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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

- USING RESEARCH IN COACHING PRACTICE

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UPDATED ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT

Many theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology lend themselves well to coaching. A wealth of literature has been written on the subject over the last couple of years. This paper is based on a review of the literature on positive psychology coaching, which is part of a PhD-project on the use of theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology in evidence-based coaching.

Objective: The objective of this paper is to give the participants an overview of the literature on positive psychology coaching.

Design: The literature is primarily identified through searches in PsycINFO and handsearching. The present paper focuses on literature that explicitly uses the terms positive psychology and coaching.

Methods: The literature is analysed using thematic analysis.

ABSTRACT

Results: Preliminary results will be presented focusing on yearly production, types of literature, published vs. unpublished, peer reviewed vs. non-peer reviewed, theoretical material vs. empirical material, most productive authors, and trends in the literature.

Conclusion: The paper concludes with a few guidelines for how to apply theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology in coaching psychology practice.



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BACKGROUND

EBBE LAVENDT

Education	Authorized psychologist, University of Copenhagen, Master of Applied Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania
Title	Consultant and PhD-student; founder and first chair- man of the Danish Society of Evidence-Based Coaching
Workplaces	Center for Positive Psychology and The Department of Leadership and Strategy, University of Southern Denmark
Tasks	Coaching, teaching and research
Special interests	Positive psychology and evidence-based coaching

RESEARCH QUESTION

My PhD-project and the present literature review grew out of a question from participants in positive psychology training courses: How do we use this material in coaching?

Most quantitative research focuses on **what**. What correlates with what? And what causes what?

Course participants were interested in **how**. How do we use the research, the theories and the interventions from positive psychology in coaching practice?

Existing literature on positive psychology coaching partly answers this question – especially the existing qualitative and theoretical research



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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is simply to give the participants an **overview** of the literature on positive psychology coaching



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DESIGN

PHD-PROJECT ON POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

The present literature review is part of a PhD-project on positive psychology coaching

The project is divided into three parts:

1. A **review** of the existing literature on positive psychology coaching
2. **Interviews** with experienced positive psychology coaches on how they apply theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology in coaching
3. Development of a **theory** on positive psychology coaching and simple **guidelines** for practice

DEFINITION OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

Activity	Individual positive psychology coaching is a conversation
Practitioner	where a coach
Method	via research, theories and methods from positive psychology intentionally helps explore and/or handle
Target group	a coachee's
Issue	problems and/or challenges
Change	in an attempt to develop
Goal	optimal performance and/or well-being – physically, mentally and/or socially -
Context	in a private and/or professional context.

Positive psychology coaching is a **sub-category** of coaching psychology



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METHOD

LITERATURE SEARCH

The literature was identified through several search strategies:

Searches in **PsycINFO** using the search terms:

- Positive psychology coach*
- Positive psychology AND coach*

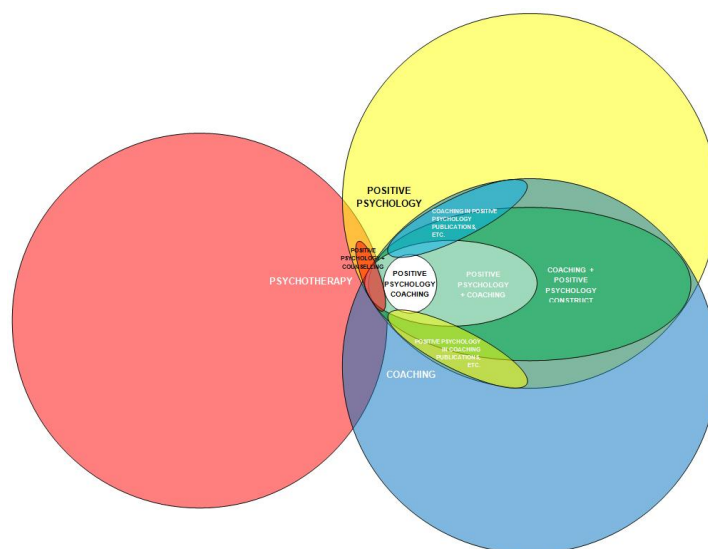
Handsearching:

