



## The PERMA model of wellbeing

### Positive Emotions

Positive emotion is much more than mere 'happiness.' They can include joy, excitement, inspiration, hope, and gratitude, and may come from many sources. Increasing positive emotions helps us build physical, intellectual, psychological, and social resources that lead to increased resilience and overall wellbeing.

- Spend time with people you care about.
- Engage in activities you enjoy, e.g. hobbies.
- Use your character strengths every day.
- Reflecting on things you are grateful for and what is going well in your life.

### Engagement

When we are truly engaged in a situation, task, or project, we can experience a state of flow: time seems to stop and we lose our sense of self, concentrating intensely on the present and focusing entirely on the task at hand. We are more likely to experience flow when we use our top character strengths.

- Participate in activities that you love, where you lose track of time when you do them.
- Do a task that allows you to use your strengths, and which is challenging but achievable.
- Clear away distractions so you can better focus on what you are doing.

Research from the field of positive psychology has shown that five key pillars of psychological wellbeing can be captured in the acronym **PERMA** (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment). They can each independently measured and enhanced, and by focusing on these aspects, we can improve our health, happiness and satisfaction with life.

Martin Seligman, often dubbed as the "founding father" of positive psychology, coined the term *Flourishing* to describe the state of successful growth, happiness and emotional, social and mental wellbeing.

**Character strengths** are pathways to each of these five areas.

### Relationships

As humans, we are social beings. Relationships in the PERMA model refer to feeling supported, loved and valued. They provide a sense of purpose and buffer against hardship, which makes them core to our wellbeing. People who have meaningful, positive relationships have been shown to have higher levels of wellbeing.

- Ask questions of the people you don't know well to find out more about them.
- Join a class or group that interests you.
- Move from acquaintance to friendship level.
- Get in touch with people you have not spoken to or connected with in a while.

### Achievement

A sense of accomplishment is a result of working hard toward and reaching goals, mastering an endeavour, and having self-motivation to finish what you set out to do. Achieving intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) leads to larger gains in wellbeing than external goals such as money or social status.

- Set and work towards SMART goals.
- Reflect on past successes and the learning opportunities they offer.
- Look for creative ways to celebrate your achievements.

### Meaning

Having meaning or purpose in life is different for everyone. It can be derived from belonging to and serving something bigger than the self, whether this is a specific religion or social cause, serving one's community or organisation, going into politics, pursuing a creative endeavour, raising a family or anything else.

- Get involved in a cause or organisation that matters to you and resonates with your values.
- Try new, creative activities to find things you connect with on a deeper level.
- Spend quality time with people you care about.