therapeutic conversations, some of which included talks about the literature and brief detailing of them. The results were encouraging with this strategic application of Meditation.

Certain studies indicate that the development of gratitude had measurable positive effects on a person's life and it is reported to uniquely predict lower depression in chronic illness in population [4], higher level of well-being [5], trust in strangers [6], increased sleep quality[7], and more. The same development had been helpful for Mr. X.

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CONCLUSION

Positive psychology can be implemented in cases like these and sometimes even for relatively well functioning people in our society by guided meditation, of which a specific subset, that of Matrimandir, Puducherry was chosen in this case study, and used as augmentation to the standard procedure of therapy, which proved, in the counsellor's eyes to be more productive than it would have been without it. It will do us all a favor to remember that just as there is a flip side to everything, there are meditations and systems of meditations that can potentially be harmful instead of useful, and the selection of Matrimandir, Puducherry was made on the basis of not well regulated, but sufficiently convincing previous use of the same in the vicinity of the counsellor.

Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater well-being and if need be, can be tried to be developed using similar setups as in this case study.

Further suggestions

Gratitude Meditation /specialized Meditation for the target virtue may be carried out in more elaborative studies. Practice of this method in varied population may provide us with evidence based research for benefit of self and the society as well