

Gratitude as a resource

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Content

- Concept and theory
- Impact on well-being and mental health
- Interventions
- Recent Dutch study

Short exercises

Definition & theory

Appreciation of good & goodness

I. Moral affect

Gratitude typically results from and stimulates moral behaviour, that is, behaviour that is motivated out of concern for another person.

Michael McCullough & Robbert Emmons (2001)

Moral reinforcer

Hearing 'thank you'

reinforces

prosocial behaviour

I want to do more good

Gratitude as trait

Gratitude Scale 6

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.*
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.*

Answer range: 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree

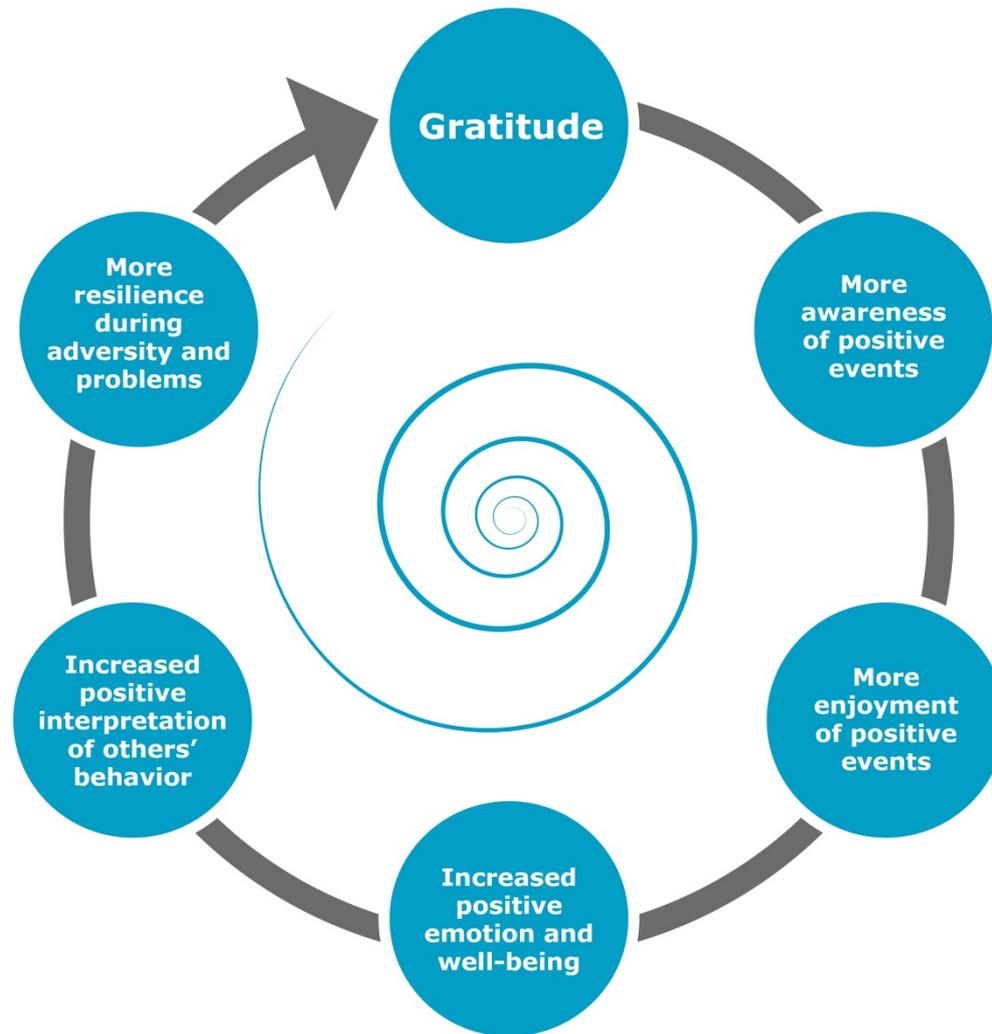
Appreciation of good & goodness

(Philip Watkins, 2004)

- Sense of abundance
- Simple pleasures
- Appreciation of contribution of other's to one's well-being

Amplifying the good

positive spiral





What brings fulfillment is
gratefulness, the simple
response of our heart to this life
in all its fullness.

