

Program Design Outline: Real-Life Resilience

Amaya Brockington, Erik Darden, Shannon Garrick, and Emily Miller

College of Health and Human Services, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

HLTH 6212: Health Promotion Program Management

Lisa Nee, MPH

November 5, 2024

Overview

Real-Life Resilience is a program that is all about supporting nontraditional students who are juggling the demands of work, family, and school. For this program, we are considering any college student over the age of 24 to be nontraditional. While the population is loosely defined, it also includes other factors such as caring for a dependent or attending school part-time. It's no surprise that these challenges can create a lot of stress, which can take a toll on mental health and make it tougher to succeed academically. Our main goal is to enhance mental and emotional well-being through a strengths-based approach. We're excited to begin planning a positive psychology workshop where participants can learn practical skills such as resilience, mindfulness, and stress management. By prioritizing mental health, we aim to ease stress and anxiety, enhance coping skills, and foster a strong, supportive community among nontraditional students. Specifically, we hope to mitigate the impact that financial and social stress has on nontraditional college students. This holistic approach not only tackles immediate concerns but also sets students up for long-term success, leading to better academic performance and increased overall happiness.

Article review

This dissertation by Ruth Rhodes (2016) explores the impact of incorporating positive psychology concepts into foundational courses for nontraditional students at a private career college. The theory-based study, conducted in 2016, aimed to determine if this approach could enhance student well-being, improve goal attainment, and ultimately increase retention rates. In this program, "positive psychology concepts" refer to the following theories:

- Seligman's PERMA: This theory posits that well-being consists of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Kovich et al., 2023).

- Peterson's Character Strengths and Virtues: This framework identifies 24 character strengths and virtues that contribute to psychological health (White & Waters, 2015).
- Csikszentmihalyi's Flow: This theory describes the state of optimal experience characterized by intense focus, enjoyment, and a sense of mastery (Heutte et al., 2021).
- Lyubomirsky's Happiness Activities: This research outlines specific activities that can contribute to increased happiness and well-being (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).
- Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory: This theory suggests that positive emotions broaden an individual's awareness and resources, leading to further positive experiences (Fredrickson, 2001).

The goal of this intervention was to answer two primary questions:

1. Does exposure to a positive psychology curriculum influence nontraditional students' ability to achieve academic, social, or personal goals?
2. Does exposure to a positive psychology curriculum lead to improvements in self-reported measures of well-being?

Additionally, it's important to define the activities that the participants participated in.

1. Savoring - Focusing on positive experiences (Kovich et al., 2023).
2. Good Things - Sharing examples of what has gone well that day (Fredrickson, 2001).
3. Strengths - Identifying and utilizing personal character strengths and virtues (Kovich et al., 2023; White & Walters, 2015)
4. Forgiveness - Letting go of grudges or writing forgiveness letters (White & Walters, 2015).
5. Gratitude - Writing letters thanking someone for their contribution to the participant's life (White & Walters, 2015).

6. Celebration - Acknowledging achievements and practicing the PPT interventions (Kovich et al., 2023).
7. Mindful Listening to Music - Engaging with music before and after each session (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kovich et al., 2023)
8. Phone Calls Between Sessions - Maintaining contact and support (Martino et al., 2015)
9. Random Acts of Kindness - Encouraging positive social interactions (Martino et al., 2015).

The timeline for these activities involved a structured intervention consisting of 14 two-hour sessions for participants conducted over 9 weeks. Additionally, the qualitative portion of the intervention included interviews and focus groups; these lasted between 5 to 100 minutes for interviews and 75 to 105 minutes for focus sessions (Rhodes, 2016). This is an important stage of the evaluation process for this program. Since a state of mind such as mindfulness or peace is subjective and qualitative, our group will likely try to replicate this evaluation on a smaller scale.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to the field of positive psychology by demonstrating the potential benefits of incorporating these concepts into the educational experience of nontraditional students. The findings suggest that positive psychology can be a valuable tool for promoting student success, well-being, and engagement in higher education. Because of the evidence presented in this dissertation, our team is prepared to move forward with an intervention centered around implementing a positive psychology workshop that incorporates the core ideas of this much longer curriculum.

