

Support and development of mental health in schools

Presentation

Implementing CoVitality in the Netherlands and Slovenia

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Outcome ISPA Conference July 2022

Conclusions of the 43rd Conference of International School Psychology Association in Leuven, Belgium in July 2022:

- Growing concern worldwide about the increase in social emotional problems of children, adolescents and young adults.
- Clear decline in well-being of children, adolescents and young adults.
- The corona crisis has strengthened this development.
- Need for science-based programs and interventions that enhance well-being.

Classical definition of health and well-being

Definition health - medical model:

- Absence of illness or disease and emphasis on the role of clinical diagnosis and intervention.

Definition World Health Organization - 1948:

- State of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.

21st Century - Positive psychology and well-being

- Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity.
- Including having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose and the ability to manage stress.
- More generally well-being is just feeling well

PERMAH – theoretical model of well-being

1. **Positive Emotion:** pleasure, joy, peace, calmness, excitement, gratitude.
2. **Engagement:** behavioral, psychological, cognitive.
3. **Relationships:** to be connected, related and accepted by others.
4. **Meaning:** of live, of what we do, of the situations we encounter.
5. **Accomplishment:** objective - high performance in academics, sport etc. / subjective - competence, mastery and achieving goals.
6. **Health:** physical fitness and strenghts / personal perception of health.

Engagement in school

1. **Behavioral engagement**: attendance, participation in activities, persisting with tasks, being prepared for class, following classroom and school rules.
2. **Emotional or psychological engagement**: interest and enjoyment of learning, feeling safe, sense of belonging to and valuing school.
3. **Cognitive engagement**: concentration, paying full attention, focused, self regulation, different learning strategies, willingness to exert effort.

Dual factor model well-being

Increase of strenghts, assets and sources

- Happiness, life satisfaction, being related to and accepted by others, engagement, sense of meaning and purpose, optimism and personal perception of health.

Decline of social emotional problems

- Anxious and depressed feelings, social withdrawal, negative self-talk, difficulties in concentrating, self harm and suicidal thoughts, verbal and physical aggression, bullying, theft, vandalism and fighting.

Measuring Social Emotional Health/Well-being

Social Emotional Health Survey (SEHS):

- SEHS-S-2020: Adolescents → 36 items.
- Validated in: USA, Spain, Japan, China, England.
- SEHS-T: Teachers → 48 items.

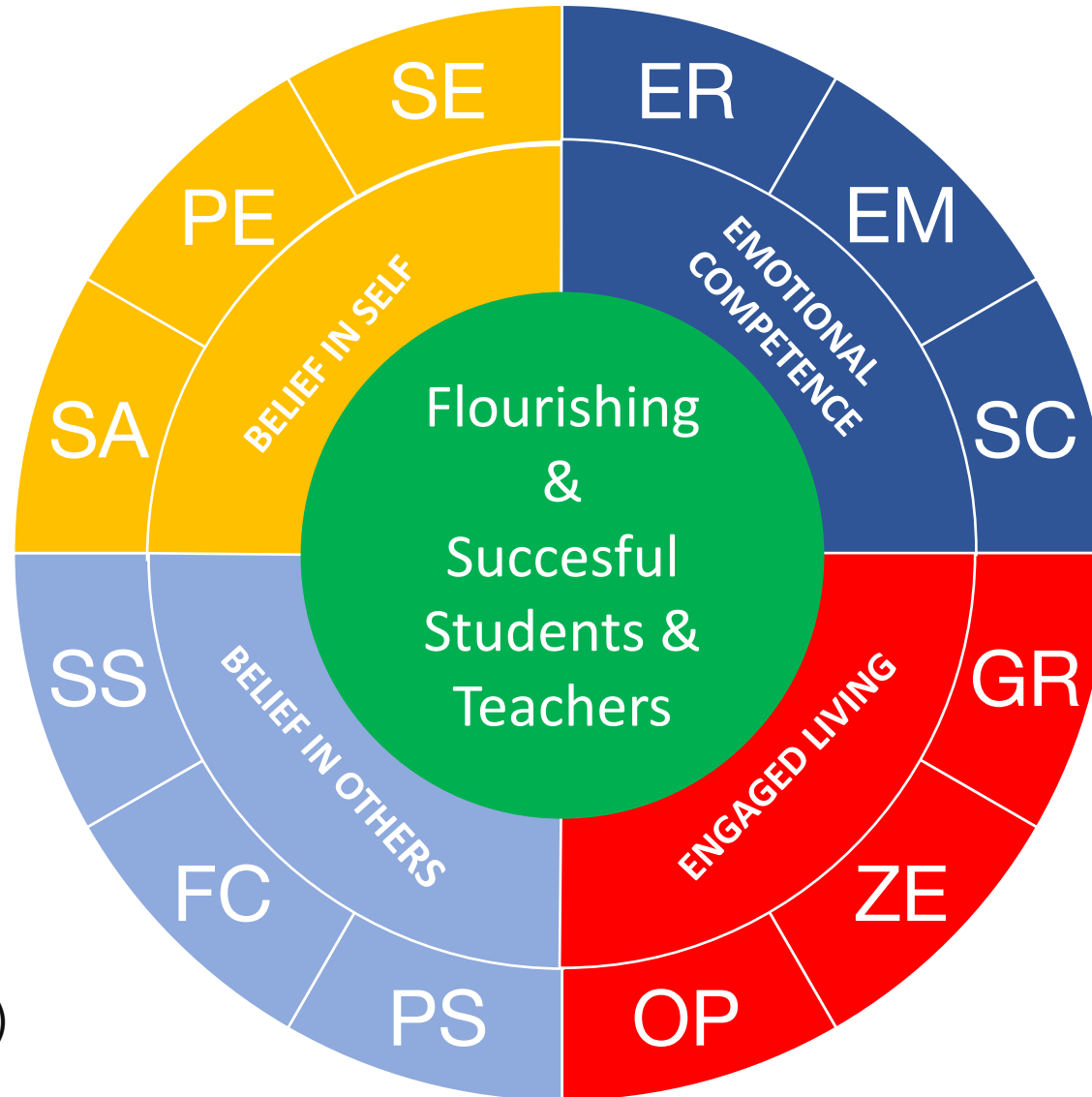
Covitality or My Own Strength – model:

- 4 Domains: belief in Self, Belief in Others, Emotional Competence, Engagement.
- 12 Strengths: 3 strengths in each domain.

CoVitality / My Own Strength - model

BELIEF IN SELF

- Self Efficacy (SE)
- Persistence (PE)
- Self Awareness (SA)



EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

- Emotion Regulation (ER)
- Empathy (EM)
- Self Control (SC)

BELIEF IN OTHERS

- School Support (SS)
- Family Coherence (FC)
- Peer Support (PS)

ENGAGED LIVING

- Gratitude (GR)
- Zest (ZE)
- Optimism (OP)

Objectives of the CoVitality model + Surveys

- Shift of focus from deficits → strenghts.
- Awareness of social skills, assets and strenghts.
- More consciousness focus on development of social skills and strenghts.
- Monitoring well-being of adolescents and teachers.
- Planning interventions focus on 3 or 4 Strenghts → monitoring increase well-being.
- Enhancing success, well-being and flourishing.

The Netherlands: 'School of Live'

- Youth (15 – 22 years) at risk → between school, work and street culture.
- Neighbourhoods at risk → poverty, undermining crime and youth crime, drugs, discrimination → life expectancy 5 or 8 years shorter.
- Youth workers → network in the neighbourhood and school.
- Projects: the Hague (2x), Eindhoven, Den Bosch, Utrecht (2023).
- School of Live: part of one of the main national projects of Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
- Period of an intervention: 6 months.
- Continuation project 'School of Live' until 2025.

Program 'School of Live'

- Getting to know each other and to become a group.
- Develop mutual involvement and support
- Visiting nice, challenging locations and projects outside their own neighbourhood.

Project activity

- Carrying out a meaningful project for the neighbourhood in pairs → method of 'Youth organizing'

First results of the project

- Adolescents feel more self confident.
- More positive connection to education, work and neighbourhood,
- More positive future perspective.

'School of Live' and CoVitality / 'My Own Strength'

- Monitoring effect of 'School of Live' → SEHS-S 2020 and SEHS-T.
- Taking survey in the 2nd month and in the 6th month of the program.
- Individual interventions → focusing on 2 or 3 strenghts.
- Group interventions → focusing on 1 or 2 strenghts.
- Training youth workers: workshops + coaching.

Challenge youth workers

- Learning implementing interventions using and focusing on 2 or 3 strenghts.
- Dare to explore with the strenghts + model → don't to be perfect.
- More intensive implementation CoVitality period 2023 – 2025.

PUM-O project Slovenia

- National project of the Institute of Adult Education → more than 20 years.
- PUM-O projects in more than 10 towns spread across Slovenia.
- Youth (15 – 25 years) with mental and psychiatric problems → between school, work, psychiatric institution and home.
- PUM-O coach → network with several institutions in town.
- Duration of participation in local PUM-O project: 6 – 12 months.

