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**Applying the Wellbeing Balance and
Lived Experiences Model to Design
Personalized Wellbeing Interventions**

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Chapter

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Abstract

The WellBalance Institute's Wellbeing Balance and Lived Experiences (WBAL) Model and Assessment is a novel, validated comprehensive tool for measuring positive wellbeing. The assessment measures positive experiences and positive feelings across various activation and arousal levels. Compared to other wellbeing assessments, PERMA+ and WBA-24, the WBAL Assessment demonstrated convergent validity, measuring a similar concept of subjective wellbeing, and also divergent validity as a different construct of wellbeing that measures experiences demonstrated to enhance wellbeing, thereby extending the application utility of these "gold standard" assessments of subjective wellbeing. Findings from a U.S.-based cohort highlight the significance of meaningful connections and purposeful contributions for enhancing wellbeing, and the impact on wellbeing of situational factors such as relationships, parenting and employment, which have a substantially larger effect on wellbeing than age, gender, or income. These findings suggest tangible ways to enhance the wellbeing of subgroups of people with similar life circumstances. By identifying key modifiable sources of wellbeing alongside a spectrum of related positive feelings, the WBAL Assessment enables tailoring of individualized interventions to each person's unique wellbeing profile.

Keywords: subjective wellbeing, positive psychology, human flourishing, balanced wellbeing, wellbeing assessment, mindset, positivity, resilience, mindfulness

1. Introduction

Widely used measures of self-reported subjective wellbeing and flourishing generally focus on observing and quantifying subjective feelings of wellbeing and do not directly measure positive experiences from which those feelings of wellbeing and flourishing may arise. While these assessments have proven to be useful descriptive tools to assess wellbeing and monitor wellbeing longitudinally across populations

and can identify general domains of wellbeing around which to direct interventions, they have limited ability to support the design of personalized interventions around specific positive experiences that have the most potential to improve wellbeing for individuals.

In contrast, the Wellbeing Balance and Lived Experiences (WBAL) Model and Assessment takes an experimental approach to evaluating wellbeing and related feelings of wellbeing, in order to evaluate discrete modifiable sources of wellbeing to develop personalized interventions to improve individuals' wellbeing [1]. By measuring lived experiences over which individuals have a degree of control to change their level of engagement, this new model of wellbeing and corresponding assessment instrument extend the utility of "gold-standard" models of subjective wellbeing by evaluating the self-reported frequency of positive experiences and positive feelings of wellbeing, balanced across a range of activation and arousal levels.

A recent study used the WBAL Model to understand the impact of life situations, including relationship, parenting and employment status on overall wellbeing, as well as the specific sources of – or detractors from – wellbeing across subgroups in different life situations [2]. A key finding of this study is that respondents' life situations impacted wellbeing significantly more than socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, and annual household income. Identifying key opportunities to improve wellbeing in targeted subgroups of individuals with similar life circumstances promises to enhance the design of wellbeing interventions targeted to these subgroups.

Furthermore, the WBAL Assessment defines an individual's highly personalized wellbeing profile, with a quantitative assessment of their overall wellbeing, key sources of their wellbeing, and specific prioritized opportunities to improve their wellbeing. The Assessment also quantifies the breadth of an individual's wellbeing sources, an indicator of wellbeing resilience, as well as overall mindset positivity based on the frequency of positive feelings relative to positive experiences. Because the WBAL Model evaluates a wide range of specific categories of wellbeing contributors, the WBAL Assessment indicates positive experiences to pursue, positive feelings to nurture, and mindful positivity practices that are most likely to improve an individual's wellbeing. The WBAL Method then enables the design of a personalized positivity plan for an individual based on their personal values and aspirations, either as an empowering self-directed program or to inform consultation with professional coaches or therapists.

2. Measuring wellbeing: Limitations of current methods

Advancements in wellbeing research have been significantly facilitated by the development of measures designed to capture its multifaceted and multi-domain nature. The concept of well-being expands upon "wellness," which traditionally refers to physical, mental, social, and spiritual health as a foundation for counseling or medical interventions [3, 4]. While wellness encompasses various health dimensions and lifestyle factors, well-being incorporates subjective evaluations of life satisfaction and personal fulfillment [5].

Numerous self-report instruments exist to measure well-being and related constructs, such as quality of life and wellness, differing in length, psychometric validity, and their underlying conceptual frameworks [6–8]. Well-being is often conceptualized within two primary traditions: hedonic and eudaimonic. The hedonic perspective

defines subjective wellbeing as the balance of positive and negative emotions coupled with life satisfaction [9], focusing on individuals' subjective life evaluations. Measures in this tradition assess the subjective experience of individuals, covering all aspects of life and emphasizing positive measures of well-being [10].

In contrast, the eudaimonic tradition highlights positive functioning and the achievement of a fulfilling, meaningful life. This approach includes domains such as relationships, accomplishment, positive emotion, engagement, and meaning (PERMA) [11–13]. These elements are often measured in combination with negative emotions, physical health, and loneliness, forming the expanded PERMA+ framework.

A comprehensive summary measure of human flourishing – the Flourish Index – incorporates happiness, life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships, with financial and material stability serving as proxies for sustained flourishing [14]. Another well-validated instrument – the Well-Being Assessment – integrates these flourishing domains to assess life satisfaction and evaluation, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and caring, relationships, community and social support, financial evaluation and stability, and overall affect [15].

These psychometric assessments have primarily been used as observational tools to evaluate population-level wellbeing. Applications include longitudinal epidemiological monitoring [16, 17], cross-population comparisons [18–21], and assessing the impact of interventions on population well-being [22–24].

While these “gold standard” assessments of subjective wellbeing have proven to be very useful for quantifying feelings of wellbeing across populations, they do not measure lived experiences that have been demonstrated to improve wellbeing and thus are not able to provide insight into the relationship between feelings of wellbeing and respondents' lived experiences, nor directly identify actionable opportunities to enhance wellbeing through pursuing specific categories of positive experiences [25].

In today's world, modern society and technology conspire with our biology and psychology to pull our lives out of balance. Particularly in Western cultures, which have a generally hedonistic conceptualization of wellbeing, excitement is valued over contentment [26]. Meanwhile, modern media and technology compete for our time and attention [27, 28]. Our daily habits are shaped by evolution which designed our minds and bodies to survive times of scarcity not the abundance we enjoy today, leaving us vulnerable to over-stimulation and over-consumption [29–31]. With declining wellbeing among many sub-populations, such as adolescents and young adults in the United States and Western Europe and increases in the inequity of happiness in every region of the world except Europe [32], there is an urgent need to not only measure wellbeing but also to identify the specific sources of wellbeing changes and relate these to specific modifiable factors in order to design more effective interventions to improve wellbeing for targeted populations and individuals.

3. The wellbeing balance and lived experience (WBAL) model and assessment

The Wellbeing Balance and Lived Experiences (WBAL) Model of wellbeing, illustrated in **Figure 1**, builds upon and integrates the accumulated knowledge of hedonic pleasure and eudaimonic positive functioning and fulfillment to measure the frequency of experiences that produce hedonic and/or eudaimonic feelings of

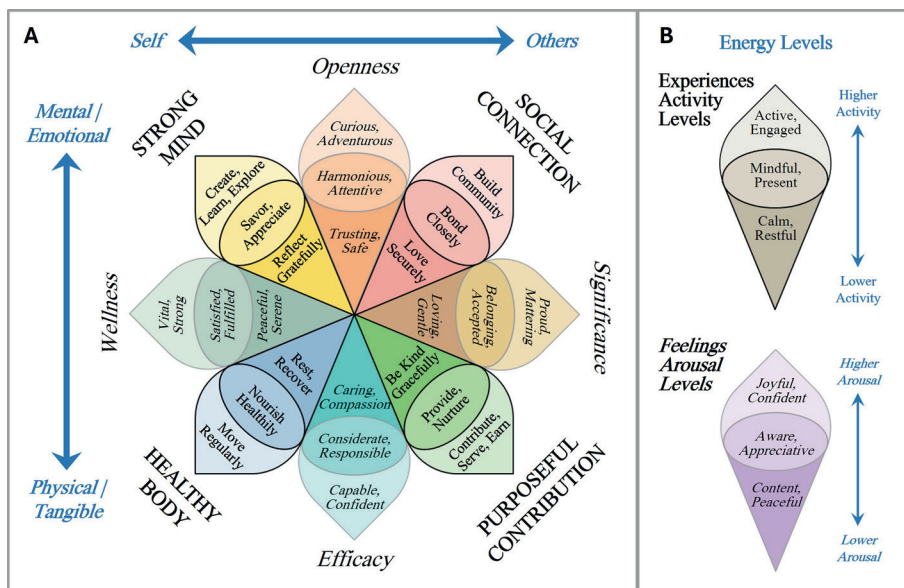


Figure 1. Panel A: The WBAL model. Factors within the experiences domain are denoted with all capitalized letters and factors within the Feelings domain are italicized and denoted with only the first letter capitalized. Panel B: Activation and arousal energy levels within WBAL experiences and feelings domains, respectively.

wellbeing, thereby enabling more comprehensive and granular evaluation of discrete, modifiable aspects of individuals' positive wellbeing [1, 2]. By identifying specific categories of experiences more likely to improve feelings of wellbeing, the aim of the WBAL Assessment is to enable development of more effective personalized plans to improve positive wellbeing for individuals or groups with similar characteristics.

Specifically, the WBAL Model has been designed to extend the utility of previous wellbeing assessments along three dimensions:

1. Evaluate lived experiences that have been demonstrated to correspond with feelings of wellbeing
2. Assess feelings and experiences with an even balance of low, moderate, and high arousal and activation levels
3. Include a full range of positive experiences and feelings previously demonstrated to contribute to positive wellbeing.

Respondents are prompted to subjectively self-assess their recent frequency of specific categories of positive experiences and positive feelings. Frequency is not an objective quantitative metric tailored to each prompt, but rather a subjective self-assessment on a 5-point Likert scale (rarely, sometimes, often, usually, and very often).

