

# Using Technology to Foster Purpose Among Adolescents and Young Adults

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at



# Shift in Focus: Education



Academic goals

Educating the whole  
individual

(London, 1987)

# Shift in Focus: Psychology

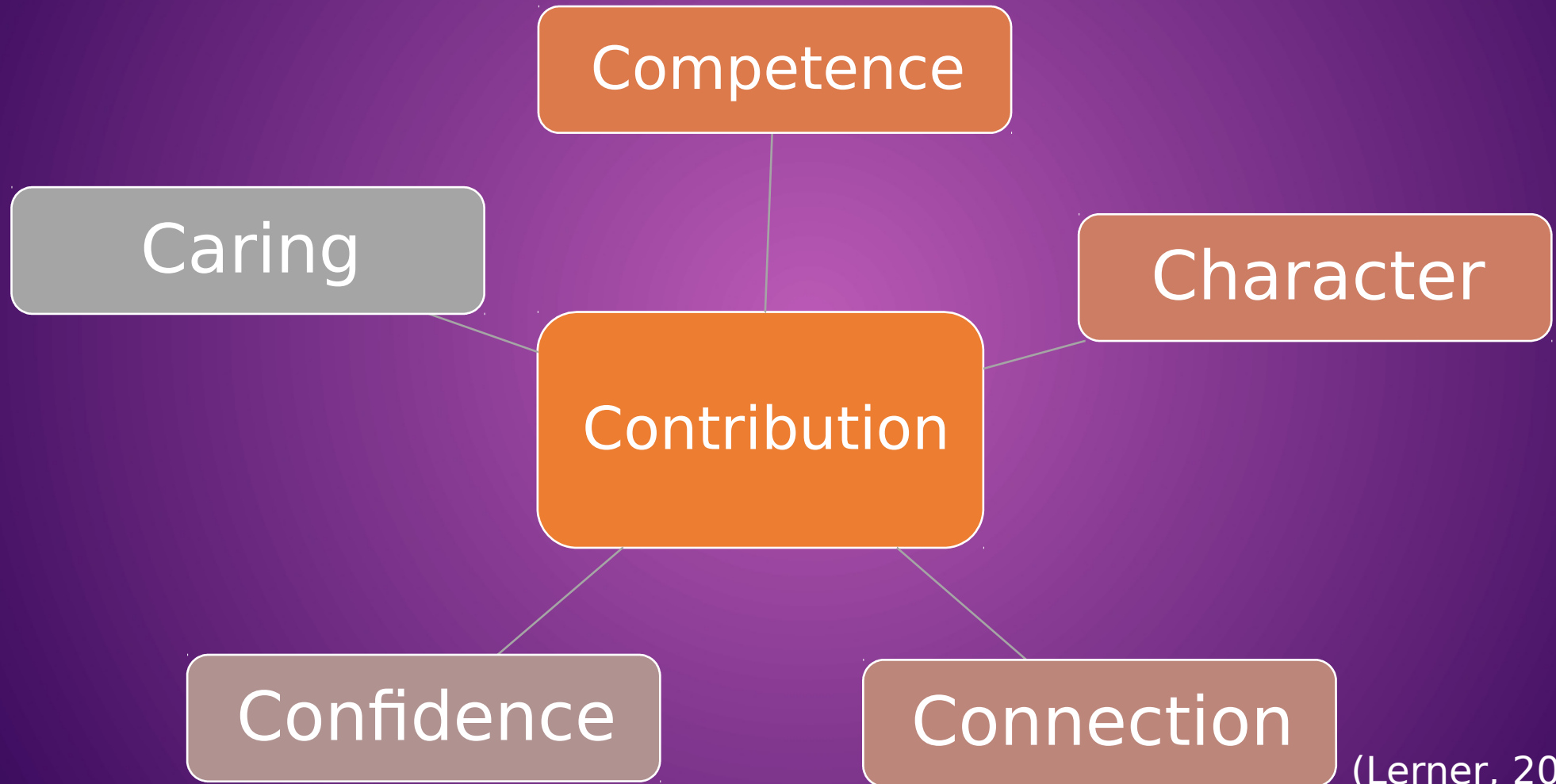


Deficit Based,  
Reducing suffering  
and risky behaviors

Optimal Development  
and PYD

(London, 1987)

# PYD: 5 C's for Healthy Development



# Purpose in Life

“A purpose in life is a stable and generalized intention that is at once meaningful to the self and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond-the-self”

Goals

Meaning

Self-  
transcendence



## Meaning

- Significance

## Purpose

- Goals
- Contribution

# Benefits of Purpose

Healthy  
Identity  
Development

(Cote & Levine, 2002; Burrow et al, 2010)

Meaningful  
Academic  
Experience

(Bronk, 2014)

Fosters  
connections  
with others

(Bronk, 2014)

Self-Efficacy

(DeWitz et al, 2009)

Greater  
Positive Affect

(King et al, 2006)

Resilience

(Masten & Reed, 2002)

