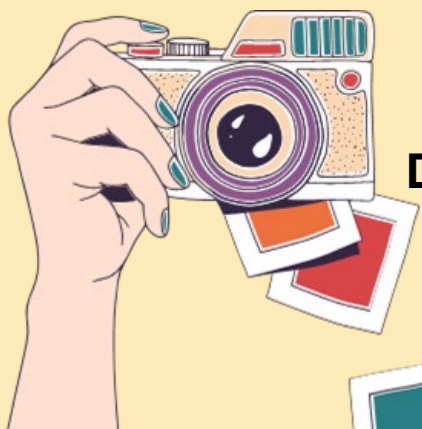




# **CYMH International Symposium: Voices of Community Collaboration**

## **Youth Mental Health in Hong Kong**



**Prof. KWOK LAI Yuk Ching, Sylvia**  
**Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences**  
**City University of Hong Kong**

**November 17, 2023**

# Youth Mental Health Challenges

## Hong Kong Youths' Perspective

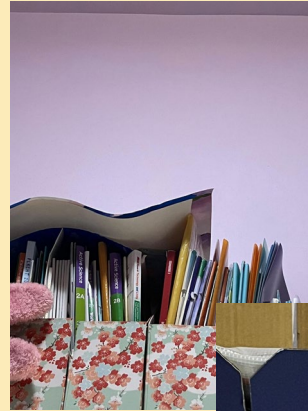
- Study, examinations, and school work lead to the feeling of disappointment due to unsatisfactory results, less personal time, and stress of being scolded by teachers and parents.
- **Traditional school rules**
- **Family relationships**



# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Exam Pressure & Family Relationship

- Very *heart-breaking* when I receive *poor exam results*
- My family would *insult me and compare me* to the others
- I did worked hard and kept doing exercises
- I already *don't have any expectations* on my results
- I hope I can make myself to study, e.g., making study plans, and timetables, going to the library weekly



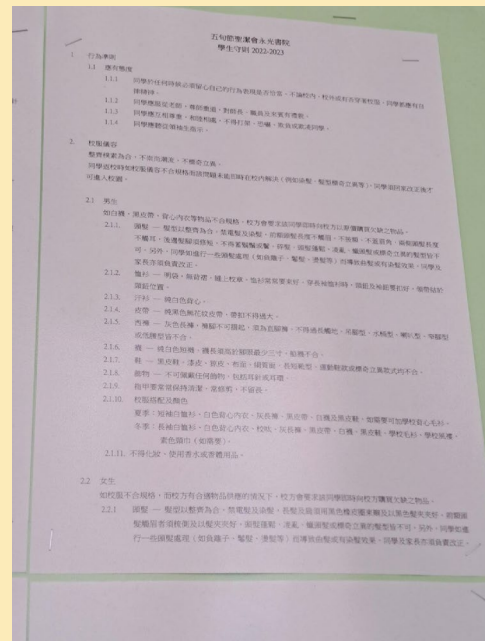
Subject	Examination Coverage
Chinese	卷一：閱讀 課文 課外文（為學一級字彙） - （閱讀） 課外文（為學二級字彙） - （閱讀） 卷二：寫作 課外文： 簡介 卷三： 筆試 - 筆試內容及知識 Paper 1 Reading • Alex Rider (Ch. 14-17) • Reading Skills Paper 2 Writing • Dictations • Writing notes for Proposal Paper 3 Listening and Integrated Skills • Vocabulary lists (Edge Units 7-9) • Grammarly 3 Units 4-3, 7, 9, 10, 13 • Mixed Issues • Verb Table Paper 4 Speaking - Group discussion • Speaking notes
Mathematics	Book 2A, 2B and previous knowledge
Integrated Science	Book 2A and 2B (Ch.7-11)
Biotechnology	Ch.1 - 6
English	80-83) 108-111) 116-121) 142-148) 156-165) ny World Trade International scene today and to the world by the international community with reference to foreign relations reference to foreign relations Computer System and Computer Software Book P.2-4 : Cambridge Opera Note



# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Traditional School Rules

- The school rules here *limited my thoughts*. Of course school rules are here for their reasons, and they should be implemented strictly when needed. However, are all of them necessary?
- One time when I entered the school, a teacher suddenly stopped me and said, “Your hair covers your eyebrow, I’m sure the school rules did mention it.” I was *frightened* and answered in panic, “I didn’t notice it, I will cut it today after school.” At that moment, I *felt extremely stressed* from these words, pressurizing me and *feeling overwhelmed*.
- Setting up old-fashioned school rules and asking people in the new era to follow them make every student feel *anxious*.
- Why would traditional rules that are unsuitable in modern society still restrict new generations’ deserved freedom?



