



Should wellbeing be the goal?

Associate Professor Aaron Jarden

Thursday 13th March 2025, 7pm

**WE ARE ALL AIMING FOR WELLBEING,
BUT WHAT IF WE'VE GOT THIS WRONG?**

**WHAT IF THERE IS SOMETHING BIGGER
AND BETTER THAN WELLBEING?**

**WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN
WELLBEING?**

**WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN
WELLBEING?**

Discuss...

WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WELLBEING?

Obeying the law

Paying the bills

Non-maleficence (do no harm)

Acting ethically

The environment

Intergenerational responsibilities (future generations)

Outline...

Today I will suggest that:

- We need to be brave and take an open mind to change.
- We need to think beyond just 'wellbeing'.
- We need to embrace complexity and systems science.

Transilience

Defined as “*taking a leap from one thing or state to another*”.

The etymology of the word comes from the Latin ‘*transiliens*’, which is ‘*to leap across or over*’. It can also mean a transition, a change or variation in a particular state. Much of the writing on transilience is with regard to a change in geological formation, and infers the agility and flexibility required to make such a transition in state. Dictionary synonyms for ‘*transilience*’ include: sudden progress, advance, big change, giant strides, quantum jump.

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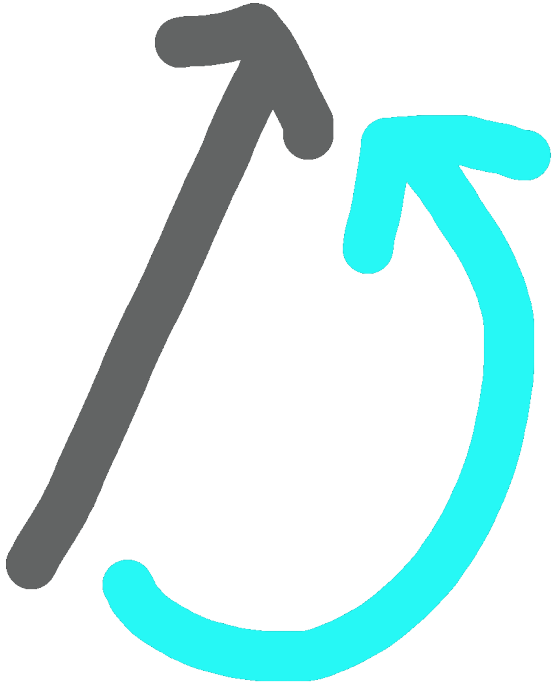
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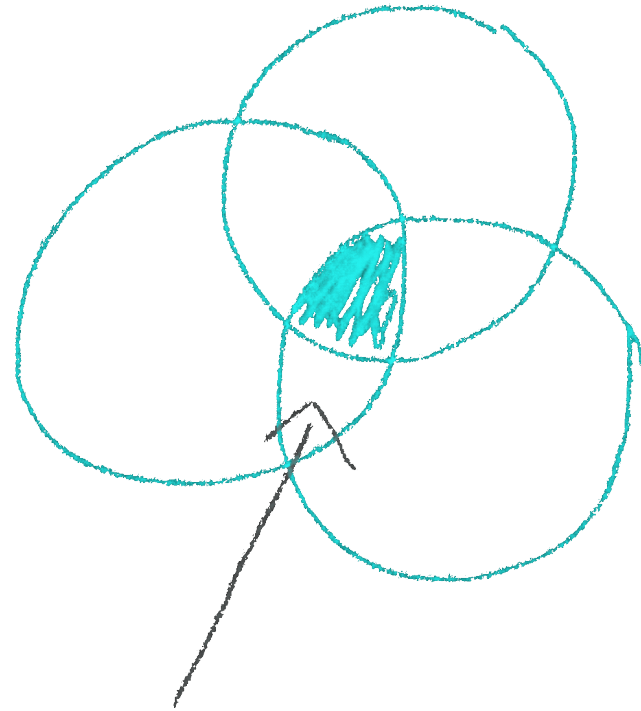
MEDIA PARTNER: **WellBeing**



