Wominjeka! (Welcome)

Indigenous students at Melbourne go on to do great things. Our culture of reconciliation aims to give Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples equal opportunity for achievement.

We’re committed to reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Australia that recognise the profoundly important contribution that Indigenous staff, students and communities make to this University, and society as a whole.

Find out more about our Reconciliation Action Plan and the opportunities available to Indigenous students at Melbourne.

Visit us at the Old Physics building or the Student Experience Precinct on South Lawn.

Murrup Barak, Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development
murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au
The Next 60 Minutes

- Student context
- A little bit about wellbeing
- Some fun stuff
- 10 mins of Q&A
- Applause or ridicule
Student context
Student context

• Students as a group have considerably lower wellbeing than the average public:
  • 1 in 4 university students experience significant levels of psychological distress.

• The reasons are pretty well known:
  • Financial pressures.
  • Social pressures.
  • New experiences and learning curves.
  • High expectations.
  • Stress.
  • Lack of social supports.
  • Cultural issues.
A little bit about wellbeing
A little bit about wellbeing

Today is an introduction and taster session...

• Wellbeing science + Positive psychological interventions
  • So basically leave here: Know stuff + do stuff (knowledge + experience)
A little bit about wellbeing

Positive assessment

• Let’s do a “back of the napkin” assessment.

How happy are you right now in life?

What would you pay / give / do / sacrifice / commit to in order to be, on average, one point happier?

10 - Extremely happy
9 - Very happy
8 - Pretty happy
7 - Mildly happy
6 - Slightly happy
5 - Neutral
4 - Slightly unhappy
3 - Mildly unhappy
2 - Pretty unhappy
1 - Very unhappy
0 - Extremely unhappy
Fun stuff
The Geelong three breaths exercise

- **Breath One.** Take a deep breath. Notice *your physical body* and any points of pain or tension. Breath out slowly and release any tension away.

- **Breath Two.** Take a deep breath. As you breathe out think about what you are grateful for right at this very moment. Say to yourself “**Right now I am grateful for...**”.

- **Breath Three.** Take a deep breath. As you breathe out think what intentional state you want to be in right now. Say to yourself “**My intention right now is to be** (kind, open minded, relaxed, critical, curious etc)...”.

Developed by Justin Robinson at Geelong Grammar.
**Fun stuff**

**Positive Introduction**

**Step 1:** Pair up.

**Step 2:** In 2 minutes (1 minute each), tell a story – a thoughtful narrative with a beginning, middle and end – that illustrates *when you are at your best*.

**Note:** Swap when you hear the bell the first time after 1 minute, stop completely when you hear the bell the second time after 2 minutes.
Fun stuff

Positive introduction

• Key point: Wield your strengths – they are paths to engagement and enjoyment.
• http://www.viacharacter.org
• What strengths can you draw on in times of stress and adversity?
A little bit about wellbeing

Disclaimers

- I'm no expert on your wellbeing

- “happiness is not a spectator sport” (Chris Peterson).
  - Hard work required.
  - One healthy meal or one gym session will not impact much.
A little bit about wellbeing

Positive psychology

• Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that conducts scientific inquiry into the factors that help individuals, communities and organisations thrive by building on their strengths and virtues.

• Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.

• Positive psychology is the study of topics as diverse as happiness, optimism, hope, flow, meaning, subjective wellbeing and personal growth.

• Positive psychology aims to expand psychology from its focus on repairing the negatives in life to also promoting the positives in life.

What is optimal human functioning?
A little bit about wellbeing

The Cheat Sheet

• The good life is best construed as a matrix that includes happiness, occasional sadness, a sense of purpose, playfulness, and psychological flexibility, as well autonomy, mastery, and belonging/connection.

• For me it’s not just about learning to be more positive – it’s about using scientifically-informed tools and strategies to make my thinking more flexible, accurate, clear, and expansive. This thinking (I hope) leads to happiness and more healthy behaviours.
A little bit about wellbeing

The wellbeing continuum

• Traditional Psychology.
  • **Aim:** Healing.
  • **Change:** is created by healing disorder and distress.

• Positive psychology.
  • **Aim:** Flourishing.
  • **Change:** is created by building on strengths.
# A little bit about wellbeing

## What is wellbeing?

- Different definitions and theories of wellbeing and flourishing.
- SWB = Satisfaction with life + high positive affect + low negative affect

### Flourishing

- **Positive emotion**
- **Engagement**
- **Positive relationships**
- **Meaning and purpose**
- **Accomplishment / competence**

### Keyes

- **Flourishing**
  - Emotional Wellbeing
  - Positive affect (happy)
  - Positive affect (interested)
  - Life satisfaction
  - Social Wellbeing
  - Social contribution
  - Social integration
  - Social actualisation
  - Social acceptance
  - Psychological Wellbeing
  - Self-acceptance
  - Environmental mastery
  - Positive relationships
  - Personal growth
  - Autonomy
  - Purpose in life

### Huppert & So

- **Flourishing**
  - Positive Appraisal
  - Positive emotion
  - Positive Functioning
  - Engagement
  - Competence
  - Meaning
  - Positive relationships
  - Positive Characteristics
  - Emotional stability
  - Vitality
  - Optimism
  - Resilience
  - Self-esteem

### Diener et al.

- **Flourishing**
  - Purpose and meaning
  - Positive relationships
  - Engagement
  - Social contribution
  - Competence
  - Self-acceptance
  - Optimism
  - Self-esteem

### Seligman et al.

- **Flourishing**
  - Positive emotion
  - Engagement
  - Positive relationships
  - Meaning and purpose
  - Accomplishment / competence
Fun stuff
A little bit about wellbeing

Ways to wellbeing

• Step 1: Pair up with a partner, get a pen ready, as well as a blank A4 page...