Steinl-Rast



When we release expectation
and experience appreciation, all
the moments of our lives become
openings and opportunities

Kristi Nelson

Impact and meaning

Gratitude & depression

Disabato et al., 2016

1. Gratitude promotes prosocial behavior & positive events.
2. Positive events diminish depression.
3. So gratitude should diminish depression via an increase of positive events.

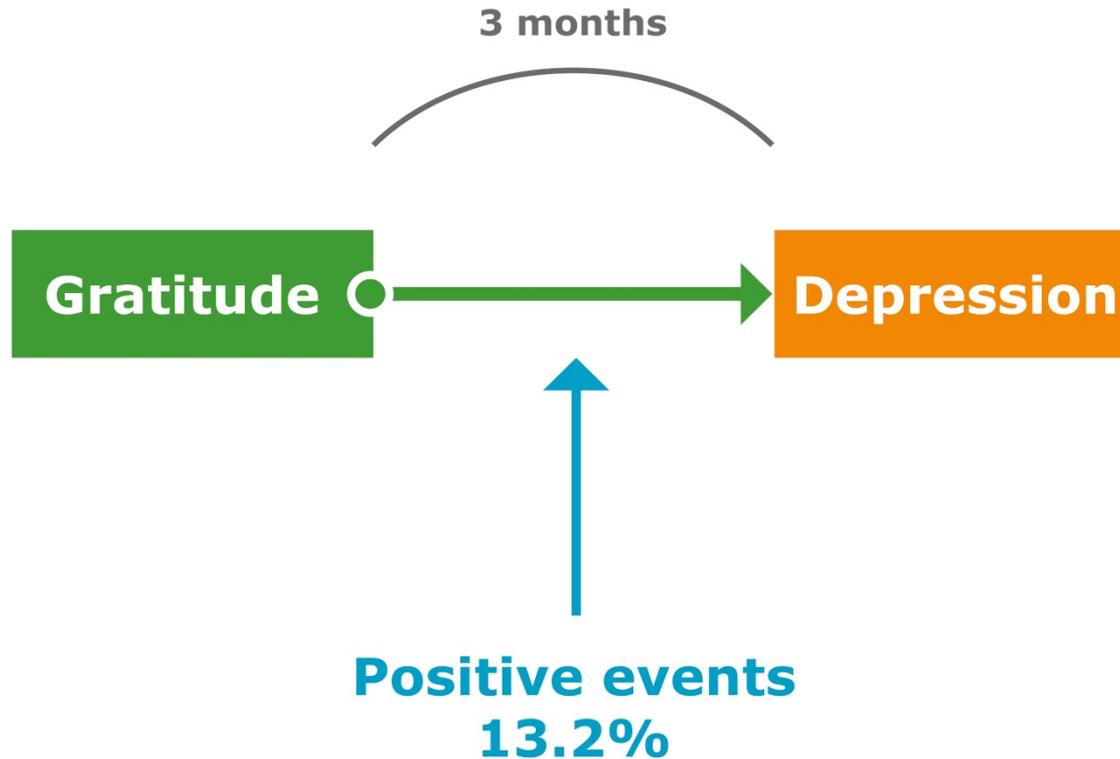
Gratitude & depression

Disabato et al., 2016

- 797 adults
- 43 countries
- 3 time-points
- Measuring: depression, gratitude, positive events