# Development of Purpose

- Begins in adolescence
- Coincides with identity development



# Development of Purpose

- Begins in adolescence
- Coincides with identity development

Identity

**Coherent sense of self**  
including continuity with the past  
and **direction for the future**

(Marcia, 1994; Bronk, 2014)

# Development of Purpose

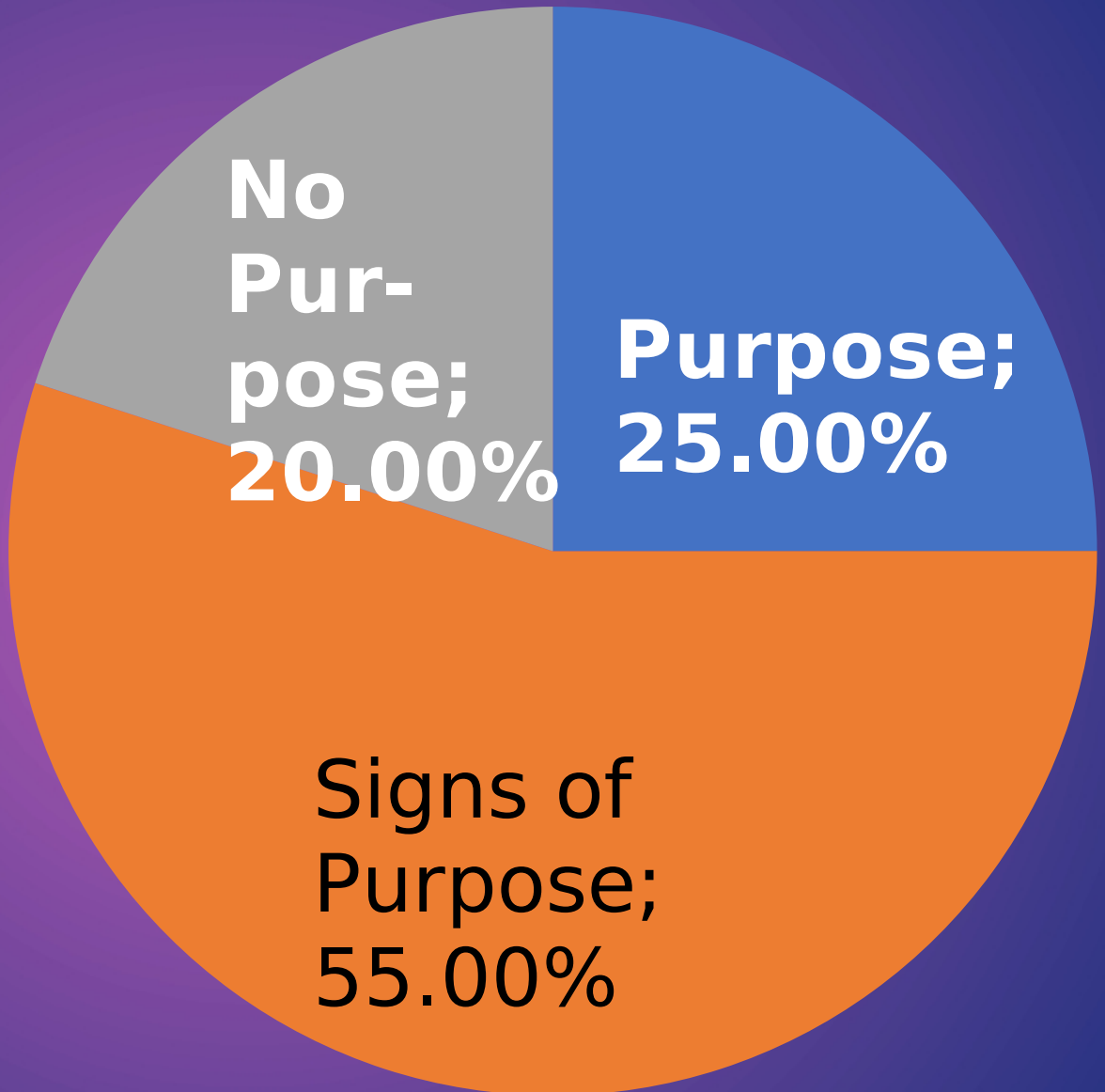
- Begins in adolescence
- Coincides with identity development

**Who am I?  
What matters most  
to me?  
What do I want for  
the future?**

**Identity**

**Coherent sense of self**  
including continuity with the past  
and **direction for the future**

# Prevalence of purpose among US adolescents



# Fostering Purpose Project: Assumptions

Reflection  
is useful

(Bundick, 2011)



Classroom  
Setting



Can be  
fostered in  
brief period

(Bundick, 2011)