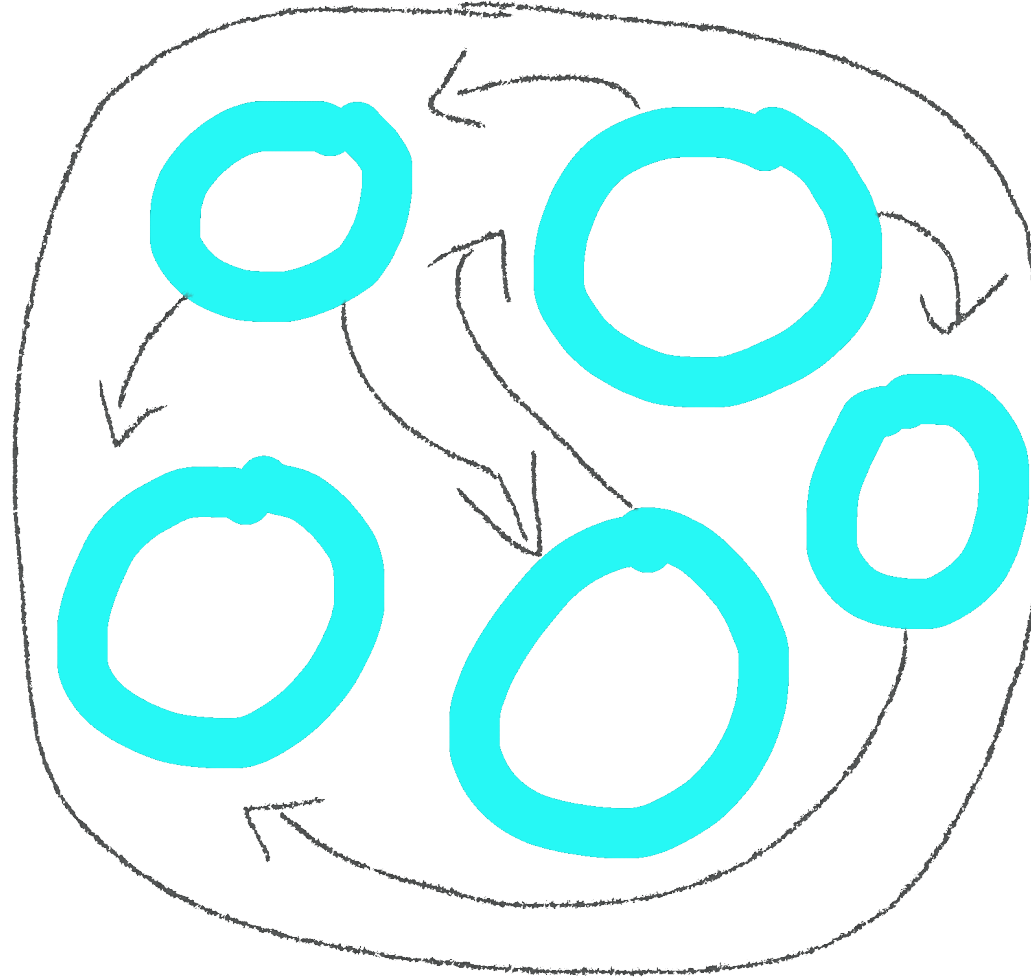
Linear Thinking



Design Thinking



Systems Thinking



**ARE OUR GOOD INTENTIONS FOCUSING
ONLY ON WELLBEING CAUSING MORE /
UNSEEN / UNINTENDED PROBLEMS?**

**WHAT IS THE FOCUS ON WELLBEING AT
THE EXPENSE OF?**

**WHAT IS THE FOCUS ON WELLBEING AT
THE EXPENSE OF?**

DISCUSS...

What is PP trying to achieve?

What is the moonshot goal for positive psychology?



ENPP

Positive psychology can be defined as “The science and practice of improving **wellbeing**” (Lomas, Hefferon & Ivtzan, 2014). The discipline spans a vast array of topics including, but not limited to: **flourishing**, meaning, strengths and positive relationships. Importantly, positive psychology does not just focus on **happiness** and positivity, recognising the inevitability of difficult and challenging circumstances across the lifespan and their role in human development.



OTHERS

Positive psychology aims to expand psychology from its focus on repairing the negatives in life to also **promoting the positives in life**: From what is wrong with individuals to what is right with them.