# Youth Mental Health Challenges

## Hong Kong Adults' Perspective:

- **Stress from studies**
- **Public examination.**
- **Parent-child relationships**
- **Peer relationship**
- **COVID-19**



# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Academic Stress

### A Primary School Teacher said

- Hong Kong's **education policies and curriculums** often cause a lot of stress to students.
- students still need to **study at home after school** that affects their resting time and social interactions.

### A Social Worker said

- They have **too much homework per day**.
- Some students reported that they need to **reduce their time for extracurricular activities** to complete their homework.

### A Secondary School Teacher said

- The stress brought by a **harsh and conservative examination system**,
- The exam focus is **inappropriate and out-dated**.



# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Lack of Parents' Support

### A Parent said

- Some parents were trapped in a **traditional Chinese mindset**
- They have **high expectations** of their children and force them to study hard but **do not consider their child's abilities and strengths**.

### A Parent said

- Children **keep their thoughts in mind** and seldom listen to youth sharing about the support from their parents.



### A Social Worker said

- Youth are **not willing to share their thoughts** because of the **generation gap**, they have ambivalent feelings towards their parents, e.g. **love and hate**.
- Youths understand why their parents have high expectations on them. Over time, these **expectations become their stress**.

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Peer Relationships & Lack of Regular Exercises

### A Parent said

- My daughter is very **introverted**. She has only few friends and is **not willing to accept new relationships**.
- Sometimes when she **faces conflicts** she will be **exhausted and stressed**.
- Some of my child's friends have faced **cyberbullying** and misunderstanding,



### A PE Teacher said

- Our school has purchased different sports equipment for students after the full resumption of classes, which they can use freely in their spare time.
- Looking back, during the **pandemic** (COVID-19) and compared to now, they are **more energetic than during online classes**.
- A lack of regular exercise affects their mental health





# Youth Coping Strategies



## Hong Kong Youths' Perspective

- **Companions** (e.g., friends, pets, dolls), things that one **enjoys** (e.g., photography, drawing, travelling, music, food, online games, etc.), and **enjoying the nature**.
- Having a home as both a **physically and mentally safe place** during bad weather and other challenges.

# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Companion from Pets

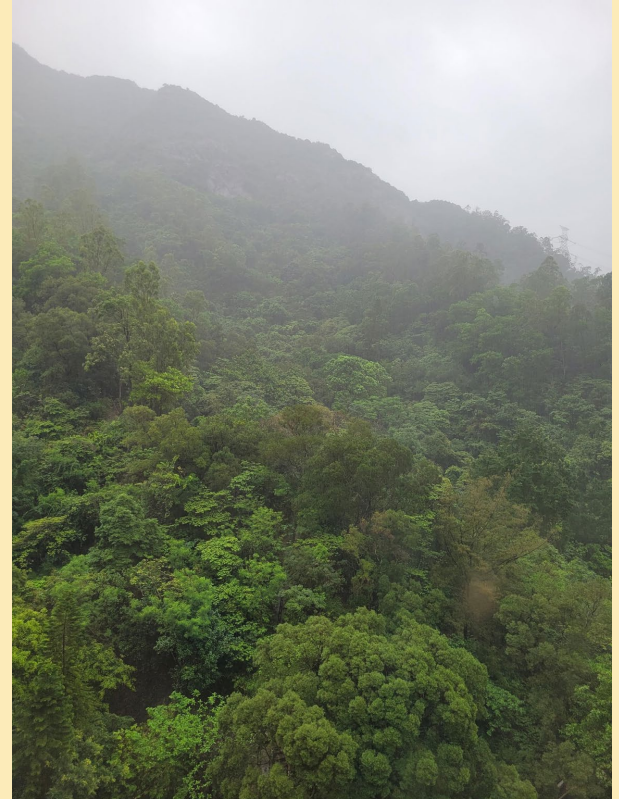
- My cat Kilo would always stay with me when I'm feeling bad or lonely.
- My emotions will be *less agitated* when I'm petting her.
- She's like my *soulmate* since she would listen to me a lot.
- Unlike people, some show bad sides and betray you. I trust her very much.
- Sunbathing/playing in the garden with her makes me happy, it's *heart-warming* every time she brings me leaves and flowers, and it makes my day and emotions better.
- She is my *emotional support* and *brings me happiness*.



# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Home as a Safe Place

- This photo was taken on a day with heavy rain, if I stayed outdoors I would be all wet. Luckily, I stay at home safely, *my home is my safe haven*, and I can get the resting space I need, *without worrying about things outside*.
- No matter where and no matter when, I will always have my place at home.
- My *family* always tell me that “if you felt tired outside, come home anytime, it is always your safe haven.”



