

The Best Possible Team

Mindset

Exercise

30-60 min.

Group

No

The Best Possible Self exercise is a well-known positive psychology exercise for cultivating optimism. The BPS exercise involves envisioning oneself in an imaginary future in which everything has turned out in the most optimal way. Research has shown that writing about and imagining a BPS improves people's mood and well-being (King, 2001; Peters et al., 2010; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), and increases optimism (Peters et al., 2010; Meevissen, Peters, & Alberts, 2011). The Best Possible Team adapts the original BPS exercise to be used with teams (e.g., work teams, sporting clubs, etc). This exercise first invites team members to envision an ideal version of the team individually; then, team members share their individual visions with each other to find common aspirations and differences in views; then, the team works together to create one best possible team scenario based on the information gathered in the prior steps.

Author

This tool was created by Lucinda Poole (PsyD) (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lucinda-poole-24a122121/>) and Hugo Alberts (PhD) (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hugo_Alberts).

Goal

The goal of this tool is to develop a new, shared understanding of a team functioning at its best and increase the team members' optimism.

Advice

- Encourage clients to come up with a realistic picture of their ideal team, to avoid feelings of disappointment and worry that could emerge if the ideal team is too far from the current team.
- At Step 5, it might be helpful to provide the group with The Top 5 Values tool to facilitate the process of defining their core values. This tool contains a list with over 100 values.
- The team might like to display their core values (Step 5) somewhere to serve as a visual reminder of what the team stands for.

Suggested Readings

King, A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 798-807.

Peters, M. L., Flink, I. K., Boersma, K., & Linton, S. J. (2010). Manipulating optimism: Can imagining a best possible self be used to increase positive future expectancies? *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(3), 204-211.

Meevissen, Y. M., Peters, M. L., & Alberts, H. J. (2011). Become more optimistic by imagining a best possible self: Effects of a two week intervention. *Journal of behavior therapy and experimental psychiatry, 42*(3), 371-378.

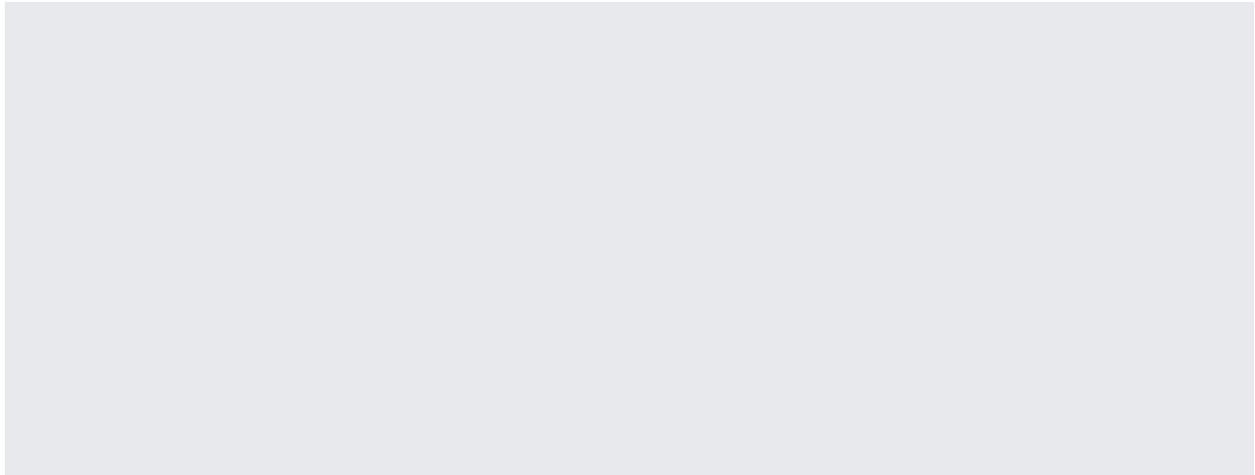
Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(2), 73-82.

Tool Description

Instructions

Step 1: Imagine your best possible team

This step involves writing about your team at its best possible 'self'. Imagine your team functioning at its optimal level, with each of its members performing to the best of their abilities, and the team achieving all the things that it sets out to achieve. You will write for 10 minutes about this best possible team. While writing, do not worry about grammar or punctuation; simply focus on expressing all thoughts, feelings, and emotions that show up for you. You may want to have several sheets of paper for this step.



Step 2: Share individual visions with the group

Have each team member share their vision of their best possible team with the wider group. Invite team members to take turns to summarise (or read if preferred) what they wrote in step 1.