IPPA

The goal of positive psychology is not to replace therapies and interventions that center on coping with or healing from negative experiences, but instead to expand the protocols and processes for helping people to focus on what they do **well** and enable those individuals to **thrive**.

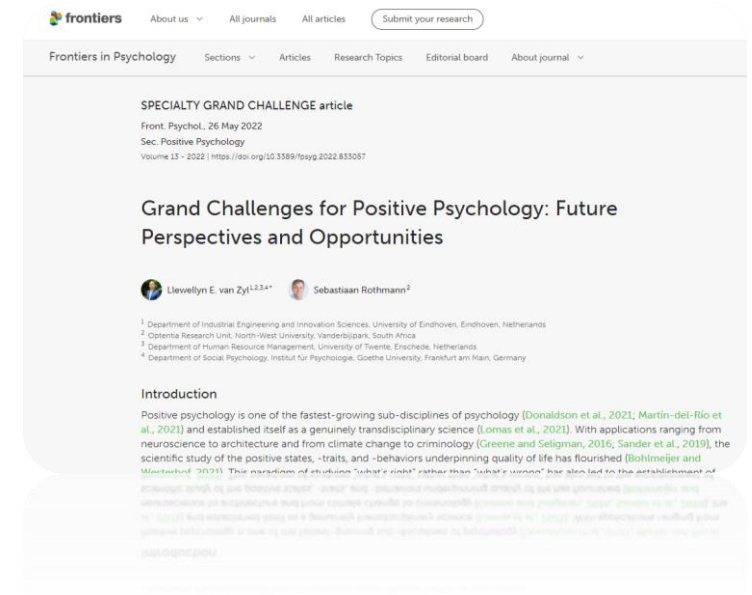
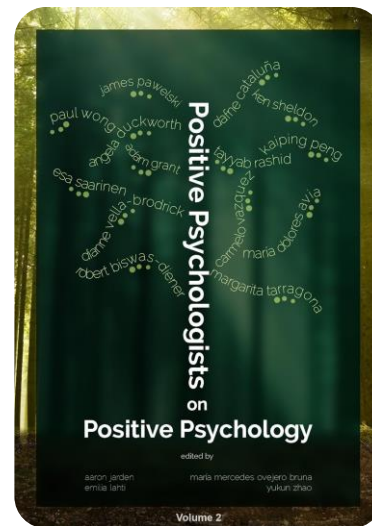
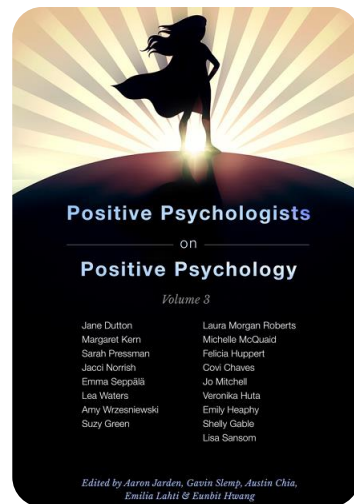
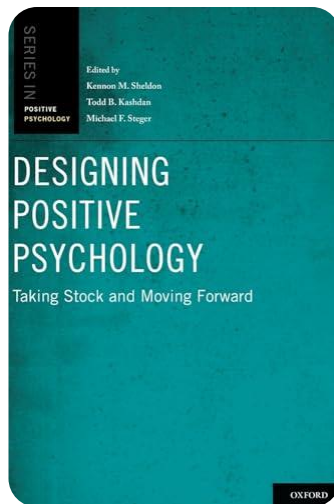


SELIGMAN

Positive Psychology is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and **fulfilling lives**, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

What is PP trying to achieve?

- There have been various books on the topic, as well as journal articles.



**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY'S GOAL IS
CLEARLY WELLBEING OF SOME SORT**

From happiness, to wellbeing, to flourishing and thriving.

WHAT DOES 'WELLBEING' MEAN TO YOU?

WHAT DOES 'WELLBEING' MEAN TO YOU?

Discuss...

Wellbeing

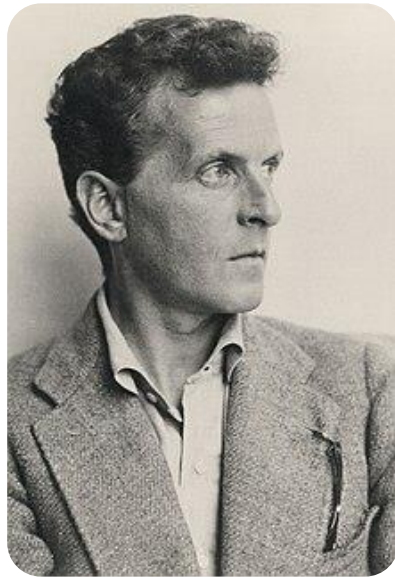
- *“Wellbeing can be understood as how people feel and how they function both on a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.”* - Michaelson, J., Mahony, S., & Schifferes, J. (2012).
- *“How well someone’s life is going for them.”* - Crisp, R. (2014).
- *“the experience of personally valued fulfillment within one’s life”*
Kashdan et al., (2025)
- n. *“a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life”* – APA Dictionary.

Wellbeing

“Wellbeing can be understood as how people feel and how they function both on a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.” - Michaelson, J., Mahony, S., & Schifferes, J. (2012).

Wellbeing

“the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein, 1958, S43).



Wellbeing

Similar terms:

- Wellness.
- Flourishing.
- Thriving.
- Life satisfaction.
- Happiness.
- Quality of life.
- Mental health.
- Subjective wellbeing.
- The list goes on...

Different disciplinary interest:

- Philosophy.
- Economics.
- Literature.
- Religious studies.
- Health sciences.
- Developmental studies.
- Psychology: Positive, Clinical, Counselling, Coaching
Humanistic...

Wellbeing

Coaching, while focusing largely on performance and improvement and goal obtainment, has also recognized the vital role of wellbeing.

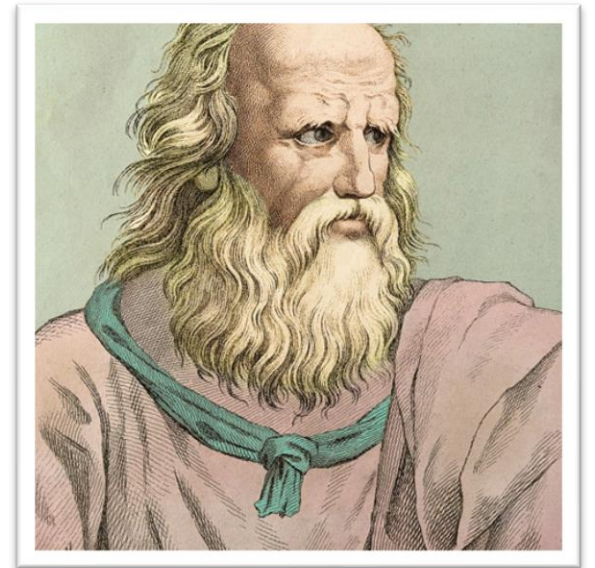
Coaching → Wellbeing

Wellbeing → Performance

The Good Life

The good life is a philosophical concept that describes **the ideal conditions of human existence**, including virtue, wisdom, knowledge, and purpose.

It has ancient roots in Greek philosophy, with the earliest known use of “*good life*” occurring in Plato's dialogue Phaedrus (375 BC).



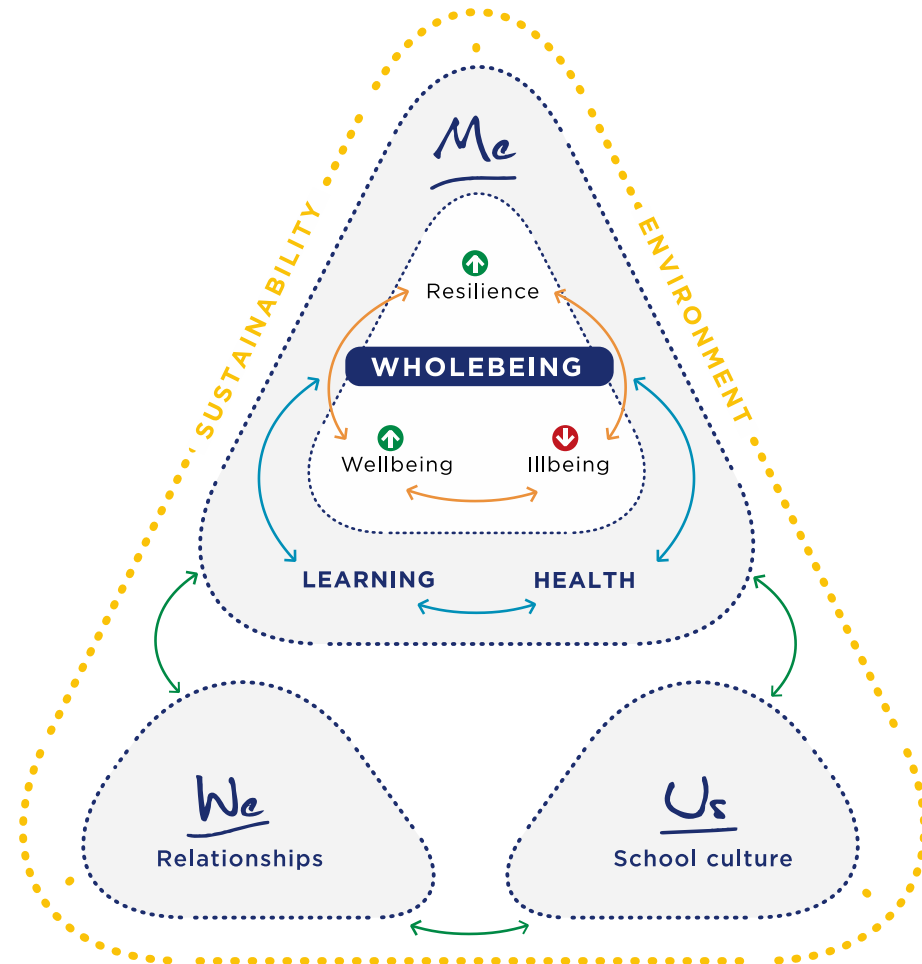
**HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT 'THE GOOD
LIFE' LATELY?**

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LIFE' LATELY?**

Show of hands...

Wholebeing

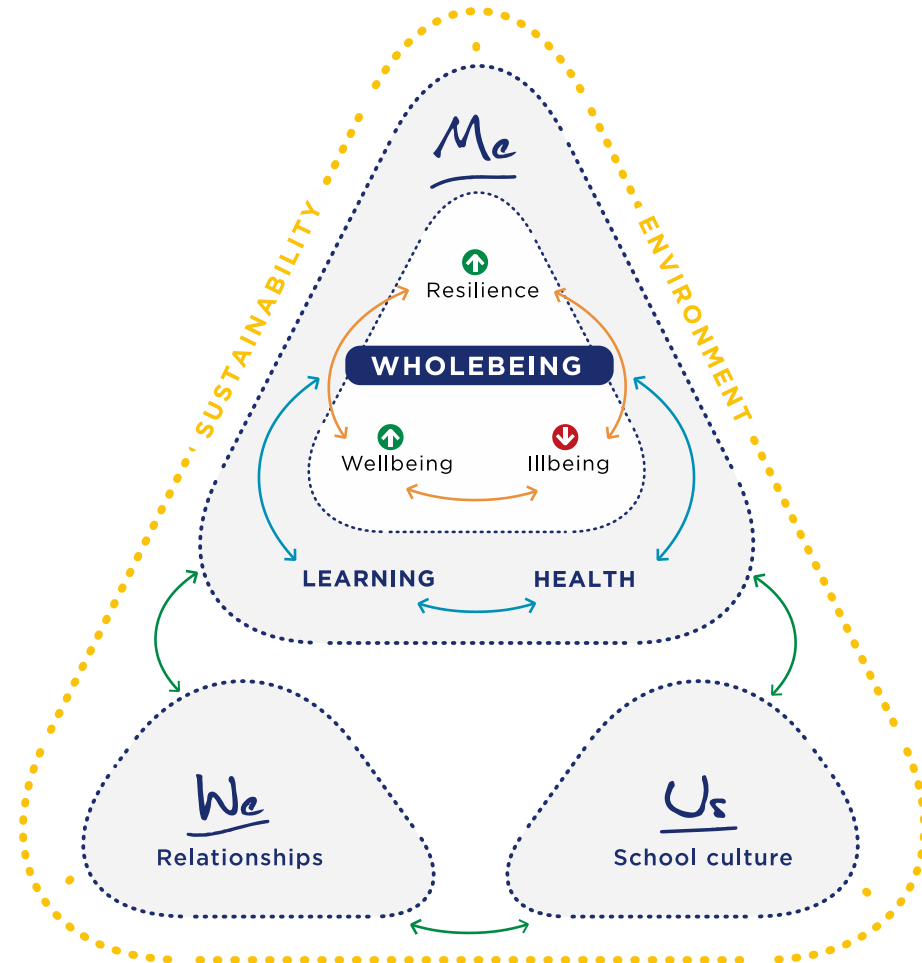
Wholebeing is defined as an emergent phenomenon that is the result of high levels of **wellbeing**, low levels of **illbeing**, and the presence of **resilience**. When wholebeing is present in an individual, this quality allows the individual to be more of who they truly are and to live a sustainable good life; to be authentic, values driven, self and other focused, and perform at their best in various environments. We also posit that greater wholebeing is related to greater **physical health** and **learning**, and vice versa.