# Youth Coping Strategies



## Hong Kong Adults' Perspective

- Youths can gain support mostly from their *hobbies and their friends*.
- Some adults understand and agree that *playing online games* can relieve stress.
- Some regard their *dolls and pets* as their children's source of strength.

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion



## Hobbies and Social Interactions

### A Parent said

- My daughter feels very stressed when learning in Hong Kong because she is not used to all the subjects. She likes **drawing and chemistry** a lot, however, she also feels guilty if she spends too much time drawing on her iPad instead of revision.
- Therefore, we sent her to the UK when she was in Secondary 4, so she could choose what she wanted to learn and be more flexible. I think **learning and doing things that she wanted** to can help her release stress and be more relaxed.

### Teachers and Social Worker said

- My students likes **singing**, they will **listen to music and chat with their friends** when they feel stressed.
- Doing things that they like to do in their spare time, such as hiking. They **feel relieved from the packed learning schedule**.
- Youths like playing online games, and some adults too. They agree that **playing online games** can relieve stress.

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Dolls and Pets

### *A Parent said*

- My daughter's mental support is *her dolls and her pet*.
- She always *seeks support* from them.

### *A Teacher said*

- A long time ago, one of my students texted me and said: "I attempted to kill myself with 150 pills of Hypnotic, luckily *my dog, my only friend, stayed beside me and saved me.*"

# Community Support to Youth



## Hong Kong Youths' Perspective

- *Enjoying the nature* (e.g., hiking, jogging by the seaside), participating in indoor and outdoor exercises and activities, and support from *social workers at schools and community centres*.
- The *beautiful city view* at the Victoria Harbour as a community spot that improves mental health.

# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Enjoying the Nature

- This photo is from a short hiking path called 'Tai Mei Tuk Family Walk' in my village.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, I went there after online lessons every day to *keep myself motivated*.
- It shows the mountain range called 'Pat Sin Leng' (Ridge of the Eight Immortals), Plover Cover Reservoir (the world's first reservoir built in the sea), Tolo harbour, and Tai Mei Tuk village, where my ancestors lived.
- The *air was fresh* and it was *funny* to see things that look so tiny.





# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Beautiful City View

- Hong Kong has a *dense atmosphere with a lot of stress*, regardless of students or adults, they face different stress in life like academic or work.
- The photo was taken in *Victoria Harbour*, a famous tourist attraction in Hong Kong. I think these views can *ease one's mind* when they are feeling stressed out.
- This may improve our mental health when we feel *relaxed in places* with *nice environment*, and Victoria Harbour is one of the examples. I genuinely hope that people in the community can feel better even though they are facing different challenges and obstacles in their lives.



# Evidence: Storytelling Group

## Social Workers & Community Centers

- I believe that there are **community centers** around where you live, and there is also one in my previous neighborhood. Once I had an opportunity to participate in an event held by Caritas, keeping me involved 7-years till now.
- I had **discovered my interest and practiced my basketball skills** here. This is a really precious chance for me from a less wealthy family. Here I can **relieve my daily stress**, and the social workers here always chat with me, allowing me to learn a lot.
- I have also **found my future career goal** – being a social worker. I believe this is the importance of a community center, helping teens to **find their directions, developing interest, building skills, and relieving stress**.



# Community Support to Youth

## Hong Kong Adults' Perspective

- Different parties raised various suggestions to help the youth enhance their mental health, for example, to *raise public awareness*, *reform the education system*, *reallocate resources*, *promote positive education* or *encourage the youths to voice out their needs*.
- These suggestions cannot be implemented by the efforts of one party only but by *concerted efforts* from parents, educators, social workers, government officials or the whole society to achieve effective outcomes.

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Policies & Resources

### *Raising Public Awareness*

- Stakeholders from different sectors of society, especially Education and Social Welfare should **raise more concerns** about students' mental health problems to the public, **enhance public awareness** and **give impetus for the Government** to invest more resources to promote mental health among youths.

(from a parent)

### *Matching Resources*

- It is useless to place and invest resources blindly and continuously. For example, holding some workshops or assigning more social workers to schools to help reduce students' academic stress, but not to **solve the root problem** about the syllabus. Resources needed to be **properly matched and targeted** at quality rather than quantity.

(from a teacher)

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Education

### *Education / Examination Reform*

- Examine the syllabus and public examination system and **delete unnecessary subjects or segments of the subjects.**
- Allocate class hours reasonably and **allow enough time** for students to participate in extracurricular activities.
- May have **more off-campus classes** or shorten the class duration to let them feel the warm and bright sunshine.