Drawing together findings across positive psychology and wellbeing fields of research, the WBAL Model posits that our subjective sense of wellbeing arises from positive life experiences including caring for ourselves mentally and physically by attending to our minds and bodies, while engaging with others emotionally and

tangibly by nurturing positive social relationships and engaging in purposeful activities that contribute to others' wellbeing. Each category of positive experiences corresponds with a body of evidence supporting the positive impact of these activities and experiences on wellbeing [2]. Additionally, the WBAL Model aims to encompass the full range of hedonic and eudaimonic positive experiences and feelings, which balances mental and physical activity and stimulation with savoring and mindful engagement, and with rest and reflection [1].

These three dimensions of the WBAL Model of positive experiences that contribute to positive feelings of wellbeing are represented by the WBAL Lotus as depicted in **Figure 1**:

1. Balance positive experience and feelings directed towards self and others (x-axis)
2. Balance mental/relational and physical/tangible positive experiences and feelings (y-axis)
3. Balance active, mindful and calm activities and feelings (z-axis, from the outer to inner circles of the lotus)

Together, these dimensions create 12 “wellsprings” of wellbeing, categories of positive experiences that have been demonstrated to improve subjective feelings of wellbeing, in turn represented by 12 “blossoms” of flourishing, the categories of positive feelings that collectively represent the many facets of human flourishing and overall wellbeing.

A study validating the WBAL Model [1] demonstrated that more frequent positive experiences correspond with more frequent positive feelings, and that together, these correspond closely with an individual's self-reported overall wellbeing. Additionally, specific types of frequent positive experiences were shown to be more likely to correspond with specific types of frequent positive feelings, in accordance with their spatial relationships in the graphical lotus depiction of the model [1]. Furthermore, having more categories of frequent positive experiences and feelings corresponds with increased overall wellbeing, consistent with an upward spiral of positivity as predicted by the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions [33, 34].

The WBAL Model is illustrated in **Figure 1**, Panel A as a lotus flower (WBAL Lotus) that interweaves items of positive experiences with items of related positive feelings. WBAL scores represent averages of all items overall and within two domains of positive Experiences and positive Feelings, with 10 factors including four Experiences factors (Body, Mind, Connection, and Purpose), four Feelings factors (Wellness, Openness, Significance, and Efficacy), and two additional factors assessing the overall balance of Feelings Arousal levels and Experiences Activation levels.

Each factor contains three items representing low, moderate and high Arousal and Activation levels within the factor. As shown in **Figure 1**, Panel B: Experiences Activation levels include Active/Engaged, Mindful/Present, and Calm/Restful. Feelings Arousal levels include Joyful/Confident, Aware/Appreciative, and Content/Peaceful. Each discrete energy level within a factor is a distinct source of wellbeing that corresponds to an item on the WBAL Assessment (WBAL-30).

The WBAL Assessment (WBAL-30), shown in **Figure A1** in the Appendix, measures the frequency of distinct items of positive Experiences and positive Feelings related to wellbeing in the WBAL Model. The WBAL Assessment has 30 items scored

on a 5-point Likert Scale (from 0 to 4) measuring respondents' self-reported subjective frequency of these positive Experiences and Feelings over the past 2 weeks (0 = rarely, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = usually, 4 = very often). A total of 12 of these items correspond with each Activation level within each Experiences factor, and 12 of these items correspond with each Arousal level within each Feelings factor. Additionally, the WBAL Assessment includes three items to assess the overall range of Experience Activation levels and three corresponding items to assess the overall range of Feelings Arousal levels.

The WBAL Model is thus a comprehensive integrative subjective construct of positive aspects of wellbeing that:

1. expands the assessment of hedonic pleasures and positive affect by evaluating multiple distinct categories of positive feelings across the full range of emotional arousal levels, and
2. extends the eudaimonic assessment of human flourishing by integrating positive experiences alongside subjective feelings associated with various aspects of fulfillment, flourishing, and satisfaction with life.

In order to embody these features within the limits of a feasible assessment tool, the WBAL Model focuses on the frequency of emotions with positive valence and does not directly evaluate emotions with negative valence, such as loneliness, anger, or sadness. The WBAL Model also does not directly assess objective life situations, such as financial security, food security, or physical disability, that have been shown to impact wellbeing or flourishing but are not specific feelings or experiences *per se*.

3.1 A valid, comprehensive measure of positive wellbeing

In a study with 496 evaluable subjects [1], the WBAL Assessment was demonstrated to be a reliable and valid instrument to comprehensively measure positive aspects of wellbeing and evaluate multiple modifiable sources of individuals' wellbeing to guide the design of personalized assessment and intervention programs to enhance positive wellbeing. A confirmatory factor model showed good fit, indicating that each of the model factors are related but distinct, and all items load significantly onto their factors [1]. As shown in **Table 1**, the WBAL Assessment demonstrated high internal consistency and internal validity across wellbeing factors and Feelings and Experiences domains.

Experiences		Feelings	
Overall	0.94	Overall	0.96
Body	0.61	Wellness	0.85
Mind	0.70	Openness	0.82
Connection	0.75	Significance	0.86
Purpose	0.74	Efficacy	0.82

Table 1.
Correlations of WBAL domains and factors with overall WBAL score. Values are Pearson's *r*.

The WBAL Assessment also demonstrated strong convergent validity in comparison to the PERMA+ Profiler [11] developed by the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center to measure the five pillars of wellbeing identified by Dr. Martin Seligman, as well as the Wellbeing Assessment for Adults 24-item (WBA-24) [35] developed collaboratively by The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100 Million Healthier Lives metrics team. This harmonized consolidation of wellbeing assessments incorporates both the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's Wellbeing Assessment for Adults 12-item (WBA-12) [36] and the Harvard Flourishing Index [12]. Correlating strongly with these measures, as shown in **Table 2**, indicates that the WBAL Assessment measures a similar overall concept of wellbeing and flourishing [1].

Discriminant validity of WBAL factors was also demonstrated, with the main difference between instruments being the WBAL Assessment's inclusion of positive Experiences, as shown in **Table 3**, indicating that WBAL represents a different, experiential construct of wellbeing [1].

Each item within each factor representing the energy level of that factor (i.e., Activation levels of Experiences and Arousal levels of Feelings) was highly correlated with its factor. Each assessment item was significantly correlated with other items of the same energy level within the corresponding Experiences and Feelings domain and poorly correlated with different energy levels within each Factor. Each Experiences Activation energy level correlated strongly with the corresponding Feelings Arousal energy level. Correlations between items of different energy levels within each factor were lower than with the factor overall, with the lowest correlations observed between Active and Calm energy levels within each factor, whereas Mindful and Active or Mindful and Calm energy levels were somewhat more highly correlated [1].

	Comparator assessments				
	PERMA+	PERMA [*]	WBA-24	Flourish Index	WBA-12
Overall WBAL	0.80	0.81	0.75	0.77	0.69
Experiences	0.66	0.68	0.62	0.63	0.56
Feelings	0.83	0.84	0.79	0.81	0.73

^{*}PERMA excluding PERMA+ items for health, negative emotion, and loneliness.

Table 2.
Correlations of WBAL overall, experiences, and feelings with previously validated comparator constructs.

	WBAL Experiences with			WBAL feelings with	
	PERMA+	WBA-24		PERMA+	WBA-24
Overall	0.66	0.62	Overall	0.83	0.79
Body	0.45	0.41	Wellness	0.77	0.70
Mind	0.42	0.38	Openness	0.61	0.58
Connection	0.54	0.52	Significance	0.78	0.75
Purpose	0.46	0.46	Efficacy	0.69	0.68

Values are Pearson's *r*.

Table 3.
Correlations between WBAL factors and PERMA+ and WBA-24 domains.

Furthermore, the spatial arrangement of factors in the WBAL Lotus graphical framework accurately represents the relationships between different categories of Experiences and Feelings. Each Experiences factor was more strongly correlated with its two most closely adjacent Feelings factors than with their two more distant Feelings factors. As predicted by the WBAL Model, this indicates closer associations between Experiences factors and Feelings factors that are positioned more closely adjacent in the WBAL Lotus framework [1].

3.2 Extending the utility of existing measures of subjective wellbeing and flourishing

Thus, the WBAL Model and Assessment closely corresponds to, while differing from, these “gold standard” measures of subjective wellbeing and flourishing, extending their utility by identifying specific modifiable categories of experiences to develop personalized interventions to improve individuals’ wellbeing [1].

The WBAL Model enables a nuanced and comprehensive evaluation of wellbeing across various demographic groups and life situations by simultaneously assessing a wide range of positive experiences and feelings across a full range of activation and arousal levels [2]. Unlike existing measures which primarily assess feelings of wellbeing or focus on isolated aspects of wellbeing, the WBAL Assessment integrates both experienced and felt sources of wellbeing. This enables the investigation of relationships among the frequency and breadth of positive experiences and feelings, as well as mindset positivity and range of feelings arousal levels, providing a better understanding of the effects of socio-demographics, lifestyle situations, and other subgroup characteristics on wellbeing [2].

The WBAL Assessment’s ability to measure the number of frequent sources of positive wellbeing, and feelings with positive affect across a range of arousal levels, provides additional insights into the importance of having a breadth of positive experience and feelings with a balance of arousal levels for overall wellbeing. These measures not only serve as useful summaries of overall wellbeing but may also offer promising targets for interventions aimed at enhancing wellbeing [2]. For example, increasing the breadth of frequent positive experiences and feelings while expanding the range of positive feelings across low, moderate, and high arousal levels could be effective generalizable strategies for improving wellbeing.

3.3 Considerations for interpreting and applying the WBAL model

The WBAL Assessment offers a detailed perspective on the relationships between individuals’ Experiences and Feelings, serving as a tool to identify specific gaps in well-being that can inform personalized interventions. However, the WBAL Assessment is only able to measure correlations between positive Experiences and their associated positive Feelings, without establishing causality between these factors. Existing research suggests that causality is likely bidirectional – engaging in more positive experiences has been shown to increase positive feelings of well-being [37–41], while positive affect promotes healthier behaviors [42] and supports well-being and success behaviors [43]. Furthermore, substantial evidence indicates that enhancing mindfulness and participating in mindful activities can significantly improve well-being [44, 45]. Further research is needed to understand underlying causes of changes in wellbeing, mediating factors and potential benefits of individualized interventions for wellbeing.

