



Lesson Title:

Hero Journal

Course Level:

High School - Undergraduate

Courses: Psychology, Positive Psychology
Class Time: 40-60 minutes
Assignment Time: 2 hours
Prerequisite: Read Be the Hero
Overview: Students record their heroic stories and discuss the impact of this action.

OBJECTIVES

1. Build personal strengths: empathy, gratitude, and hope.
2. Build skills in creating own and helping others shape heroic stories.
3. Understand impact of hero stories on emotions, energy, and actions during (a) the time of the creation of the story each day and (b) the time of the retelling of the story during class.
4. Understand how repetition of behaviors affects neural networks and future responses, emotions, and actions.

ASSIGNMENT

Keep a hero journal for four weeks. Your hero journal should include one entry each day of a heroic story you told yourself that day. The story should be one that lifted your spirits and/or helped you to act in a more productive, energized, effective manner. If you do not have a heroic story from the day think about a moment from your day when you told a victim story. Compose a heroic story to replace the victim story and record the heroic story in your journal. This should not take more than about 5 minutes per day.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

1. Journal Sharing

Action:

Have students spend 2 minutes reading their journals. In groups of 3-4 have students share a hero story they are particularly proud of (approx 6 minutes).

Discussion:

1. How did it feel to share your journal entries?
2. How did you feel as you were listening to your partners' stories?

Key Talking Points:

- Creating, rereading, sharing, and listening to hero stories feels good. This positive affect helps you respond more effectively to other people, be resilient in the face of challenges, and have energy to take positive action.

2. Story Building

Action:

In groups of 3-4 have students help one another strengthen one of their stories. They might identify a story from their journals to build upon or a story they are struggling with that did not get into their journals. Each student should share his/her basic story. Then the other students suggest more heroic stories that can be told. (approx 15 minutes)

Discussion:

1. What stands out to you from that exercise?
2. How was it different for you being the story owner vs. being one of the story builders?

Key Talking Points:

- It is often easier to see alternative stories for someone else than for yourself. Victim stories depress your mood. Depressed affect diminishes creativity.
- One simple benefit of therapy is providing more creative alternatives to the stories the patient is telling. The skilled therapist does this not by always offering new stories, but by helping the patient build the skill to craft their own new stories.

3. Journal Review

Discussion:

1. What is the impact of keeping a hero journal?
2. How did journaling affect your emotions? Actions?
3. Why does journaling make a difference?
4. Why did we only record hero stories and not victim stories?
5. Which theories have we discussed so far in this class that relate to the journaling we have just done?

Key Talking Points:

- Neural network theory tells us that when we engage in consistent patterns of behavior we strengthen the neural networks responsible for those behaviors. So every time you tell a hero story, you strengthen your ability to think like a hero, see heroic things in the world around you, automate a positive emotional response, and act like a hero. Therefore, we recorded hero stories and NOT victim stories because, while it would have been interesting to explore victim stories, we wouldn't have wanted to strengthen that capacity in you.

4. Be the Hero Review

Discussion:

1. Martin never mentions using a journal. What support mechanisms does Jeff use to mimic the effect/value of the journal?

Key Talking Points:

- At the end of the book Jeff talks about sharing the hero concept with his team. "What's your story," became a rallying cry for the team. Thus they verbally reinforced the hero stories with one another.