



WELLBEING TOOLBOX:
THE SIX WELLBEING FACTORS

LESSON 1 PLAYBOOK

THEWELLBEINGLAB

FROM THE MICHELLEMCQUAID GROUP

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DISCOVER | HOW DO YOU CARE FOR WELLBEING?

Please share what's the best action you've been consistently taking to care for your wellbeing over the past three months?

- Which PERMAH factor(s) (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Health) did this action support?
- How has this behaviour supported your wellbeing (i.e. reduce anxiety, manage stress, boost creativity, build connection, etc)?
- Why has this action been so effective for you? How have you managed to consistently prioritize it?

WHICH WELLBEING FACTORS SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED?

One way to understand, measure, and action evidence-based approaches for improving wellbeing is by drawing on Dr. Martin Seligman's PERMAH Framework (2012), which points to six wellbeing factors that enable us to feel good and function well:



POSITIVE EMOTIONS – Prioritizing moments of regular heartfelt positivity – spending time in nature, finding a reason to laugh, taking a break, practicing mindfulness – to fuel your resilience.



ENGAGEMENT – Using your neurological strengths – the things you're good at and enjoy doing – to feel more confident, energized, and engaged.



RELATIONSHIPS – Making time to genuinely connect with other people – expressing gratitude, showing kindness, being compassionate – and savoring the feelings of warmth and trust.



MEANING – Understanding how what you do each day has a positive impact on others and feeling connected to something larger than yourself.



ACCOMPLISHMENT – Embracing a learning mindset and cultivating the grit you need to accomplish the things that matter most to you.



HEALTH – Eating well, moving regularly, taking time to recover, and sleeping deeply each day to ensure you have the energy to consistently thrive.

Dr. Seligman suggests that we think of these wellbeing factors like the dashboard that allows a pilot to fly a plane – there is no one dial that indicates how an airplane is functioning. Rather, the fuel gauge, the airspeed indicator, the altimeter, and the interaction between them provide all the information needed.

To thrive, you need to cultivate each of the PERMAH factors. But how much you'll need of each will vary depending on the type of person you are, the situations you're in, and the outcomes you want to achieve. This means there is no single blueprint for wellbeing (Lyubomirsky, 2007). The right plan looks different for each of us.

We've chosen the PERMAH framework to guide the Certificate, because we've found it to be an easy and helpful way for people to understand, measure, and take action using evidence-based research and tools that meet their unique needs, interests, values, resources and inclinations. We did not choose it because it has been conclusively proven; after all, good science is never proven but is an evolving process of ongoing learning and refinement - and the PERMAH framework is no exception.

WHAT BRINGS OUR WELLBEING EFFORTS UNSTUCK?

Dr. James Prochaska and his colleagues (2016) have found that there are three common factors that put the brakes on the wellbeing changes we want to create and slow us down:

I DON'T REALLY WANT TO

If you don't want to embrace a challenge or honour a hope because it doesn't feel meaningful for you or it conflicts with other things you value, then change never really gets started. Yes, it might be something you "should do," "have to do," or is "expected of you," but until you "want to" create change, there will be no real forward movement, regardless of how good the change might be for you or others. You need to have the freedom to choose goals that express who you are rather than impress others, if you are to have the confidence and commitment to realize your goals.

Equally, if the changes you want to create are in conflict with other things you value, you'll also find yourself taking the "I don't really want to" detour. Most of us try to tackle far too many changes simultaneously, many of which pull us in different directions and cause us to leak energy and effort as we worry about why and realize we're not making any progress. Instead of trying to think your way out of this conflict, researchers suggest that it's better to stop pushing and beating yourself up and instead, give yourself a break from this conflict for a few days. Then try to commit to one very small action to move your goal forward, see how this works, and what impacts it has. If the change continues to be something you "want to do", rather than something you "should do", then try the next small action, reassess, and so on.

I DON'T KNOW HOW

Our need to be certain about our choices can cause us to get stuck in doubt and delays, but sharing the changes you're contemplating and any uncertainty or experiences of getting stuck with others can be a great way to surface the support you need. Be it talking with a close friend or family member, a trusted colleague, a coach or mentor, or a support group of some kind who are tackling similar changes, by going public about the changes you want to make, studies have found you increase your levels of commitment, improve your self-regulation, and are more likely to gain access to the knowledge, tools and help you need to move past the 'don't know how to' detour.

I DON'T THINK I CAN

We've all experienced the disappointment of trying to create changes that don't work or are never fully realized. And it leaves us feeling demoralized and defeated. Failing to create the changes we want can leave us stuck in stories of "I'm not good enough," "I have no willpower," and "I don't have what I need to pull that off." Hoping to make a change can be a frightening proposition for many of us, but researchers have found that when we set learning goals, rather than just performance goals, we realize that success is not just about achieving outcomes, but realising our potential for growth. The only way to truly fail is never to attempt the changes you want.

BOOSTING POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Researchers have found that the experience of heartfelt positive emotions—like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love—can make you more optimistic, more resilient, more open, more accepting, and more driven by purpose (Green et al., 2009). As William James said over 100 years ago, “We don’t laugh because we’re happy; we’re happy because we laugh.”