The WBAL Assessment may be a useful practical tool to more precisely identify gaps in positive well-being for individuals who report low life satisfaction, subjective well-being or positive affect, as measured by abbreviated measures such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale [46], Subjective Happiness Scale [47], or Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) [48]. And because the WBAL Assessment covers such a broad spectrum of categories of positive experiences and feelings without precision within each category, the design of personalized interventions may benefit from further assessment interrogating more specific aspects of well-being indicated by WBAL to be of interest, or using localized or contextual models with greater relevance to the individual's particular situation and context [49, 50].

Because the WBAL Assessment only directly evaluates positive Experiences and positive Feelings, the instrument does not directly measure how negative Experiences and Feelings affect overall well-being. Future studies are needed to evaluate the effect of negative experiences and life stressors on the validity and interpretation of the WBAL Assessment, especially with regard to negative feelings, which have been shown to correlate inversely with positive feelings but coexist with a degree of independence [51].

As with other similar wellbeing assessment tools, WBAL implicitly assumes normative values regarding the meaning of wellbeing. Caution is therefore warranted to avoid normative judgment when interpreting responses of individuals or across populations that may have unique norms and values [49]. The WBAL Model and Assessment do not assign relative significance to any of the aspects of positive well-being measured, so interpretation and application must allow for respondents to assign different degrees of importance to different aspects of their well-being, based on their personal value judgments.

Lastly, despite being a relatively short 30-item questionnaire, the WBAL Assessment encompasses a very wide range of positive experiences and feelings and therefore is inherently complex to interpret and apply to design tailored wellbeing interventions. As described more fully below, to design interventions that can be practically applied, multiple qualitative factors need to be taken into consideration and potential intervention targets may need to be prioritized or staged. Furthermore, this instrument is not intended to replace, but rather supplement and inform, more fully validated methodologies for improving wellbeing. As the psychology and coaching communities gain more experience using this novel tool in practice, more standardized applied approaches will likely need to be developed and validated, and practitioners trained on their use.

4. Applying the WBAL model and assessment to enhance wellbeing interventions for targeted subgroups in differing life situations

4.1 Impact of life situations on overall wellbeing and specific sources of wellbeing

Applying the WBAL Assessment to a US-based cohort of 496 evaluable respondents stratified by age and gender showed that relationship, parenting and employment status significantly impact wellbeing and sources of wellbeing across life situations [2]. The distribution of respondents by category is shown in **Table 4**. These life situations have a more significant effect on overall wellbeing than the demographic variables of age, gender, and household income.

	Category	<i>n</i>	%
All evaluable subjects		496	100%
Gender identification	Male	212	43%
	Female	284	57%
Age range	Young adults (20–29)	92	19%
	Established adults (30–44)	151	30%
	Midlife adults (45–60)	158	32%
	Older adults (61–69)	95	19%
Annual household income	Lower income (\$25 k–\$50 k)	141	28%
	Middle income (\$50 k–\$75 k)	131	26%
	Higher income (\$75 k–\$100 k)	117	24%
	Highest income (\$100 k+)	107	21%
Employment status	Unemployed (and seeking work)	10	2%
	Part-time employed	35	7%
	Self-employed	41	8%
	Student	20	4%
	Full-time employed	265	53%
	Homemaker (not working outside home)	40	8%
	Retired	78	16%
Relationship status	Single (not in a relationship)	80	16%
	Steady relationship	37	7%
	Living together	59	12%
	Married or domestic partnership	282	57%
	Divorced or separated	24	5%
	Widowed	7	1%
Parenting status	No children	182	37%
	Single-parent household (primary caregiver)	28	6%
	Co-parent (split time, custody arrangement)	13	3%
	Two-parent household	151	30%
	Parent with children not home	111	22%

Table 4.
Sample sizes by demographic and life situation category.

Reported wellbeing improved significantly with life situations, including companionate relationships, parenting, and more full employment, that provide greater opportunities for more frequent social connection and purposeful contribution to others' wellbeing, which in turn are associated with increased feelings of significance and efficacy, that is, the ability to positively impact their own and others' lives. In contrast, the impacts of age, gender, and household income on wellbeing as measured by WBAL were relatively small, except for a significant age-related positivity effect observed, with older adults reporting more frequent positive feelings than younger age groups.

4.1.1 Key sources of wellbeing and resilience

A range of positive experiences and feelings has previously been demonstrated in the wellbeing literature to contribute to subjective wellbeing and human flourishing. These include physical and mental wellness, social connection and openness, purposeful experiences, and feelings of significance and efficacy. Furthermore, breadth of positive experiences and feelings, as well as mindset positivity, has been shown to increase subjective wellbeing, human flourishing, and resilience. The WBAL Assessment instrument enables simultaneous study of these sources of positive wellbeing and their inter-relationships for individuals and across groups.

Overall, applying the WBAL Assessment to a US-based cohort [2], the most frequently reported positive experiences contributing to wellbeing among respondents were purposeful contributions, corresponding with frequent feelings of efficacy and significance, as shown in **Figure 2**. In contrast, respondents reported less frequent positive self-care experiences, corresponding with less frequent feelings of wellness, and less frequent social connection. On average, respondents reported having positive feelings more frequently than they engaged in positive experiences, indicating a generally positive mindset.

Physical and mental wellness has been shown to be important aspects of wellbeing. Physical activity is strongly associated with subjective wellbeing, and increasing physical activity improves happiness, positive affect, life satisfaction, and self-esteem [37, 52]. Eating nutritiously is important for maintaining psychological wellbeing [52, 53]. And, sufficient sleep is essential for emotional and physical wellness [52, 54]. Activities that benefit our minds, such as creative activity and behavior [55], flow experiences [56], being in nature [57, 58], esthetic appreciation of art [59], and making or listening to music [60], are each associated with higher wellbeing.

Feelings of meaning, significance and mattering has been shown to be important sources of wellbeing that are interwoven with social relationships [61]. Experiencing meaning in life is an important contributor to wellbeing and health [62] and perceiving life to be meaningful buffers against life stressors [63]. Meaning involves feeling that life matters,

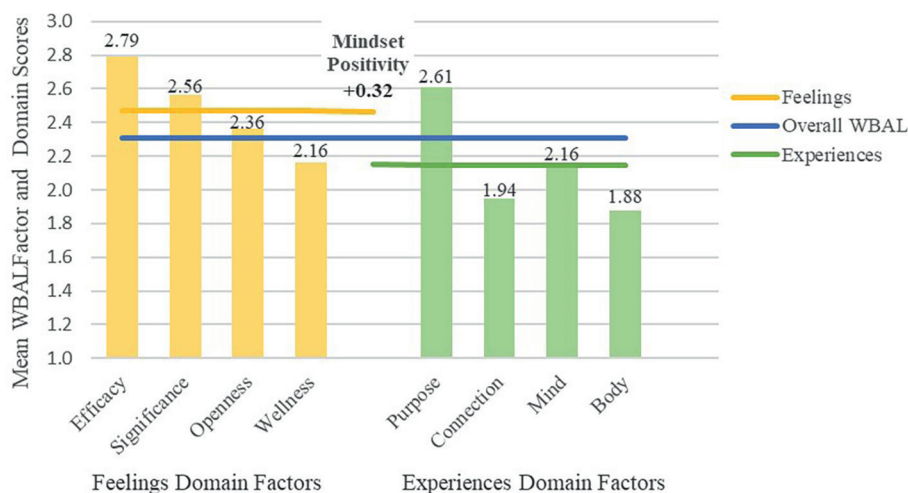


Figure 2.
 Mean WBAL scores by WBAL domain and factor for all respondents.

follows a narrative that makes sense, and has a broader purpose [64]. These three components – significance, coherence and purpose – are each important for feeling that life is meaningful [65]. Having a sense of purpose with coherent life goals provides personal meaning that can be a renewable source of motivation and engagement [66].

Social relationships that entail reciprocally adding value and feeling valued, including self, others, work, and community are essential to feel that our lives have purpose and significance [67]. Previous studies have found that correlations between social connection and wellbeing, across individuals and within individuals over time, depend on both the number of social connections and individuals' evaluation of the quality and supportiveness of these relationships [68]. Meaningfulness involves being a "giver" to others over time [69]. Meaningful participation, a sense of belonging and connectedness are associated with wellbeing [70].

Experiencing a wider range of enjoyable activities with varying activation levels has been shown to be associated with improved psychosocial and physical wellbeing [41]. Participating in a variety of positive activities leads to a broader range of positive emotions, and sustainable happiness is possible through intentional activity changes, rather than changes in life circumstances [71]. According to the hedonic adaptation prevention model, increasing the variety of positive experiences, along with increased appreciation of these positive experiences through savoring and gratitude, reduces hedonic adaptation – the tendency for the degree of happiness derived from the same positive experiences to decrease with repetition- which in turn sustains and increases the stability of wellbeing improvements [72, 73].

Positive mindset practices, such as savoring, gratitude, and compassion, have demonstrated independent associations with more positive wellbeing. Increased savoring of positive experiences has been demonstrated to improve subjective wellbeing [74], including increasing happiness [75] and life satisfaction [76]. Gratitude has been shown to be positively associated with subjective wellbeing [77, 78], as has loving kindness and compassion [79]. Forgiveness is associated with higher subjective wellbeing, greater life satisfaction, and more positive emotions [80]. Mindfulness is an important driver for mindset positivity. Mindfulness practice is associated with both psychological and subjective wellbeing [81], with contemplative practitioners reporting higher wellbeing than non-practitioners [82]. Dispositional mindfulness is associated with more positive mindsets among emerging adult college students [83]. Dispositional mindfulness also appears to reduce stress in the work setting by encouraging decentering and reducing emotional reactivity to stressors, thereby reducing negative affect and interrupting negativity spirals [84].