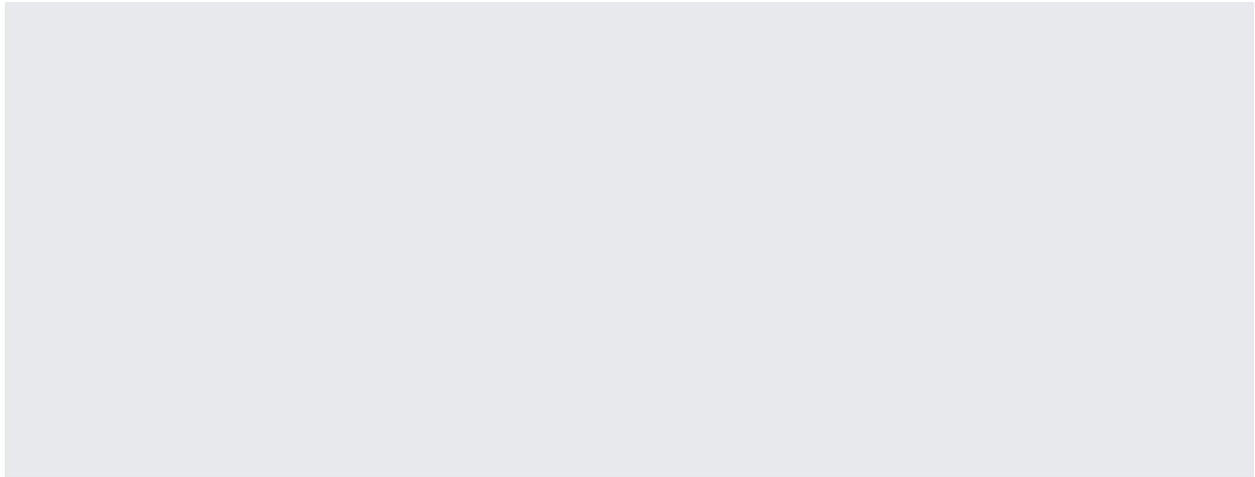
Step 3: Similarities and differences in visions

On a whiteboard or piece of butchers paper, draw two columns and label them 'Similarities' and 'Differences'. As a group, discuss (and write down) the similarities and differences among the individual team members' visions. For example, if multiple team members mentioned something along the lines of 'respectful communication', this would be added to the 'Similarities' column. If only one team member mentioned 'more frequent team meetings', this would be added to the 'Differences' column. Take time here to make sure that every team member's vision has been considered and incorporated into the table.

Step 4: Create a new best possible team

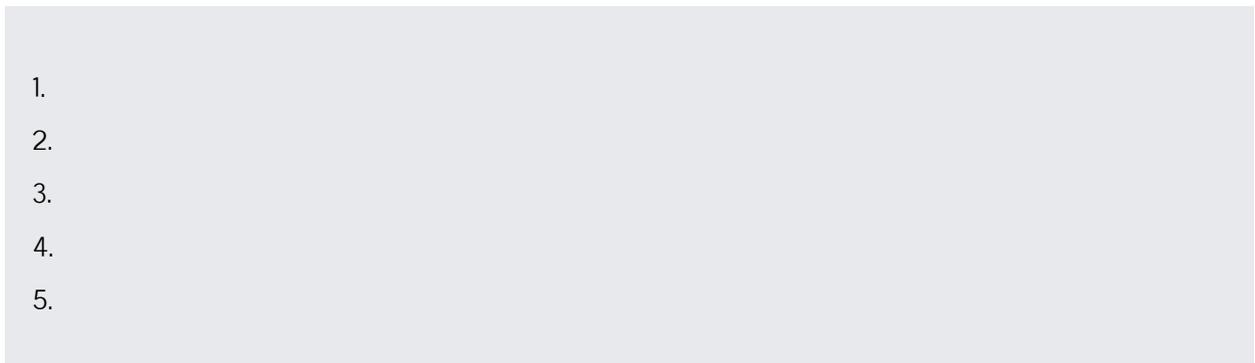
As a whole group, integrate your findings from Step 3 to come up with a new shared best possible team. Pay particular attention to the Similarities column from Step 3, as this reflects the group's common aspirations. Work

collaboratively to write down a detailed description of this new ideal team.



Step 5: Define core values

The final step of the exercise is to define what this newly defined ideal team stands for. In the space provided, have the team work together to come up with 3-5 core team values:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.