

Wellbeing has become something we all desire. We talk about it, we read about it, we worry about it... But how well do we understand it? And can we actually *have* it?

I asked someone recently to describe their understanding of wellbeing. As I listened, I realised that we have a tendency to believe that wellbeing is something we either *have* or *don't have*.



So, I was inspired to go searching for the answer to that very question. Is wellbeing something you *have*? Or is it something you do?

As with words such as: frustration, depression, love, relationship etc – you cannot see or touch it, you cannot buy it in a shop or pick it up from the floor. They are not objects, they are processes: i.e. 'frustration' is the process of 'frustrating' or 'being frustrated'.

The dictionary defines "wellbeing" as a noun. But is it? We have an illusion that words like 'depression', 'wellbeing' and 'love' are things and therefore have a solid shape and form, like a ball or a table. If that was true, we would be able to touch them and take them out or replace them with something else.

Let me illustrate. Visualise each of the following sentences and see if you can place the underlined words into a container.

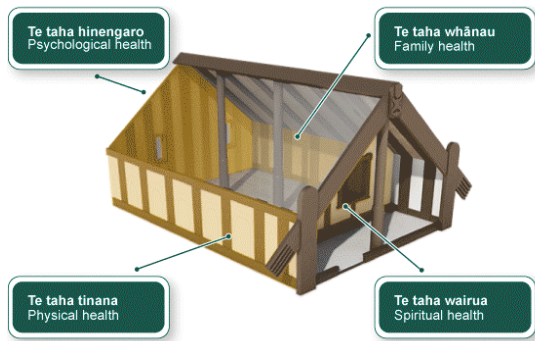
- I have a lot of pens
- I have a lot of frustration
- My car doesn't work
- My relationship doesn't work
- I don't have the keys
- I don't have wellbeing

Notice that the words that represent objects (pens, car, keys) are tangible, while words like frustration, relationship and wellbeing are not. So, if we return to the original question, is wellbeing something you *have*? I guess not. So what is it?

We can look to the word itself for some clues. The word wellbeing actually breaks down into three pieces "well-be-ing". If you consider the concept in this way, it creates a notion of the 'action' of being well.

That's it! Wellbeing is something you DO! I know, I know, it sounds radical, but trust me, it is true. If you allow yourself to have an open mind and experiment with a new way of thinking, you'll experience the results for yourself. Stop waiting for wellbeing to happen and start living it! If you believe that wellbeing is something you *do* - it puts you in control of your own life and sense of satisfaction. It's liberating!

Now we know wellbeing is something we do, the next obvious question is, how do you do wellbeing? Solutions have been written down for thousands of years. The challenge is in getting us to stop doing the things that don't work, and start doing the things that do. And we do not need to look too far to find the answers.



The Māori approach toward wellbeing is based on a holistic concept called 'Te whare tapa whā'.

The concept is very simple and is represented by the symbol of a wharenui (meeting house) that has strong foundations and four equal sides illustrating four dimensions of wellbeing.

Māori health is underpinned by these four dimensions representing the basic beliefs of life: te taha hinengaro (psychological health), te taha wairua (spiritual health), te taha tinana (physical health) and te taha whānau (social/family health).

Here is how you can use this model to help you *do* wellbeing. As you get up in the morning and go about your daily routine, think about the four walls of your 'castle': psychological, spiritual, physical and social. What can you do in each of the areas to strengthen your walls?

Psychological

It is understood that the mind and body are inseparable. This is how we see ourselves in this universe and how we interact with the world around us – our thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others. Think positively!

What you can do today:

Try new things regularly, read educational books, keep learning and growing, set a goal and enjoy achieving it. Be positive. Be aware of the world around you and appreciate what you have. Feeding your brain with nutritious positive information is as important as feeding your body with healthy food.

Spiritual

The spiritual essence of a person is their life force. It's who and what we are, where we come from and where we are going.

What you can do today:

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Volunteer your time and offer help. Thank someone. Helping other people is incredibly rewarding and creates a sense of connection and contribution.

Physical

Keeping the good physical health is imperative for feeling good. Our bodies were designed to be exercised. It needs nourishment and rest too – so eat and sleep well.

What you can do today:

Go for a walk often alone or with someone, bike to work, go to the gym, play with the kids, garden, dance. Doing physical activity produces 'feel-good' chemicals.

Social/Family

The sense of belonging, sharing and caring is very strong in us as human beings.

What you can do today:

Connect with the people around you. Ring a friend, have a coffee with someone, etc. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Just as each corner of the house must be strong and balanced to hold its structure, each dimension of wellbeing must be balanced for health to exist.

So, if you think you have not had the experience of wellbeing for a while, then it's likely that you've stopped 'doing it'. Let's get empowered and start taking control of our own sense of wellbeing. There's no time like the present – take the initiative - ring a friend, ask them to go for a walk and chat about what makes *you* both happy. The rest will follow– enjoy the journey.

Be well!

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