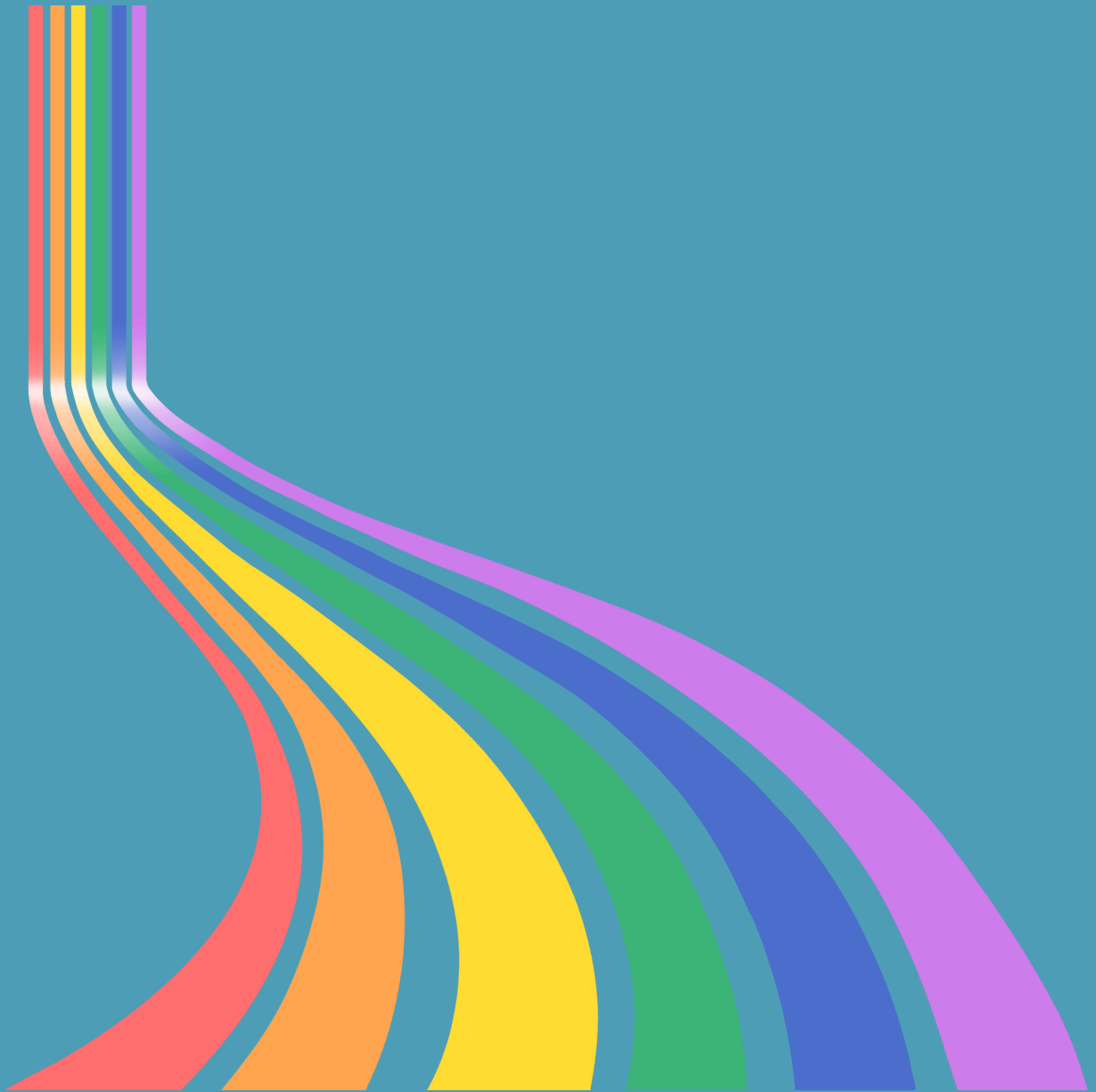


5 Wellbeing Tips



INTERACTION

Five key tips to simplify wellbeing – it's really not that complicated

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Wellbeing was not originally developed to be a commodity. In the last 15 years or so it seems like everyone is on the bandwagon, selling wellbeing products or services, creating an huge industry and with it, an avalanche of overwhelming information and expectations about the “right” way to do it.

To be fair, it is not always clear what wellness or wellbeing actually is (or even which word to use) leaving it open to a depreciation of the original multidimensional approach and confuses it with health concept, making it prescriptive, rather than individualised by commercialisation and simplification. Its distinction from health is the fact that it is prescriptive, focused on not only what we want to avoid, but what we want to gain.

Is it possible to simplify our understanding AND make wellness easier to achieve?