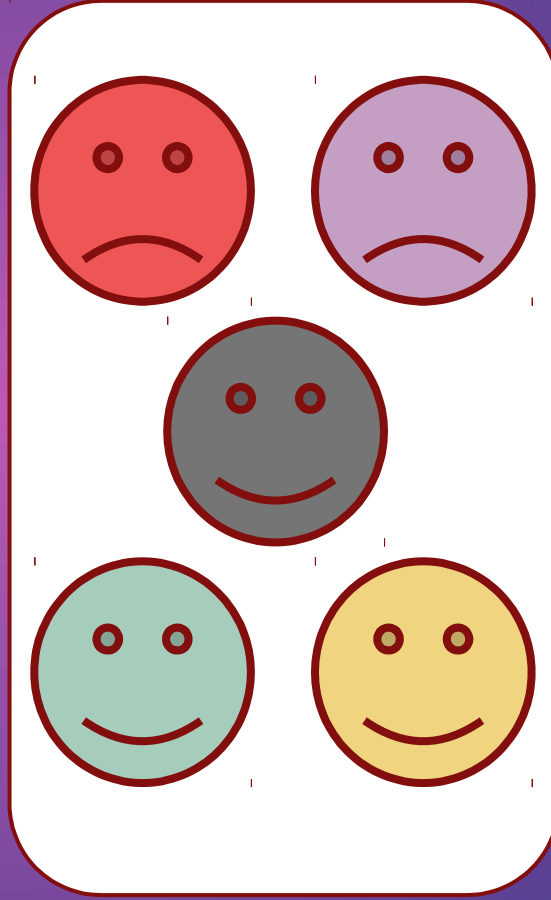
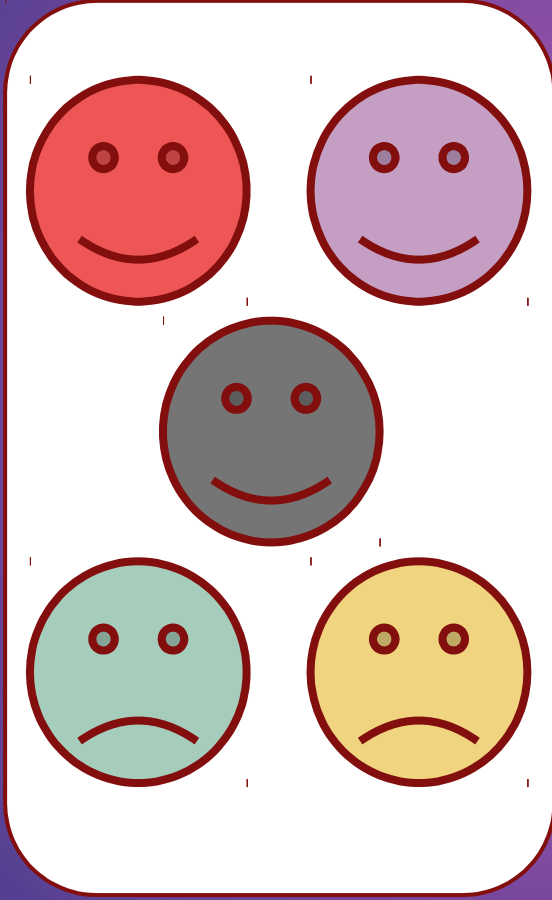
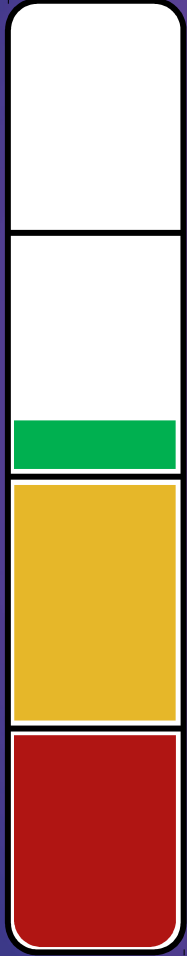


# Fostering Purpose Pilots

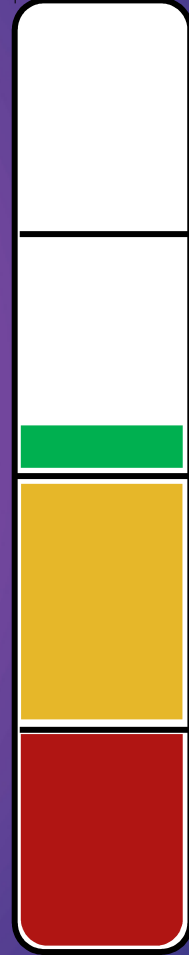
- Bundick's (2011) Study suggested reflection helps
- Created and piloted in class activities
  - Teacher collaboration
  - Teacher implementation
- Decided to implement in fully online format

# Pilots and Activity Revisions

Activity 1



Activity 2



# <https://www.fosterpurpose.org/>

## Fostering Purpose Toolkits

These toolkits - developed by researchers at Claremont Graduate University - feature online activities that take teens about 15-20 minutes each to complete on their computers, phones, or tablets. The activities are meant to be completed over the course of a week or two. This includes watching videos, reading and reflecting on quotations, and imagining their ideal future. These activities have been found to help youth reflect on the things that matter most to them ([click here to read more about the science behind this toolkit](#)).