Feeling a varied range of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, serenity, and pride, has been shown to increase psychological and physical wellbeing [85]. Individuals who feel a variety of positive emotions in response to pleasant daily experiences report higher levels of subjective wellbeing [86]. Recent research has demonstrated the particular importance of lower arousal positive emotional states for wellbeing. For example, contentment and self-acceptance have been shown to be strong predictors of wellbeing and life satisfaction [87], and dispositional mindfulness and serenity are associated with lower stress and increased mental wellbeing [88].

Individuals who more frequently feel positive emotions spanning from low to high arousal levels, exhibit greater resilience and are better able to cope with stress and respond to adverse situations [89]. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that a diverse range of positive emotions broaden individuals' thought-action repertoire, causing them to build more personal resources that encourage exploration and pursuit of more novel positive experiences. This results in even more positive feelings which

can catalyze an upward spiral of positivity that increases psychological resilience and ability to cope with stressors [33, 34].

4.1.2 Indicators of positive wellbeing across life situations and demographics

Multiple key indicators of subjective wellbeing have previously been identified, although the underlying factors driving these differences in wellbeing are poorly understood. These include life situations such as relationship, parenting, and employment status, as well as demographic factors such as age, gender, and annual household income. In addition to confirming multiple previously demonstrated effects in a single instrument, the WBAL Assessment enables more granular evaluation of key wellbeing sources causing differences in overall subjective wellbeing across groups.

Applying the WBAL Assessment to a US-based cohort [2], higher wellbeing was most broadly and significantly associated with being in a companionate relationship and being a parent. Retirees and homemakers reported higher wellbeing, whereas unemployment was associated with lower wellbeing. Wellbeing among older respondents was significantly higher than other age groups, with reported wellbeing being lowest among midlife respondents. There were no significant differences in overall wellbeing between genders or across income levels, although some differences in underlying sources of wellbeing were observed between these groups.

Relationship status has been demonstrated to correspond with significant increases in subjective wellbeing as people move along the continuum from less to more committed relationships. Various components of romantic relationship quality are positively correlated with subjective wellbeing [90]. Married individuals report the highest level of subjective wellbeing, followed in order by individuals in cohabiting relationships, steady dating relationships, casual dating relationships, and individuals who date infrequently or not at all [91].

Marriage has been consistently demonstrated to have beneficial effects for wellbeing [92, 93], with lasting long-term benefits [94, 95], although whether marriage protects wellbeing [96] or is selected and sustained by people with higher wellbeing [97] is less clear. Marriage also helps mitigate mid-life drops in life satisfaction [98]. Positivity resonance, the interpersonal connection characterized by shared positivity, may be a key mechanism for this enhancement of wellbeing through more committed relationships [99].

Consistent with this prior research, being coupled, and particularly being married, improved wellbeing broadly as measured by WBAL [2]. This improvement corresponded with the most positive mindset, most frequently feeling efficacious, significant and well, as well as the most frequent experiences of trusted loving companionship and providing for and nurturing others. In particular, progression of relationship commitment from steady relationship to living together to marriage was associated with significant increases in the frequency of experiences entailing purposeful contributions to others' wellbeing.

As shown in **Figure 3**, wellbeing increased as groups move from being uncoupled to more steady committed relationships, with married respondents (or domestic partners) reporting the highest overall wellbeing and the most sources of wellbeing. Coupled respondents reported significantly higher wellbeing than uncoupled respondents with more positive mindsets and a wider range of sources of positive wellbeing. Coupled respondents also reported significantly more frequent positive feelings overall and across all WBAL factors, particularly feelings of significance and efficacy, with more frequent positive feelings across arousal levels. These coupled respondents



Figure 3. Mean WBAL and WBAL domain scores by relationship status, with Cohen's d effect size for change in the overall WBAL score, number of frequently positive experiences and feelings, and mindset positivity. Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. Symbols for Cohen's d represent statistical significance of the specific Tukey's HSD test.

reported more frequent positive experiences, particularly more frequently spending time with a loving companion, providing for and nurturing others and being calm and restful more often.

Among coupled respondents, those who are married or living together reported significantly more frequent experiences of purposeful contribution than coupled respondents not yet living together. Married respondents reported more frequently reflecting gratefully than other coupled respondents, and feeling efficacious, satisfied and fulfilled more frequently.

Among uncoupled (i.e., single, divorced, and widowed) respondents, there were no significant differences in overall wellbeing, positive feelings, or positive experiences. Divorced respondents reported the highest overall wellbeing among uncoupled respondents, comparable to those who are living with a companion and not yet married, suggesting that it is indeed better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. No significant differences were observed between single and divorced or single and widowed subgroups.

Parenting has also been shown to improve adults' subjective wellbeing [100] and is associated with greater meaning in life, positive emotions, and enhanced social roles, while marital stress can reduce parents' subjective wellbeing [101]. Parents, and especially fathers, report relatively higher levels of happiness, positive emotion, and meaning in life than do nonparents [102], whereas mothers report less happiness, more stress, and greater fatigue than fathers [100].

Consistent with this prior research, parenting was a major contributor to wellbeing, as measured by WBAL, with wellbeing increasing with increased sharing of parenting responsibilities [2]. Parents reported significantly more frequent experiences of social connection and purposeful contribution with more frequent feelings of significance and efficacy than non-parents.

As shown in **Figure 4**, being a parent was significantly associated with higher overall wellbeing, including positive feelings and experiences. Parents reported

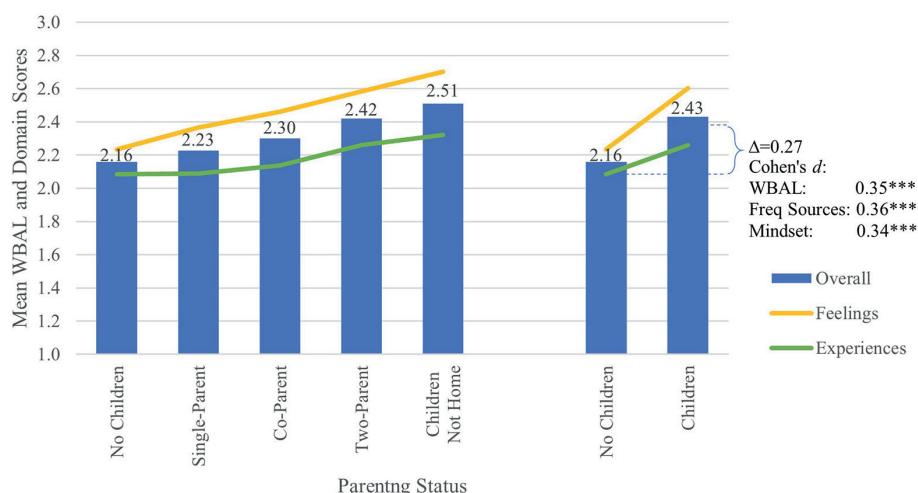


Figure 4. Mean WBAL and WBAL domain scores by parenting status, with Cohen's *d* effect size for change in overall WBAL score, number of frequently positive experiences and feelings, and mindset positivity. Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. Symbols for Cohen's *d* represent statistical significance of the specific Tukey's HSD test.

significantly more positive mindsets and more sources of positive wellbeing than those without children. Parents reported more frequent positive feelings across a wider range of arousal levels than non-parents, with more frequent feelings of efficacy, significance, and wellness. Parents also reported a wider range of positive experiences across activation levels with more frequent social connection, including time with a loving companion, and more frequent purposeful experiences, including providing for and nurturing others.

Parents whose children are no longer at home reported a significantly wider range of positive experiences across activation levels than active parents. They reported more frequent experiences of treating others with kindness and grace. Additionally, they experienced more frequent positive feelings across arousal levels, especially feelings of harmony and attentiveness, trust and safety, and awareness and appreciation.

The ability to share parenting responsibilities positively affected two key sources of wellbeing. In addition to reporting more frequently spending time with a loving trusted companion, respondents in two-parent households felt considerate and responsible more frequently than single parents. No significant differences were observed between single parents and co-parents.

More full employment – as employment changes from unemployed to self-, part-time, and full-time employment – has been shown to be associated with higher wellbeing, but the underlying factors behind this relationship are not well understood. Previous research has demonstrated a correlation between job satisfaction and subjective wellbeing [103], with perceived organizational support increasing career satisfaction which in turn improves subjective wellbeing [104]. Later in life, however, the pressures of working reduce subjective wellbeing, and those who do not work enjoy a higher level of life satisfaction [105].

In contrast, unemployment significantly reduces mental health and subjective wellbeing, due to a combination of psychological stress and financial strain [106]. This effect is reciprocal: unemployment reduces wellbeing, and poor wellbeing can

also lead to unemployment [107]. Additionally, non-standard employment arrangements, such as part-time and self-employment, are associated with lower global subjective wellbeing [108].

Retirees and homemakers reported the highest overall wellbeing, and significantly higher wellbeing than employed respondents, as shown in **Figure 5** [2]. Among those available to work, wellbeing trended upward with the degree of employment. Unemployed respondents seeking a job reported the lowest wellbeing, while full-time employees reported the highest. Part-time, self-employed, and students reported intermediate levels of wellbeing.

Compared to employed respondents, retirees, and homemakers reported significantly more sources of wellbeing, more frequent positive experiences and more frequent positive feelings across a wider range of arousal levels. Unemployed respondents reported significantly less frequent feelings of joy and confidence than those employed, retirees, or homemakers. No significant differences were observed between retired and home-maker respondents.

Among employed respondents, full-time employees reported significantly more frequent feelings of efficacy and fulfillment than part-time employees. Full-time employees also reported more frequent feelings of calm and restfulness than self-employed respondents. No significant differences were observed between part-time and self-employed respondents. Students reported overall wellbeing similar to employed respondents, with no significant differences observed between these groups.

Annual household income has previously been shown to correlate modestly with wellbeing within the US, following a log-linear relationship where increases in subjective wellbeing diminish at higher income levels [109–111]. Similarly, increases in positive feelings in the moment and evaluations of overall life satisfaction have also been shown to be log-linear, with diminishing marginal benefits as income rises [112].