(from a parent and teachers)

### *Promoting Positive Education*

- Merge **positive education concepts** into life education lessons that help our youths discover their strengths
- Train and remind them to use their **character strengths** to overcome and cope with difficulties that they are facing in life.
- My daughter's school has **positive education training sessions** with CityU, and we have learned a lot through the training. At home, we will use those strategies to solve problems and challenges, and to be more positive while thinking.

(from a social worker and parent)

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Society

### *Set Up Peer Support Network*

- Youths prioritize their relationships with peers, with the **peer support network**, youths can help and support each other immediately.
- Give **training** to students, teaching them how to maintain good relationships with their peers and to educate them on **the importance of communication** and **how to cope with difficulties**.

(from social workers)

### *Encourage Multiple Intelligences*

- Provide different **experiential opportunities** for the youth and encourage them to **search for their interest** rather than only focusing on academic performance
- **Release academic pressure and increase self-confidence** while searching for their multiple intelligences.

(from a social worker)

# Evidence: Round Table Discussion

## Family

### Listen to their Needs

- Encourage children to *talk and share more* and be friendly while listening. To understand them humbly, but *not to judge them by your own experiences*.

(from a parent)

### Providing More Space (Me Time)

- Do not overload our youths. Giving them more *space* in life. Giving them time to rest and relax at home.

(from a teacher)



### Parent-School Cooperation

- To strengthen the *communications and information exchange* between parents and teachers.
- To *detect the difficulties and mental challenges* faced by our youth and provide early support and interventions.

(from a teacher)

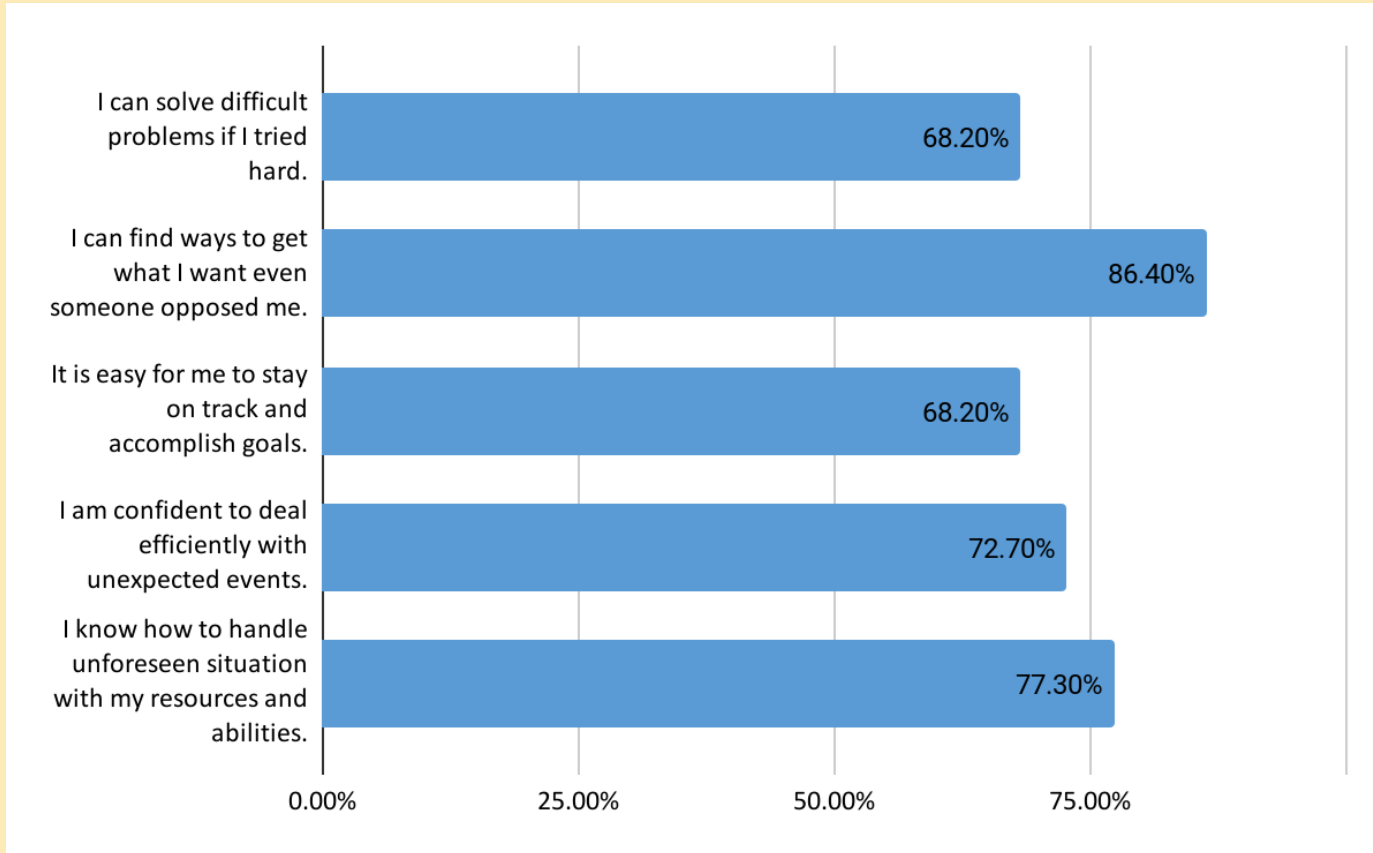
# Storytelling Group Evaluation Outcomes

