INTRODUCTION

Martin Seligman understood well-being to be comprised of five elements: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment; otherwise known as PERMA (2011). The Happiness Assessment was developed by Dr. Karen Harvey to assess five levels of well-being: Pleasure, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Achievement and Meaning (2009). NYSTART Richmond-Kings explored the use of the Happiness Assessment at the beginning and end of Therapeutic Coaching. Corey Fisk, LCAT and Sharon Cyrus-Savary, LMHC created the PERMA Assessment that was used to assess aspects of PERMA at all three phases of Therapeutic Coaching to better understand whether or not we were able to increase the experience of PERMA in the lives of the individuals we serve through therapeutic supports that included strength spotting and mindfulness.

METHOD

Nine children and adults newly enrolled in Therapeutic Coaching were assessed with the Happiness Assessment at the beginning and end of the coaching process (Phase I & III). Assessments were filled out by either the individual enrolled or a caretaker based upon the individual’s communication abilities. The Happiness Assessment provided open-ended questions to assess PERMA. Individual responses were coded with a “1” if the response met the criteria for the category being assessed or a “0” if it did not. To visually analyze the results we took the total average of each facet of PERMA was graphed.

PRE & POST HAPPINESS ASSESSMENT RESULTS: AVERAGE QUESTIONS ANSWERED (PHASE I & III)

DISCUSSION

Results from the Happiness Assessment and the PERMA Assessment showed an increase in all 5 aspects of PERMA by the third stage of Therapeutic Coaching. Individuals exhibited higher rates of Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Relationships. An increase in Meaning and Accomplishment was found in all participants but the scores, overall, remained lower than the other facets of PERMA. One limitation of the pilot study is that we had a small sample size and no control group. A second limitation was that multi-example responses were scored with the same salience as one example response, minimizing the ability to analyze the subjective quality of the increase in PERMA. We attempted to showcase some subjective improvement through our section on “Individual Examples of Increasing PERMA.” Future areas of exploration and research should involve gaining a better understanding of what factors lead to Meaning and Accomplishment scores being lower than their PERMA counterparts.

We hypothesize that through the use of strength spotting interventions, PERMA was increased in the lives of the participants. We would like to further explore the notion that the assessment process brought mindfulness of PERMA to both the therapeutic coach and participant, increasing the ability to develop opportunities to infuse PERMA through strength spotting. It is possible that the coach highlighted facets of well-being that were already present but were previously unacknowledged. Additionally, we hypothesize that participants were unfamiliar with attributing Meaning and Accomplishment to their lives and the lives of those supported. Another future study could look at ways to increase Meaning and Accomplishment through Therapeutic Coaching.

REFERENCES