Amidst this dissertation, there is a comprehensive literature review that proved useful in establishing a link between positive psychology and favorable outcomes for students (Rhodes,

2016). One article in particular, from Guse (2010) will provide additional value to the Real-Life Resilience program. This is because Guse's article discusses specifically how students who implemented a positive psychology curriculum were apprehensive at first but reported their sense of empowerment and self-efficacy growing as the course went on. The article explains that this is most likely due to the strength-based approach of positive psychology. This is valuable because it provides reasons to believe that helping participants overcome apprehension about the program is a crucial component of its overall success

VMO statements

The Real-Life Resilience program envisions creating an empowering educational environment where nontraditional students can thrive academically and personally by prioritizing mental health and increasing access to resources that promote their success. Our mission is to enhance the well-being of these students through a positive psychology workshop that will equip participants with essential skills in resilience, mindfulness, and stress management. In addition to providing valuable skills, Real-Life Resilience connects students to comprehensive campus resources that'll help them navigate their unique challenges.

To achieve this, the Real-Life Resilience program has established process, outcome, and impact objectives. Our first process objective is that by January 1, 2024, we will identify a set primary location that meets the requirements for a community gathering where social events can be held. This space will foster a sense of belonging and community among nontraditional students. Additionally, until April 10, 2024, we will advertise the social event through at least three different communication outlets, including campus posters, electronic signage in the OASES office, and the OASES weekly student newsletter, ensuring maximum visibility and participation. By February 15, 2024, we will finalize the workshop curriculum and select guest

speakers specializing in positive psychology, resilience, and mindfulness to enhance the workshop experience. Our expected outcome objectives of these efforts include one; an increase in the number of nontraditional students who are aware of resources provided by the OASES office and newly established resources by 50% following the social event. Two, we anticipate that 75% of students in attendance will be able to identify three or more resources for nontraditional students by name after the social event. Third, by the end of the workshop series, 85% of participants will report increased confidence in managing stress and utilizing mindfulness practices, as measured by a post-workshop survey

In terms of long-term impact objectives, first, we will aim for the number of students interacting with the UNC Charlotte OASES events webpage to increase by 20% after the program event on April 10-11, 2025, compared to engagement levels before programming. Additionally, we hope to see a 20% increase in the number of nontraditional students applying for scholarships available for adult students at UNCC for the academic year of 2025-2026, including those offered through the 49er Finish Program. Third, By the 2025-2026 academic year, there will be a 10% increase in nontraditional student engagement in campus mental health resources, as evidenced by utilization data from the counseling and wellness center. Through the Real-Life Resilience program, we strive to empower nontraditional students to thrive by providing them with the tools and resources necessary for academic and personal success. By fostering a supportive community and enhancing resource awareness, we aim to create lasting positive changes in the lives of our participants and future nontraditional students.

Program Description

In the creation of the Real-Life Resilience Program, each aspect included within the two-day event is based on existing research and previously established programs aimed at

assisting nontraditional students. Within the conducted needs assessment, it was identified that the most common difficulties faced by nontraditional students are stress related to environmental, social, and financial hardship (Penn GSE, 2021; Penn Today, 2021). The program is thus aimed at teaching the students strategies to improve mental and emotional well-being and about financial resources that exist within the UNC Charlotte campus. Additionally, existing research about implementing a positive psychology curriculum for nontraditional students, as detailed in the article review section, will be used as a guide in creating this program's positive psychology workshop.

