



**CAPP Case Study  
Positive Psychology Coaching**

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### Case Study: Danielle\*

Danielle and I first connected after she did a google search for a career/life coach. She and I have met in my office six times over the past eight weeks, and we continue to work together. She has been seeing a therapist for several years, and understands the distinction between coaching and therapy. Our work is focused on helping her to clarify her goals for the future and take steps toward achieving those goals.

#### **Client**

- Very accomplished publishing professional, fifty years old
- Laid off twelve months before our coaching relationship began this March
- “Devastated by the layoff and really struggling with motivation and self-esteem”
- Life is dominated by family responsibilities and fear of the future
- Taking very little enjoyment in life or hope for improvement

#### **Situation**

- Had not taken any steps toward finding a new job
- Family’s financial resources were close to tapped out
- Husband is facing a chronic illness that will cause him to stop working in the next few years
- Mother, who lives with them, is in the early stages of Alzheimer’s; little help from siblings
- Beloved 25-year-old nephew struggling with cancer

**\* Client name and key identifying characteristics have been changed.**

**Danielle**  
**Coaching Relationship Summary**

**Phase One (Two Sessions)**

Instill Hope by Shifting the Positivity Ratio

**Phase Two: (Two Sessions)**

Increase Motivation and Confidence through Appreciative Inquiry

**Phase Three: (Two Sessions and Ongoing)**

Inspire Action with Solutions Focused Coaching

**General Coaching Relationship Outline**

- Help client identify positive goal(s) for our coaching relationship
- Agree on a rough, high-level structure for our work
- Check in and change/expand goal(s) and structure as we go

**General Coaching Session Outline**

- Check in
- Discuss client's progress toward coaching goal(s) since last session
- Inquire regarding session goal/focus
- Discuss client's journaling
- Focused coaching: questions, stories, occasional exercises, introduction and reinforcement of key concepts
- Accountability: What will you do this week to get closer to your goal(s)?
- Email journal prompt(s) to client the next day

**Phase One: Instill Hope by Shifting the Positivity Ratio**

***“I feel like I’m stuck in quicksand and I’m afraid to even try to get out.”***

**Danielle’s Positive Goal**

**1. I want to feel better about myself and have some hope for the future.**

Key Techniques

- Encourage storytelling
- Active listening

Key Concepts

- Permission to be human
- Self-compassion
- Positivity ratio, small changes

Journaling

I value . . .

I love to . . .

To make my life right now 5% better . . .

To take care of myself as well as I take care of others . . .

Accountability

What will you do this week to bring some pleasure in your life and give you some things to look forward to?

- Talk with specific friend every other day, yoga on Monday and Thursday

***Reflection question for call participants: Is there someone in your life who is “stuck” in some way? How would you begin to help the unsticking process?***

**Phase Two: Increase Self-Efficacy and Hope through Appreciative Inquiry**

***“I want to find something that matters more to me than the fear.”***

**Danielle’s Positive Goals:**

1. I want to feel better about myself and bring some pleasure into my life.
- 2. I want to actively make decisions about my life, rather than just reacting.**

Key Techniques

- Appreciative inquiry
- Reframing the story
- Tracking energy

Key Concepts

- Love/meaning/strengths overlap
- Strengths: stories of optimal and over-use
- Growth mindset

Journaling

- A time that I was at my best and what the story says about me.
- What do I want to offer the world? What do I want in return?

Accountability

What will you do this week to make progress toward your goals?

- Family calendar to cover mother’s appointments

***Reflection question for call participants: What additional techniques or concepts might you use to help Danielle feel more confident and hopeful?***

### **Phase Three: Inspire Action with Solutions-Focused Coaching**

***“I’m ready to face my career search.  
I want expand this feeling of positive motion.”***

#### **Danielle’s Positive Goals:**

1. I want to feel better about myself and bring some pleasure into my life.
2. I want to actively make decisions about my life, rather than just reacting.
3. **I want to actively engage in the career exploration/job search process, both as a way of understanding my options and preferences and in order to make concrete progress toward getting a new job.**

#### Key Techniques: Solutions-Focused Coaching

- Ideal Self exercise
- Client’s wisdom: what is the path, what’s in the way, how will you react to setbacks?
- Practical advice and assistance when helpful and necessary

#### Accountability: What will you do this week to make progress toward your goals?

- Three mornings/week at library investigating options and taking practical steps
- Family meeting to detail plan and request active support
- Practice setting personal boundaries in pursuit of goal

***Reflection question for call participants: How would you judge how much practical help to offer a client who is struggling with key tasks on the path toward an important goal?***

## **Benefits**

Danielle has brought daily pleasure into her life and reports feeling significantly happier and better about herself most of the time. She consciously practices giving herself permission to be human, treating herself with compassion, and setting healthy boundaries in her relationships with others.

Danielle's most noticeable change is in the action she's taking to clarify and pursue her life and career goals. Armed with hope for the future and an enhanced appreciation of her own strengths, interests, and values, she's feeling more motivated and confident in her ability to set and achieve goals that will work for her, and she is spending substantial dedicated time in pursuit of those goals.

## **Key Learning**

Clients who are really stuck often need to take small steps to enhance their positivity ratios before they can begin to think productively about goals.

The Ideal Self exercise is sometimes best used after some progress has already been made. For "stuck" clients, sentence stems (2%, 5%) can be a better alternative early on.

We may be the experts in Positive Psychology and coaching, but our clients are the experts in their own lives. In most cases, their answers will be far more useful to them than ours could ever be.

On the other hand, insights that may seem obvious to us can be brand new to our clients.

Because we form conclusions about ourselves based on what we see ourselves do, one of the greatest gifts we can give our clients is to help them as much as necessary (so they can experience success) and as little as possible (so they feel that the success is their own).



## **Whole Being Institute Positive Psychology Coach Training Program**

We're currently building a series of WBI Positive Psychology Coach training courses. These courses will offer students the opportunity to master skills that they can apply in a wide range of professional and personal settings. Students who choose to go through the full sequence of courses will have an opportunity to earn certification as a **WBI Certified Positive Psychology Coach** and to participate in a **WBI Certified Coach Referral Program**.

The courses will offer an evidence-based approach grounded in our shared values; a mix of lecture, demonstration, and student-to-student practice; and opportunities for both personal and professional growth.

### **Level One**

The essential theory and skills of Positive Psychology Coaching, with extensive opportunity to practice those skills in peer coaching sessions.

### **Level Two**

Advanced coaching techniques, including practice in structuring productive coaching sessions and relationships to help clients to clarify and pursue their goals.

### **Level Three**

Practicum including individual mentoring; final step towards certification as a WBI Certified Positive Psychology Coach.

### **Optional Short Courses**

Building a Successful Coaching Practice

Specialty Courses on topics including Health Coaching, Executive Coaching, and Relationship Coaching

### **Level One Pilot Opportunity for CiPP1 Students**

All CiPP1 students who join (or have already joined) CAPP premium will have the opportunity to pilot the Level One Coaching Course -- at no additional cost.

Classes will be held live by phone, and will be available for replay for students unable to attend particular sessions. Peer coaching will take place by phone or Skype at any time convenient for you and your practice partner for that week.

Our pilot course will begin the week of September 8, 2013. We hope you will join us!