Gratitude & depression

results 3 months



Mediation was greater for people with
higher initial levels of depression

COPE: coping styles

Active coping

Instrumental support

Emotional support

Planning

Positive reinterpretation

Growth

Humor

Denial

Substance use

Behav. disengagement

Emot. disengagement

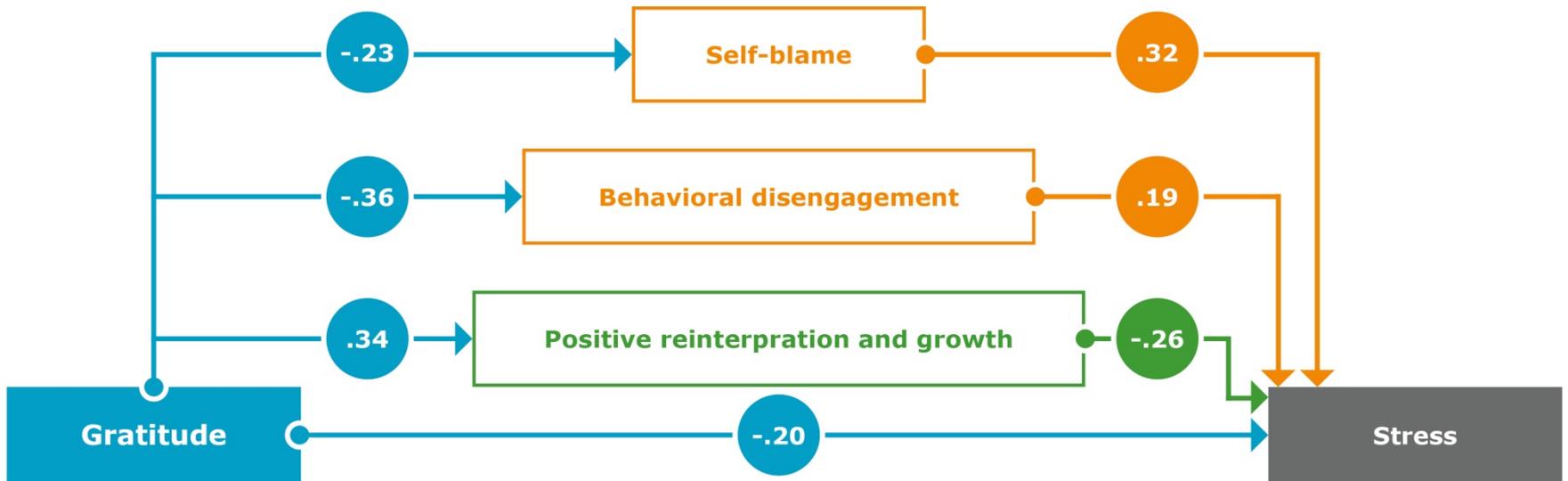
Self-blame

What coping strategies might grateful people be more or less inclined to use?

Wood et al., 2007

- 236 younger adults
- Gratitude
- Coping styles (Brief COPE)
- Perceived stress

Results



Clinical application

J Happiness Stud (2015) 16:17–36
DOI 10.1007/s10902-013-9492-1

RESEARCH PAPER

Can Gratitude and Kindness Interventions Enhance Well-Being in a Clinical Sample?

Shelley L. Kerr · Analise O'Donovan · Christopher A. Pepping

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PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

WELL-BEING

**Rehabilitation
&
Complete recovery**

**(Core)
Treatment**

**Pre
Treatment**

Intake

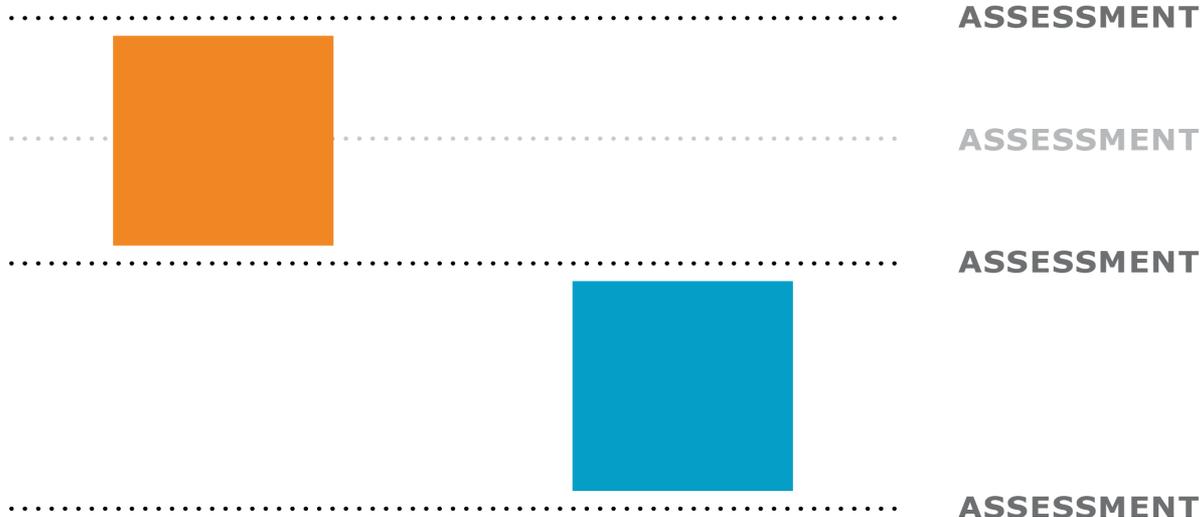


Table 2 Means and standard deviations in parentheses for pre and post intervention outcome measures by condition