How? Studies by Professor Barbara Fredrickson from the University of North Carolina have repeatedly demonstrated that positive emotions help you to broaden and build the way your brain responds to opportunities and challenges. For example, her research shows that when you feel positive emotions they:

- **EXPAND YOUR FIELD OF PERIPHERAL VISION**, allowing you to see and seize new opportunities
- **IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO THINK INNOVATIVELY** by flooding your brain with the feel-good chemicals dopamine and serotonin.
- **ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION** by making your brain feel safe, so you think more about “we” and less about “me.”

As positive emotions accrue, they create an upward spiral that builds up your psychological, intellectual, social, and physical resources, leaving you more resilient. In contrast, negative emotions tend to spiral us down towards feeling overwhelmed, helpless, and despairing. Fredrickson’s studies (2019) suggest that these downward spirals can be short-circuited with an injection of heartfelt positivity.

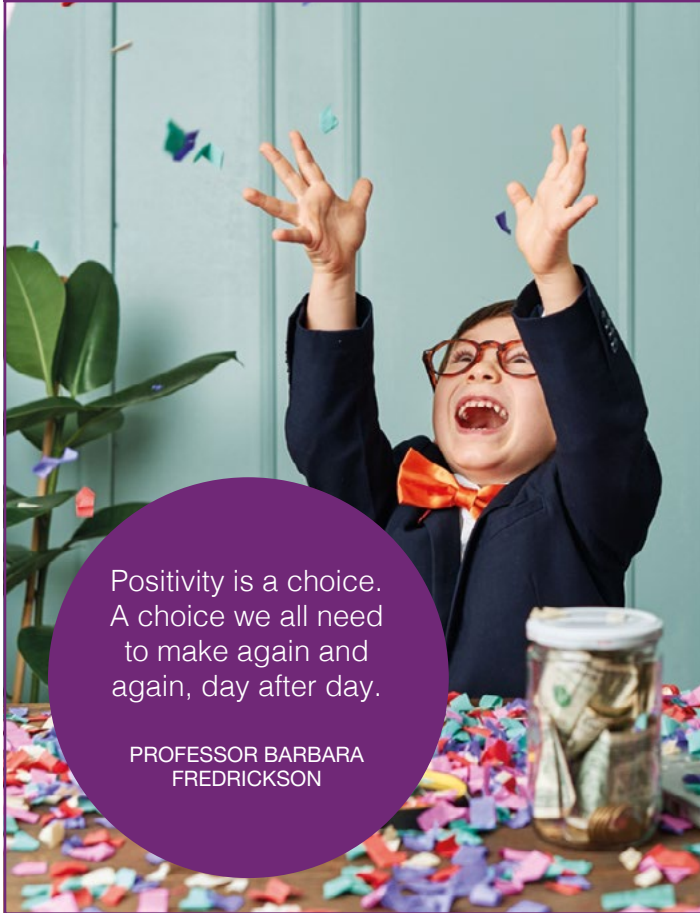
You can increase heartfelt positivity by getting out and exercising; meditating regularly; spending time with good friends; connecting with nature; giving yourself permission to play; practicing acts of kindness; savoring goodness; using your strengths; and injecting jolts of joy—like a favorite song—into your day (Fredrickson, 2009).

However, it is worth noting that when it comes to prioritizing positivity, people often get it wrong. For example, when people indulge in positive fantasies and disconnect from reality, studies have found that over time this predicts depression. And when people excessively value and pursue happiness, it can be associated with heightened feelings of loneliness, fewer positive emotions, and more depression (Catalino, Algoe & Fredrickson, 2014).

It’s also important to understand that there’s a certain low level at which positive emotions are functionally inert. This means that if people are experiencing more negative emotions than positive emotions, the positive emotions never have a chance to seed the kind of growth you might experience. While Fredrickson no longer advocates for a particular tipping point, she suggests that when it comes to our positivity ratios, the higher the better, but within balance (Fredrickson, 2016).

Finally, Fredrickson’s studies (Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011) have also found that there is the possibility of having too much positivity. It’s difficult to be really connected and grounded to life without tapping into and experiencing negative emotions at times.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS



Positivity is a choice.
A choice we all need
to make again and
again, day after day.

PROFESSOR BARBARA
FREDRICKSON

DIALING UP POSITIVITY

Experiencing heartfelt positive emotions can create an upward spiral of wellbeing that broadens and builds our psychological resources, allowing us to be more open to possibilities, connect with others, and build our resilience and wellbeing. Try:

- **Savoring what went well:** Start meetings by asking “What’s gone well?” This creates an opportunity to savor the good things – big or small – that are happening around your team and to spark feelings of joy, pride, hope, inspiration, awe, and gratitude..
- **Sharing jolts of joy:** Make time for the things that put a smile on people’s faces. It might be sharing a funny story, playing a funny video, reading a piece of poetry aloud, or playing a game.
- **Connecting with nature:** Create opportunities to spend time outside. Take a walking meeting, share lunch under a tree with a colleague, or plan your next workplace event outside. Being closer to nature helps to lift our levels of positivity.

To hear more from Professor Barbara Fredrickson click here.