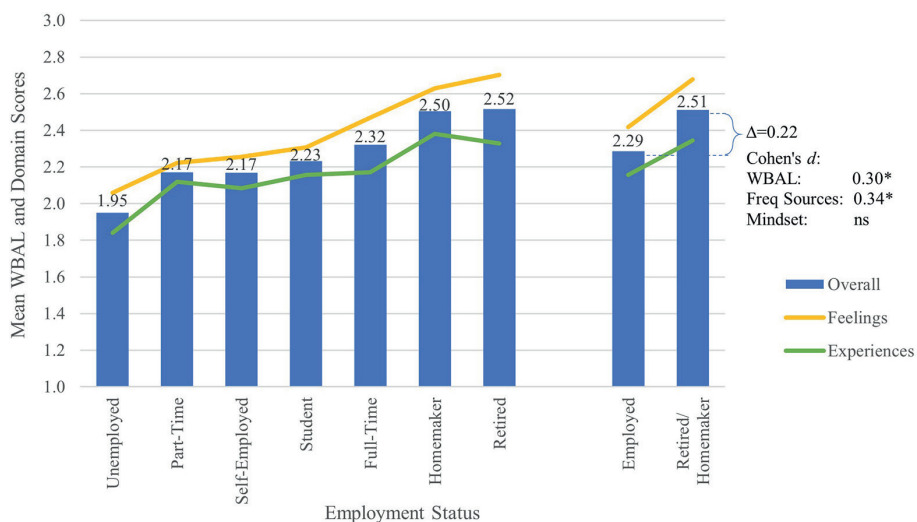


Figure 5.

Mean WBAL and WBAL domain scores by employment status, with Cohen's *d* effect size for change in overall WBAL score and number of frequently positive experiences and feelings. Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. Symbols for Cohen's *d* represent statistical significance of the specific Tukey's HSD test.

As measured by the WBAL instrument, respondents reported very small differences in wellbeing by income bracket, as illustrated in **Figure 6** [2]. Household income showed a significant effect on mindset positivity, with a trend of increasing positivity from lower to higher income groups and a moderate effect size between the highest and lowest income groups. However, this trend towards improved mindset positivity did not translate to higher overall wellbeing as measured by WBAL, because respondents in higher income brackets reported a lower frequency of positive experiences.

Age has been shown to exhibit a U-shaped relationship with subjective wellbeing, with a low point occurring between the mid-30s and mid-50s [113]. Recent analyses suggest a more complex wave-like pattern that culminates in highest wellbeing later in life [114]. Additionally, wellbeing in adolescence and young adulthood is dropping in North America, flattening the curve through the first half of life [32]. Recent studies have begun to elucidate the psychological and social factors associated with age that may influence subjective wellbeing [115], including an age-related positivity effect, whereby improved wellbeing is accompanied by more positive mindset in later life [116, 117]. However, the underlying factors mediating the relationship between age and wellbeing are poorly understood.

As shown in **Figure 7**, age was a significant contributor to differences in overall WBAL score, as well as frequency of positive experiences and feelings of wellbeing [2]. Respondents aged 20 to 60 years old reported similar positive wellbeing, with no significant differences in any domain or factor, although with a non-significant downward trend towards mid-life. Reported wellbeing increased significantly in the older adult subgroup (aged 61–69), primarily due to a rise in the frequency of positive feelings.

Consistent with this age-related positivity effect, older adults experienced a greater increase in positive feelings compared to positive experiences. Older adults reported higher mindset positivity than other age groups, with significantly more

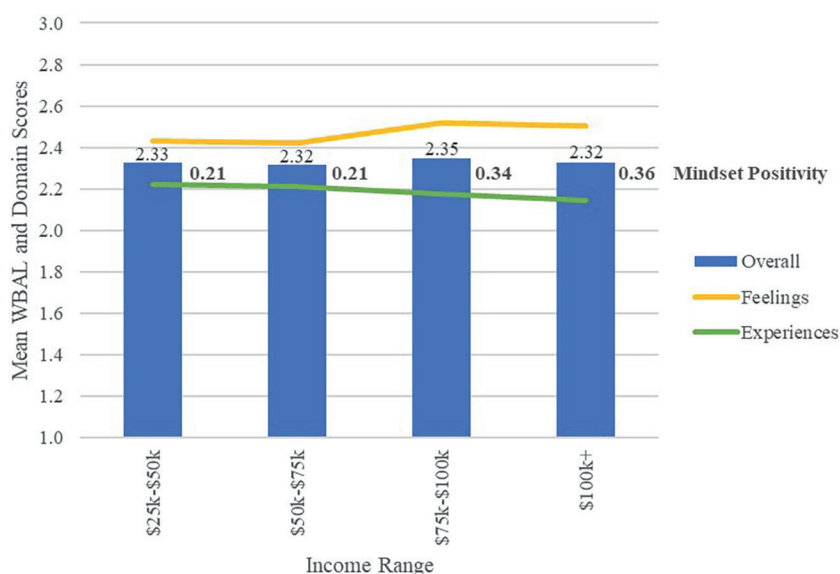


Figure 6.
 Mean WBAL, WBAL domain scores, and mindset positivity by annual household income.

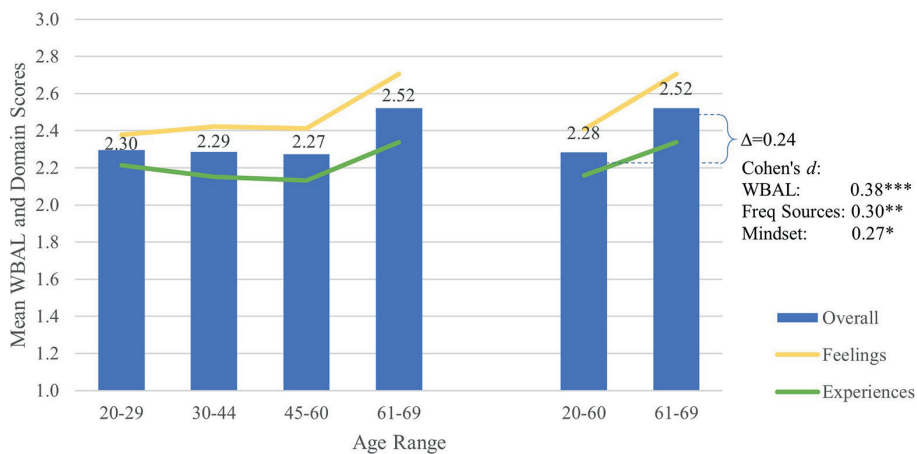


Figure 7. Mean WBAL and WBAL domain scores by age, with Cohen's *d* effect size for change in overall WBAL score, number of frequently positive experiences and feelings, and mindset positivity. Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. Symbols for Cohen's *d* represent statistical significance of the specific Tukey's HSD test.

frequent positive feelings across a wider range of arousal levels. They also reported more frequent positive experiences across a wider range of activation levels relative to younger age groups. Together, these findings suggest that age-related positivity increases the wellbeing resilience of older adults.

Midlife adults reported the lowest overall WBAL scores, although this effect is small. This result is consistent with recent findings for North America [32] showing wellbeing declining only slightly in early adulthood, with no significant differences among young, established and midlife adults, then increasing significantly in older adults. While midlife adults provided for and nurtured others more frequently than young adults, they were less frequently physically active and engaged and less frequently felt proud and that their lives mattered compared to young adults. No significant differences were observed between midlife and established adults or between established and young adults.

Gender has consistently been shown to have minimal impact on overall subjective wellbeing. Men and women generally report similar levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and other global measures of subjective wellbeing and human flourishing. No significant gender differences were observed in overall satisfaction with life or affect balance [118]. However, differences in wellbeing between women and men appear to be influenced by cultural and social factors [119]. For example, men have consistently been observed to be more physically active than women, with differences in impact of psychosocial variables such as self-efficacy and social support [120–122]. And women score higher than men in positive relations with others and lower in self-acceptance and autonomy [123]. Some gender-related differences by age have been observed, with younger women being more happy and older women less happy than men [124]. And, the negative impacts of unemployment are greater for men than women [107].

Consistent with these previous findings, there were no significant differences between genders, as measured by the WBAL Assessment, in overall WBAL, mindset positivity or overall frequency of positive experiences or positive feelings [2]. Men reported being physically active more frequently than women, whereas women reported connecting with friends and family more often than men.

4.2 Implications for designing and enhancing targeted interventions for subgroups in similar life situations

The deeper understanding of the interactions between positive experiences and feelings enabled by the WBAL Model and Assessment can guide the design of interventions to improve wellbeing across subgroups with similar life situations, which can also have important practical implications for community initiatives, workplace practices, educational programs, and public health. For example, as shown in **Figure 8**, findings to date from evaluating wellbeing with the WBAL Assessment suggest certain intervention targets may be more likely to have positive benefits for different subgroups.

Uncoupled and childless individuals may benefit most from wellbeing interventions to improve social connection, purposeful contributions and feelings of significance and efficacy, each of which are important drivers of intrinsic motivation and meaning. Whether considering relationship or parenting status, feelings of significance and efficacy closely correspond with experiences of social connection and purposeful contribution, suggesting that these factors work together to enhance wellbeing.

Therefore, interventions focused on increasing social connection and tangible contributions to others may be more effective if coupled with mindfulness practices to nurture feelings of significance and efficacy. Interventions targeting these wellbeing sources could be particularly valuable for uncoupled respondents and individuals without children who have significantly lower experiences of social connection and purposeful contribution accompanied by lower feelings of significance.

Significantly lower wellbeing was also associated with less positive mindset for those without children and/or a companion. General interventions to help individuals in these life situations develop a more positive mindset may therefore improve overall wellbeing by increasing individuals' frequency of positive feelings relative to their frequency of positive experiences.