• Step 2: Raise a hand in the air when you're ready...

• Step 3: Without looking down at your blank page, and **ONLY looking at your partner’s face**, you have 1 minute to draw a portrait of your partner, starting on the bell!

• Step 4: Sign your name, date it, and swap pictures with your partner...
A little bit about wellbeing

Ways to wellbeing

Five ways to wellbeing
A little bit about wellbeing

Connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give

• **Connect** – Make connections with friends, family, colleagues and neighbours. When you build these connections they help enrich your life with new experiences and opportunities.

• **Be Active** – Get moving. Walk, skip, run, dance – move your muscles. Exercise not only makes you feel good, it keeps you healthy. Pick a physical activity that you enjoy.

• **Take Notice** – Be mindful. Be curious. Like a child, see the wonder and beauty of the world. Notice the things around you – the weather, the landscape, the mood and feelings of the people around you. In noticing you learn to appreciate the things that matter.

• **Keep Learning** – We never stop learning. Keep trying something new – a new course you’ve been wanting to do or a more challenging task at work. Challenges keep us on our toes and increase our confidence and excitement in our day.

• **Give** – Be generous with your time, your knowledge and your talents, giving to friends, family and even strangers. Be thankful, smile at people, and volunteer. Sharing to a wider audience gives you a greater reward than just doing things for yourself.
A little bit about wellbeing

What does a good day at work look like?
A little bit about wellbeing
A little bit about wellbeing

Why become happier?

• Bunch of reasons – longevity is one of them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 85</th>
<th>Age 94</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The Nun Study: Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001
Positive emotional content, 180 nuns, mean age = 22 years)
Fun stuff
A little bit about wellbeing

Importance of communication

• Four ways of responding, and “active constructive responding” has been shown to build solid, strong and lasting relationships the best:
  
  • **Active Constructive Response** involves expressing enthusiastic positive support = “That’s really great. Your wife will be pretty proud of you. I know how important that promotion was to you. We should go out and celebrate”. During such communication the person is maintaining eye contact and displaying positive emotion, such as laughing or smiling.
  
  • **Active Destructive Response** involves expressing a derogatory or critical response = “That sounds like a lot of responsibility to take on. There will probably be more stress involved in the new position and potentially longer hours at the office”. The person is displaying negative emotions, such as frowning or anxiety.
  
  • **Passive Constructive Response** involves showing benign disinterest = “That’s good news”. The person is displaying little nonverbal communication.
  
  • **Passive Destructive Response** involves distancing or failing to respond = “What are we doing Friday afternoon?” The person does not acknowledge the good news, little eye contact, and may be turning away or leaving the room.
  
• Using active constructive responding is a good way to convey understanding, validation and caring, and to increase the wellbeing of your existing friends, as well as to make new friends.
A little bit about wellbeing

Discomfort

• Embrace negative emotions – they are functional.
• Embrace discomfort – chances are the best days of your life to date included an element of discomfort.
A little bit about wellbeing

Data driven decision making.
Wrapping up now...
A little bit about wellbeing

Peak-end theory

• Peak-end theory states that people’s judgments of their overall experience (like of this 60 minute talk) is greatly influenced by the peak of their experience, and how it ends.

• It has to do with our memory of experiences...
A wellbeing overview...
A little bit about wellbeing

• Invest time and effort in family connections.
• We are social creatures so be enmeshed in a community of friends - deep and meaningful relationships.
• Know your personal values and live by them. Similarly, know your purpose and what derives meaning for you.
• Know you personal strengths and find ways to exercise them every day.
• Develop and optimistic thinking style.
• Invest your money in experiences rather than things.
• Be in work or study, and work or study that you enjoy.
• Be grateful.
• Savour the now regularly – rather than the past or future.

• Slow down and do less – perhaps meditate?
• Be curious.
• Monitor your wellbeing.
• Look after your health (the below 5 can make approximately 14 years difference to your life expectancy).
  • Eat real food – not too much, and mostly plants (LCHF).
  • Exercise regularly – and different types: aerobic, resistance, flexibility, balance.
  • Drink alcohol in moderation.
  • Don’t smoke.
  • Get enough quality sleep.

Caveat: Genetics and upbringing also make a slight bit of difference, but since you can’t do too much about those, don’t worry about them...
Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Some of your new skills / strategies / learnings

To take away today:

• Geelong three breaths is portable.

• Happiness is not a spectator sport - hard work required.

• Wield your strengths – they are paths to engagement and enjoyment. You can only be at your best when using your strengths...

• The ‘five ways to wellbeing’ teaches us there are many and multi-synergistic pathways to wellbeing – identify yours...

• Active constructive responses build bonds between people.

• Plan for a good day at work; know what that looks like...

• Discomfort is not necessarily bad for us.

• Data-driven decision making – start with tracking your wellbeing...
Questions?
(or applause/mockery)
Thank you

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