For Students



For Teachers



Foster Purpose



Lab

# Fostering Purpose Project Activities



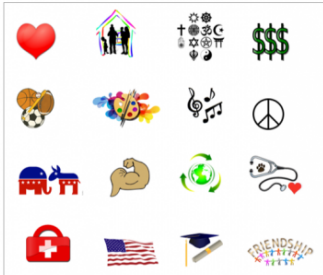
Email Activity



# Tattoo Activity

Now, your task is to design a tattoo that represents the things you described above. **The tattoo should symbolize what is most important to you.** Spend some time thinking about symbols or drawings that may represent what matters most to you. Below are some examples of symbols to get you started. Feel free to use any of the symbols below, or none. Remember this is about what matter to YOU.

Please complete this activity, even if you do not like tattoos.



# Purpose Video



After watching the FULL video, the NEXT button will appear at the bottom of the page and you can continue to the next activity.



*If the link above does not work for you please open this one in a new tab or window.*  
<https://youtu.be/5vo9LYrO8F4>

# Best Possible Self Activities



Think about the world you live in. This can include your life, your community, or the world at large.

If you had a magic wand and could change the world to make it your ideal world, is there anything you would change about the world today? If so, what would you change?

A large black rectangular box intended for writing an answer to the question about changing the world with a magic wand.

Do you think you can play a role in helping the world get closer to this ideal? If so, please tell us how. If not, please tell us why not.

A large black rectangular box intended for writing an answer to the question about playing a role in helping the world get closer to the ideal.

(Layous, Nelson, Luybomirsky, 2012)

# Celebrity Videos

Today you will be watching celebrities you may know talking about what matters most to them.



# Purpose Quotes

For this activity, you will be presented with 5 quotes. Think about what each one means to you.

Quote 1: "The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream... It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin." -Benjamin Mays

Quote 2: "The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Quote 3: "Your purpose in life is to find your purpose [passion] and give your whole heart and soul to it." -Buddha

Quote 4: "Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!" – Viktor Frankl

Quote 5: "All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward [enhancing] man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom." — Albert Einstein



# Q Sort Activity

## Items

Volunteering is very important to me.

## Not At All Like Me

Please select EXACTLY 3 items.

Serving my family is very important to me. **1**

Being there for my friends is very important to me. **2**

## Neither Like Me or Not Like Me

Please select EXACTLY 7 items.

Supporting social issues is very important to me. **1**

Promoting my political beliefs is very important to me. **2**

Finding a career that is consistent with my values and beliefs is very important to me. **3**

## Exactly Like Me

Please select EXACTLY 3 items.

Pursuing a calling, rather than just a job, is very important to me. **1**



# Methods Summary



Pretest Posttest  
Experiment

Young Adults

Measured Searching  
for, and Identified  
Purpose in Life

# Methods Summary



Individual  
Activities  
Mturk

Pretest Posttest  
Experiment  
Young Adults  
Measured Searching  
for, and Identified  
Purpose in Life

Full Toolkit  
Mturk

Pretest Posttest  
Experiment with 2  
lagged follow up  
surveys  
Young Adults  
Searching & Identified  
Purpose in Life

-



# Methods Summary

Individual  
Activities  
Mturk

Pretest Posttest  
Experiment

Young Adults

Measured Searching  
for, and Identified  
Purpose in Life

Full Toolkit  
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lagged follow up  
surveys

Young Adults

Searching & Identified  
Purpose in Life

Full Toolkit  
Adolescents  
& Young  
Adults

Pretest Posttest  
Experiment

Adolescents & Young  
Adults

Searching & Identified  
Purpose in Life



## Individual Activities Mturk

N= 565, 296 Male, 265 Female

Age  $M= 24.6$  ( $SD=5.6$ ), Range 18-30

75.6% Caucasian

9.7% African American/Black

6.0% Asian

5.6% Hispanic/Latino/a

3.1% another race/ethnicity

## Measures

- Searching For Purpose
- Identified Purpose

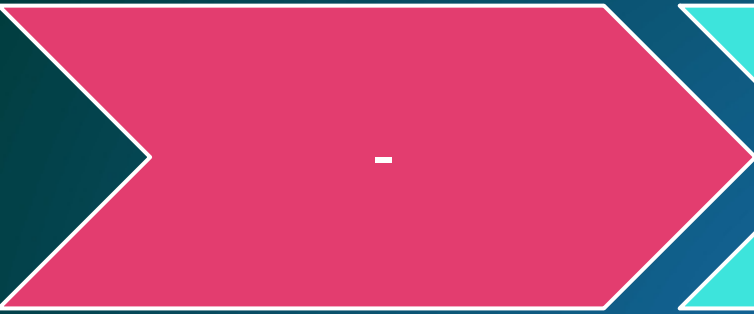
## Methods

- Pretest Posttest Control Group Experiment
- Each group did 2 activities

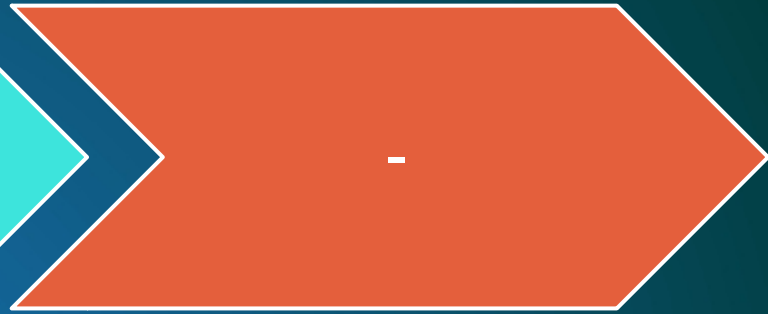
Individual  
Activities Mturk

- Purpose video
- Purpose quotes
- Best possible selves
- Celebrity videos
- Q-Sort
- Tattoo
- Email
- Gratitude Activity

