A great deal of research has been carried out in an attempt to define happiness. Whilst this has proven to be an elusive concept to define, there are a number of factors which can be said to have a direct impact on our levels of happiness.

Positive emotions include confidence, hope and optimism. These enable students to counter negative emotions; resist depression during periods of stress, increase concentration, focus on work output and improve physical health. Positive emotions provide an element of perspective when reflecting on past experiences, an enjoyment of the present when ‘in the moment’ and a sense of possibility when projected forward.

“Optimism is living with a positive attitude. This enables us to lead meaningful lives with purpose and direction. We are living positively when we are grateful for everything we have, use our strengths and are engaged in activities.”

Peer Support Australia, 2009.

According to Positive Psychology, the forms of happiness gained through engagement and meaning are of lasting benefit.

Seligman, 2002, suggests one way of becoming engaged more often during our lives is to identify and regularly use our particular strengths.

The happiness which endures longest is the one which has been created through altruism and service. Service for the benefit of others provides a lasting feeling of wellbeing which is increased by subsequent experience. This can be further enhanced with the measure of gratitude. The process of expressing genuine gratitude to others provides mutual benefit and generates positive feelings in both the giver and the recipient.

“Optimism is living with a positive attitude. This enables us to lead meaningful lives with purpose and direction. We are living positively when we are grateful for everything we have, use our strengths and are engaged in activities.”

Peer Support Australia, 2009.

Living Positively
This 8 session module focuses on optimism and develops the skills and knowledge for students to approach life with a positive attitude, use their strengths, engage in enjoyable activities and show gratitude to others. Students will be given opportunities to identify their personal strengths and how they may take advantage of these strengths in order to feel happier and more fulfilled. The important strengths focused on throughout the module are curiosity, kindness and teamwork.

Students will work with a model to assist them in developing the skills of optimism:

- I laugh - activities I enjoy
- I live - my strengths
- I love - showing appreciation.

Living Positively focuses on developing skills in:

- resilience
- coping
- critical thinking
- planning.

Aims of Living Positively:

- identify and use individual strengths
- enjoy life by engaging in activities
- practise positive self talk
- develop coping strategies
- demonstrate perseverance
- work towards their goals
- develop resilience
- demonstrate gratitude.