- References in all material found
- Conference proceedings from conferences on coaching psychology and positive psychology

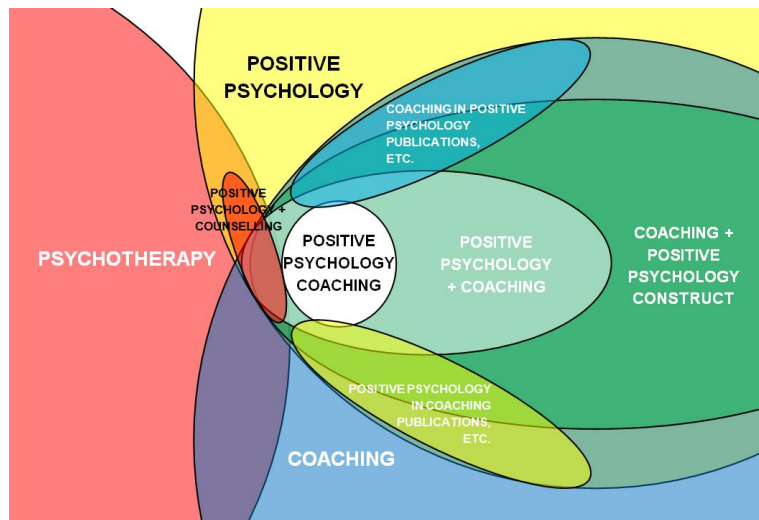
Requesting information from **experts** in the field:

- Positive Psychology Coaching Group on LinkedIn
- Coaching SIG on UPenn's Master of Applied Positive Psychology Community
- The most productive authors

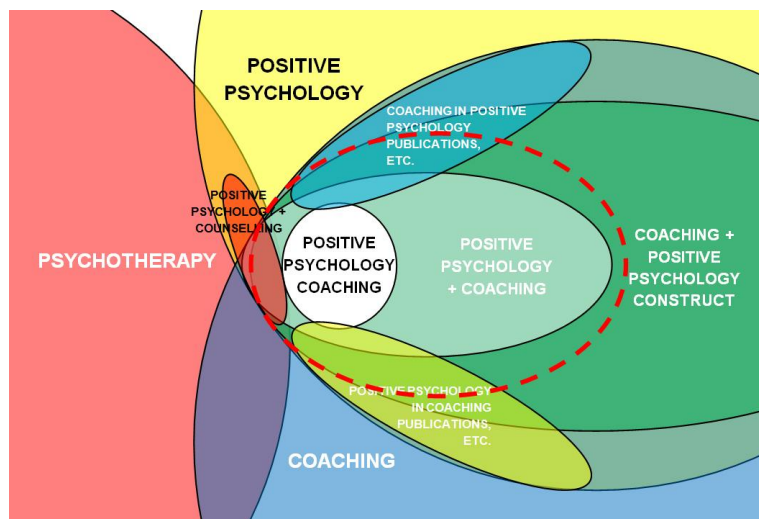
LITERATURE



COACHING PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE



THE FOCUS OF THIS LITERATURE REVIEW



SELECTION CRITERIA

Most coaching research focus on increasing either performance (optimal functioning) and/or well-being. This **overlaps** with my definition of positive psychology coaching

Much of literature that could be considered positive psychology coaching has **not** been **labeled** as such by the authors

Including most coaching research in the literature review would not make much sense

The difficult challenge has been to define **objective criteria** for what literature to include and what not to include

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Literature that incorporate the following criteria are included:

- Positive psychology coach* in title, abstract, key concepts, and/or all fields
- Positive psychology AND coach* in title, abstract, key concepts, and/or subtitles
- Literature that mention coaching and positive psychology constructs, and/or positive interventions written by an author who has used the words positive psychology and coach* in other references already on the list
- Literature published in a coaching journal or presented at a coaching conference that mention positive psychology several times
- Literature published in a positive psychology journal or presented at a positive psychology conference that mention coaching several times

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Coaching research that other authors in the field consider relevant to positive psychology
- Articles in Positive Psychology News Daily under the category of coaching that mention coaching several times
- Literature that describe how to apply positive psychology in counselling