An evaluation of their abilities was done with the students after they participated in the storytelling group.

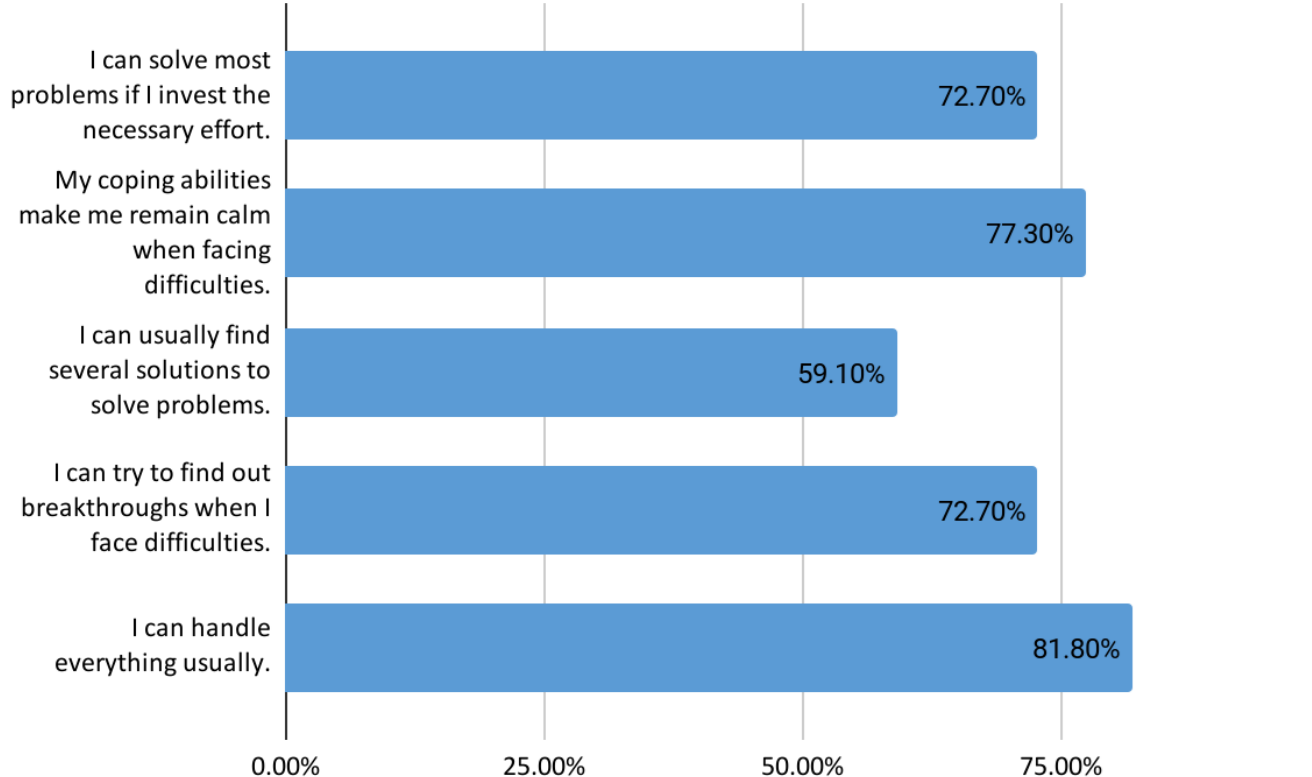
- Over **80%** of students agreed that they can **find ways to get what they want** even if someone opposes them and are able to **handle everything** that comes their way.
- Around **75%** of students were **confident in dealing with unexpected events** or **handling unforeseen situations** with their resources and could **remain calm while coping with difficulties**. They also trusted themselves that they could **solve most problems if they invested the necessary effort** and could usually **think of breakthroughs** when they faced difficulties.
- About **60%** of students revealed that they can **manage difficulties if they tried hard** and it was easy for them to **stay on track while achieving goals**. Also, they could **find several solutions** when they are confronted with a problem.



