



5 secrets to happiness



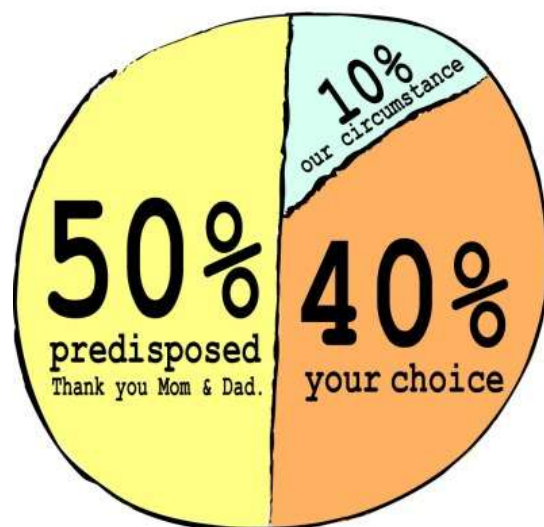
MOUNT BARKER
DISTRICT COUNCIL

5 Secrets to Happiness

What makes us happy?

Is it being attractive, having lots of money, a prestigious job and having all the mod cons?

Not according to research. A number of studies since 1971 have shown that our circumstances don't account for most of our happiness. Through her studies American psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky, developed a theory called the 'happiness pie', which attributes happiness to three factors in different proportions:



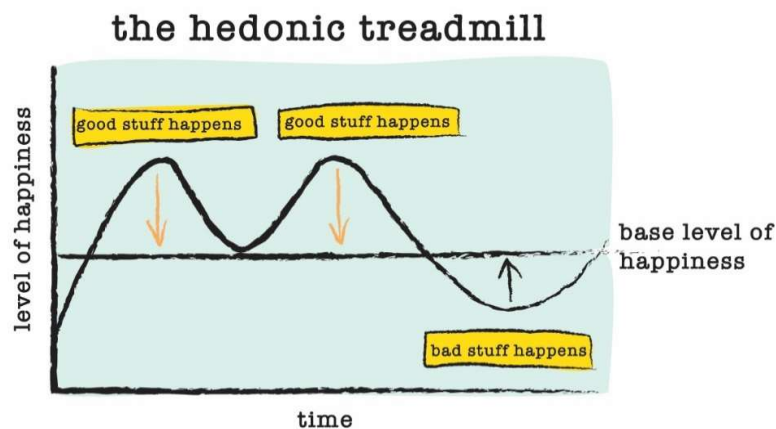
(1)

So 50% of our happiness can be attributed to genetics, 10% to our circumstances and 40% is within our control through our attitudes and actions.

Growing research suggests that each person is born with a particular 'happiness set point' — a baseline for happiness to which you return, even after major setbacks or triumphs.

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Our level of happiness may change in response to life events, but then almost always returns to the 'happiness set point' as we become accustomed to those events and their consequences over time.



(2)

The good news is that 40% is within our power to control! We can increase our happiness through our thoughts, actions and attitudes! (3)

Can we increase happiness in the long-term or are we stuck with our 'happiness set point'?

In 2005, two psychology professors, Frank Fujita and Ed Diener ran a study over 17 years to examine changes in the baseline level of wellbeing in a large sample of German people.

They found that even though there was significant stability in the happiness assessments, 24% of participants still experienced a significant change to their happiness level. (4)

So it seems that we can shift our 'happiness set point'!

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Are we really talking about happiness?

Being 'happy' or 'happiness' is a transient or momentary state that describes your emotional (or psychological) frame of mind at that moment in time

In contrast, 'wellbeing' describes a more comprehensive and stable view of your current mental state, and is comprised of multiple factors that each contribute to your overall health and functioning. This means that happiness, while being crucial, only forms a part of your wellbeing – it can contribute to your life satisfaction but is not sufficient on its own to help you flourish. ⁽⁵⁾

So happiness is one part of wellbeing but the other part is about health and functioning well.

So how do we increase happiness?

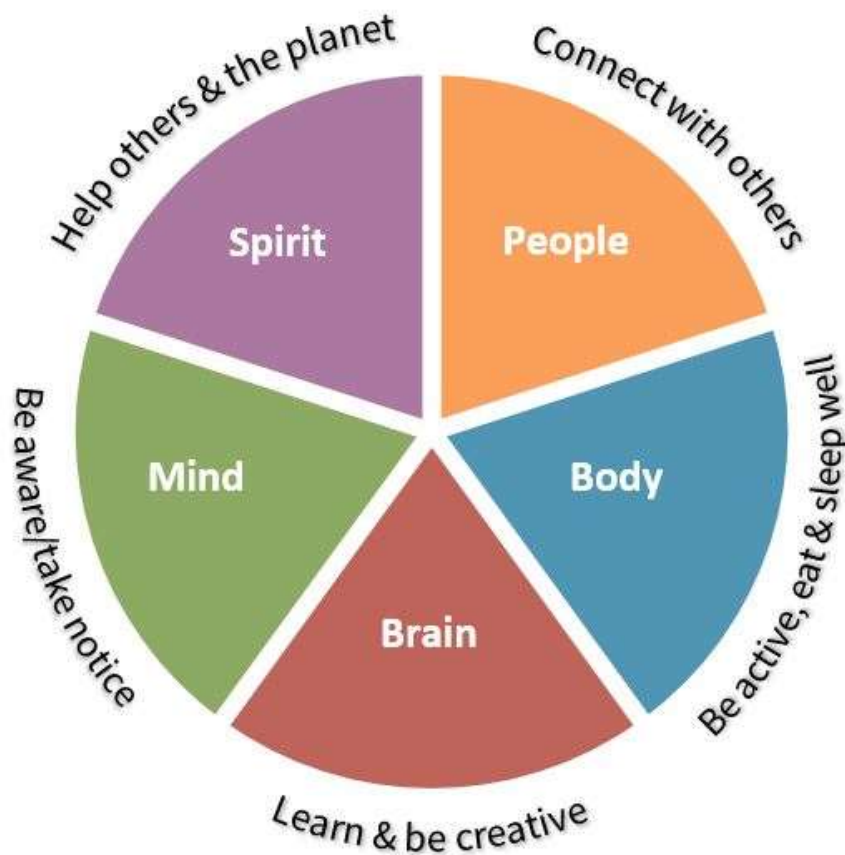
In the UK, the Government Office of Science commissioned the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project to develop 'five ways to wellbeing': a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing and happiness.

The five ways they identified are connect, be active, learn, take notice and give.

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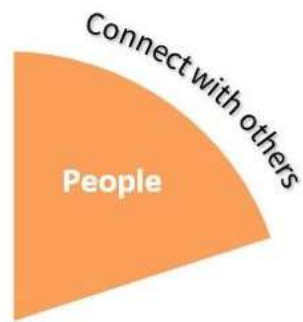
Other research has also identified sleep well, eat well and take care of the planet as other activities that improve wellbeing. The ‘five ways’ can form a wellbeing wheel.

The Wellbeing Wheel



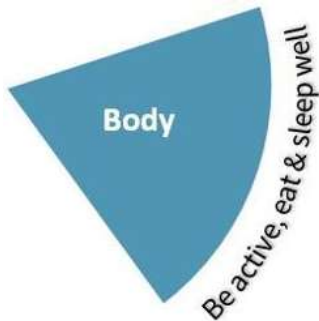
Each segment of this Wellbeing Wheel is briefly explained on the following page.

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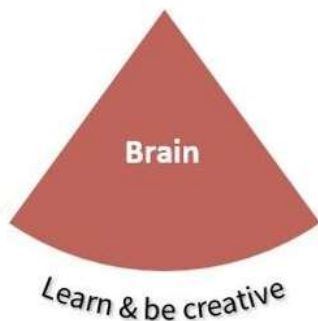
Connect with Others

Close relationships can add up to 7 years to our lives. That's the same benefit as giving up smoking!



Be Active, Eat & Sleep Well

Great for our physical bodies but they are also linked to good mental and brain health (moods and cognitive function).



Learn & Be Creative

When we have new experiences and learn, we generate new brain cells and neural connections, whatever our age.



Be Aware/Take Notice

Studies show that being 'mindful' enhances well-being and savouring 'the moment' can reaffirm your life priorities.



Help Others & The Planet

Scientific evidence shows that there is a virtuous circle: Helping others makes us happier. Happier people tend to help others more.

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Wellbeing Wheel Activity

How can the Wellbeing Wheel help to improve our wellbeing and happiness?

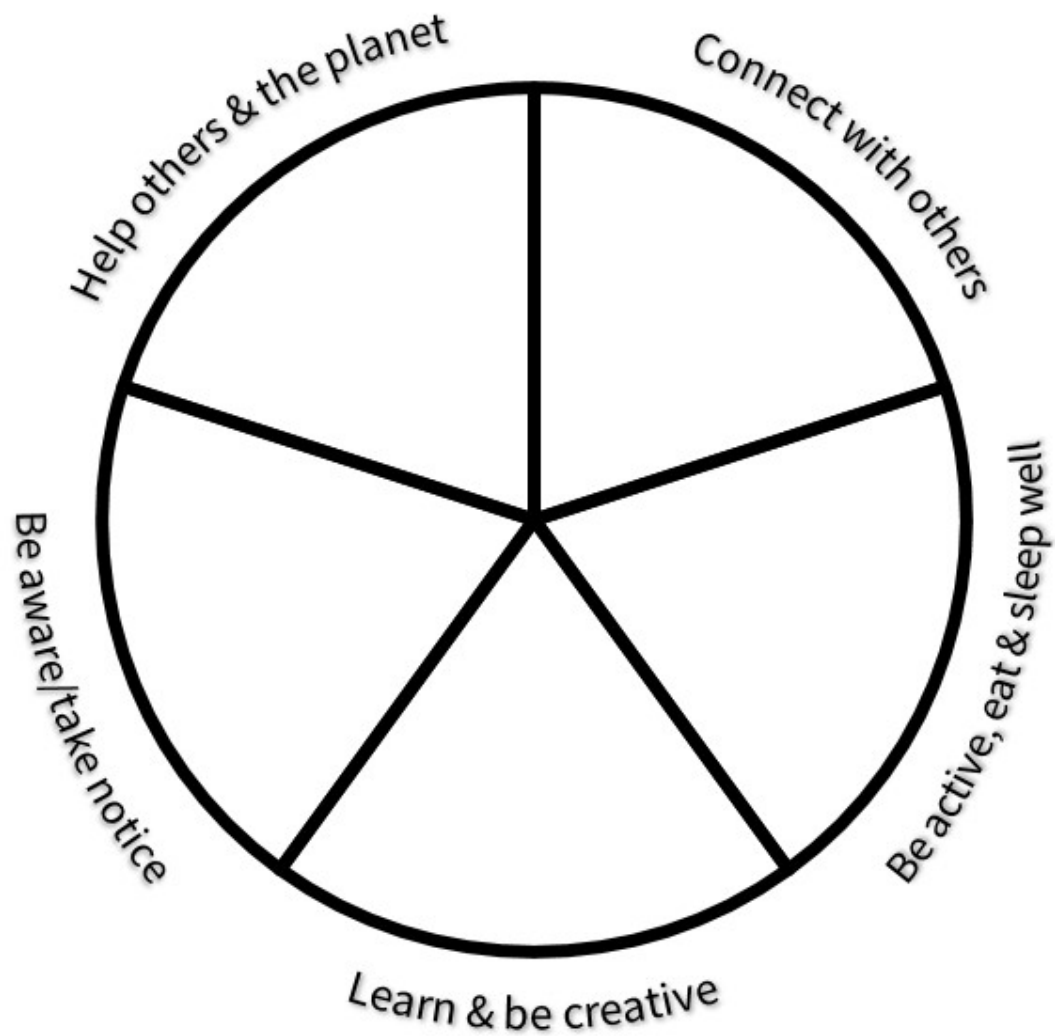
This activity enables us to reflect and assess our wellbeing and take action to increase our wellbeing and happiness

1. Taking 0 as the centre, and 10 as the outer edge of the circle, rank how satisfied you are with each area of your life now by drawing a line through the segment (e.g. if you mark something as 5 out of 10, then draw your line through the segment half way between the centre and the circumference).
2. Colour in that part of the segment if you like!
3. The new perimeter you have just drawn represents your wheel of wellbeing. Is it a bit flat on one or more sides?
4. Identify those areas that you might want to start to develop in the future and mark them with an asterisk (*).

(see example on page 10)

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My Wellbeing Wheel



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Smart Actions

Based on your Wellbeing Wheel identify a list of actions you would like to take to improve your wellbeing, particularly in those areas marked with an asterisk (*).

SMART Actions I can take to improve my wellbeing
(SMART stands for:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable (= realistic)

Relevant (= why are you setting this goal)

Time Bound

Some actions may apply to more than one area of wellbeing!
(See example on page 11)

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Smart Actions

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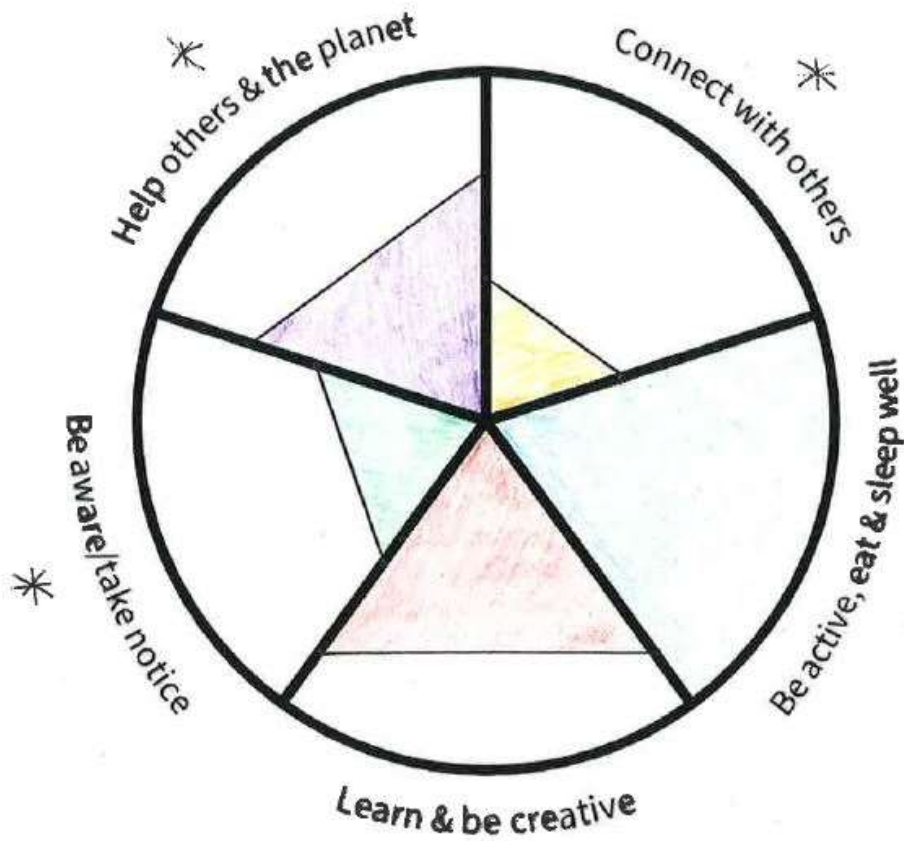
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Wellbeing Wheel Activity (Example)



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SMART Actions (Example)

SMART Actions I can take to improve my wellbeing
(SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant &
Time Bound)

Some actions may apply to more than one area of
wellbeing!

Once a month organise a catch up with a friend(s)

At the end of each day think of three good things that
happened that day.....

Do one 'random act of kindness' each week

Contact a friend once a month on the phone or on the
Internet.....

Once a week find and cook one new healthy vegetarian
recipe

Make a quilt wall hanging for the front bedroom by the
end of next winter (end August).....

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A close-up photograph of a person's hand painting a wooden easel. The easel is made of light-colored wood. The person is applying a vibrant blue and green paint to a vertical wooden post. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The bottom of the image features a green gradient overlay containing contact information.

**For more information contact Community Programs
by phone on 8391 7234 (9am-4pm Mon-Fri) or email
communityprograms@mountbarker.sa.gov.au**

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