Wholebeing

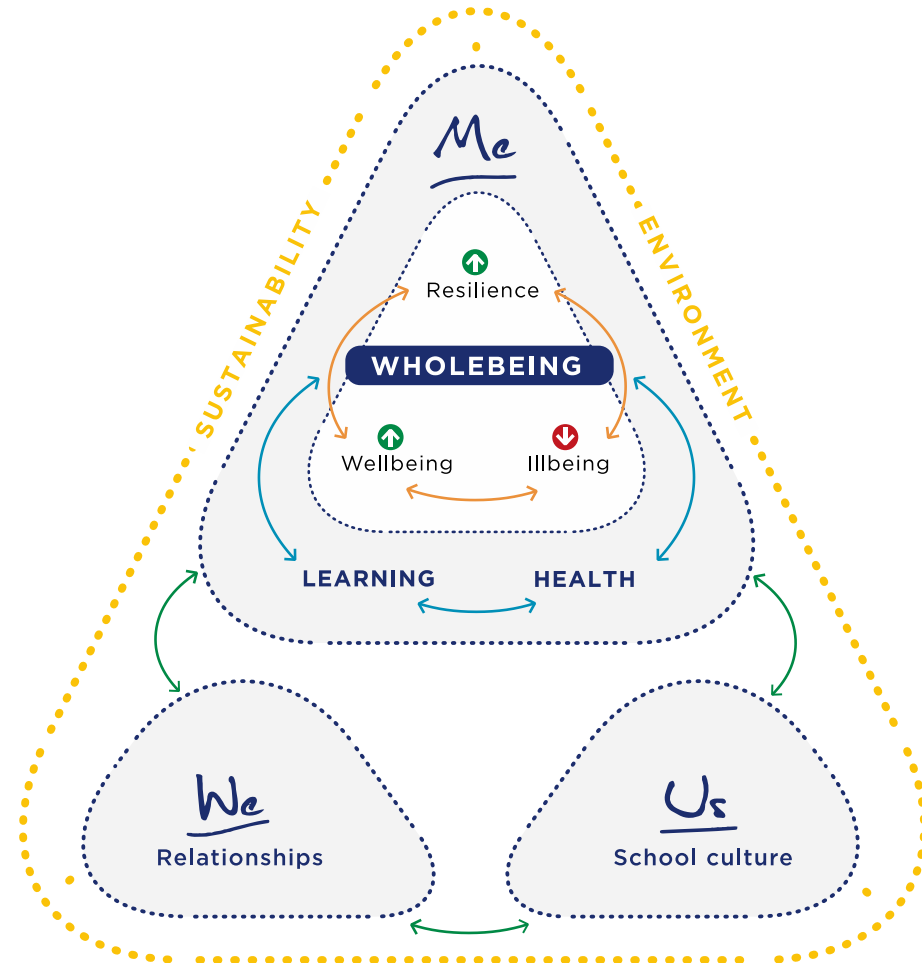
The **Wholebeing Model** encompasses a systems thinking approach, and is underpinned by factors that drive personal growth and performance. It also highlights the persons relationships with others, and to the environment, available resources to them, and the systems they are within (e.g., time, finances, energy).