DIALING DOWN NEGATIVITY

Once we’ve learned from a negative experience, it’s important not to recycle these feelings unnecessarily. While ruminating might feel like a way of working things out, it can quickly spin out of control and zap our energy, diminish our confidence, and reduce our engagement with life. Try:

- **Embracing discomfort:** Feelings of negativity due to changing circumstances or confrontations can be an important part of our learning and growth. Try to normalize these emotions in your team and workplace, and create safe spaces where people can talk honestly about the struggles they are encountering without the fear of being judged.
- **Controlling the controllable:** Often, in challenging situations we can feel anxious about things that we actually have no control over. Help your workers find the things they can take action on, and they’ll be more likely to constructively respond to and process these storms as they work.

To hear more from Dr. Susan David click here.

SHORT CIRCUITING STRESS

There is a difference between a stressor (something that challenges us) and stress (the perception that we are unable to cope with the stressor). We often confuse the two, which leads to the idea that all stress is bad. But studies find that stress can help us learn, improve our resilience, and make us more likely to courageously help others. Try:

- **Tuning in to stress:** Help your workers acknowledge feelings of stress as their body’s way of letting them know that something important to them needs their attention and action. What is at stake here and why does it matter?
- **Challenging stress responses:** Try to make use of the energy stress gives people, instead of wasting energy trying to manage their stress. What can we do right now that reflects our values and goals? What strengths can we draw on? How can we harness the energy and focus that stress can bring, to help us learn and grow?

To hear more from Dr. Kelly McGonigal click here.

CREATING ENGAGEMENT

At some point, each of us has experienced what using a **strength**—those things you're good at and actually enjoy doing—feels like. They're the moments that you find yourself looking forward to, which completely absorb you, and leave you feeling more confident, energized, and satisfied. Strengths are your neurological superpowers.

A strength is a strength because it represents the way your brain is wired to perform at its best. Over time, you've spent so much time practicing these particular thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that you've built up neural pathways through your brain that make it easy, effective, and enjoyable to show up in these ways (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). As a result, studies have found that people who regularly use their strengths experience more confidence and less stress, enjoy more energy and are happier, and are more creative, engaged, and satisfied (McQuaid & Lawn, 2014).

Your strengths may comprise your:

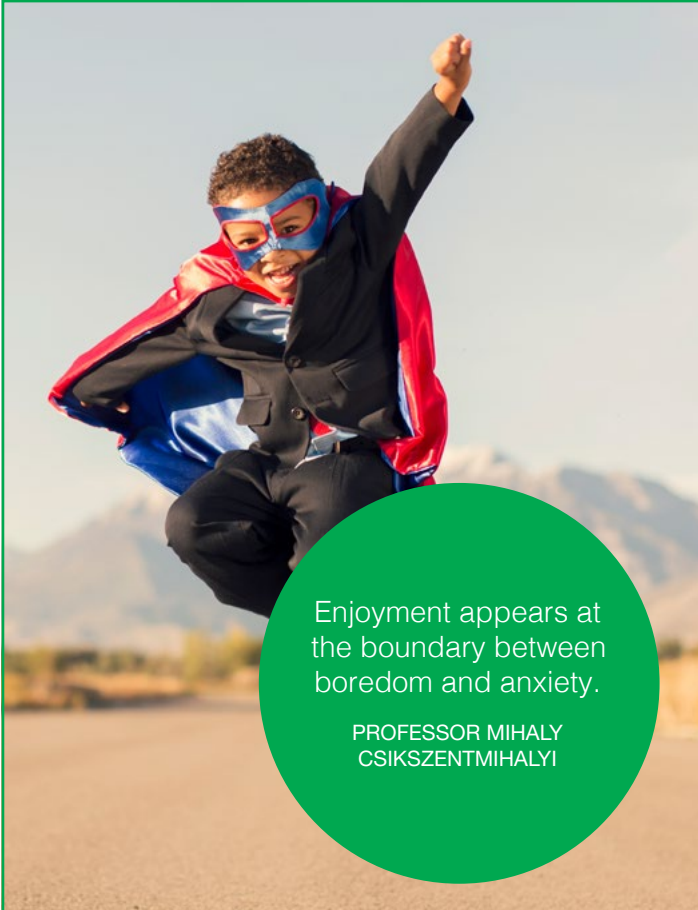
- **INTERESTS** – Your natural urges take the form of interests in certain topics and activities that you're passionate about and driven to pursue. These interests are what we enjoy doing and ultimately determine where our attention goes and energy flows.
- **RESOURCES** – Your mental, physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial aids that contribute to you being at your best.
- **SKILLS** – Your skills are talents that you develop with practice, such as computer skills or presentation skills.
- **TALENTS** – Strengths that are innate and have a strong biological loading, e.g. spatial reasoning, musical ability, interpersonal ability, and so on. You can discover your talents with the paid twenty-minute survey at gallupstrengthscenter.com.
- **CHARACTER** strengths – Your positive personality traits that lead to benefits for yourself and others, e.g. gratitude, perseverance, hope, and creativity. You can discover your character strengths with the free ten-minute survey at www.viacharacter.org.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR WEAKNESSES?

Researchers estimate we spend about 80% of our time focused on fixing weaknesses, and only 20% on building strengths. This is because our brains are wired with a negativity bias that trains us to spot what's going wrong and feel an evolutionary pull to fix it. To capitalize on how your brain is wired to perform at its best, however, the researchers recommend that you try to flip this equation and spend at least 80% of your time building on your strengths (Cooperrider & Goodwin, 2011).

