

5 ways to wellbeing: personalised goal setting

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Five Ways to Wellbeing

- * NEF (the New Economics Foundation) was commissioned by Foresight to look at the academic evidence to draw out public health messages concerned with how to promote and maintain positive mental health.
- * The stated intention of the project was to develop a “mental health equivalent” of the popular and well-known message that people should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day in order to maintain good physical health.
- * NEF’s subsequent report, *Five Ways to Wellbeing*: presented the evidence as 5 key messages to reflect:
 - * kinds of behaviour that people can undertake, which academic evidence suggests may lead to improvements in their wellbeing.
 - * demonstrate that wellbeing is determined in part, but not solely, by factors over which individuals have some control.

Policy direction ...

... away from an understanding of health that focuses solely on the provision of targeted help for vulnerable groups, towards an approach that balances promotion and prevention of wellbeing at a population level.

- * Focuses on strengths not deficits
- * About individual, service and community action not about treatment
- * About wellbeing (not merely absence of disease) because wellbeing is associated with substantial cost savings and better outcomes

Outcomes

- * People who report higher levels of wellbeing tend to be more involved in social and civic life, are more likely to behave in environmentally responsible ways, have better family and social relationships at home and are more productive at work.
- * Wellbeing is positively associated with various positive health outcomes.
- * Increasingly positive health states actually precede and help to cause good outcomes in health and wellbeing.
- * For instance, longitudinal studies of wellbeing have shown that the prevalence of good moods predicts working days lost through illness five years later, likelihood of stroke six years later and of cardio-vascular disease ten years later.

References

Aked, J., Marks, N., Cordon, C., & Thompson, S. (2008). Five Ways to Wellbeing: the evidence. London: nef.



Foresight. (2008). Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project: Final Project Report. London: The Government Office for Science.



5 Ways to well being

* Connect

Foresight Report: indicates that social relationships are critical for promoting well-being and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health. This seems to be the case for people across all ages

Other evidence: Research has also found that happy people have stronger social relationships than less happy people.

* Be active

Foresight Report: regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of well-being and lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. It is not clear, however, if regular exercise has a direct influence on feelings of wellbeing or whether well-being is a determinant of regular exercise behaviour

Other evidence: Small changes in activity levels of sedentary or elderly people will enhance well-being

* Take notice

Foresight Report. Research has shown that being trained to be aware of sensations, thoughts and feelings for 8 to 12 weeks enhances well-being for several years.

Other evidence: Being in a state known as mindfulness has been shown to predict positive mental states, self-regulated behaviour and heightened self knowledge. This self-regulatory behaviour is thought to be important for well-being.

* Keep Learning

Foresight Report: The continuation of learning through life has the benefits of enhancing an individual's self-esteem, encouraging social interaction and a more active life. Adult learning has been correlated with positive effects on well-being, reports of life satisfaction, optimism and efficacy. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of well-being.

Other evidence: Feelings of satisfaction associated with both progress and goal attainment mediate the effects of goal setting on wellbeing.

* Give

Foresight Report: Feelings of happiness and life satisfaction have been strongly associated with active participation in social and community life. For older people, volunteering is associated with more positive affect and more meaning in life while offering support to others has been shown to be associated with reduced mortality rates

Other evidence: Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in well-being, compared to control groups

5 ways to Well being in practice

Lets Live Well in Rushcliffe

A brief case study

Summary

- * Has strong evidence base
- * Is an appreciative conversation
- * Places the person in control
- * Is strengths based
- * Encourages activity without it being “painful”
- * Encourages movement from languishing to flourishing

Thank you for listening
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