The short answer is yes, but we need to go back to the 1970's to unpackage the essence of wellness and the definition developed by Dr John Travis, one of the original fathers of wellness.

“Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life, through a personalised and multidimensional approach, characterised by the principles of awareness, education and growth.”

Wellness motivates self-responsibility to pursue balanced integration of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual experiences of life.

This definition highlights the complexity and interdependent nature of high level wellbeing and yet, simultaneously provides key concepts that are aspirational and achievable for everyone.

Tip #1: An Active Process

Wellbeing is not a place we get to, a box we tick or a state we achieve. We don't “reach” wellbeing and stop being involved in making the choices that contribute towards our health or fulfilment because it's all done. Wellbeing is an active choice on our part – to take responsibility for what we think, feel and

do. It is also a process that, from the moment we embrace it, continues for the rest of our lives. Far from being frightening or overwhelming, this provides all of us to be working towards wellbeing for the rest of our lives as a process of healthy striving and continual improvement. In essence, rather than saying, you may as well give up now – this is as good as it will get; the active process of wellbeing continues to give us hope that we can change our lives for the better any time we like.

Tip #2: Making choices

Even when we feel trapped or forced down one path – there is always a choice. Frequently they are not easy choices. At times we feel compelled to take certain action because of who we are and what we value most which doesn't feel like a choice – but it still is. Moment by moment in life we are making choices. Some are thoughtful, considered and intentional, and some are reactions triggered by our entrenched beliefs and neural pathways. Wellbeing offers us the opportunity to examine those things in our lives which aren't working well. By paying attention we give ourselves a choice – do I keep on going, knowing this isn't working well for me, or do I choose to do something different, be it how, when or where I do it, who I am when I do it, or do I not do it at all? In the end, that choice is ours to make.

Tip #3: Healthy and fulfilling life

So much of our notion of wellbeing is a focused on our physical health and wellbeing – mine certainly was until I studied the concept further. In many ways, it's easier to do – we can see our physical wellbeing in a way that we can't see our emotional, mental or spiritual wellbeing. But as I found out, physical health is only part of the puzzle. Additionally, research over the last 20 years has really begun to provide evidence of the mind body connection and link our thoughts and feelings to our physical health via the field of psychoneuroimmunoendocrinology which provides the biological basis of mind-body physiology and pathophysiology. We are not our bodies, we have a body – how we choose to take care of it is not confined to physical health – it really does matter what we think and feel, how and who we connect with and the meaning we make of our lives. Understanding and embedding those things that bring us fulfilment contribute as much to our physical health as nutrition, movement, and sleep, if not more. “Do those things that you love and are good at” said my good friend, colleague and leading Listening expert Harry Armytage. With this simple phrase he set me free to focus on my fulfilment.

Tip #4: Personalised and multidimensional

Basically, this means there is not a one-sized-fit-all approach to wellbeing. If it were that simple, we could line up, get the prescription, and implement it. Here-in lies the rub and the gift of wellbeing – essentially it is a quest to understand ourselves, what works for us and is important to us as individuals, and to find what Brene Brown refers to as the Theory of True Belonging, feel at home with ourselves. And this requires us to pay attention to our needs first.

Wellpeople model of wellness describes the 12 dimensions of wellbeing as an energy system. Energy inputs include breathing, eating and sensing; while energy outputs are identified as Self-responsibility and Love, Moving, Feeling, Thinking, Playing and Working, Communicating, Intimacy and Transcending. High level wellness is not realising perfection – it is achieving balance in the 12 dimensions of the Energy Wellness System.

Tip #5: Awareness, education and growth

How do we achieve wellbeing? Through the principles of awareness, education and growth. We cannot change something if we don't know we are feeling, thinking or doing it. Mindfulness is bringing our awareness to what we are directly experiencing through our senses or to our state of mind via our thoughts and emotions. Looking back, I have had the opportunity to hear my inner voice many times, but I can count on my hand, the times I remember what it said. These were powerful and life changing moments for me. In those moments, when I could hear my thoughts, I realised I had to change something. And in that moment I knew the only thing I could change was me.

Even though I knew I needed to change, I often didn't know how. Taking steps to reach out and research, question, practice and seek professional help brought me a greater depth of knowledge and allowed me to make an informed choice about how I wanted to change. And through the process of education I experienced personal growth, than positively influenced all aspects of my life – professional, personal, relationships, and how I treated myself.

These five key concepts have lead me to some simple questions I ask myself to build wellbeing moment to moment. These are:

Keep going! – this is an active process and you're not done yet. The more I do it, the easier it becomes.

There is always a choice – What are your choices right here, right now?

What am I good at and love – Don't take it all so seriously.

Its ok if no one else is with me on this – I am ok to do what I know is right for me