Because younger individuals and students are more likely to be uncoupled and childless, and more engaged in seeking a sense of meaning and purpose [125], educational programs that integrate wellbeing practices into their curricula – particularly

					Key:	Primary Targets		Secondary Targets		
Subgroups:	Un-	Child-	Young	Job Loss,	Under- and	Employed	Lower	Higher	Women	Men
Intervention Target Areas	coupled	less	Adults	Job Loss, Divorce, Widowed	Unemployed	Workplaces	Income	Income		
Broad Targets:										
Wellbeing Breadth										
Mindset Positivity										
Positive Experiences										
Social Connection										
Purposeful Contribution										
Healthy Body										
Strong Mind										
Positive Feelings:										
Efficacy										
Significance										
Wellness										
Openness										

Figure 8.
Summary of suggested primary targets for intervention by subgroup.

those that support students' search for purpose, meaning, and efficacy, and build mindful positivity practices into their lives – can help students develop life-long skills for building a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Loss of human connection, for example, through the loss of a job, the end of a companionate relationship or the death of a spouse can dramatically reduce wellbeing across multiple dimensions and especially social connection and associated feelings of belonging. Therefore, interventions for unemployed, divorced, or widowed individuals should include a strong component of social connection, with opportunities for purposeful contribution that enhance feelings of meaning and significance. Building social connections beyond our workplaces and companionate relationships – with friendships, family, and “third place” communities [126, 127] – can not only mitigate the impact on wellbeing from these losses of connection but also proactively build a more resilient social network to prepare us to withstand future major losses in our sources of human connection.

Under- and unemployed individuals actively seeking work suffer from a loss of agency despite having more time affluence. Together, agency and time affluence are important enablers of wellbeing, as shown by the differences in wellbeing between people with different parenting and employment statuses. Homemakers and retirees reported the highest overall wellbeing among employment status categories, with the widest range of positive experience activation and feeling arousal levels. These groups who have chosen not to work also reported the widest range of positive sources of wellbeing. Similarly, parents with children not at home reported the widest range of positive experience activation and feelings arousal levels, suggesting a higher degree of time affluence and agency.

In contrast, unemployment, part-time employment, and self-employment broadly reduce key sources of wellbeing. Unemployed respondents reported the lowest wellbeing among any subgroup studied, with significantly fewer sources of positive wellbeing than employed respondents. This finding is consistent with the broad-based downward spiral of negativity observed in previous studies [107]. Therefore, in addition to supporting increased social interaction and feelings of significance, under- and unemployed individuals are likely to benefit from wellbeing interventions focused on creating feelings of agency and exercising autonomy in parts of their lives that they do control, to mitigate the impact on their wellbeing and improve motivation and mindset while they continue their search for meaningful work with outcomes that are less within their control.

Higher and lower income individuals are likely to benefit from different wellbeing interventions. As measured by WBAL, annual household income had no independent effect on overall wellbeing, but mindset positivity was significantly associated with higher income. The frequency of respondents' positive feelings of wellbeing trended upward with income, as previously observed. However, the highest earners did not report higher overall wellbeing as measured by WBAL because their frequency of positive experiences trended downward with increased income.

Although these differences were small, higher earners felt more positively about their lives, whereas those with lower income engaged more frequently in positive experiences. A more positive mindset appears to enable higher earners to maintain wellbeing despite engaging in positive experiences less frequently than lower income respondents. Therefore, members of lower income households may benefit most from interventions aimed at improving mindset positivity, whereas those in higher income households may benefit from introducing a balance of more frequent positive experiences into their lives.

Workplace and community settings generally provide opportunities for social connection and purposeful contributions. The low frequency of community engagement across the US population sampled suggests that interventions within these settings designed to enhance social connections and create more opportunities to make purposeful contributions can be particularly effective for improving wellbeing. Programs that encourage physical self-care and positive mindset can also be beneficial in these settings. In these settings, supporting an environment that creates a healthy community and physical self-care, while providing a degree of agency and recognition, is likely to lead to greater increases in overall wellbeing, as well as motivation and feelings of efficacy and significance, which together are likely to improve productivity, engagement, and retention.

Different genders may benefit from different wellbeing interventions. Physical self-care and social connection were the least frequently experienced sources of wellbeing overall and the main factors with significant gender differences. As seen in prior research, while women and men in this study reported the same overall wellbeing, women reported being physically active less frequently, suggesting interventions to encourage more regular physical movement among women, while men reported less frequent social interactions, suggesting interventions to encourage men to seek and support more social connections.

The WBAL Assessment can be a useful instrument for measuring overall positive wellbeing and assessing changes in the nature, frequency, and range of feelings of positive wellbeing. This enables deeper understanding of these inter-relationships and allows for more tailored interventions for targeted populations in similar life circumstances.

5. Applying the WBAL model and assessment to design personalized wellbeing interventions

The WellBalance Model establishes that sustainable wellbeing requires that we care for both our minds and bodies while building deep, meaningful relationships. Contributing to others' lives and feeling a sense of significance and connection are the foundation of our wellbeing. We need to feel that we belong and our lives matter and have meaning. Breadth and balance across these dimensions with varying levels of activation and arousal create higher and more resilient wellbeing.

Having a valid tool to assess the frequency and range of positive experiences in an individual's life and relate these to the frequency and range of their positive feelings enables identification of specific modifiable sources of wellbeing which can form the basis of a personalized wellbeing intervention plan. By focusing on a comprehensive set of discrete categories of positive experiences that have been demonstrated to enhance wellbeing, the WBAL Model can enable individuals to identify and pursue specific experiences and mindful positivity practices with the greatest promise to improve their wellbeing.

Variety and breadth of positive experiences and feelings corresponds closely with overall wellbeing. Wellbeing that is narrowly focused on fewer positive sources of wellbeing is likely to be more fragile in the face of negative life events, especially losses or challenges within an individual's core sources of wellbeing. Therefore, focusing interventions on raising the frequency of positive experiences or feelings not currently experienced frequently by an individual can be expected to improve overall positive wellbeing and resilience.

Our lives are constantly being pulled out of balance by external forces, especially between work and home [128, 129], as well as our identities and personalities [130], and our desire to repeat familiar experiences that have made us happy in the past. Although most people know what they are supposed to be doing to be healthy and happy, our behaviors are deeply ingrained. Also, these behaviors, developed in response to past situations and experiences, may no longer be constructive adaptive responses for the individual at this point in their life. The WBAL Assessment identifies an individual's categories of less frequent positive experiences and feelings, establishing a starting point to design personalized wellbeing interventions to increase the frequency of these experiences and feelings and begin to create more positive habitual behaviors over time.

5.1 Using the WBAL model and assessment to support resilient positive wellbeing

Designing a tailored intervention plan to enhance individuals' wellbeing entails four components which can be incorporated to varying degrees, priorities, and timing. Together, these four elements of an effective wellbeing improvement plan can help individuals amplify joy and contentment, build resilience, and flourish in ways that are both achievable and lasting:

- a. Catalyze upward spirals of positivity
- b. Maximize wellbeing productivity
- c. Nurture mindset positivity
- d. Build wellbeing resilience

5.1.1 Catalyze upward spirals of positivity

In accordance with the broaden-and-build theory of positivity, positive experiences create positive feelings which in turn open us to explore new experiences, creating *upward spirals of positivity* [33, 34]. How we feel arises from what we experience and also affects the experiences we are inclined to pursue. By intentionally pursuing positive experiences, we can create positive feelings of wellbeing. By fully savoring these experiences, we can then enhance the positive feelings they create. Then by attending to and nurturing these feelings, we open and motivate ourselves to explore new positive experiences. These upward spirals of positivity – cycles where positive experiences create positive feelings, which then inspire even more positive actions – can transform individuals' wellbeing in profound ways. Importantly, this does not necessarily require a major change in life circumstances. Over time, small, purposeful choices to explore a balance of positive experiences and nurture the resulting positive feelings can broadly catalyze positive wellbeing.

5.1.2 Maximize wellbeing productivity

Individuals generally have a limited amount of discretionary time and while focusing on one thing and are not focusing on another, which can lead to neglecting important aspects of their lives. Therefore, *wellbeing productivity* – the amount of positive feelings of wellbeing we can create in our limited discretionary time – is an

important component of most individualized plans. For example, we can magnify the positivity in our lives by adding wellbeing “boosters” to activities we are already doing. Rather than spend an hour on a treadmill at the gym, we could exercise outside in nature, with a friend, help that friend with a challenge they are facing, and express gratitude for their friendship. In this same hour, by combining multiple positive aspects into our experiences, we can create more positive feelings of wellbeing. When identifying specific activities to address an individual’s gaps in sources of wellbeing, those that can address multiple gaps simultaneously should generally be prioritized.

In addition, pursuing positive experiences in one area of our life multiplies wellbeing in other areas of our lives. For example, restful sleep supports healthy eating and increases exercise tolerance. Restful sleep can also improve our mood, productivity, relationships, and kindness. Similarly, having a trusted companionate relationship provides security for us to more actively meet new people, while being more reflective, more kind, and sleeping better. Indeed, every category of positive experiences reinforces other positive experiences, often mutually.

5.1.3 Nurture a positive mindset

We need to nurture our *mindset positivity* – gaining more positive feelings from our positive experiences, primarily by attending to and being grateful for the good in our lives. We need to savor special moments we create, be grateful for what we have, and let ourselves anticipate, fully experience, and reminisce our positive experiences. Mindset positivity, independent of the breadth and frequency of positive experiences, is associated with more positive feelings about those experiences, which in turn corresponds with higher overall wellbeing [1].

WBAL evaluates each individual’s mindset positivity, the extent to which overall feelings scores exceed overall experiences scores, which correlates strongly with overall positive feelings but not positive experiences [1]. Mindset positivity may also be important for an individual’s response to stressful life events and thereby mitigate the wellbeing impact of these events. Individuals with more negative mindsets as measured by WBAL may benefit more from interventions targeted to improve positive mindset (e.g., mindfulness, presence, gratitude, forgiveness, intentions, affirmations, etc.) to improve overall subjective wellbeing and increase wellbeing resilience [131, 132].

Furthermore, the WBAL Assessment can identify specific contributors to or detractors from mindset positivity, based on differences in frequency of specific categories of positive feelings in relation to the categories of positive experiences from which these feelings are more likely to arise. This enables identification of specific mindful positivity practices that are most likely to address personal gaps in an individual’s mindset, supporting a highly individualized and targeted approach to developing and improving mindfulness skills that are most likely to improve the individual’s mindset.