VIA survey



Full Toolkit  
Mturk





N= 169, 51.3% Male,  
73 intervention 96 control group  
Age  $M= 23.7$  ( $SD=4.1$ ), Range 18-28  
66.7% Caucasian  
12.1% African American/Black  
7.6% Asian  
7.6% Hispanic/Latino/a  
4.5% another race/ethnicity

### Measures

- Searching For Purpose
- Identified Purpose

### Methods

- Pretest Posttest Control Group Experiment
- 2 lagged follow up surveys



## Control Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $M_{pre}=4.83$ ,  $M_{post}=4.93$ )
- ( $t(68) = -0.13$ ,  $p > .05$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $t(61) = 1.50$ ,  $p > .05$ )

## Treatment Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $M_{pre}=5.55$ ,  $M_{post}=6.06$ )
- ( $t(65) = 3.90$ ,  $p < .001$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $M_{pre}=5.54$ ,  $M_{post}=5.74$ )
- ( $t(65) = 2.08$ ,  $p = .041$ )

# Full Toolkit Mturk

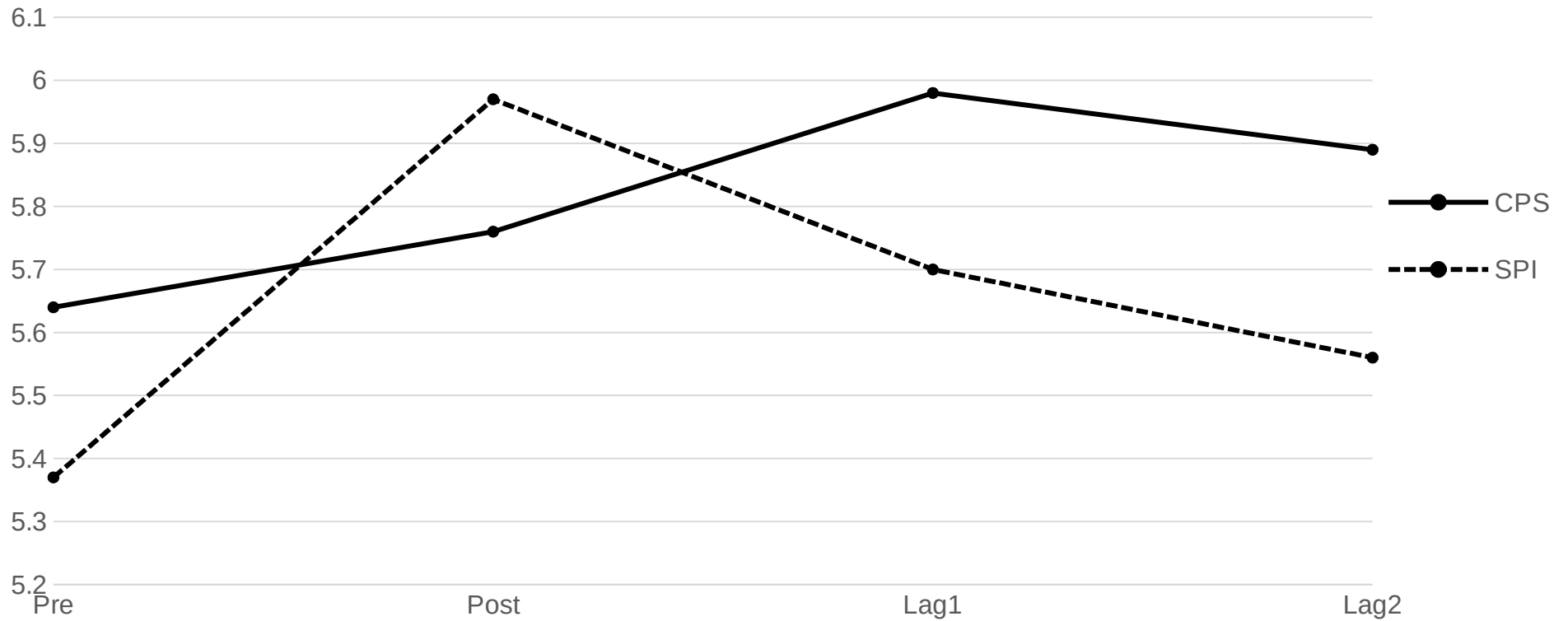
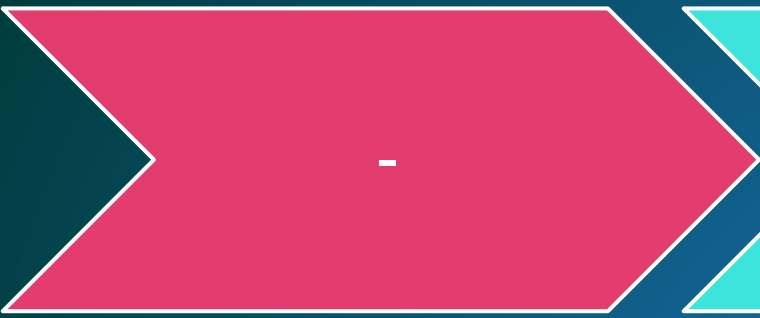


Figure 1. CPS and SPI mean scores across time points (n = 45)



Full Toolkit  
Adolescents  
& Young  
Adults





**Adolescents** N= 285, 143

Intervention group, 116 control group  
(59% female)

Age  $M= 16.83$  ( $SD=5.6$ ), Range 15-19

29.6% Hispanic/Latino/a

22.8% Caucasian

17% Asian

14.2% Mixed race/ethnicity

4% African American/Black



**Adolescents** N= 285, 143  
Intervention group, 116 control group  
(59% female)  
Age *M*= 16.83 (*SD*=5.6), Range 15-19  
29.6% Hispanic/Latino/a  
22.8% Caucasian  
17% Asian  
14.2% Mixed race/ethnicity  
4% African American/Black

**Young Adults** N= 294, 173  
Intervention group, 121 control group  
(83% female)  
Age *M*= 22.12 (*SD*=3.51), Range 18-40  
56.5% Hispanic/Latino/a  
22.1% Caucasian  
8.3% Asian, 2.8% AA/Black  
10.3% Mixed race/ethnicity



## Control Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $M_{pre}=4.83$ ,  $M_{post}=4.93$ )
- ( $t(50)= 1.29$ ,  $p>.05$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $M_{pre}=3.48$ ,  $M_{post}=3.40$ )
- ( $t(51)= -1.96$ ,  $p=.055$ )

## Treatment Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $M_{pre}=5.00$ ,  $M_{post}=5.23$ )
- ( $t(68)= 1.62$ ,  $p>.05$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $M_{pre}=3.39$ ,  $M_{post}=3.55$ )
- ( $t(69)= 1.93$ ,  $p=.058$ )



## Control Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $t(81) = .06, p > .05$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $t(80) = -1.09, p > .05$ )

## Treatment Group

### Searching for Purpose **SPI**

- ( $M_{pre} = 5.48, M_{post} = 5.76$ )
- ( $t(113) = 3.21, p < .01$ )

### Identified Purpose **CPS**

- ( $M_{pre} = 3.75, M_{post} = 3.89$ )
- ( $t(113) = 2.78, p < .01$ )