# Storytelling Group Evaluation Outcomes



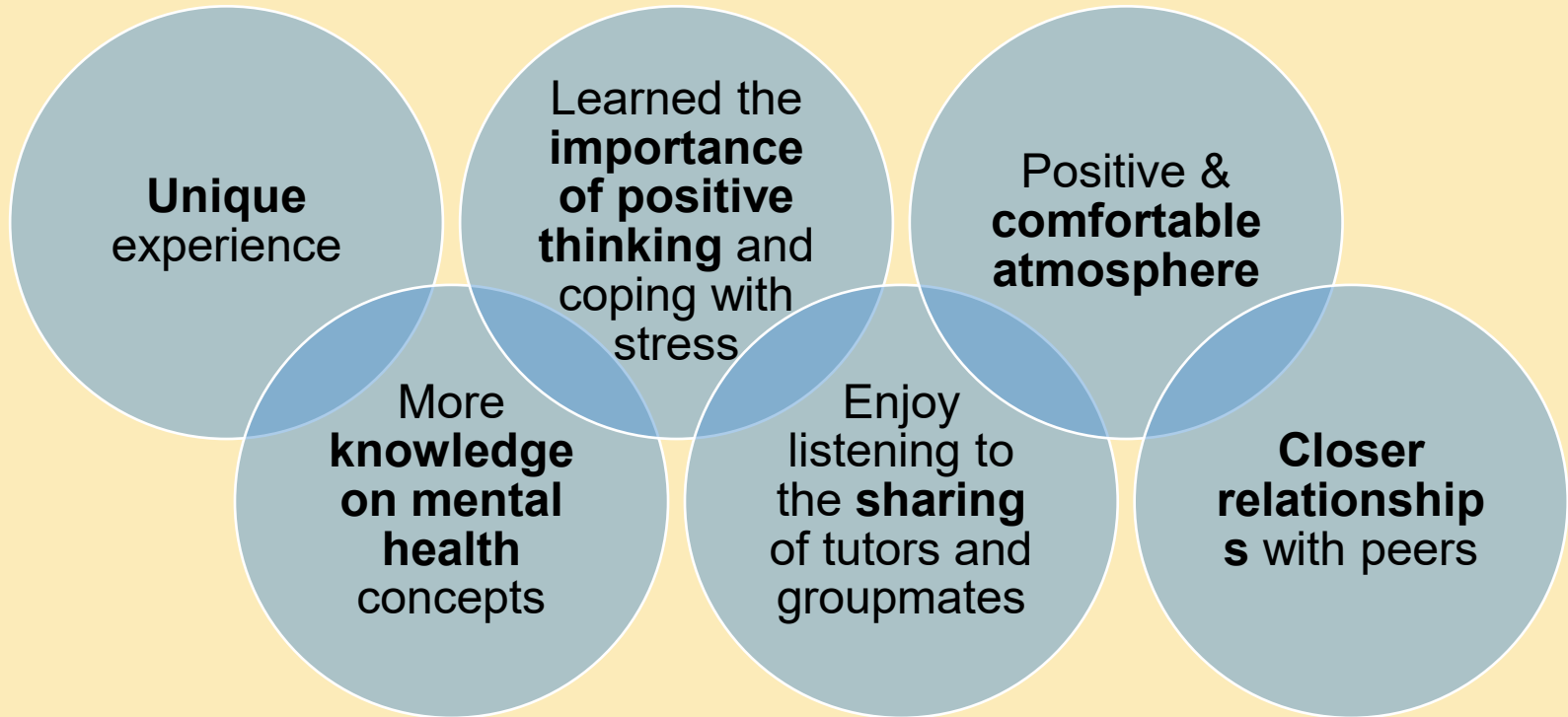
# Storytelling Group Evaluation Outcomes





# Experiences & Opinions

Students also shared their experiences and opinions in the Storytelling Group.





# Knowledge & Insight

Knowledge and insight that students have gained in the Storytelling Group.

Increase  
**awareness** in  
mental health  
issues

Look at  
mental health  
from a  
**different**  
**perspective**

Understand  
the effect of  
**social and**  
**self-**  
**expectations**  
on one's  
mental health

Depression or  
other mental  
problems are  
**not caused**  
**instantly but**  
**cumulatively**



# Valuable Parts in the Group

Students valued:

Interaction within  
the group

Sharing &  
communicating

Discussion session

Mental health  
knowledge

Games &  
experiences

Coping strategies

# **Positive Psychology project for junior secondary school students**



SUN Teens

青少年精神健康計劃  
成效研究暨實務手冊

主辦機構：



聖雅各福群會  
St. James' Settlement

研究院校：



香港城市大學  
City University  
of Hong Kong



Department of  
Applied Social Studies

計劃資助：



香港公益金  
THE COMMUNITY CHEST

研究資助：



社會福利署  
Social Welfare Department

**Positive  
psychology**

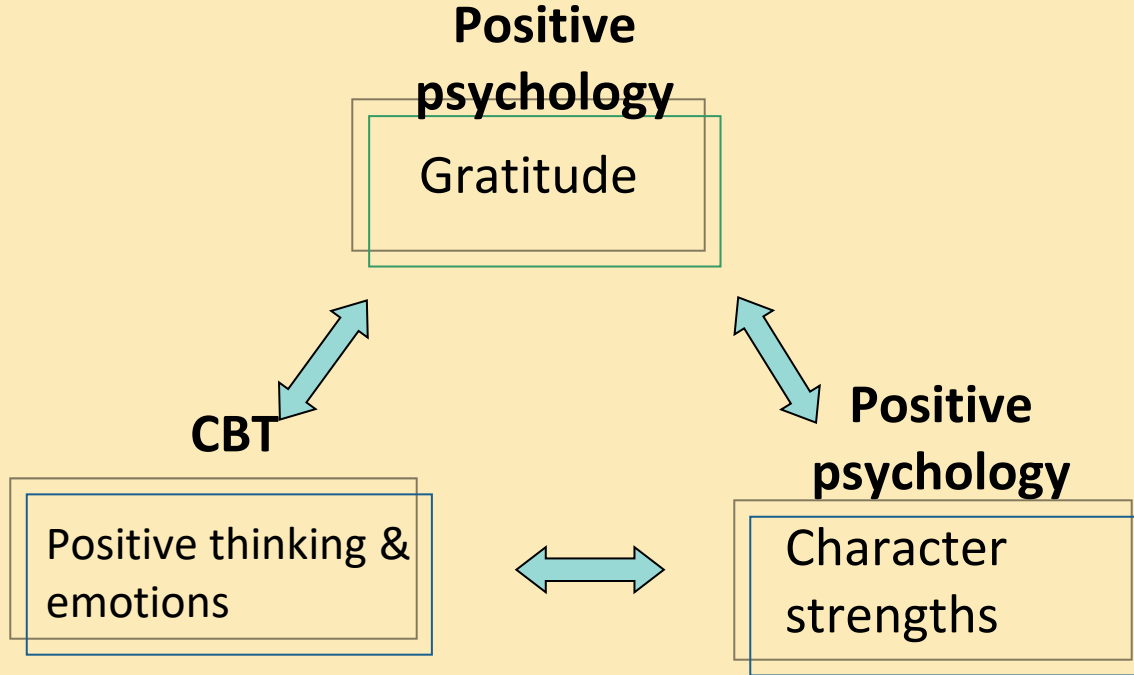
Gratitude

**CBT**

Positive thinking &  
emotions

**Positive  
psychology**

Character  
strengths





# **Positive Psychology projects for junior secondary students**



「整合正向心理學與音樂治療元素—  
正向大使計劃」  
研究報告暨實務手冊

主辦機構:



協辦機構:



贊助機構:

香港研究資助局優配研究金

# **Positive Psychology project for senior secondary school students**

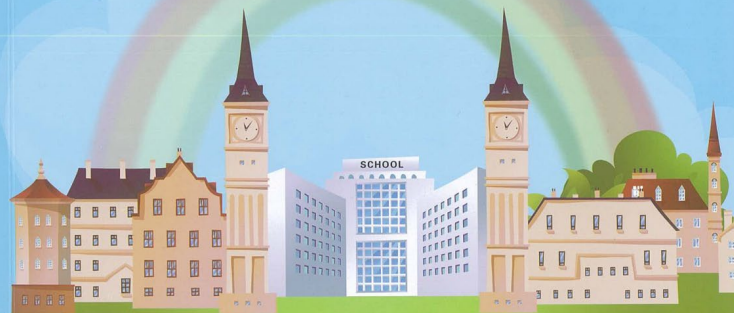


基督教香港信義會生命天使教育中心

# 快樂巨升

## 紓減學生焦慮計劃

### 教材套



優質教育基金  
Quality Education Fund

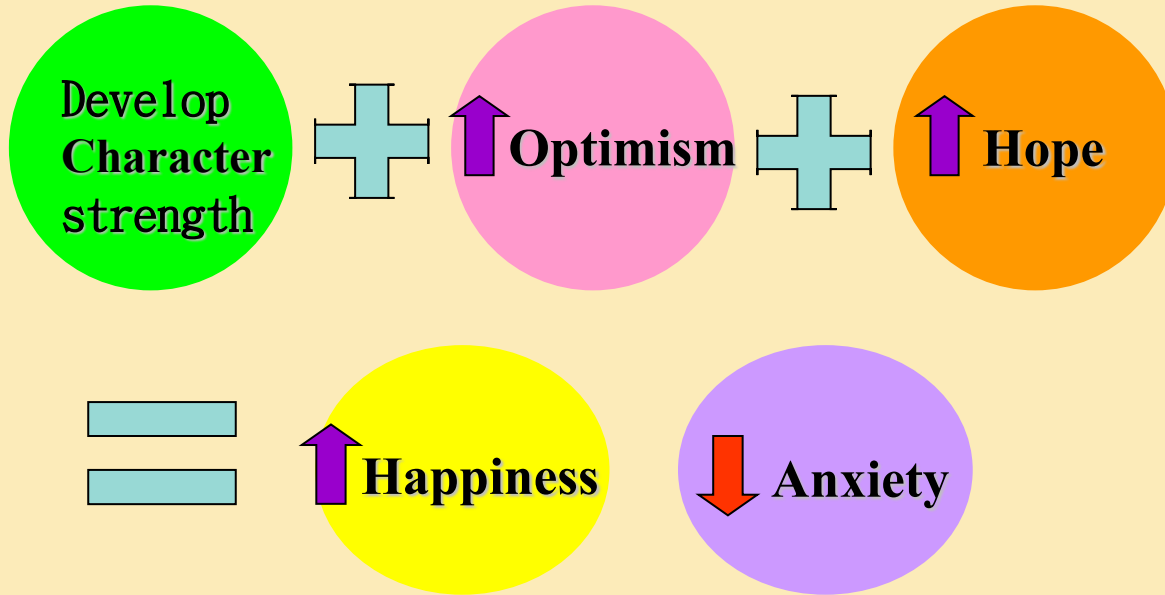
贊助



香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong  
三十週年紀念三十周年紀念  
三十分會慶三十週年紀念  
三十分會慶三十週年紀念  
Department of  
Applied Social Sciences

計劃顧問

# Theoretical Framework



# Online resources for positive education

# Website on Positive Family

# 添「十」幸福樂園



家庭治療咖啡杯



親職劇院



溝通雕塑展覽館



家家有故事



資源諮詢站



樂園郵局





# Positive Psychology projects for families



## Board Game



## 2B 實用欣賞詞彙

有關心的  
敏敏的  
勇敢  
口齒伶俐的  
滿心的  
大方的  
忠誠的  
強壯的  
樂於幫助的  
誠性的  
興快的  
有熱情的  
有想像力的  
好玩的  
有吸引力的  
有禮的  
善於鼓勵人的  
好笑的  
有禮貌的  
有情有義的

善於調解的  
優雅的  
高興的  
和藹的  
健玩的  
懂得關心人的  
一個好朋友  
容易興奮的  
堅強的  
活潑的  
遵守承諾的  
樂於參與的  
善於表達的  
活潑的  
小心謹慎的  
謙虛的  
有吸引力的  
樂於接受新事物的  
負責任的  
值得信賴的  
有學識的

實惠的  
有智慧的  
優雅的  
輕鬆自在的  
美麗的  
愛樂的  
生龍活虎的  
有內涵的  
有主動性的  
靈活的  
機靈聰敏的  
獨特的  
高雅文雅友的  
思想開放的  
平凡的  
有地位的  
受人尊敬的  
有理想的  
細心的

## 2B 溝通姿態 - 超理解



- 不讓自己和他人, 只是聽者
- 作一個主動的傾聽者, 以協助對方分析狀況及作出處理
- 瞭解有關個人及情緒上的信息

「超理解」是溝通姿態中最高級的一種。它要求傾聽者能理解對方的情緒和需要, 並能作出適當的回應。這需要傾聽者具備高度的同理心和溝通技巧。在溝通中, 傾聽者應專注於對方的感受和需要, 而不是只關注自己的觀點。這需要傾聽者能夠放下自己的成見, 並能夠理解對方的觀點。這需要傾聽者能夠理解對方的感受和需要, 並能作出適當的回應。這需要傾聽者具備高度的同理心和溝通技巧。

# Board Game

## 遊戲



*Computer Game*

遊戲



*Computer Game*

# Computer game on building character strengths

# 小朋友「正」冒險

開始遊戲

設置

0.1.0

# Positive Education Laboratory

[http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/ss\\_posed/](http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/ss_posed/)





**THANK YOU**