This doesn't mean that you ignore your weaknesses. It does mean you should be realistic about the time, effort, and commitment it takes to really rewire your brain and turn a weakness into a strength. When it comes to improving your engagement, first see if there is a strength you can build upon that might create the changes you're seeking. If there's not, go to shoring up a weakness head-on, but ensure you have the support you need to deliver the outcomes you want.

ENGAGEMENT



Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety.

PROFESSOR MIHALY
CSIKSZENTMIHALYI

BEING MINDFUL

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully aware, non-judgmental and curious about each moment, rather than being “caught up” in our thoughts. Being mindful can help improve our self-awareness, acceptance of others and ourselves, and our ability to handle stress. Try:

- **Looking for what’s novel:** As workers move through their day, encourage them to actively notice new things, relinquish preconceived beliefs, and act on their new observations.
- **Broadening perspectives:** Other people’s behavior always makes sense from their perspective. When someone’s perspective is different, encourage others to use this as an opportunity to understand and learn from them.
- **Freeing ourselves of evaluations:** Instead of falling down when things don’t go to plan, encourage workers to try to fall up by finding ways to be curious, more engaged, and mindful in what they do.

To hear more from Professor Ellen Langer
[click here.](#)

DEVELOPING STRENGTHS

When we have opportunities to use our strengths – the things we are good at and enjoy doing – we are likely to feel more confident, creative, engaged, and satisfied with our life. Try:

- **Discovering strengths:** Encourage workers to take the free 10-minute VIA Survey (www.viacharacter.org) and share their results. How do people’s strengths show up in the things they enjoy most each day? Where might strengths get overplayed or underplayed?
- **Holding strength check-ins:** Take the time to ask others: What lit you up last week? What are you looking forward to this week? What support do you need to continue developing your strengths?
- **Giving strengths-based feedback:** Don’t just say, “thanks, great job.” Role model strengths-based feedback by being specific with others about the strengths you saw in use, why these were valued and how they could continue to be built upon.

To hear more from Dr. Ryan Niemiec [click here.](#)

STAYING PLAYFUL

We are built to play and built through play, as it helps us to see things differently and explore new behaviors, thoughts, strategies, and ways of being that stimulates our learning, growth, and creativity. Try:

- **Playfully experimenting:** Create opportunities for workers to try something new, learn something new, create something new. Give people permission to surrender to their curiosity as they improvise and explore new ways of doing things, losing track of time and any sense of self-consciousness in the process. Encourage people to enjoy the fun of feeling actively engaged in what they are doing without the need for any bigger outcome.
- **Getting active:** One of the quickest ways to jump-start play is to get moving. Consider setting up a play area at home, at your workplace, or in your community that involves physical activities – like throwing a ball, Velcro darts, or skittles.

To hear more from Stella Grizont [click here.](#)

IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

One of your brain's greatest skills is its ability to think about the minds of others in order to understand them better. Every day, you engage in a kind of mind-reading on an almost minute-to-minute basis when you're interacting with others, with the capacity to make inferences about invisible things - about what others think, believe, feel, and want. This operates like a sixth sense.

For example, when somebody comes into your office to talk to you, you make an inference about their motive, intent, or desire, and what they're trying to get out of the conversation. This capacity to think about the minds of others operates really quickly and automatically and allows you to connect deeply and honestly with others. It allows you to cooperate with those you trust, avoid those you don't, and to track your reputation in the eyes of others.

However, as great as this capacity to connect with the minds of others can be, Professor Nick Epley (2019) has found that people's overconfidence in their ability to infer invisible motives and emotions can result in interpersonal misunderstandings, which can create social friction, missed opportunities, and undermine psychological safety in our relationships.

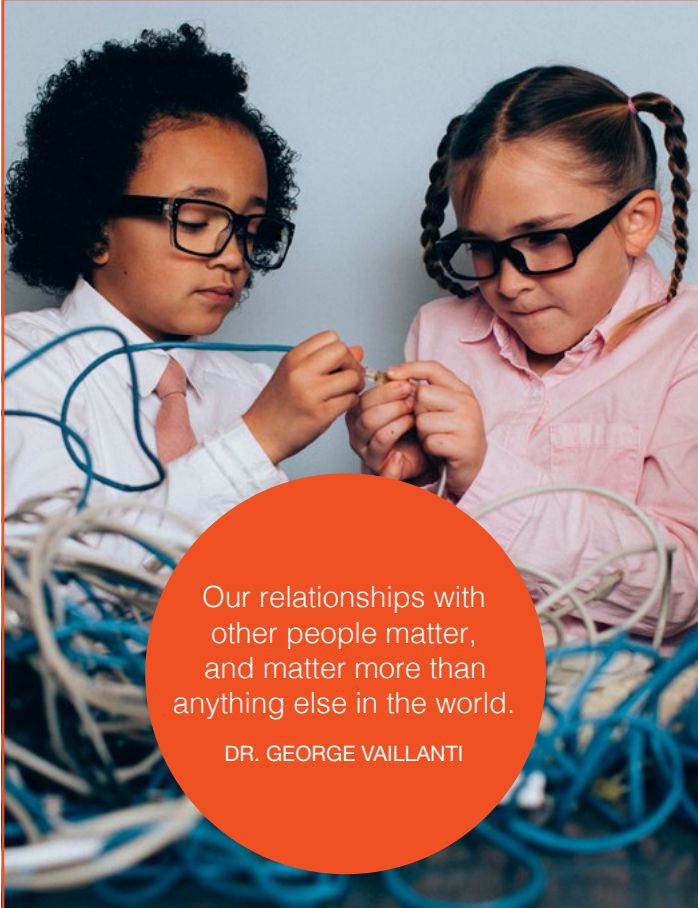
For example, studies indicate you tend to have a good sense overall of whether others in your workplace generally find you to be likable. However, if you were asked to predict how much those you know like you, you would be little better than guesses. This means you may have no real idea about who likes you or doesn't like you in your organization, making it difficult to tell when you're conveying the desired impression or messages to others (Epley, 2014).

You may also have real difficulty knowing if someone is lying to you or telling you the truth. Studies have found (Bond & DePaulo, 2006) you are likely to be accurate about this about fifty percent of the time, which is barely better than chance (i.e., flipping a coin to guess). However, really knowing if someone is being honest with you or not, could improve your interactions. For example, it could help you encourage those who are nervous about telling you the truth to feel more comfortable about opening up, by letting them know that it's okay and that you can handle the truth.

Professor Gervase Bushe (2019) explains that our overconfidence in mind-reading others often bogs down our relationships in "interpersonal mush" – the largely unfavorable conclusions we tend to leap to, about what others are thinking, feeling, and doing – which leads to distrust, spotty implementation, an inability to learn together, and results in higher levels of anxiety and burnout. For example, someone might say or do something that you're not happy with. But rather than saying something to them, you'll make up a story to make sense of their actions. This story then becomes your truth and a filter for how you interpret any future interactions with the other person.

How do we avoid this neurological trap? If you really want to increase your understanding of someone's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a situation, approach them in a humble way and ask them direct questions about what's on their mind at the time when they're having thoughts that you care about and listen well. Lean into your curiosity when you notice your go-to judgment behaviors sneaking in. Stay hypervigilant to your own biases - we all have them - and challenge them with questions whenever you can.

RELATIONSHIPS



Our relationships with other people matter, and matter more than anything else in the world.

DR. GEORGE VAILLANTI

CREATING MICRO-MOMENTS OF CONNECTION

Studies suggest that it can take just a micro-moment to genuinely connect with another person and create an upward spiral of warmth and trust. For example, when we show enthusiasm and take delight in other people's good news, they feel understood and cared for, which enhances their feelings of commitment and satisfaction in the relationship. Try:

- **Asking appreciative questions:** Encourage workers to look for the true, the good, and the possible in others by asking appreciative questions. For example, "What's working well at the moment?", "What's been the highlight of your week?", or "What are you looking forward to in the coming months?"
- **Expressing appreciation:** Practicing gratitude is a mega-strategy to improve wellbeing and relationships. Role model taking the time to genuinely thank someone each day and be specific about what you valued about what they did and the positive impact it had for you.

To hear more from Professor Jane Dutton click here.

BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological safety exists when we feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable with each other by speaking up and offering new ideas, asking questions, valuing different opinions, and being willing and able to learn from our mistakes. Try:

- **Replacing blame with curiosity:** Encourage workers to try to avoid leaping to assumptions about others' intentions or actions. Instead, remind each other that generally we are all doing the best we can with what we have in any given moment. By getting curious about what might be happening for someone, we can see them struggling, and we can treat each other with the respect and kindness we each deserve.
- **Remembering failure can lead to growth:** Make it safe to take smart risks at work by normalizing failure and struggle as part of the learning process. Talk openly and with curiosity about what's not working, encourage and reward people's willingness to ask for help or mentoring, and share and celebrate the lessons being learned.

To hear more from Professor Amy Edmondson click here.

GIVING KINDNESS

When we commit acts of kindness it highlights our abilities, resources, and expertise, leaving us with a sense of confidence, optimism, usefulness, and potentially meaning in our life. Best of all, it can jump-start a cascade of positive social consequences in our relationships. Try:

- **Performing 5-minute favors:** Encourage workers to spend 5 minutes each day helping someone else. They could share information, connect contacts, offer feedback, or make a recommendation.
- **Chunk your giving:** Help workers to balance their giving with other commitments by setting aside specific times each week to give – for example, Thankful Thursdays. Encourage people to align what they're giving to the strengths they have.
- **Communicate powerlessly:** Create win-win outcomes by helping workers to seek the advice of others, ask questions about each other's needs, and give everyone a chance to contribute to the conversation.

To hear more from Professor Adam Grant click here.

HOW MIGHT YOU ACTIVATE WELLBEING?

How might your Mental Wellbeing Project help people in workplaces to:

- 1 | Create more moments of positive emotions?
- 2 | Mindfully engage and develop their strengths as they go about their work?
- 3 | Build trust and psychological safety in their relationships?



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DISCOVER | WHY IS WELLBEING CHALLENGING?

Please share what's the wellbeing action you've most struggled to prioritize consistently over the past three months?