Measure	Pre			Post		
	Gratitude (n = 16; 3 male)	Kindness (n = 16; 4 male)	Control (n = 15; 5 male)	Gratitude (n = 16; 3 male)	Kindness (n = 16; 4 male)	Control (n = 15; 5 male)
Eudaimonic well-being						
Meaning in life	79.38 (23.79)	86.38 (23.47)	77.31 (15.29)	81.13 (22.49)	88.40 (23.61)	76.46 (19.73)
Psychological functioning						
OQ-45	89.69 (23.77)	84.06 (19.75)	90.64 (19.02)	77.19 (25.93)	73.57 (18.40)	82.94 (19.62)
DASS-depression	18.63 (12.43)	14.50 (11.49)	22.38 (9.99)	15.13 (13.06)	13.60 (9.30)	20.25 (8.03)
DASS-anxiety	14.00 (11.10)	14.88 (9.58)	15.00 (10.61)	9.38 (9.57)	9.07 (4.89)	16.75 (11.24)
Dass-stress	22.50 (11.58)	21.38 (10.87)	23.13 (10.12)	18.00 (11.84)	17.20 (10.02)	23.25 (8.64)

Interventions

Interventions

1. Gratitude lists or other journaling
2. Gratitude letters

Meta-analysis of 26 randomized controlled studies
Davis et al., 2016

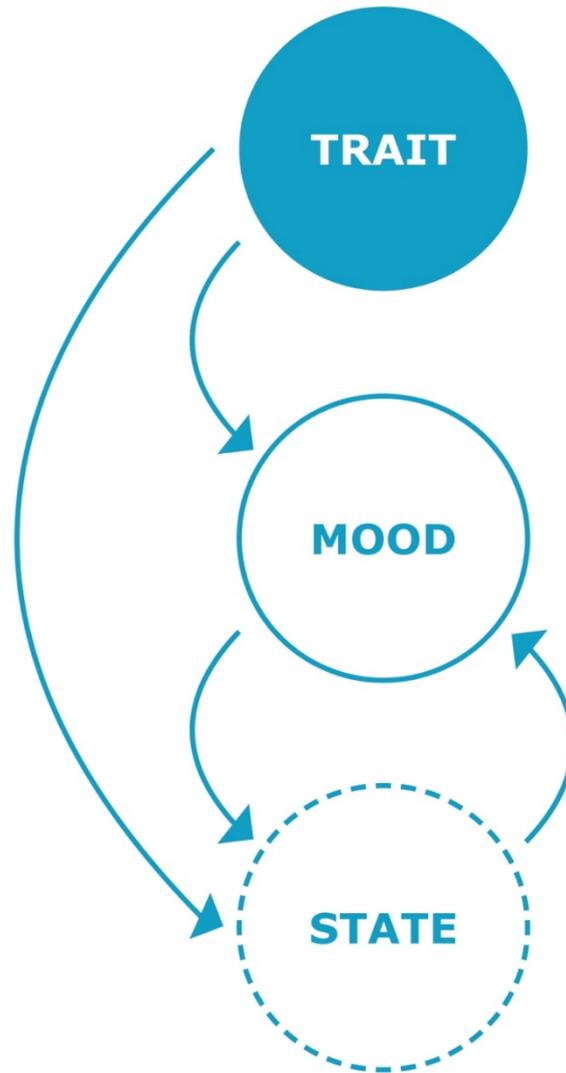
Summary of effect size from meta-analysis of gratitude interventions

Outcome variable	<i>d</i>	95% CI	<i>k</i>	<i>n</i>
Measurement-only control				
Gratitude	.20	[−.04 , .44]	4	631
Psychological well-being	.31	[.04 , .58]	5	664
Alternative-activity condition				
Gratitude	.46	[.27 , .64]	15	1,392
Anxiety / stress	.11	[−.08 , .31]	5	395
Psychological well-being	.17	[.09 , .24]	20	1,755
Activity-matched	.14	[.01 , .27]	18	1,391
Psychologically active	−.03	[−.13 , .07]	9	1,012

State of the art

- Healthy populations (students)
- Short interventions (1 – 2 weeks)
- Gratitude as mood?

