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The 9 Ingredients for Wellbeing

Life is indeed short – putting these 9 ingredients into your life will help you live feeling a greater sense of wellbeing and contentment.

What is wellbeing

The concept of 'wellbeing' is subjective but in essence it's something along the lines of being happy, comfortable, content and healthy. Living a life where both the mind and body are two happy parts that in perfect unison, make up the one well organism. It appears essential for longevity, but more importantly nobody wants to live out their existence miserable in the opposite-to-wellbeing dimension.

Here are the 9 ingredients you need to achieve and maintain your wellbeing...

According to the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre, wellbeing is not a single entity or a way of being, but is a construct made up of numerous elements. The Centre believes that wellbeing can be measured and conceptualised by integrating:

Dr Martin Seligman's PERMA dashboard (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment) + physical activity, good nutrition, quality sleep and an air of optimism.

Positive emotion

According to the PERMA model, positive emotion is more than just happiness. It's engaging a range of emotions like joy, amusement, hope, love, compassion, gratitude, thoughtfulness, intrigue, creativity, passion, pride and so on. We can't alter our genetics but we do have the capability of committing and mindfully focusing on driving positive emotions. It eventually becomes habit and the more we engage in the practice, the easier it becomes.

Engagement

Engagement is being involved in things we love to do. We make a conscious effort to focus on living in the present and focusing on the task at hand. The goal is to draw attention to the enjoyment of the current experience and in engaging in the things that give us pleasure. These are the things we get up in the morning to enjoy engaging in. They are meaningful and worthwhile activities and we are passionate about the outcomes.

Relationships

Relationships are the connections we have with others in our lives. Relationships help us to feel connected, supported, valued and cared for. We are social beings and require positive social connection to survive and flourish. Relationships help us feel nurtured, wanted and protected. They are essential to our positive wellbeing.

Meaning

The fourth component in the PERMA model is meaning. Human beings must find meaning to the things we do. This is often also connected with a belief that we are serving something more important than just ourselves. Meaning is having a higher purpose. Focusing on meaning helps divert power away from the difficult moments and helps us cope in a more positive way. Meaning may be found through our work, interests, goals or beliefs and spirituality.

Accomplishment

Having a sense of accomplishment is enriching. Most of us know the feeling we have had after doing well on an exam, our sporting team wins a Grand Final, we finish a difficult project, we get that promotion, and the like. A sense of accomplishment is experienced when we strive and achieve our goals, we've mastered a task and completed what we set out to do.

Plus...

In addition to the individual components of the PERMA model, a sense of wellbeing also requires attention to the realms of: physical activity, good nutrition, quality sleep and optimism.

Physical activity and good nutrition

The positive impacts of regular exercise and a quality diet, on physiological functioning and longevity have been extensively evidenced. But exercise also correlates strongly with emotional good health. According to the Black Dog Institute, even a small level of exercise is mentally beneficial and is known to prevent and treat mental illnesses such as depression.

Likewise, there is no shortage of research to support that what we eat impacts on our emotional functioning. According to the Mental Health Foundation, people who reported mental health problems also reported eating fewer healthy foods like fresh fruit and vegetables, organic foods or home-made meals, but reported an intake of more unhealthy foods such as chips, chocolate, ready meals and takeaways).

Quality sleep

According to the National Sleep Foundation, adequate and quality sleep is necessary for healthy functioning. Sleep regulates mood, is essential for learning and other memory functions and influences weight and energy levels. Sleep issues are also related to significant health conditions such as stroke and heart attack. With inadequate sleep, we perform poorly at work and tend to exercise and connect with others less.

Optimism

Optimism is the propensity to expect positive things will come in the future and that life will generally provide good outcomes. According to researchers, optimism influences both a person's physical and

mental health. Optimists are highly more successful than pessimists during difficult events and when significant life goals encounter obstacles. Recommendations are that strategies to foster optimism should be integrated into future mental health prevention and treatment programs to improve overall wellbeing.



The application

Although addressing some of these ingredients to wellbeing may be more difficult than others, or may take more time, there are things you can implement immediately.

1. Focusing on applying positive emotion is a choice. We have a new thought every 1.2 seconds and many of them are negative. You can't control what thought comes into your head but you can ask yourself if the thought is helpful for putting you in the direction you want to go. Thoughts create feelings and emotions. You can choose now whether to enhance your negative emotions or your positive ones. Try immediately to see the lighter side of people and life.
2. You can choose to improve your diet and amount and type of exercise you engage in. Set a date to make changes to these areas if you need to. Likewise, look at the amount of sleep you are getting and assess it for length and quality. If you are having trouble improving these on your own, there are many professionals out there that work in these speciality fields: ie personal trainers, dietitians and sleep clinics (if your sleeping issue is severe).
3. Write a plan for the future on how to increase your engagement, your relationships with others and to develop more meaning in your life, if you identify these areas as an issue for increasing your level of wellbeing.

It's all G to know the 9 ingredients to a great wellbeing but application is the ultimate key. Research tells us that commitments like New Years Resolutions etc., often fall flat and are never put into action. Motivate yourself, make the commitment to put action into place and overcome procrastination. Then you'll reap the fruits – sublime wellbeing. You've got this!