The **Me**, **We** and **Us** represents the interconnected relationships between different systems levels - how we thrive individually, jointly, collectively and in larger groups.



Wholebeing

Wholebeing specifically looks at how these different areas and leavers interact towards building positive mental health and sustainable flourishing in people's organizations and contexts.



Wholebeing

Created with Andrea Downie

Jarden, A., Downie, A., Finter, K., & Jarden, R. (2024). Next level flourishing in education: A case study of 'wholebeing'. In G. Arslan & M. Yildirim (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive School Psychology Interventions: Evidence-Based Practice for Promoting Youth Mental Health*. pp. 123-144. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54295-4_9



Wellbeing

Back to wellbeing...

A story...



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WHAT IS THE UTOPIAN DREAM?

WHAT IS THE GOOD LIFE?

WHAT END STATE DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

WHAT IS THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN?

WHAT IS

DREAM?

WHAT END S

TO ACHIEVE?

WHAT IS TH

WANT TO LIVE

CREATING

THE

WORLD



WE WANT
TO LIVE IN

How Positive Psychology Can
Build a Brighter Future

Bridget Grenville-Cleave,
Dóra Guðmundsdóttir, Felicia Huppert,
Vanessa King, David Roffey,
Sue Roffey and Marten de Vries



Sue Roffey and Marten de Vries
Vanessa King, David Roffey,
Dóra Guðmundsdóttir, Felicia Huppert,
Bridget Grenville-Cleave



**WE NEED TO FOCUS MORE ON WHAT
SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR POSITIVE
PSYCHOLOGY**

**AND HOW THIS SUCCESS HELPS WITH
REAL WORLD PROBLEMS!**

**AND HOW THIS SUCCESS HELPS WITH
REAL WORLD PROBLEMS!**

**THIS SUCCESS MAY MORE THAN JUST
“WELLBEING”**

Concluding...

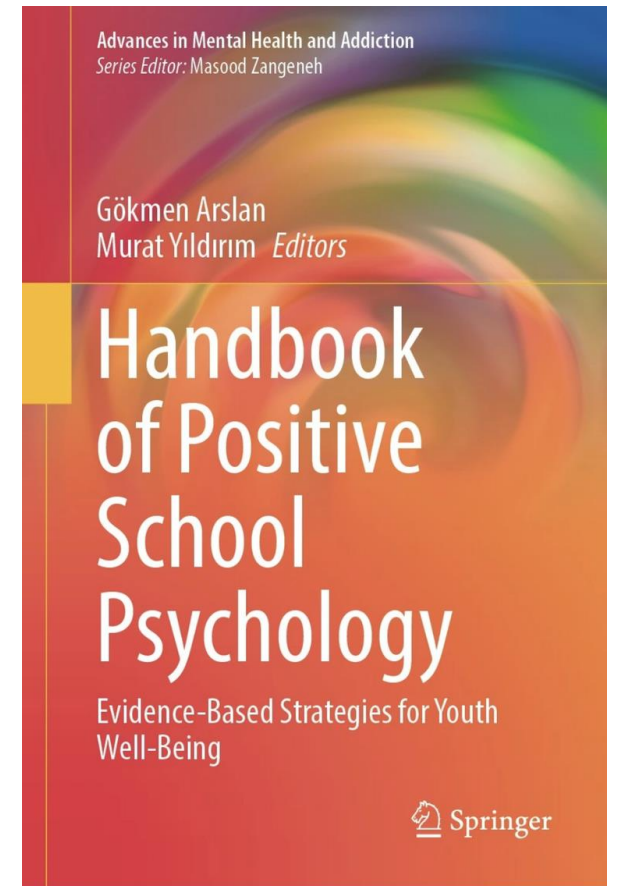
Today I have suggested that:

- We need to be brave and take an open mind to change.
- We need to think beyond just 'wellbeing'.
- We need to embrace complexity and systems science.

Credits...

Organisations:

- Strathcona Girls Grammar
- University of Melbourne
- Project Thrive
- British School Jakarta



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Thank You

Q & A

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