The event itself will consist of a positive psychology workshop as well as a financial aid presentation. This event will take place in a meeting room within the Popp Martin Student Union as this is a well-known building on campus that is easily accessible. Within the positive psychology workshop, participants will learn practical skills such as resilience, mindfulness, and stress management. This portion of the program will be guided by a guest speaker, who is experienced in the area of positive psychology and subsequent workshops. For this workshop, approximately an hour will be spent on mindfulness activities including a journaling session where attendees identify personal character strengths and virtues, reflect on positive things that have occurred during their week, and write a letter of gratitude to someone who has positively contributed to their life. In addition to these three reflective writing prompts, students will receive a printed handout of other suggested journaling prompts that can be used outside of the program (see Appendix A). This would include prompts such as writing a letter of forgiveness to someone you feel hurt by, describing successes you have experienced within the last month or semester, and reflecting on a positive outcome that came from an experience that was initially scary or stress-inducing. Each participant will receive a journal, pens, and stickers, so they will

not need to use any of their own materials to complete the journaling activity. Journaling strategies will be taught so that students may continue to practice mindful journaling outside of this program. Throughout this workshop, music with affirming lyrics and an upbeat tone will be playing in the background to create an additional atmosphere of positivity. After the positive psychology workshop is complete, participants will be given pizza and other refreshments that are provided and socialize with the other attendees. They will be encouraged but not required to share something they reflected on during their journaling session. Finally, there will also be a 20-minute presentation by a guest speaker from the OASES office regarding financial aid resources and scholarship opportunities, including the distribution of an informational packet that students can take home, as well as a question and answer session to clarify any points of confusion that arise during this session. As an extra addition to increase social connection, a QR code will be displayed at the end of the event, allowing all participants to join a shared GroupMe. This will allow participants to easily connect if they would like to continue interacting socially outside of this program.

The activities included in the Real-Life Resilience event will be useful and relevant to nontraditional students as they are taught positive coping mechanisms for stress, be given avenues to create new social connections and learn about how they can be supported financially through campus resources. Real-Life Resilience seeks to uplift these students not only while they are in attendance at the event, but also in a way that will help them move forward through their academic careers and beyond.

As mentioned, the priority population for this program is nontraditional students. While the term nontraditional students can encompass many groups, the program will be more specifically created for undergraduate students above the age of 24. However, no students

outside of this demographic at UNCC will be excluded, and all are welcome to attend the programming event. This is because we want nontraditional and traditional students to network and socialize, and limiting the program to our priority population may cause a divide between the two groups. The Real-Life Resilience Program event will be held on April 10th and 11th from 6 pm to 8 pm. Both days of the event will include identical programming as well as have an option to join virtually. This will be to accommodate the schedules and responsibilities that the nontraditional students have outside of simply being students.

To advertise the event, posters will be distributed around campus, with the OASES office being utilized in sharing the program through student newsletter emails and electronic advertising boards within the office (see Appendix B). Advertisement materials for Real-Life Resilience will promote an event that includes a positive psychology workshop with a journaling activity, a short information session about financial resources, free incentives (journals, pens, and journaling stickers), as well as providing pizza and a chance to meet new people.

Real-Life Resilience follows a theoretical framework grounded in the positive psychology theories of Seligman, Peterson, Csikszentmihalyi, Lyubomirsky, and Fredrickson emphasizes the PERMA model, which includes positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Rhodes, 2016). This framework suggests that individuals can improve their well-being by utilizing their character strengths to develop elements like happiness, optimism, purpose, and resilience. This approach supports the incorporation of the journaling activity, including positivity-based prompts, into the program.

To ensure the success of the program, we will partner with several key stakeholders. The Office of Adult Students and Extended Services (OASES) will play a crucial role through their experience in providing advising services and essential resources, including social support and

financial assistance recommendations tailored for adult students. Additionally, the 49er-Finish program assists in helping returning students complete their degrees, offering valuable scholarship opportunities and support services (UNC at Charlotte 49er Finish Program, n.d.). As a result, 49er-Finish provides valuable information regarding financial aid and scholarship opportunities that exist on campus for nontraditional students. The Center for Wellness Promotion (CWP) will also be an important stakeholder as it provides a well-equipped team of professionals who have experience in addressing issues surrounding the well-being of a variety of student groups.