Program PUM-O project

- New participant → feeling comfortable in the group and becoming a member.
- Building a relationship of trust with the PUM-O coach.
- Developing mutual involvement and support with peers in the group.

Project activities

- Creative activities: painting, drama, music, dance, cooking,
- Dialogues in the group, group and individual coaching.

Goal project

- Adolescents: decrease in mental and psychological problems, more self confident, positive orientation to education and work, positive future perspective.
- Starting with new education or a job.

Objective of the training

- Scientific substantiation of the PUM-O project applying the CoVitality / My Own Strength model as a theoretical framework.
- Using the My Own Strength model as common frame of reference for the PUM-O project.
- More targeted use of interventions using the My Own Strength model.
- Using the My Own Strength model for the further development of the PUM-O project in Slovenia.

PUM-O project and CoVitality / 'My Own Strength'

- **Training:** 2 days 12th and 13th in May 2022.
- **Participants:** 20 PUM-O coaches + 5 school counsellors/psychologists.
- **Location:** training centre near Ljubljana.
- **Trainers:** Michaël v.B.t.H., Natalija Zalec - coordinator PUM-O project, Tamara Malesevic – coordinator school counsellors + psychologists.
- **Language:** English and Slovenian.

Program training – focus internalizing problems

Day 1

- **Theory:** Positive Psychology, Social Emotional Learning and ‘My Own Strength-model’.
- **Exercise:** My Own Strengths as a professional.
- **Case study adolescent:** film ‘I Choose to live’ about suicidal behaviour & anorexia and ‘My Own Strength-model’.