TYPES OF MATERIAL INCLUDED

In order to get the fullest understanding of how to conduct positive psychology coaching **several types of material** were included:

- Articles
- Dissertations, master theses and capstones
- Posters
- Papers, presentations, masterclass materials, workshop materials, and manuals
- Books and chapters
- Annotated bibliographies, book reviews and editorials

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Literature that incorporate the following criteria are excluded:

- Positive psychology coach* in all fields, where the term only appears on the list of references
- Coaching literature that mention positive psychology, but primarily focuses on deficits
- Literature that mention positive psychology and coaching without elaborating on the topic
- Literature from before 1998, when positive psychology officially started

Of all the literature I have looked at, **187** pieces met the criteria for being included in this literature review

EXAMPLES OF RELEVANT, BUT MOSTLY EXCLUDED MATERIAL

There is a wealth of literature on coaching that includes positive psychology constructs and/or positive interventions – for example:

- Appreciative inquiry
- Emotional intelligence
- Flow
- Happiness
- Hope
- Job satisfaction
- Mindfulness
- Motivation
- Quality of life
- Resilience
- Strengths
- Wellness

Only a fraction of these are included



PRELIMINARY RESULTS

SEARCH RESULTS

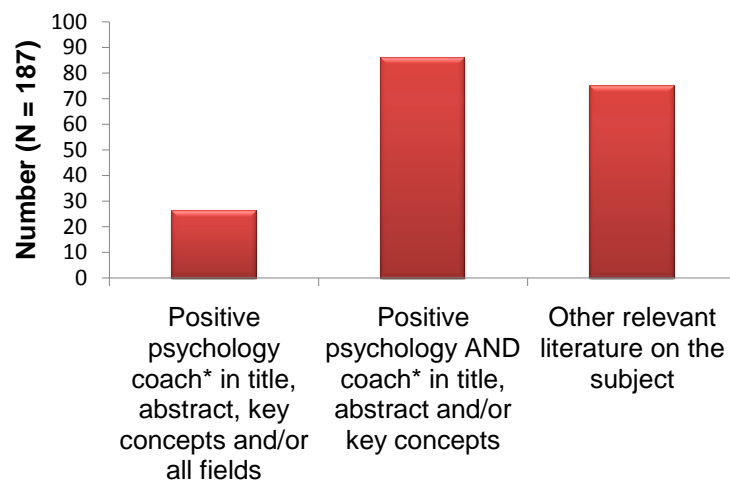
	Positive psychology coach*	Positive psychology AND coach*
Title	3	12
Key concepts	5	53
Abstracts	2	33
All fields	20	461

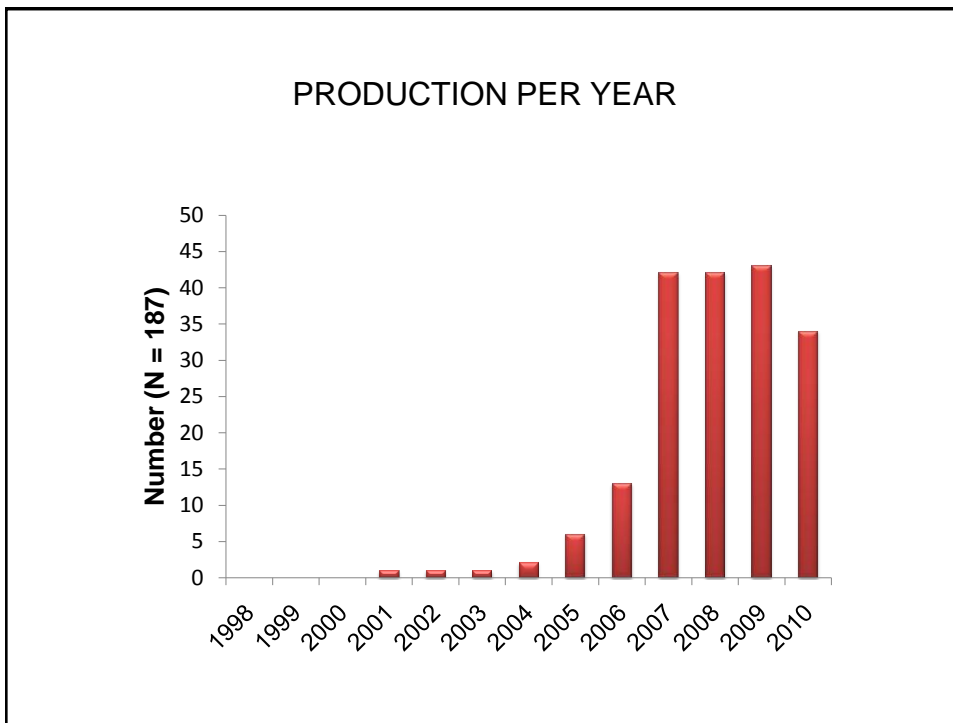
SEARCH RESULTS

	Positive psychology in title	Positive psychology in abstract	Positive psychology in key concepts	Positive psychology in all fields
Coach* in title	12 (3)	36	29	
Coach* in abstract	0	53 (5)	38	
Coach* in key concepts	0	39	33 (2)	
Coach* in all fields				461 (20)

73 unique references in PsycINFO when excluding the 461 in all fields

ONLY 26 REFERENCES USE THE TERM POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING





PRODUCTION PER YEAR

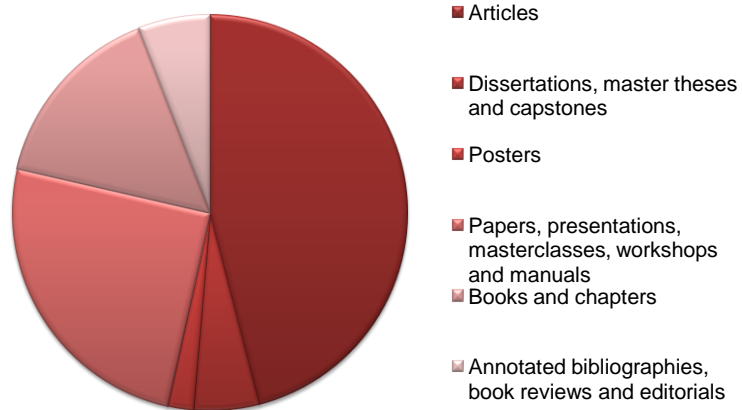
Positive psychology coaching has become more common and hence it has received a **growing attention** in literature

As illustrated by the chart, literature on positive psychology coaching began appearing in 2001, however, scarce up until 2007

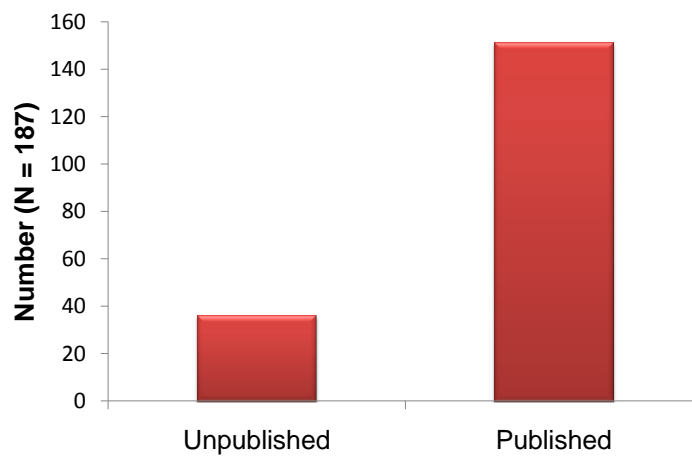
In contrast, 2007-2010 has seen the burgeoning of relevant literature

There seem to be a **stable production** of around 42 references per year

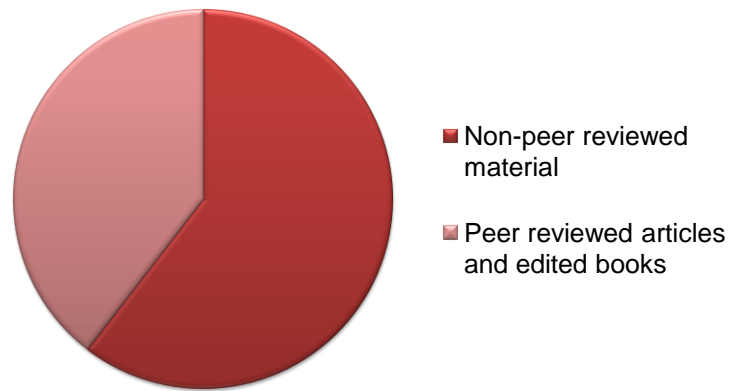
ARTICLES ACCOUNT FOR 46 % (N = 187)



81 % OF THE LITERATURE IS PUBLISHED

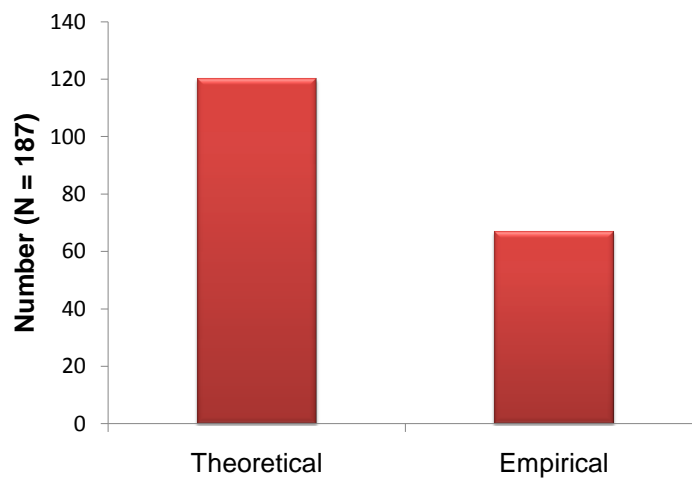


ONLY 40 % IS PEER REVIEWED (N = 187)



60 % of the material would be excluded from most reviews

36 % OF THE REFEEENCES INCLUDE EMPIRICAL MATERIAL



EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

There is a wide **variety of research**. From a mixed methods perspective this is a good thing. If the Gold Standard is used to evaluate the research, the quality is bad

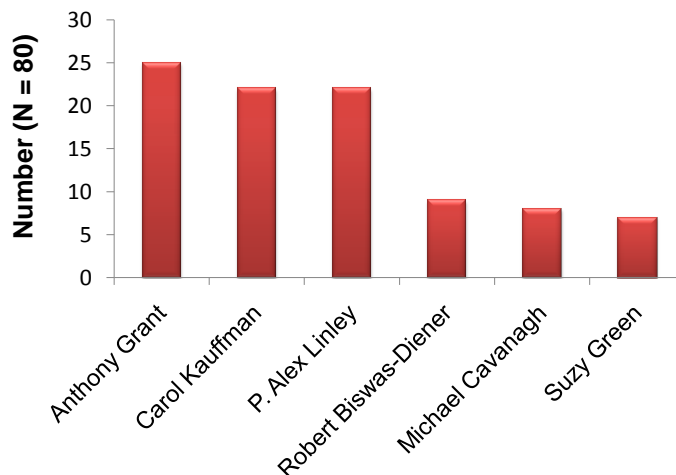
Most of the quantitative research is **not practitioner friendly** in that it does not clearly describe how the coaching was conducted

Some authors do not even name the type of coaching they employed

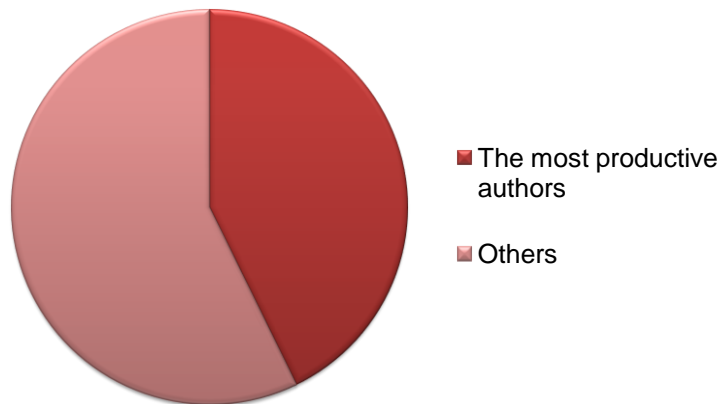
Some authors use real-life examples in chapters to illustrate how they work. These examples are sometimes called case studies

Some of the empirical material is reported several times in different types of literature. Thus, both primary and secondary sources are included in the reported 36 % empirical material

THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AUTHORS



SIX AUTHORS ARE INVOLVED IN 43 % OF THE LITERATURE (N = 187)



TRENDS IN THE LITERATURE

From initial reading, it is my impression that there is a great deal of:

- Focus on **strengths**, strengths assessments and strengths interventions
- Focus on **positive interventions**
- Focus on **well-being** as the primary outcome variable (not performance)
- **Relabeling of old topics** – now named positive psychology
- Borrowing of theoretical principles and techniques from the **solution focused approach** and from **appreciative inquiry**
- **Optimism** about the potential of combining positive psychology and coaching



PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

There is **not enough research** to support one “right way” of applying theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology in coaching psychology practice

At the moment the right way is what works for you and your coachees

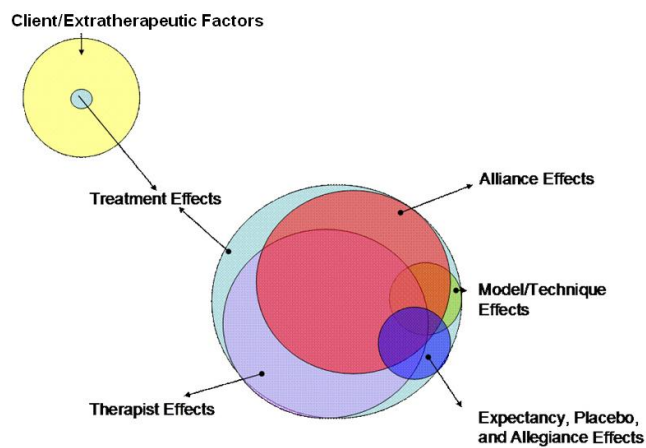
Follow the guidelines from evidence-based coaching:

- Use what you consider the best available research in each case
- Integrate it in the way you work
- Adapt it to your coachees and the context



FUTURE RESEARCH

FUTURE RESEARCH WILL HOPEFULLY HAVE A BROADER FOCUS THAN THE EFFICACY OF POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS



HUBBLE, MILLER, DUNCAN, WAMPOLD, IN PRESS

FUTURE RESEARCH IN GENERAL

We need more research – especially on:

- The **coachees** and what goes on outside the coaching sessions
- What characterizes good coaching **relationships** and how to “train” coaches (and clients) in forming good relationships
- What characterizes good positive psychology **coaches** and how to “train” coaches in becoming good coaches
- How to get the most out of **expectancy** and **allegiance** factors

And we will of course also see more research on **models** and **techniques**

MY FUTURE RESEARCH

My own research will include:

- An **annotated bibliography** of positive psychology coaching
- A formal **literature review**
- **Video recorded interviews** with experts in the field
- A **theoretical description** of possible ways of using research, theoretical principles and interventions from positive psychology in coaching psychology



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NEXT STEP

WHAT TO READ

For an overview of **coaching** literature see Anthony Grant

For an overview of **positive interventions** see Timothy So & Carol Kauffman (and Nancy Sin & Sonja Lyubomirsky, 2009; Stephen Schueller, in press)

For practical **advice** see Robert Biswas-Diener, Carol Kauffman, Alex Linley, and case studies

For practical **models** see Lucy Ryan

For **discussions** on positive psychology coaching see Positive Psychology Coaching Group on LinkedIn, and Positive Psychology News Daily

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

The list of references is probably incomplete. If you know of any relevant literature that ought to be included, please contact me at el@positivepsychology.dk. Thanks!

This presentation can be downloaded from <http://www.positivepsychology.dk/iccp.html>

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If you want more information on upcoming research on positive psychology coaching, send me an email