By collaborating, these stakeholders can help identify specific gaps in support services for nontraditional students, particularly in mental health, well-being, and financial aid. Forming a coalition among these groups and student representatives will create a holistic approach to address these challenges, fostering a strengthened support system for students. To establish this ongoing coalition, there would be regularly scheduled collaborative meetings to discuss progress, share resources, and coordinate efforts. Defining shared goals focused on improving student support and success will ensure that all coalition members are aligned in their efforts.

One of the hopes for the Real-Life Resilience program is that, down the line, an educational curriculum will be created based on the positive psychology workshop framework. This would be an objective that the coalition could center its efforts around. Furthermore, the Discover Your Wellness Program, a partnership with the office of wellness promotion and campus faculty, offers workshops and events on diverse health topics, enabling students to earn classroom credit while enhancing their personal development (UNC at Charlotte Discover Your Wellness Program, n.d.). The basis of this program could provide an outline to the coalition to

incorporate incentives such as instructors providing extra credit for attending wellness programs such as Real-Life Resilience.

In summation, these stakeholders are essential due to their expertise and established programs that align with the mission of Real-Life Resilience. Their diverse resources and approaches will create a comprehensive network of support, addressing the needs of students and fostering the future of established support networks for nontraditional students.

Program-Budget.

To successfully implement the Real-Life Resilience program, we've planned for a variety of resources that align with our vision, mission, and goals.

BUDGET TABLE

Budget Item	Amount
Marketing Materials	\$100
Workshop Materials	\$250
Virtual Meeting	\$15
Incentives for Participation	\$350
Guest Speaker Fee	\$135
Room Reservation	\$200
Refreshments	\$350
Miscellaneous	\$100

Total:	\$1,500
---------------	---------

DESCRIPTIONS

- **Marketing Materials (\$100):** Effective promotional materials are essential for high program visibility. With this budget, we'll create and print posters (11x17 & trifold board) and digital ads to display across campus, including high-traffic areas and the Office of Adult Students and Extended Services (OASES). We'll also ask OASES to send a digital flier by email, if possible. This funding covers graphic design and printing to ensure quality materials.
- **Workshop Materials (\$250):** Each participant will receive high-quality journals, pens, stickers, and printed resource guides for use during and after the workshops. With this larger budget, we can also invest in stress-relief items, such as stress balls, which align with our wellness focus.
- **Incentives for Participation (\$350):** Providing incentives encourages attendance and participation, especially for students balancing multiple responsibilities. Potential incentives include calming candles, water bottles, and herbal teas—all of which support the positive psychology theme by promoting relaxation and well-being.
- **Guest Speaker Fee (\$150):** Inviting guest speakers with experience and a background in positive psychology will make the program stronger. With this budget, we can offer a reasonable payment to attract a skilled professional who specializes in this area.
- **Refreshments (\$350):** Offering snacks and drinks during workshops makes the program more inviting and can encourage more students to attend. Refreshments are especially helpful for nontraditional students who may be coming straight from work or family

responsibilities. With a larger budget, we can provide a wider variety of options to meet different dietary needs and preferences.

- **Miscellaneous (\$300):** This budget is set aside for any unexpected expenses that might come up, such as extra supplies or items we may need at the last minute.

<i>Logistical consideration (provide at least 10)</i>	<i>Team solution</i>	<i>Additional support needed</i>
Event location	Utilize the University Events and Reservations Dept in Popp Martin Student Union	Consideration - how many individuals will be attending; how do we use the space to facilitate the workshop and provide refreshments?
Advertisement	Create colored ads to put up around campus & the OASES office and digital ads to go on computers throughout campus	Where are we going to place these ads? How are we going to make it stand out
Event Time	Possibility of an event being over 2 days (Thursday, April 10 & Friday, April 11th) for 2 hours (6 - 8 pm)	Consider the type of food and freebies that we are offering students to get them to come to the event (child-care).
Event Speaker	Erik has a connection to someone at Lenoir-Rhyne who taught this class and can contact them	Consideration of speakers who are on campus at UNC-Charlotte (Student wellness, psychology departments)
Food	The idea is to order pizza as an “incentive” for students to join this event.	Food at on-campus events involves Chartwells catering or signing a waiver through them to order food from off-campus
Food - other refreshments/beverages	Along with pizza, there will be other food options to accommodate dietary restrictions/allergies.	As with the pizza, we would either sign an off-campus food waiver or use retail ordering through Chartwells for other options (salads, sandwiches, beverages).