1 | If we look beyond simply having enough time and energy, what else has derailed this wellbeing behavior for you (i.e. don't really want to, don't know how to, don't think I can)?

2 | What support might help you to overcome this obstacle in future?

BALANCING MEANING

While studies have found that finding meaning in your work brings many benefits, Professor Robert Vallerand (2003) also suggests that when it comes to finding meaning and purpose in our work, we can have too much of a good thing. His studies have found that:

- **HARMONIOUS PASSION** occurs when our work brings us intrinsic joy, we have a sense of control over what we're doing, and it is in harmony with other activities in our life. We have flexibility around our passion, so if we can't undertake the work we're able to adapt easily by shifting our focus on to other tasks. And we're able to disengage entirely from when our work becomes too risky, or we want to enjoy other activities in our life.

For example, when we have harmonious passion for our work we're able to realistically prioritize tasks, set clear and consistent boundaries around our hours of work, and switch off to get the rest and recovery we need. As a result, harmonious passion has been associated with higher levels of physical health, psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, positive emotions, creativity, concentration, and work satisfaction.

- **OBSESSIVE PASSION** occurs when we believe our work is so important and highly valued that we have an uncontrollable urge to engage in it and feel compelled to undertake it. We find it hard to stop thinking about our work, get frustrated when prevented from working, and persist even when it's risky and/or we're exhausted because our sense of identity and self-worth is so heavily tied to our work.

For example, when our work becomes an obsessive passion, we put off taking a vacation, take more and more projects on, stay back late or take lots of work home, and check emails all weekend instead of spending time with our loved ones. And while short bursts of obsessive passion to meet a deadline or prepare for a special event rarely do any lasting harm, when we consistently feel conflicted between our passion and other areas of our life studies it leads to higher levels of negative affect over time and puts us at risk of burning ourselves out.

Watch out for passions that start to feel they're in control of you. Studies have found that even activities that are really good for your wellbeing, such as yoga will only deliver positive benefits if you have a harmonious passion for them.

When you notice that your passion for work is getting out of hand rebalance your life and put your passion back into perspective.

Remember that your self-esteem doesn't depend on doing exceptionally well in this activity, you can still do reasonably well and get to interact with people in order to nurture your psychological needs. And remind yourself of the other things you love. Go back to your normal schedule. Revert back to who you really are when life is harmonious.

And remember that each additional passion you cultivate outside of work gives you an opportunity to value the strengths you have beyond your job and lowers your chance of burnout. Think about what else interests you? What would you like to pursue purely for the joy of the activity? What lights you up outside of work? This is an approach every workplace should encourage for their staff.

MEANING



The single strongest predictor of meaningfulness is the belief that our actions make a positive difference for others.

PROFESSOR ADAM GRANT

CRAFTING PURPOSE

Studies have found our purpose gives us more motivation to accomplish the goals that matter most to us and be resilient in the face of challenges. Finding our purpose means uncovering opportunities to put our passions into action right now. Try:

- **Making the mundane meaningful:** Help workers find meaning in what they do by asking them to write down a task, drawing an arrow to the right and then noting who this task helps and how. Repeat these steps until the bigger value of the little tasks they do becomes clear.
- **Outsourcing inspiration:** Encourage workers to connect to the people impacted by what they do each day so they can learn more about the challenges they face and the differences their actions can make.
- **Soaring into your purpose:** Understand workers “what” and “why” by asking: What are you great at? How can you use your strengths to help others? Why would this be meaningful for you? What might you achieve?

To hear more from Professor Jackie Stavros [click here.](#)

FIND BELONGING

We all need to feel understood, recognized, and affirmed by others. We all need to find our tribe. Studies suggest that focusing on others – so our relationships are based on mutual care, love, and a sense of being valued – is the easiest way to build a sense of belonging. Try:

- **Contributing to others:** Look for opportunities to give to others. Encourage workers to offer a helping hand to someone in need, volunteer their time, or join a local community group.
- **Finding your tribe:** Create community groups that give people the opportunity to use their interests or passions, or to learn something completely new together.
- **Seeing others:** Create safe spaces for workers to ask questions and learn what lights each other up. Encourage people to listen better to each other by putting our phones away, parking our judgments, and giving them our full attention.

To hear more from Emily Esfahani Smith [click here.](#)

KEEPING PASSIONS HARMONIOUS

Harmonious passion occurs when we engage in behaviors because they bring us intrinsic joy, we feel we have a sense of control, and they are in harmony with other activities in life. Associated with higher levels of physical health, psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, positive emotions, creativity, concentration and work satisfaction, to help others keep their passions harmonious try:

- **Restoring balance:** After a short burst of obsessive passion to reach a milestone, it's important to rebalance life. Encourage workers to rediscover the other things that bring them joy.
- **Cultivating alternative passions:** Having more than one passion helps keep life balanced. Ask workers: “What can be pursued purely for the joy of the activity? What lights you up outside of this passion?”
- **Setting boundaries:** Encourage breaks during the course of the day and time for family, friends, and other activities.

To hear more from Professor Robert Vallerand [click here.](#)

BOLSTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT

Do you fear failure? The truth is, we all fail at something some of the time. The only question is whether we are learning from these experiences or missing out on some of life's best lessons because it feels too painful to admit we were wrong or didn't measure up.