THREE LEVELS OF GRATITUDE



Study at the UT

Public mental health: target group adults with mild or moderate distress and/or suboptimal well-being

Advertisement in national newspapers and social media

- 6-week gratitude intervention (n=85)
- 6-week acts of kindness to oneself intervention (n=85)
- Waiting-list control group (n=84)

Gratitude intervention

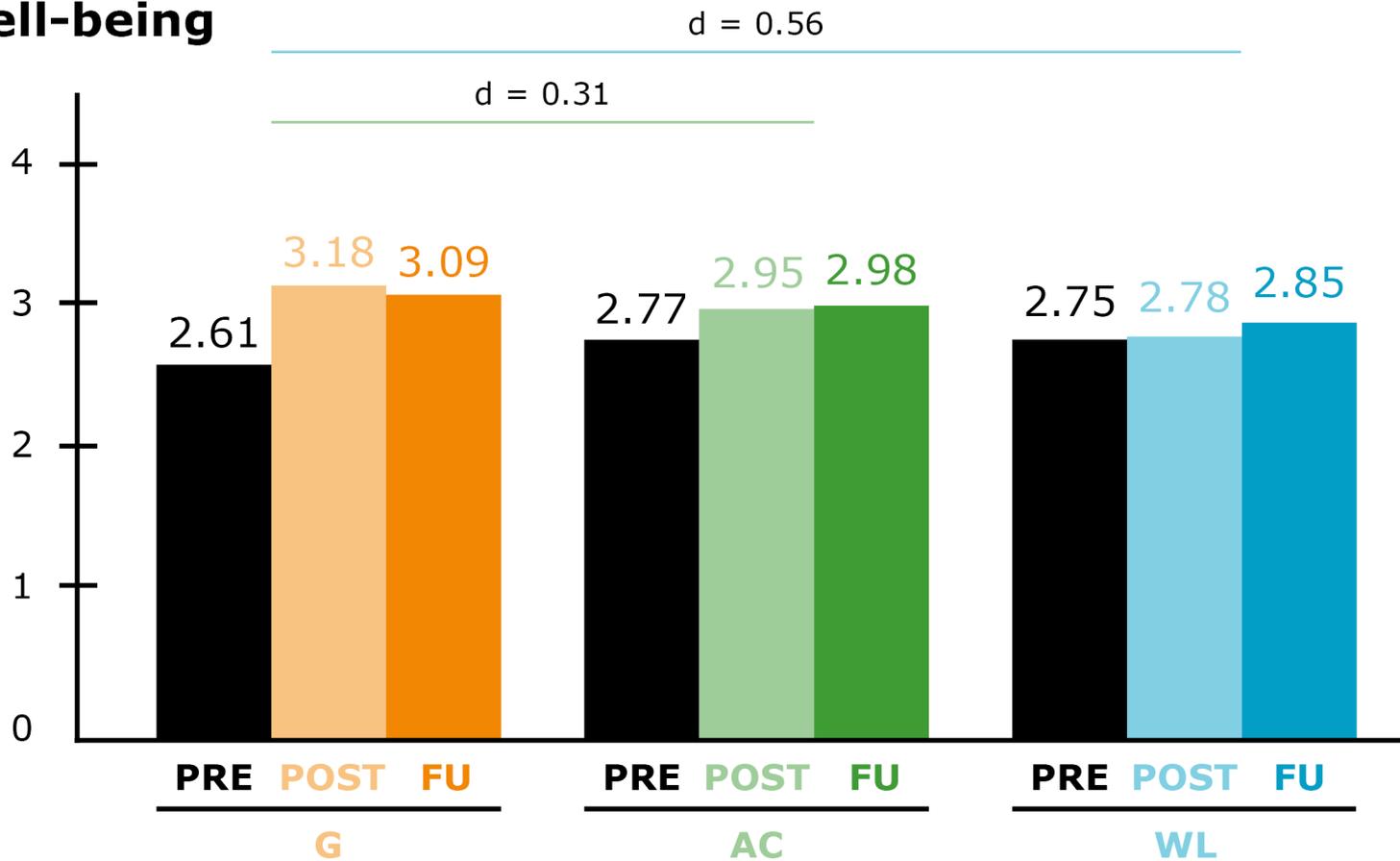
- Journaling
- Expressing gratitude
- Mental subtracting
- Grateful life-review
- Grateful processing difficult events
- Living with grateful intention