Virtual Option	Offer a virtual option for students to join in on the positive psychology workshop & financial aid info session	Consider that hosting an online meeting may take time to set up to ensure it runs smoothly
Financial Aid Information Session	For the financial aid information session, we will have a faculty member from OASES come	Considering the program is geared to include nontraditional and traditional students, there will need to be additional financial aid resources to discuss
Workshop Materials	For this event, students will be provided with a journal, pens, and stickers for an activity.	What about those who are virtual? Can we find a virtual way to integrate journaling for them?
Incentives	Pizza and other food will be offered; the journal, candles, pen stickers, water bottles, and herbal teas	MPH designated materials for the journals, stickers, and pens

References

- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Fredrickson B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *The American psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.56.3.218>
- Guse, Tharina. (2010). Positive psychology and the training of psychologists: Students' perspectives. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*. 36. 10.4102/sajip.v36i2.848.
- Heutte, J., Fenouillet, F., Martin-Krumm, C., Gute, G., Raes, A., Gute, D., Bachelet, R., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2021). Optimal Experience in Adult Learning: Conception and Validation of the Flow in Education Scale (EduFlow-2). *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 828027. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.828027>
- Kovich, M. K., Simpson, V. L., Foli, K. J., Hass, Z., & Phillips, R. G. (2023). Application of the PERMA Model of Well-being in Undergraduate Students. *International journal of community well-being*, 6(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-022-00184-4>
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success? *Psychological bulletin*, 131(6), 803–855. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803>
- Martino, J., Pegg, J., & Frates, E. P. (2015). The Connection Prescription: Using the Power of Social Interactions and the Deep Desire for Connectedness to Empower Health and

Wellness. *American journal of lifestyle medicine*, 11(6), 466–475.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827615608788>

Penn Today. (2021). *Systemic barriers to college for low-income and nontraditional students*.

<https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/systemic-barriers-college-low-income-and-nontraditional-students>.

Rhodes, R. H. (2016). Evaluating Positive Psychology Curriculum Among Nontraditional Students in a Foundational Course. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/evaluating-positive-psychology-curriculum-among/docview/1832951791/se-2>

University of North Carolina at Charlotte. (n.d.). *49er Finish Program: About Us*.

<https://49erfinish.charlotte.edu/>

University of North Carolina at Charlotte. (n.d.). *Discover your wellness program*. Wellness Education.

<https://wellness.charlotte.edu/wellness-education/wellness-starts-here/discover-your-wellness-program>

University of Pennsylvania - Graduate School of Education [Penn GSE]. (2021). *Equity*

indicators report reveals systemic barriers to college access and success for low-income and non-traditional students [press release].

<https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/press-releases/higher-education-equity-indicators-report-2021>

White, M. A., & Waters, L. E. (2015). A case study of 'The Good School:' Examples of the use of Peterson's strengths-based approach with students. *The journal of positive psychology*,

10(1), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.920408>

Appendix A

Journaling Brochure Handout



Types of Journaling

1. Reflective Journal - you write about experiences
2. Gratitude Journaling - writing about things you are grateful for
3. Bullet Journaling - writing in categories (goals, sleep, mood)





Some Prompts for Journaling:

- Write a letter forgiving someone who hurt you
- Describe successes that you have had this past semester
- Reflect on an experience that was scary or stressful but turned out positive

BENEFITS OF JOURNALING

- Reduces feelings of stress and anxiety
- Helps with setting goals and achieving them
- Helps you remember better!
- creativity!
- Improves your writing





Appendix B



REAL LIFE RESILIENCE

**Come join us for a positive psychology
workshop!**

GET a FREE journal,
pen, stickers and MORE



Food and Refreshments
will be offered!

Popp Martin Student Center 261

Sessions: April 10 & 11th

Time: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm