

# TUTOR PROFILE



## CLAIRE HIGGINS

**Chief Operating Officer,  
Director of Research &  
Education at the Positive  
Psychology Guild**

Director of Inner Athletics  
Ltd., a Research &  
Coaching Lab for  
Performance, Stress &  
Recovery

### CONTACT

[claire@ppnetwork.org](mailto:claire@ppnetwork.org)  
[www.ppnetwork.org](http://www.ppnetwork.org)  
[claire@innerathletics.com](mailto:claire@innerathletics.com)  
[www.innerathletics.com](http://www.innerathletics.com)

### STRENGTHS

**Creativity** is without a doubt my top strength. It shows up consistently in number one position on the VIA strengths survey test. I also know it to be true at a deeper level. As a child and teenager, I used my creativity to write music and Arabic calligraphy. As an adult, I've used it to create websites and enhance the learning process for my students.

My other four top strengths are curiosity, bravery, love of learning, and honesty. Curiosity, bravery, and love of learning have often collaborated and taken me on unexpected journeys. They have guided me through multiple studies and career transitions, and supported me on a life-long martial arts path.

**Honesty** has kept me true to myself. I find it quite impossible to lie, my facial expressions usually give me away! It has also served as a moral compass in my work and helps me to make decisions.

## QUALIFICATIONS

- MSc Exercise & Sport Psychology (MMU, UK)
- MSc Violence, Conflict & Development (SOAS, UK)
- BA (Hons) Arabic & Persian (SOAS, UK)
- L5 Diploma Positive Psychology Practice (PPG, UK)
- L5 Certificate Psychology (Staffs, UK)
- L3 Certificate Self-Defence Instructor (Combat Academy, UK)
- L3 Certificate Personal Trainer (Fit Asylum, UK)
- L2 Certificate Fitness Instructor (Fit Asylum, UK)
- ICF Coaching Certificate (MMS, Thailand)
- Health Coaching Certificate (IIN, USA)

## EXPERIENCE

My first career was in humanitarian practice. I started out as an Arabic interpreter in Jerusalem with the International Committee of the Red Cross. I then moved into prisoner protection in Tel Aviv, Lebanon, and Albania before directing media and communications for the Qatar Red Crescent Society in Doha. After, I consulted and advised on media and communications for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Along the way, I set up a prison reform office for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Jerusalem, supported refugee operations for the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip, and coordinated major events for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Abu Dhabi. After this, I set up an executive coaching practice based in the UAE and worked with non-profit, government, and corporate clients across the Middle East and Europe.

As an executive coach, my areas of practice included performance, communications, strategy, conflict resolution, and resilience. I also facilitated high-level events for international organisations and governments, and led training events for local businesses. While I enjoyed communications, strategy, and conflict, it was performance and resilience that attracted me most. This curiosity led me to create my second business, Inner Athletics Ltd., a UK-based research and coaching lab for performance, stress, and recovery. It also led me to work with the Positive Psychology Guild.

## **INTERESTS**

There are many! Sport and movement have been with me since childhood. I was a competitive swimmer until my teenage years and the pool still feels like my first home. I took up karate at the age of 12 and continued to train on and off over the years until I earned my second degree black belt in Shotokan karate (JKA) at the age of 37. I also took up judo in my 30s and enjoyed competing for a while, winning a gold medal at the UAE Armed Forces Club in Abu Dhabi in 2017. Throwing people around was a lot of fun!

In my late 20s, I began training as an Ashtanga yoga teacher. I then trained as a Restorative yoga teacher and taught after working hours while on mission to the Gaza Strip for a couple of years. I loved teaching yoga and often taught daily from my first floor apartment that overlooked the Mediterranean Sea and a police training ground. Weary human rights workers and mothers passed through my classes. Some of them are now qualified yoga teachers who are teaching today - that makes me feel proud!

Yoga in terms of practice and philosophy continues to be a part of my daily life but more as a personal endeavor. My roots in martial arts practice and philosophy run deeper and, together with my encounters with violence over the years, have raised many questions about self-protection. At 40, I teach self-defence and enjoy studying the connections between staying safe, cognitive functioning and motor skills (e.g. decision-making and movement under pressure), and the technical skill set of physical self-defence.

I also enjoy regular fitness training, particularly strength training. While I no longer compete, I enjoy the process of setting and working towards new goals. I find exercise and physical activity to be positive behaviours for me in terms of energy, stress reduction, and mental health.

## **RESEARCH**

My research area is violence and post-traumatic growth. Within this domain, I have conducted studies on the motivation to teach martial arts and self-defence. My current research project on the experience of women in self-defence training is being conducted in partnership with a psychotherapist. My future research goals include completing a PhD in an area related to psychology, self-defence, and the development of instructors.

## **TEACHING**

As Director of Research & Education, I oversee, lead, and teach on the following Positive Psychology Guild (PPG) courses:

### **Core Diplomas**

- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology Practice & Coaching
- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology Practice & Training
- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Organisational Psychology

### **Specialist Diplomas**

- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology & Somatic Practice (Movement)
- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology & Somatic Practice (Exercise)
- Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology & Somatic Practice (Sport)
- Level 7 Diploma in Applied Positive Psychology Research

### **Professional Certificates**

- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology Fundamentals
- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology & Cognition
- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology & Emotions
- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology & Movement
- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology & Exercise
- Level 5 Certificate in Positive Psychology & Sport

I also support the delivery of the following Train the Trainer (ToT) programmes through PPG's Positive Organisations Initiative:

- Level 3 Certificate in Neurodiversity & Mental Health (ToT)
- Level 3 Certificate in Mental Health First Aid & Wellbeing (ToT)

I also teach the following course under PPG's Violence & Post-Traumatic Growth Initiative:

- Level 3 Certificate in Working with Victims of Crime