-

**Figures**

Full Toolkit w/  
Adolescents &  
Young Adults

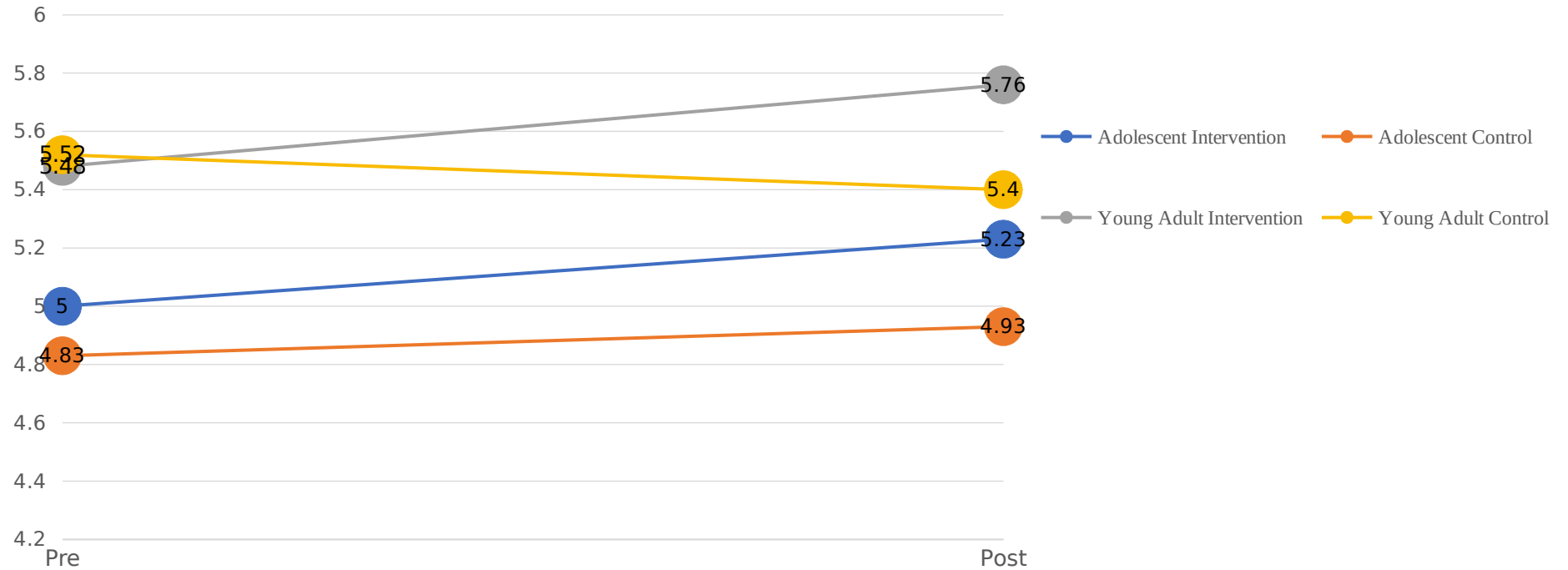


Figure 3. SPI Group Comparisons for Adolescents and Young Adults

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# Figures

## Full Toolkit w/ Adolescents & Young Adults

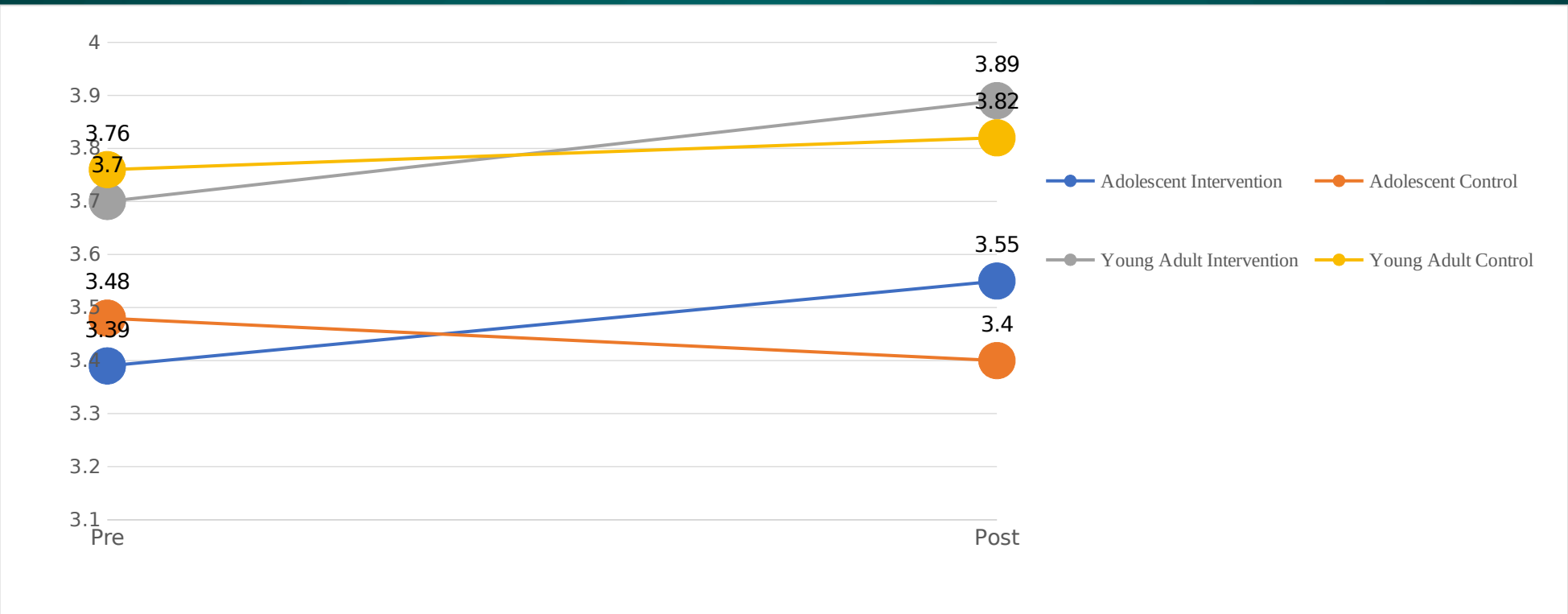
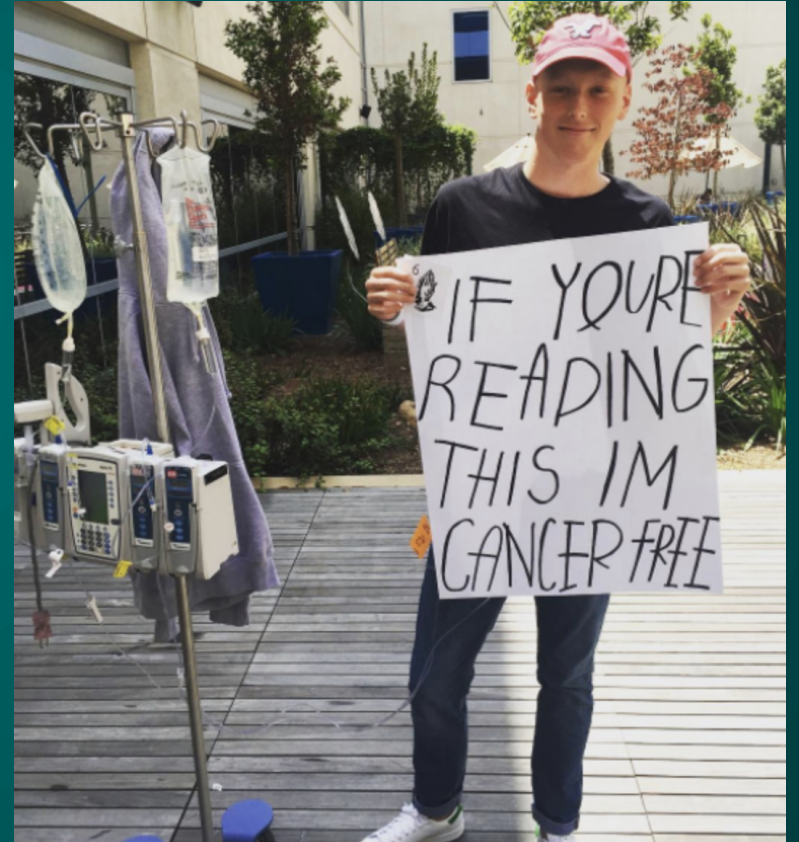