Study

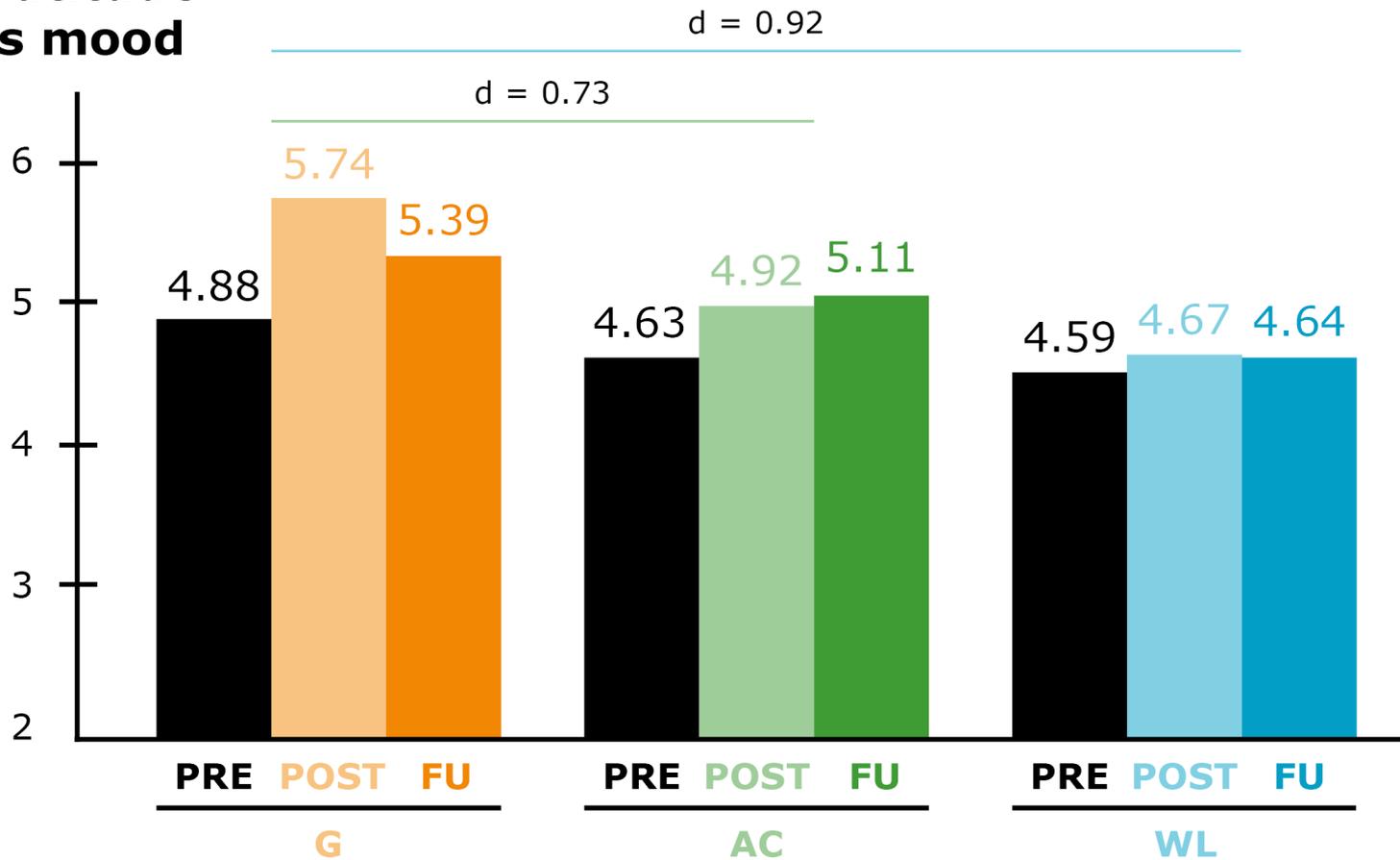
Measurements

- PRE
- POST (6 weeks)
- FU 1 (3 months)
- FU 2 (9 months) April 2018

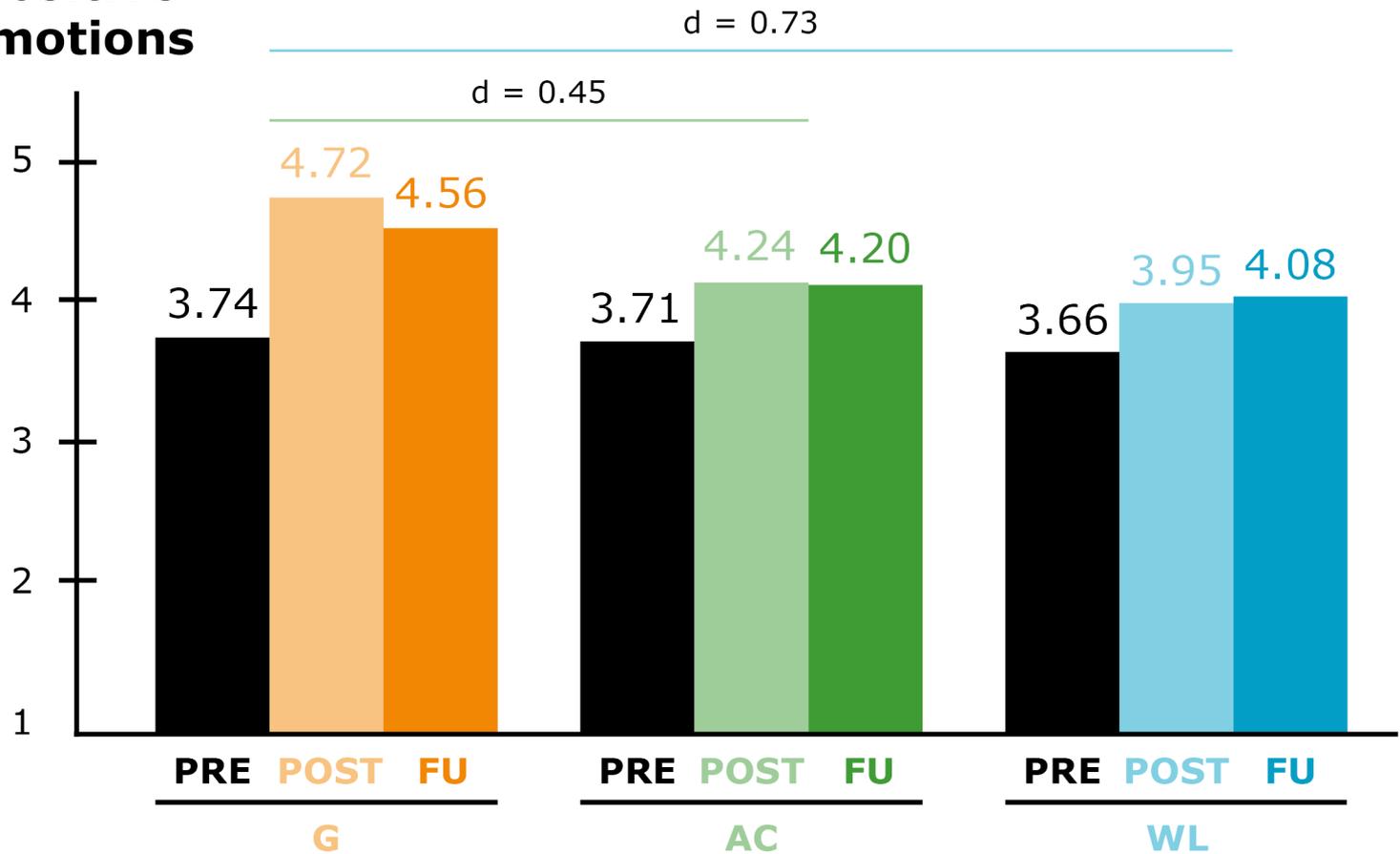
Well-being



Gratitude as mood



Positive emotions



Some conclusions

1. There is growing evidence from longitudinal studies that gratitude has a positive impact on mental health and create upward spirals in daily life.
2. Gratitude plays a vital role in building and maintaining (intimate) relationships.
3. There is some evidence that brief gratitude interventions have small effects on mental health. **Interesting challenge! Barriers!**
4. There is evidence we can enhance gratitude as a mood.
5. Some promising pilots of gratitude interventions in clinical samples. **Interesting challenge!**



Everybody has two lives.

You will receive your second life
as soon as you realize you have
only one life.

Frank Liddy

Thank for your attention

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