



Wellbeing
What is it? Is it important?

Key Questions

- What is wellbeing?
- What do we know?
- Can we build it?

Well-being has been defined as....

- Feeling Good
- Functioning Well

'Wellbeing is a contented state of being happy and healthy' (Hertfordshire HW Strategy)

Nozick's Experience Machine



"Suppose there was an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Super duper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's desires?"

Of course, while you are in the tank you won't know you are there; you'll think it's all actually happening. Others can also plug in to have the experiences they want, so there's no need to stay unplugged to serve them. (Ignore problems such as who will service the machines if everyone plugs in.)

Would you plug in? What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?" (1971)



The Study of Happiness and Wellbeing - Positive Psychology



Gives us new perspectives on existing ideas

Provides empirical evidence to support human wellbeing

Rebalances the deficit approach

Connects different disciplines

Positive Psychology at it's Worst?



Warning this could happen to you!

- Apologies in advance!

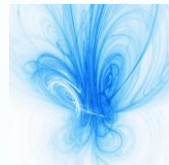
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And yet ...



- The simple interventions work.
- Positive emotions improve cognitive abilities i.e. creativity and speed.
- Optimism and resilience drives performance in many areas of life.
- 'Happy' people are more successful and sustain healthier relationships.
- Happy people appear to live longer.

Wellbeing and Mental Illness



Is Zero Good Enough?



What we know about children's wellbeing

- As many as 15-20% by the end of high school suffer depression (Lewinsohn & Essau, 2002)
- Around 1 in 15 deliberately self-harm (Association for Young People's Health, 2013)
- The Chief Medical Officer (CMO, 2013) reports that emotional, conduct and hyperkinetic disorders among children aged 5–15 in the UK are estimated to be £1.58 billion and the long-term costs £2.35 billion.
- 75% of adult mental health problems begin before age 18. (CMO 2013).



Models of Wellbeing

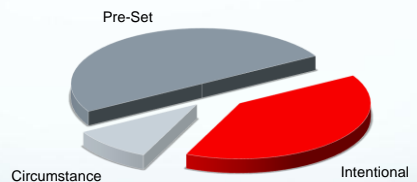


Pathways to well-being - pleasure, engagement, relationships meaning and accomplishment (Seligman)

Satisfaction with life – feeling happy (Diener)

Feeling good and functioning well (Huppert)

Can We Build Wellbeing?










Benefits of improving wellbeing

A worthwhile goal in itself and leads to better outcomes:

- reduces prevalence of mental illness
- physical health: mortality/morbidity
- health behaviour
- employability, productivity, earnings
- educational performance
- crime / violence reduction
- pro-social behaviour/social integration/relationships
- quality of life (DH 2011)

Five Ways to Well-being

Commissioned by the Foresight Project to summarise the evidence from the Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project into 5 key messages

Connect		Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of the connections as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.
Be Active		Stand up. Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a way to include physical activity in a way that you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.
Give		Do something nice for a friend. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.
Take Notice		Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are out walking, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.
Keep Learning		Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

The evolutionary benefits of negative emotions are clear...



They narrow our choices to those that best promoted our ancestors' survival.

They are associated with specific action tendencies – freeze, fight or flight.

The Role of Positive Emotions

Intellectual Resources

- Problem solving skills
- Integrate new information
- Lateral thinking

Physical Resources

- Co-ordination
- Strength and cardiovascular health



Social Resources

- Solidify bonds
- Make new bonds

Psychological Resources

- Resilience and optimism
- Identity and goal orientation

Wellbeing and the Arts

Connect



Be Active



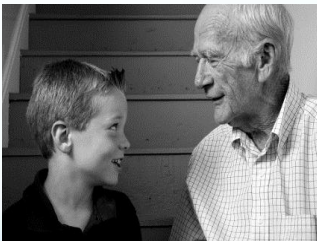
Give



Take Notice



Keep Learning



how to
THRIVE
www.howtothrive.org