Figure 2. CPS Group Comparisons for Adolescents and Young Adults

# Current Efforts – Tailoring for Adolescent Cancer Survivors

Adolescent  
**M**oral **D**evelopment **L**ab

H O P E L Δ B



# Tailoring for Adolescent Cancer Survivors

N= 12, 5 Male, 7 Female

Age Range 16-29

3 participants had cancer at time of study

9 participants were cancer free at time of study

## Measures

- Searching For & Identified Purpose
- Eudaimonic Well-being
- Resilience
- Post-traumatic Growth

## Methods

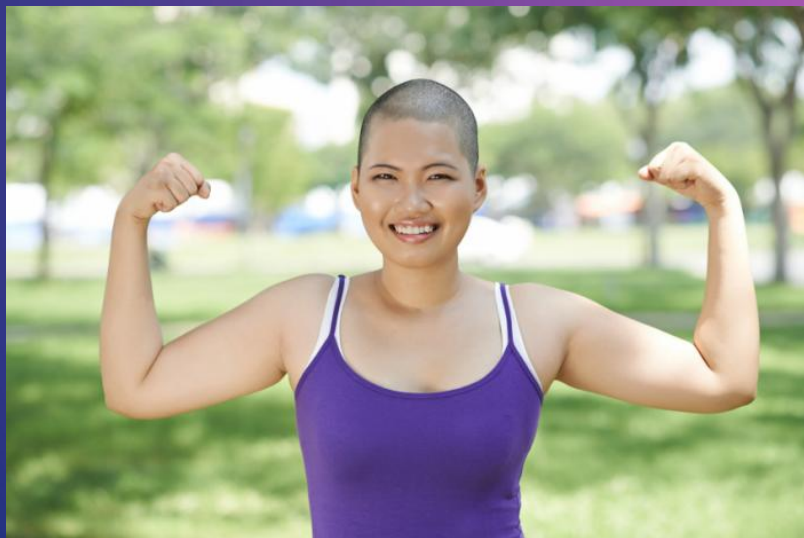
- Pretest Posttest Quasi- Experiment
- Follow up Interview



# Tailoring for Adolescent Cancer Survivors

No change on

- Eudaimonic Well-being
- Resilience
- Post-traumatic Growth



Searching for Purpose

- ( $M_{pre}=5.29$ ,  $M_{post}=6.09$ ,  $p=.041$ )

Identified Purpose

- ( $M_{pre}=3.77$ ,  $M_{post}=3.90$ ,  $p=.138$ )
- Meaning Subscale ( $M_{pre}=3.45$ ,  $M_{post}=3.78$ ,  $p=.083$ )

Positive Emotions

- ( $M_{pre}=72.63$ ,  $M_{post}=78.80$ ,  $p=.106$ )



# Tailoring for Adolescent Cancer Survivors

**“I feel like I didn't really think about my purpose before. But I feel like it did change. Now I see things so valuable, life is so valuable, and then family, too. It just... It's really life-changing”**

**“I feel like the tool kit really makes you think about your purpose in life. And I found myself really thinking about why am I living? And why am I here? And how I can make it better these past few days. It really opens your mind to think about stuff like that.”**

# Tailoring for Adolescent Cancer Survivors

“There were a few activities like that one that left me just feeling more present in my life and more into it... I really liked it over all. I had a good experience and I feel like it left me thinking more about my sense of purpose and feeling more driven and engaged in my life after only a week.”



## **Young people in China**

- Educational company in China working to use the toolkit
- Native Mandarin speakers translating materials to Mandarin
- Evaluation early 2019
  - Pre+posttest experiment
  - Interviews with subset of sample

## **Young people in Mexico and Central America**

- Translating activities to Spanish
- Collaborating with residents to find similar content that is relevant in their culture

# Thank You!

<https://www.fosterpurpose.org/>

Foster Purpose



*Adolescent*  
**Moral Development Lab**

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