Professor Carol Dweck (2008) has found this response is often the result of a "fixed mindset" that is underpinned by the belief that you are born with a certain amount of talent and intelligence, and that's your lot in life. People adopting a fixed mindset perceive outcomes as the ultimate measure of what people are capable of achieving—you're clever or dumb, good at sports or clumsy, musical or tone-deaf. They also experience a heightened fear of criticism and perceive failure as a signal that they have reached the limits of their potential.

In contrast, people with a "growth mindset" believe that, while you're born with a certain amount of talent and intelligence, with learning and effort you can always improve—and neuroscience now validates this belief. As a result, instead of just valuing the outcomes, people adopting a growth mindset also value the learning and effort, and are prepared to meet the challenges. This lowers their levels of stress and anxiety and gives them the confidence to reframe failure and criticism as teachable moments that are as important to success as perfect outcomes.

It's important to note that we each have the capacity to sit in either of these mindsets; no one practices a growth mindset all the time. For example, you might have a growth mindset around growing and learning in sport, but are convinced that you have no musical ability at all. Your mindset impacts how motivated you are to pursue different goals, and whether or not you are willing to be open and flexible in your approach.

Studies have found that a growth mindset makes it easier to set yourself stretch goals, to ask for help as you go, and to feel motivated to achieve the things that matter to you most. It sparks hope by helping you feel like you have nothing to lose and everything to gain if you step outside your comfort zone. It appears to help you move beyond your present limitations and to achieve your true potential.

You can practice a growth mindset by doing the following:

SETTING LEARNING GOALS

Each week, set at least one learning goal to build your competence in something. It might be a skill you want to gain, a task you want to master, or simply the desire to understand something better. Notice what happens as you practice, make mistakes, make adjustments, and eventually start to do better in the competence you're building. As you tackle this goal, practice letting go of the outcome, embracing your mistakes, and identifying the processes and efforts you can build upon to keep improving.

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH FAILURE

Write down the three biggest mistakes or errors you've made at work in the last year. Next to each one, list the lessons or insights you gained from making these mistakes. Put the list somewhere handy, so you can reread it when you need a reminder that mistakes can sometimes offer the best opportunities for learning and growth. When you fail, remind yourself that you're "not there yet," and set a new learning goal to build the skills you need to get closer to the outcomes you want.

ACCOMPLISHMENT



Grit is living life like it's a marathon rather than a sprint.

PROFESSOR ANGELA DUCKWORTH

REACHING FOR A GROWTH MINDSET

Workers who practice a growth mindset have the confidence to take on new challenges, re-frame failure and criticisms as teachable moments, and are able to achieve increasingly higher levels of success as their skills improve as a result of these experiences. Try:

- **Setting learning goals:** Openly set learning goals to improve upon. As this goal is tackled, encourage workers to practice a growth mindset – let go of the outcomes, embrace mistakes, and identify the processes and efforts that can be built upon to keep improving.
- **Running a learning loop:** As goals are being tackled, ask: What went well? Where did we struggle? What are we learning? How we will adjust?
- **Rewarding efforts not just outcomes:** Give feedback and show appreciation for the efforts and learning you can see unfolding in your team, rather than just the outcomes being achieved.

To hear more from Professor Carol Dweck click [here](#).

SHOWING COMPASSION

Bumping up against our limitations, falling short of our ideals, and failing miserably can be painful. Showing compassion for ourselves and each other in these moments – like a wise and kind mentor – allows us to be honest about our hopes and fears, reminds us that no one is perfect, and enhances our motivation, resilience, and creativity to keep learning. Try:

- **Be your own coach:** Help workers consider what a wise and kind coach or mentor would say to them in the moments they want to shame and blame themselves or others. For example: “You got this.” “Take a breath.” “Just do the best you can.”
- **Listening empathetically:** Give people your full attention without interrupting or feeling you need to jump in with advice or to solve their problem. Be aware, non-judgemental, and curious about their story.
- **Soothing pain:** Kind physical gestures calm our bodies. Try placing one hand over the top of your opposite wrist and taking three slow deep breaths.

To hear more from Dr. Kristin Neff click [here](#).

BOOSTING RESILIENCE

Ninety percent of us have a psychological immune system that allows us to be naturally resilient and recover quickly from these experiences. But the strength and speed of our response is often determined by the stories we tell ourselves. Try:

- **Challenging beliefs:** Tune in to the stories that cause anguish and ask: Is this story true? Is it absolutely accurate? Is there another equally believable story that would serve us better right now?
- **Embracing the struggle:** Spot the signals that workers are struggling. Rather than trying to rid people of uncomfortable feelings, sit with them and consider what values, expectations, and actions might be contributing to the struggle. Then when ready, support them to find small positive steps to move them towards who they want to be.
- **Banning “always”:** Gently but firmly challenge absolutes – like “never” and “always” – to help workers regain a sense of control and choice.

To hear more from Dr. Judith Beck click [here](#).

HEIGHTENING HEALTH

Most of us want enough energy to be at our best for the people we care about. However, sometimes we put in so much effort trying to serve others, that we can overlook what we need ourselves. Unfortunately, the reality is that when you're run down and low in energy, you're likely to be less effective at work and at helping your colleagues, customers, patients, friends, and family.

