

Why wellbeing is an inside job

Why wellbeing is an inside job explains the research that shows why wellbeing flourishes from within us – from the inside out and helps readers understand how to grow their state of wellbeing. As Daniel Goleman **says**, “We can’t chase it. We can’t buy it. But we can train our mind, body and heart to develop the ‘muscles’ that enable each of us to be our very best”.

Let’s begin by unpacking wellbeing and then look at how to achieve it.

The key concept

Wellbeing is now a well but often loosely used word. It is an active, vibrant state of conscious attention.

In Japanese, a similar idea is *Genki*, a force that permeates all aspects of human life. Others refer to *flourishing* or *thriving*.

元気

Japanese Genki – The font of energy, spirit and mind

Social scientists measure wellbeing as an index (1). This measurement encompasses five components: Purpose, Social, Financial, Community, and Physical.

Individual wellbeing is a state of equanimity, a form of happiness that does not depend on external circumstances or

what others do and say. When you enjoy wellbeing, you’re in an *internal state where you continuously remind yourself you are okay just as you are* (2). Wellbeing is more encompassing than happiness, as used by **Martin Seligman**. Happiness, particularly the pleasure element, is transient. Wellbeing is enduring once achieved.

Achieving wellbeing

1. **Take ownership**

It’s been said no-one can give you wellbeing. You have to take ownership through a combination of cognitive control and the feeling of mastery. Practising self-belief is like lifting weights in the gym. Train your mind to think positively, ‘*I can do this*’. And when you *feel* you’re in charge, you are less vulnerable to being buffeted by self-doubt and reluctance to try. Your thoughts and feelings reinforce each other positively (or negatively).

2. **Be mindful**

It’s very hard to be motivated when your stress levels are rising, you’re feeling threatened, you’re making decisions on the run, and your trust in others is plummeting. In short, you are fragile. All the evidence points to being mindful as *the* way to prevent this from happening. Mindfulness enhances your self-awareness, your empathy and your ability to be present for another person. The resources from **Headspace** are helpful for learning how to become mindful.

3. **Relax and pay attention**

Traditional schooling teaches us to ignore X so you can focus on Y. This is an over-simplification in today’s executive world. There are situations where you need to allow your mind to wander freely and incubate creative thoughts, and at other times you need to pay razor-sharp attention to one thing at a time. The point is to be relaxed and ‘ambidextrous’, knowing which ‘hand’ to use in a given situation.

More on this topic

Ultimate wellbeing has nothing to do with what’s outside us, an **interview** with Daniel Goleman by Six Seconds’ CEO Josh Freedman

(1) The governments of Bhutan and New Zealand do this to complement the economic measurement of GDP

(2) **David Buttifant** quoting Daniel Goleman