

Wheel of Well-being

the domains of happiness



what makes us happy?

aim

This activity stimulates discussion about what we think makes people happy. It encourages a better understanding of differing perspectives around the factors that contribute most to well-being. It works well as a basic introduction to the 'Five Ways to Well-being' (Nef, 2008)

This activity is designed for groups.

introduction

Everyone has his or her own 'recipe for happiness' but there are a number of factors that have been linked to higher levels of well-being in people all over the world. These factors will significantly improve our well-being and they're the things we should all concentrate our efforts on - no matter what our backgrounds.

what to do in advance

prepare the cards:

- 1 The activity uses a set of 14 sort cards. We've made a template to help you and you can download it here. Take a look at the template. You'll find 14 boxes with phrases like 'being married' and 'living in a sunny climate' in each of them. You can add photos to the boxes to make them more interesting (that's what we did) or you can just use them as they are.



Copy the template onto card - you'll need one set of 14 cards per group.

how to use the cards

- 2 Give each group a set of 14 cards and explain that they will have about 20 minutes to discuss the cards together. The aim of this part of the activity is to come to a group decision about the order of importance to most people around the world. (They are trying to come to agreement together as a group about what matters to most people - not their own opinion.)

Participants may want to put several cards together as having similar importance - that's OK. They just need to come to an agreed order - and to keep track of their main agreements/disagreements. If space allows, the groups can tape their cards onto flip-chart paper or a wall, or arrange them in order on tables or the floor, so that others can see them.



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- 3 When the time is up - get groups to look around the room at the order the other groups have come up with.

Are there any similarities? Noticeable differences?

- 4 Get each group to feedback their main discussion points - limit them to one or two. Did the group agree on things - or were there disagreements? Which topics provoked the most discussion - and why? (Facilitation note: discussions about money and religion can take over if not managed carefully!)

- 5 Once groups have all had time to compare and contrast and feed back, the facilitator can highlight the five main factors that have been linked to improved well-being:

note: It's often helpful to elicit ideas and information about group members' experiences of these factors; any benefits or barriers they may have encountered; and where to go to get more help and information about any of the factors mentioned below. Using the group's shared experience will enable this activity to build up participants' bank of knowledge about local resources, as well as improving their theoretical understanding.

1 volunteering

- the value is in giving to others, something bigger than yourself, not motivated by financial reward, connecting with others.

2 religious faith

- one of the most controversial ones but it makes intuitive sense to many for some of the following reasons:
 - provides a sense of meaning and purpose in life
 - foundation of all faiths - gratitude, compassion, love, wonder, awe, forgiveness - positive emotions connected to something bigger than yourself
 - a sense of community and a moral framework for life; secure and grounded; feelings of belonging.

3 physical activity

- the one common factor in what are called 'The Blue Zones' – the seven areas of the world where people have the longest life expectancy.
- physical activity has the greatest impact on our well-being – and reduces the risks of both physical and mental illness
- the happiest and most long-lived are those who are physically active through-out their lives – doing things they enjoy, rather than fitness-based activities for the sake of improving fitness. In the Blue Zones, gardening was the most commonly-practiced physical activity.



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4 being optimistic

- until recently it was thought to be an inherited trait but now we have robust studies showing you can learn to be more optimistic.
- See 'finding flow' and 'keep a gratitude diary' for two activities that have been shown to help us develop a more optimistic outlook

5 friends and family

Always top of the list! Important for lots of reasons - because it's where we share the most positive emotions, feel most valued and understood, as well as giving us a sense of belonging, connection and security. Studies have long shown health and happiness are directly impacted on by the strength and condition of our social connections.

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- Extra bonus points for taking notice and lifelong learning as both have strong connections to improved well-being

taking notice

Savouring the positives, reflecting on your experiences, understanding and appreciating what matters can offset the chronic stress in our 'hurry-worry' lives. The practice of mindfulness is proving one of the strongest contributors to well-being.

lifelong learning

The rewards of lifelong learning are proving to be important to our brain functioning in later life as well as being great opportunities for flow (see our activity 'finding flow'), for building confidence, gaining new skills and for connecting with others.