For example, an individual with low levels of contentment may disproportionately benefit from practicing gratitude, whereas someone with low feelings of awareness would benefit most from savoring practices. Individuals who do not feel as proud and that their lives matter as frequently as would be expected from the positive contributions they are making may benefit disproportionately from reflecting on the positive impact their actions are having directly on others in their families, community, and beyond. Individuals feeling gentle and loved less frequently than they are actually being loved by a companion and being kind to others may benefit from practicing

loving kindness to make them more attuned to the gentleness, love, and kindness in their life. Otherwise, someone with less frequent feelings of wellness than warranted by their frequency of activities benefiting their minds and bodies may benefit disproportionately from practices involving mind-body awareness.

5.1.4 Build wellbeing resilience

Lastly, sustainable wellbeing requires balance and breadth to build resilience. By increasing the number of frequently felt and experienced WBAL categories an individual can also increase their *wellbeing resilience* in response to negative life events, thus enhancing the ability to maintain wellbeing in the face of life's inevitable challenges, setbacks and losses [33, 34]. If one area of our life suffers, we have other sources of wellbeing to sustain us. And in accordance with the hedonic adaptation prevention model, variety helps us sustain the wellbeing benefits from activities and relationships we enjoy [72, 73].

We need a healthy mix of active engagement and rest, excitement, and contentment. We need to care for ourselves mentally and physically and for others emotionally and tangibly. In addition, we need to feel that our lives matter, we have the ability to positively impact ourselves and others, we are well mentally and physically, and we are trusting and open to new experiences. By broadening our sources of wellbeing across these dimensions, we create a more resilient life.

Wellbeing that is too narrow – for example, relying heavily on a job, a relationship, or a hobby – can collapse when one of these wellbeing sources falters. To build lasting resilience, we need to cultivate breadth across many areas of our lives: physical health, emotional connection, mental growth, and meaningful contribution. To prevent hedonic adaptation, an effective personalized positive change program should incorporate a mix of enjoyable activities across these dimensions. Breadth and variety create a strong foundation to draw upon when life's challenges hit.

These four elements demonstrate that lasting wellbeing is not always built through grand life changes but through small, purposeful steps and mindful practices that reinforce each other and compound over time. By helping individuals make the most of their time to create positive moments, foster upward spirals of positivity, expand their sources of joy and contentment, and nurture a positive mindset, they can unlock a life that feels more full, steady, and vibrant.

5.2 WBAL method to design personalized positivity programs

The starting point to design a personalized positivity program is to understand the individual's current sources of wellbeing, balance of experiences activation levels and feelings arousal levels, breadth of wellbeing sources supporting wellbeing resilience, overall mindset positivity, and the key contributors to and detractors from mindset positivity. Assessment of these items then enables identification of the categories of activities that are experienced less frequently which are likely to improve their overall wellbeing and resilience if pursued more frequently. Methods to change these experiential behaviors can be paired with journaling [133] and daily intentions [134] to support positive change. Positive feelings to nurture can also be identified and prioritized, with affirmations [135] personalized to reinforce these specific feelings. In addition, identifying gaps between the frequency of positive feelings relative to related positive experiences can be used to define a tailored set of specific mindful

positivity practices that are more likely to support a more positive mindset for the individual.

As demonstrated above, individuals' experiences and feelings of positive wellbeing are greatly influenced by their particular life situations. Therefore, it is important to interpret the individual's personal wellbeing profile in relation to these life circumstances and focus on areas where they have a degree of autonomy and agency to make positive changes in their lives. Benchmarking against others in similar life situations can help identify which opportunities to improve wellbeing are similar to others in their life situation over which the individual may have less control, validating the impact of their life situation on their lived experiences and feelings, and reinforcing that they are not alone in their situation. This benchmarking can also assess which opportunities to improve wellbeing are independent of their life situations and thus over which they may be more likely to have influence, validating the individual's uniqueness and increasing the personalization of the program towards these intervention targets.

In some instances, the individual may feel they are already doing what they can to address a gap in their life balance, especially if important, challenging and requiring time and effort. For example, they may already be searching for a new job, actively seeking a loving companion, or working with a fitness trainer or nutritionist. Rather than replacing these efforts towards addressing recognized gaps in their wellbeing, a personalized positivity program should focus on identifying alternative positive experiences over which they have agency within these opportunity areas to mitigate the immediate wellbeing impacts they are experiencing while increasing resilience. For example, job loss often entails loss of connection and community, feelings of significance and mattering, and ability to contribute meaningfully to others' wellbeing. So, a highly productive set of experiences to pursue would bring more of these positive experiences and feelings into their life, such as joining a community initiative to make positive change in ways that are meaningful and interesting to the individual and utilizes their unique strengths and talents. Additionally, if transitioning through major disruptions or changes in their life, a personal positivity program can be crafted to incorporate positive activities that support other aspects of an individual's wellbeing which they have neglected and now have the opportunity to reincorporate into their lives.

Personal coaching has been demonstrated to be an effective approach for improving subjective wellbeing [136]. Wellbeing interventions based on positive psychology coaching techniques, including use by mental health practitioners, should build upon the individual's personal and social strengths [137, 138]. A range of methods has proven effective for personal and executive coaching based on empirical and theoretical knowledge as applied to a nonmedical, collaborative, and highly contextual process. Therefore, while a standard method is proposed below, practitioners should integrate their own expertise and the needs of their individual clients with the best current knowledge [139].

5.2.1 Prioritizing positive experiences to pursue

While individuals have a genetically determined set points for happiness, wellbeing interventions can effectively create sustainable improvements in wellbeing by addressing happiness-relevant circumstantial factors and happiness-relevant activities and practices [140]. In particular, when considering adaptation and dynamic

processes, positive activities offer the best opportunities for sustainably increasing happiness [140]. Therefore, an important part of the personalized program design process is to align with the individual's aspirations and prioritize opportunity areas of positive experiences based on their sentiments and motivation towards each potential area of change. Categories of experiences from which individuals are already gaining meaningful wellbeing, for which they are likely to have a good understanding of the benefits and their role in creating those experiences for themselves, should first be reviewed and reinforced.

Then, with the aim to motivate positive action – and utilizing demonstrated models of motivation such as self-determination theory which focuses on the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness [141] – opportunities to pursue new positive experiences can be triaged along four main dimensions to identify the areas that are most actionable and likely to have near-term benefits:

1. Desire: Importance and motivation to change specific parts of their life
 - a. How important is this area of their life to their wellbeing and how might it positively affect and reinforce other important parts of their life?
 - b. How motivated are they to make positive change and how negative are their feelings about the lack of positive experiences in this area of their life?
2. Empowerment: Ability and agency to make positive change with efficacy and autonomy
 - a. What is their perceived, and actual, ability to create each type of positive experiences and thereby positively influence the outcome?
 - b. What is their locus of control in the area, i.e., do they feel they have control over the experience or are they subject to or constrained by external factors?
 - c. How much influence do they have over this area of their life, i.e., do others need to be enlisted or convinced or can they introduce the change unilaterally?
 - d. Do they feel self-efficacy in the area, i.e., that they have the skills and ability to create and engage in positive experiences in that area?
3. Impact: Nature and magnitude of impact on the individual's wellbeing
 - a. In what ways will pursuing positive change in this area of their life impact their life and the lives of others around them?
 - b. What opportunities exist to boost wellbeing productivity of activities by combining multiple wellbeing sources into the activity?
 - c. How large would this impact be relative to other opportunities to improve their wellbeing?

4. Ease: Feasibility and timeframe for creating more positive experiences

- a. How easy or difficult will it be to create positive change in the area?
- b. How much effort would be required over what timeframe?
- c. Will there be immediate benefits for their wellbeing, or are the benefit likely to accrue over a longer time period?

Generally, the highest priority areas to begin a personalized positivity program are those categories of positive experiences a client is able and highly motivated to change and will have large positive impacts on their life in a fairly short period with less effort than other areas. Then, over time, as the individual begins to see gains in their wellbeing, reinforcing their sense of self-efficacy and motivation, more challenging or longer-term changes where they may have less control, can be pursued.

As with other similar wellbeing assessment tools, WBAL implicitly assumes normative values regarding the meaning of wellbeing, and to date, it has only been validated in a limited cultural context. Caution is therefore warranted to consider cultural context and avoid normative judgment when interpreting responses of individuals whose norms and values may differ [49]. The WBAL tool does not assign relative significance to any of the aspects of positive wellbeing measured, so interpretation must allow for respondents to assign different degrees of importance to different aspects of their wellbeing, based on their personal value judgments and situations. For example, someone may have made a conscious decision to focus on their children, family, or close friends rather than engage with a broader community. Or they may have made a conscious decision to temporarily sacrifice sleep and physical self-care in pursuit of an important life goal or to care for another.

Mental visualization of positive experiences has been demonstrated to increase motivation and behavioral change [142–144]. Thus, as opportunity areas are triaged, the individual should envision specific experiences they could create to bring more positive experiences into 2–3 of the most important and actionable parts of their life, including adding wellbeing “boosters” such as nature, movement, playfulness, mindfulness, and/or other people into activities they are already experiencing regularly. In addition to enhancing the wellbeing productivity of their current activities, a positivity plan could include previous experiences they have mastered and enjoyed or new activities they have a desire to try, thereby introducing the variety that can help sustain wellbeing by reducing hedonic adaptation. Activities should also be explored that simultaneously address multiple specific gaps in the individual’s wellbeing and thus are likely to be the most productive ways to enhance their wellbeing within limited discretionary time. Among these, a short-list of specific experiences or activities can be identified that the individual feels most motivated and empowered to pursue that are most likely to meaningfully improve their wellbeing in the near term. These early, easy, rapid, empowered actions can then become their initial steps towards broadening and balancing their wellbeing.

5.2.2 Prioritizing mindful positivity practices to cultivate positive feelings

WBAL identifies categories of positive feelings to nurture, around which affirmations and exercises can be designed and specific categories of positive

experiences can be pursued to produce more of these feelings. These opportunities should be reviewed with the individual to understand which deficiencies of positive feelings are causing the greatest emotional distress. The positive feelings likely to arise from the positive experiences prioritized for pursuit above should be considered, along with any other activities they are currently pursuing to try to create these positive feelings.

After reviewing an individual's overall mindset positivity and highlighting their key contributors to a positive mindset, it is important to understand any current mindful positivity practices they have tried in the past or are engaging in regularly, how proficient and comfortable they feel performing these practices, and how much wellbeing they feel they have gained or are continuing to gain from these practices.

Specific detractors from a positive mindset can then be explored, for which the individual is engaging frequently in categories of positive experiences without as frequent feelings associated with these activities. If the individual is already engaging in practices directed towards these feelings of wellbeing, hedonic adaptation may have reduced the benefits they are gaining, suggesting an exploration for other experiences or mindful positivity practices with similar benefits to introduce variety. These practices can be particularly beneficial if they address other wellbeing opportunities, for example, adding group yoga practices for someone who already does breathwork but is not frequently caring for their body or lacks social connection.

If the individual has not yet developed strong mindful positivity skills or engaged in any regular mindfulness practices, specific practices can be identified to reinforce and support mindset positivity in their mindset improvement opportunity areas. A positivity program can then be designed for them to develop core skills and practices to incorporate those practices into their life that will be most likely to improve their positivity and wellbeing. Alternative mindful positivity practices can be prioritized along two main dimensions:

1. Motivation: Interest and ability to regularly perform practice
 - a. Are they interested to learn the specific mindful positivity practice?
 - b. Do they feel they have the ability, physically and mentally, to learn and regularly perform the practice?
2. Feasibility: Ability to fit into their life
 - a. Do they have the time to pursue the practice, or would an alternative less time-consuming practice be more practical and feasible?
 - b. Do they feel they have the support they need to be able to begin and continue the practice, for example from their loved ones or employer?

Additional mental, physical, relational or spiritual benefits of each practice should also be considered in relation to the individual's other areas of opportunity to improve their wellbeing and fully flourish.

Most positivity programs should include mindfulness practices demonstrated to support generalized mindset improvement, such as savoring, gratitude [74], or guided meditation [81], especially for individuals with broader deficits in their overall feelings about the positive experiences in their life. Coming to understand the root sources of mindset negativity, such as intense chronic stress, a reaction to recent or ongoing events, past difficult or traumatic experiences, or strong personality traits, it is important to consider whether the individual should be referred to a professional mental health practitioner to evaluate whether they qualify for clinical diagnosis and more intensive therapy.

Having reviewed the top opportunities to improve an individual's wellbeing, balance, and resilience, they should now be prepared to decide where they want to begin and commit to the first steps towards transformation. Recapping the most important opportunities over which the client feels a sense of agency and potential impact, with examples of positive activities they have identified in each category, envisioning and describing their future life can be especially helpful to motivate positive change. Envisioning this life emphasizes that they already have these attributes within themselves and just need to prioritize and strengthen them through practice until their lived experiences grow into fulfilling their aspirations.

Because the WBAL Assessment measures individuals' experiences within the past 2 weeks, the resulting wellbeing profile represents a single point in time and each individual's situation, behaviors and emotions at this point in their life. As individuals' lives change, whether due to external events or through personal growth, the WBAL Method can be helpful throughout life stages and transitions. For someone in a period of active growth and change, re-assessment and prioritization of new aspirations to pursue every 9–12 weeks would allow the time needed to create lasting habit change [145], while evaluating their wellbeing progress to define a growth path for the next 9–12 weeks. If someone is anticipating a major life change – for example, a new child, a new job, marriage, or relationship difficulties, job loss or loss of a loved one – assessing their wellbeing profile before and after the transition can help prepare for the change by anticipating wellbeing gaps experienced by others in similar life situations, monitor and recognize positive change, and identify areas to maintain or restore balance following the transition. If someone's life is already full and flourishing, an annual wellbeing assessment can help make small life adjustments to remain authentically aligned with the individual's evolving values and identity, and thus prevent potential crises arising from growing misalignment over time.

6. Conclusions

The Wellbeing Balance and Lived Experiences (WBAL) Model and Assessment represent an innovative framework for measuring and enhancing positive wellbeing by integrating the experiential and emotional dimensions of human flourishing. Unlike traditional assessments that focus primarily on subjective feelings of wellbeing, the WBAL Model emphasizes the frequency and breadth of positive experiences across various activation and arousal levels, providing a more nuanced understanding of how lived experiences influence subjective feelings of wellbeing. This novel approach not only complements existing “gold standard” tools but extends their

utility to enable design of personalized wellbeing interventions tailored to an individual's unique life circumstances.

The application of the WBAL Model in a U.S.-based cohort revealed important insights into how life situations such as relationship, parenting, and employment statuses impact wellbeing, surpassing the effects of demographic factors like age, gender, and income. The WBAL Model enables more targeted approaches for subgroups in similar life situations, addressing their specific needs and challenges to enhance wellbeing outcomes. Meaningful social connections and purposeful contributions with feelings of significance and efficacy were found to be foundational for positive wellbeing, underscoring the importance of considering situations that impact these factors when designing wellbeing interventions.

By identifying specific, modifiable sources of wellbeing and observing the interplay between positive experiences and feelings, the WBAL Assessment provides a robust foundation for developing highly individualized wellbeing interventions. The WBAL Method, informed by the assessment's insights, empowers individuals to pursue balance and breadth in their positive experiences and feelings, fostering resilient wellbeing. Additionally, WBAL enables prioritization of mindfulness practices to target specific detractors from individuals' mindset positivity. This personalized approach facilitates the design of actionable plans for individuals to optimize their wellbeing by nurturing their mindset positivity and expanding their repertoire of positive experiences.

The WBAL Model and Assessment represent a significant advancement in the field of applied positive psychology, offering both a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing and practical tools to improve wellbeing. By moving beyond descriptive assessment of subjective feelings of wellbeing to a more experiential and prescriptive approach, the WBAL framework holds promise for transforming how practitioners, employers, and policymakers can help individuals, workplaces, and communities cultivate and sustain flourishing lives.

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Conflict of interest

The WBAL Model and Assessment, which is freely available for non-commercial use, is proprietary to WellBalance, LLC, in which the author has an ownership interest.

A. Appendix

Domain	Factor	Energy Level	Item	Item #	Prompt
Experiences	Body	Activation Level:			Over the past two weeks, how often have you had the following experiences? (0 = Rarely, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Often, 3 = Usually, 4 = Very Often)
		Active	Move Regularly	1	My days are physically active, I exercise regularly, and my body is strong and able.
		Mindful	Nourish Healthy Rest and Recover	2	I savor nutritious food and eat only until full, while hydrating regularly without too much alcohol or caffeine.
	Mind	Calin		3	I sleep well and let myself rest and recover when I'm sore, injured or tired.
		Active	Create, Learn and Explore	4	I learn new things, express my creativity and become fully absorbed in activities.
		Mindful	Savor and Appreciate	5	I spend time in nature, and appreciate and enjoy music, art, and good stories.
	Connection	Calin	Reflect Gratefully	6	I pause to reflect, feel grateful and connect to something larger than myself.
		Active	Build Community	7	I engage with groups beyond my close friends and family, and seek out new people that share my interests.
		Mindful	Bond Closely	8	I regularly connect with my close friends or family and we help each other when needed.
	Purpose	Calin	Love Securely	9	I spend undistracted time with a loving, trusted companion, and we listen to and meet each other's needs.
		Active	Contribute, Serve and Earn	10	I help make the world better, positively impact others, and am rewarded fairly for my work.
		Mindful	Provide and Nurture	11	I am responsible, provide for others' wellbeing and help make my home comfortable and safe.
	Activation Balance	Calin	Kindness and Grace	12	I am kind to others, supporting and comforting them, without judgment or resentment.
		Active	Active and Engaged	13	My body is active and fit, my mind is engaged, and I have a meaningful impact in my community
		Mindful	Mindful and Present	14	I pay attention to and take care of myself and others, am present in the moment and appreciate the world around me.
		Calin	Calm and Restful	15	My relationships are secure, I am physically safe, and I can relax and be at peace.
Feelings	Arousal Balance	Arousal Level:			Over the past two weeks, how often have you had the following feelings? (0 = Rarely, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Often, 3 = Usually, 4 = Very Often)
		Joyful	Joyful and Confident	16	My life feels meaningful and fun, filled with purpose, joy and laughter.
		Aware	Aware and Appreciative	17	I savor life's special moments, am self-aware, and appreciate the people in my life.
	Openness	Content	Content and Peaceful	18	I feel content and satisfied with my life, at peace with myself and safe with others.
		Joyful	Adventurous and Curious	19	I enjoy meeting new people, exploring new cultures and trying new experiences.
		Aware	Harmonious and Attentive	20	I appreciate nature, art and music, and feel connected to people in my life and in harmony with my world.
	Significance	Content	Trusting and Safe	21	I trust myself and others to keep us safe, and believe things will work out.
		Joyful	Proud and Mattering	22	My life matters and has meaning, and I am proud of my accomplishments.
		Aware	Belonging and Accepted	23	I feel like I belong, am welcome and appreciated, and can be myself with people in my life.
	Efficacy	Content	Gentle and Loved	24	I feel loving kindness and am gentle towards others, and feel loved and cared for in return.
		Joyful	Capable and Confident	25	I feel confident and capable to contribute meaningfully and take care of myself and others.
		Aware	Considerate and Responsible	26	Others can depend on me and I feel able to provide for myself and others.
	Wellness	Content	Caring and Compassionate	27	I care for and feel compassion towards myself and others.
		Joyful	Vital and Strong	28	I feel alive and energetic, with a strong body and sharp mind.
		Aware	Satisfied and Fulfilled	29	I feel fulfilled and satisfied, appreciating small pleasures in the moment.
		Content	Peaceful and Serene	30	My life feels peaceful, serene and untroubled, with a restful body and calm mind.


Figure A1.
 Wellbeing and lived experiences assessment instrument, 30-item (WBAL-30). Copyright WellBalance, LLC (2023); freely available for research use with permission.

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