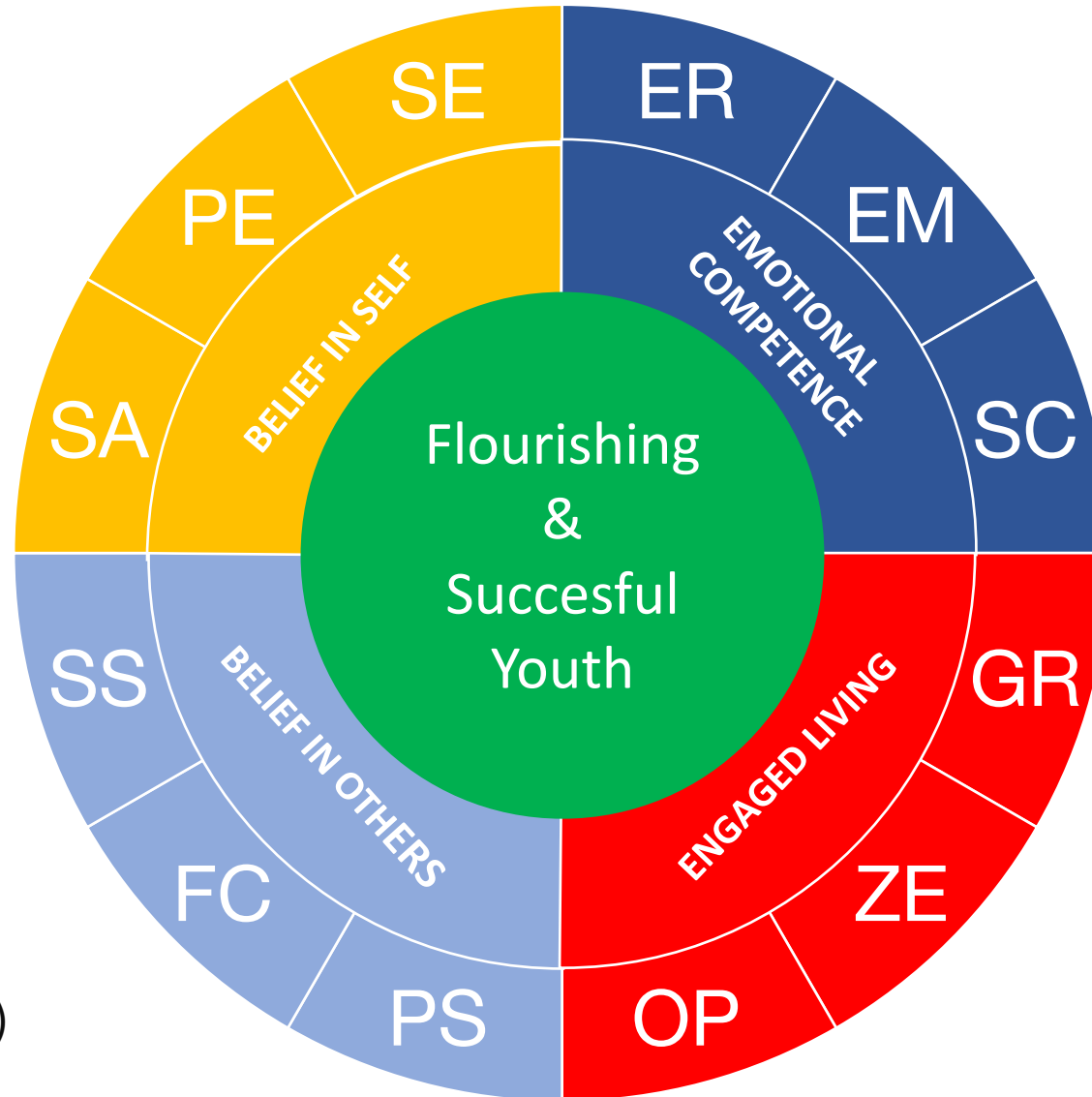
Day 2

- **Theory:** Interventions ‘My Own Strength-model’ → focus on internalizing problems.
- **Case study:** Your own case study of an adolescent in your PUM-O group and interventions using ‘My Own Strength-model’.
- **Dialogue:** implementing ‘My Own Strength-model’ in PUM-O project.
- **Dialogue:** cooperation coaches PUM-O project + school counsellors/psychologists.

CoVitality / My Own Strength - Youth

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Interventions on Strengths - Internalizing behavior

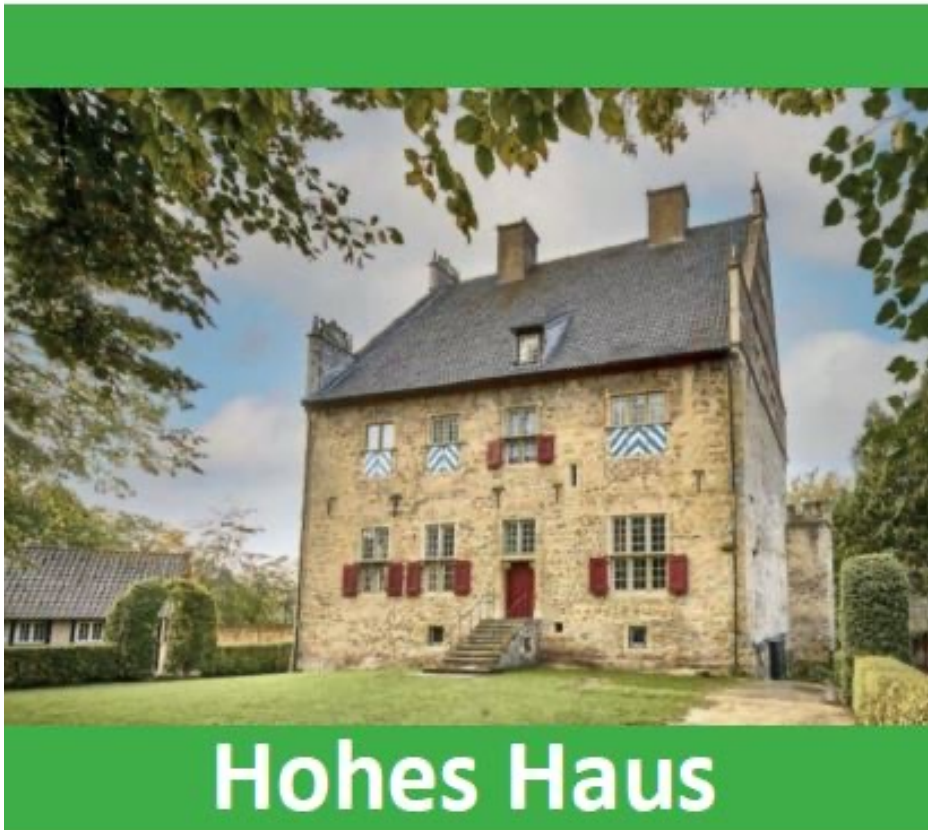
Focusing on

- **Belief in Others:** Peer support, family support, school support.
- **Belief in Self:** Self awareness.
- **Emotional competence:** Emotion regulation.
- **Engaged living:** Optimism, Zest.

Result training PUM-O project

- Participants very enthusiastic about My Own Strength – model.
- Start implementing My Own Strength-model in PUM-O project.
- Improve cooperation PUM-O coaches + school counsellors/psychologists.
- Follow up training in 2023.
- Option of international projects with European partners.

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