

Traditionally, psychology practice and research have tended to concentrate on what can go wrong with people and how this can be remedied. A lot of work has been done on things such as neuroses, addictions, depression and other disorders.

The Psychology of Wellbeing

Professor Patrick W. Jordan
Fellow, Royal Society of Medicine



In recent years however, a new branch of the discipline has emerged. 'Positive Psychology' is the study of human wellbeing. It looks at the factors which enable us to be happy, healthy and fulfilled, to perform at our best and to flourish in all areas of our lives.

Research within the field of positive psychology has revealed that people with a high level of wellbeing tend to have the following characteristics.

Taking responsibility

Those who believe that they have control over how their lives turn out tend to have a higher sense of wellbeing than those who don't. This is, in part, because they tend to have a greater sense of empowerment than those who are 'fatalistic'.

People who believe that they are in control of their destinies also tend to take better care of their health. They recognise that things such as their diet, lifestyle and exercise regimes will have a direct effect on the quality of their lives and therefore they are more likely to pay attention to these things.

Goal setting

Those who have clear goals are more likely to have a sense of purpose and direction in their lives than those who don't. Having goals enables people to focus their energy on the things that are really important to them in their jobs, relationships, leisure time and all other aspects of their lives.

Without goals there is a danger that our energy will

become diffused and dissipated, that we will drift, lack a sense of achievement and ultimately end up frustrated. Rather than being constantly caught up in the rush of life, we need to take time to think about what is important and meaningful to us and what we really want to do with our lives.

Being positive

Being positive and having high levels of optimism are traits that are highly correlated with wellbeing. Those who believe that their lives will turn out well



Persevering intelligently

Getting the most out of life and maintaining a high level of wellbeing requires persistence and determination. We need to work at all the things that are important in life – staying fit and healthy, having good relationships, doing well in our career. Whatever we do, we will inevitably face setbacks along the way, whether in relationships, jobs or other areas of our lives. Wellbeing can come from having the persistence to keep going in the face of adversity.

However, achieving wellbeing also requires a flexible and intelligent approach to life. If a course of action doesn't work we need to find effective

found to be very beneficial to our sense of wellbeing.

However, it is not just in our personal lives that relationships are important. If we have a good atmosphere at work and get on well with our colleagues, then we are likely to be far happier and more productive in the workplace.

Having an awareness of these five principles and applying them consistently to our lives is likely to have a significant effect on how well our lives turn out and on the level of wellbeing that we experience.

Psychology has always been good at helping us to address our problems – now it is starting to teach us how to live life to the full.

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and that they will succeed in the things that are important to them tend, unsurprisingly, to be happier and healthier than those that don't.

However, it is not only what happens to us that determines our wellbeing but also how we interpret and respond to it. If we see the world as basically a good place and people as generally decent, we are likely to have a far greater sense of wellbeing than if we think of it as a threatening place full of people who are only looking out for themselves.

alternatives, rather than continuing to 'bang our heads against a brick wall'.

Connecting with people

None of us live in isolation and our wellbeing relies on having effective relationships with others. Good friendships provide us with social support in good times and bad. Our good times are better and our bad times are less bad when we share them with others. Having a happy marriage or long-term relationship has also been

Professor Patrick W. Jordan is a world-renowned expert in the area of Positive Psychology. He has lectured on the subject of wellbeing at conferences, seminars and events all over the world. He is a policy advisor to the National Health Service and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Information

For more information about the principles of success and wellbeing see Patrick's website: www.patrickwjordan.net