However, when your energy levels are high, you're three times more likely to be completely engaged in your work and be at your best for others. So, if you want to make a difference for others, firstly you need to take care of your own health and energy.

Research suggests that eating, moving, and sleeping well are the keys to having more physical and emotional energy throughout your day, and can act as a buffer against stress. When you eat, move, and sleep well, you can do more for others.

It's important to tackle each of these areas simultaneously, as letting one area slip can lead to a negative spiral of energy. For example, a poor night of sleep can lead to skipping your gym workout and grabbing a high sugar snack from the vending machine later in the day. On the other hand, doing any one of these things – eating, moving, or sleeping – well can lead to an upward spiral in the other two areas.

Changing the way you eat, move, and sleep doesn't necessarily require a grand plan, but can start with the next small choice you make in your day. For example:

- Making better choices about what you eat can improve your energy and mood. Foods that are highly processed and include sugars or trans-fatty acids can have a negative impact, whereas when you eat more green leafy vegetables, whole fruits, and whole foods, you're more likely to feel calmer and happier and have more energy. Studies also suggest increasing your protein intake while, at the same time, reducing carbohydrates improves your health over time.
- Not moving well is one of the biggest global public health problems, and this includes not enough physical activity as well as too much sitting. When we sit for long periods of time, the electrical activity in our legs shuts off, and that can do more accumulative damage than not getting 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity each day. Moving regularly in small bursts of activity improves your physical energy and can also help you think better.
- You are built to oscillate between work and rest. When you allow for this oscillation, the quality of your health, relationships, and work improves. For example, a growing body of research has established that you do your best at any given task for only a limited amount of time, energy, or attention, then your performance drops off, your attention wanders, and your motivation evaporates. But resting after a depleting activity has been found to eliminate the effects of fatigue (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020).
- It's important to see every hour of sleep as an investment in your future, not an expense. Unfortunately, many of us have experienced cultures where you get bragging rights for how little sleep you can survive on. However, losing 90 minutes of sleep can cost up to a third of your productivity the next day and can reduce your competency and creativity in afternoon meetings. Over time a consistent lack of sleep can be dangerous, as the effects are similar to being intoxicated as you go about your work and life.

HEALTH



Small choices
about the way you
eat, move, and sleep
have a big impact.

TOM RATH

EATING WISELY

Eating well not only bolsters our health in the short and long-term, it can also improve our mood, keep our energy levels high, and improve productivity (Rath, 2013). Try:

- **Providing healthy snacks:** Think about the meals and snacks workers have access to. Try to have foods on hand that are good for short-term energy and long-term health.
- **Encouraging lunch breaks:** Encourage workers to stop and eat a healthy lunch so their bodies and brains have a chance to recharge. Set up nice spaces (ideally with natural light or even outside) where people can sit down and share their lunch together.
- **Tracking and adjusting:** Help people to be mindful about what they are about to eat as a net gain or a net loss for their energy, based on what they know about all the ingredients. By asking this question, it's easier to make better eating choices throughout the day.

To hear more from Tom Rath click here.

SLEEPING WELL

Roughly two-thirds of us report we don't get enough sleep and as a result studies suggest we're damaging our health, our mood, and our cognitive capacity. Try:

- **Taking restorative breaks:** When workers feel their energy waning, encourage them to take a few minutes out to recover by getting up and stretching, having a glass of water, and setting an intention for the next sprint of activity.
- **Encouraging power-down periods:** Technology makes it easy to be available 24 hours a day, but sleeping with our devices sending alerts is terrible for a good night's sleep. Encourage power-down periods when emails and messages should not be sent unless in an emergency so people can get the sleep they need to perform at their best.
- **Creating nap zones:** It only takes ten minutes of light sleep to improve our mood, concentration, alertness. Consider creating nap zones where people can take a nap to recharge when they need it.

To hear more from Thea O'Connor click here.

MOVING JOYFULLY

Every hour we spend on our rear ends saps our energy and ruins our health. This means any extra opportunity we have to move counts. The key is to find activities that we enjoy doing and are willing to do on a regular basis. Try:

- **Stepping it up:** Encourage workers to take walking meetings or catch-ups whenever possible, rather than sitting at tables.
- **Being upstanding:** If workers have to sit for long periods, encourage them to set a timer that goes off every 20 to 90 minutes and take a movement break for at least two minutes to help improve creativity, productivity, and wellbeing.
- **Getting competitive:** Be it a walking challenge or other movement-based activities, try to offer ways that your workplace can find the joy in moving together.

To hear more from Dr. Kelly McGonigal click here.

HOW MIGHT YOU ACTIVATE WELLBEING?

How might your Mental Wellbeing Project help people in workplaces to:

- 1 | Balance their sense of meaning and purpose so they don't burn themselves out?
- 2 | Bolster accomplishment by creating a growth mindset culture?
- 3 | Heighten physical health by encouraging people to eat, move, recover, and sleep well?

HOW WILL YOU CARE FOR WELLBEING?



POSITIVE EMOTIONS



ENGAGEMENT



RELATIONSHIPS



MEANING



ACCOMPLISHMENT



HEALTH

WANT MORE?

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