



PositivePsychology.com



WELLBEING X

A 7-SESSION WELLBEING TRAINING TEMPLATE

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

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THEORY & ADVICE

Introduction

Welcome to this Wellbeing intervention. This manual is designed to support you in helping clients curate their ideal life – whether in personal, community, or organizational settings – using structured, science-based tools from positive psychology. In particular, we provide tools to help your clients navigate the inevitable ups and downs of life by becoming active participants in their own wellbeing.

The sections of this manual are broken down as follows.

First, we provide a brief introduction to wellbeing, the field of positive psychology, and the PERMAH Framework as a means of wellbeing intervention. Next, we explore some of the surprising science of wellbeing change to help us establish small, sustainable wellbeing habits that have a big impact over time.

Finally, we provide a practical seven-session plan for using this intervention with your clients.

We hope these materials can help you connect your clients to a sense of hope, joy, choice, and control that is available to all of us, leading them to greater wellbeing in their lives.

Naomi Hill (MAPP), reviewed by Elaine Houston

Wellbeing

There are as many definitions for wellbeing as there are researchers studying it. Shortly, we will explore a range of approaches and attitudes towards wellbeing – from its roots in Ancient Greek philosophy to the ongoing challenges modern-day researchers face in creating definitions that are both accurate and accessible, specific, yet flexible. In this spirit, we have chosen Dr. Felicia Huppert’s definition of wellbeing, describing our ability to feel good and function effectively.

Semantics aside for now, over two decades of wellbeing research has found that individuals with higher levels of wellbeing tend to enjoy more fulfilling relationships, embrace learning challenges more readily, exhibit greater creativity and productivity, demonstrate a heightened propensity for altruism, achieve higher levels of engagement and success in their careers, attain greater financial rewards, experience better physical health, and are less prone to substance abuse [1].

The good news is that recent research suggests that when cultivating and maintaining wellbeing in work and life, even the smallest of actions can significantly impact – as long as they are performed consistently. Instead of aiming to make big, bold goals (and ending up disappointed when we fall short), researchers suggest that these small wellbeing actions, when undertaken regularly, can bolster confidence and motivation and lead to incremental ‘wellbeing wins’ that enhance our overall level of wellbeing over time.

Positive Psychology 2.0

Positive psychology research asks, *How can we lead ourselves to enjoy greater wellbeing?* In parallel, positive psychology practitioners equip clients with the tools to pursue optimal lives.

The rise of positive psychology reflects a shift in the broader aims of the psychology field. For years, research and practice have focused primarily on reducing illness and repairing weakness. Little attention was paid to positive examples of human functioning or their drivers. As a result, the knowledge of the factors that could lead to flourishing and greater meaning is limited.

This focus shifted at the turn of the century, initiating positive psychology’s second wave. While the field was initially criticized for its exclusive focus on the positive, it soon evolved also to consider the negatives. Although this second generation of positive psychology remains focused on increasing wellbeing, it appreciates the ambivalent and complex nature of the field by

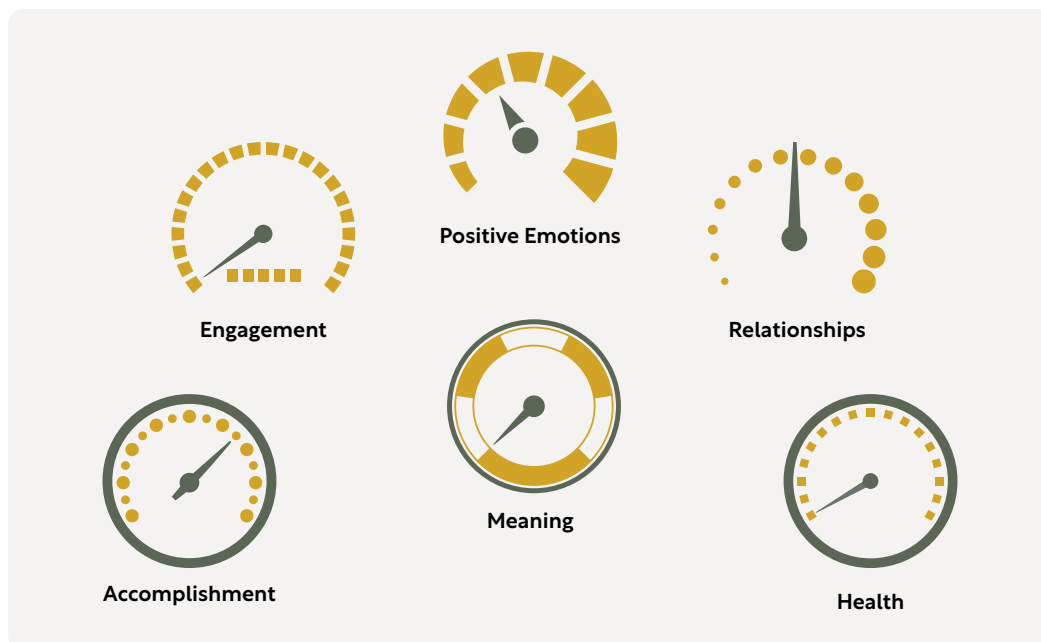
- ▶ Recognizing that seemingly negative experiences can contribute to positive aspects of human functioning and transformation
- ▶ Recognizing that seemingly positive qualities and experiences can be detrimental to wellbeing under certain circumstances, and
- ▶ Acknowledging the importance of coping with negative thoughts, experiences, and behaviors

This Intervention

This program aims to bridge the gap between science and practice by using positive psychology interventions to enhance wellbeing in daily life. In particular, this intervention aims to equip clients with the knowledge, skills, and resources to better care for their wellbeing – even in the inevitable ups and downs of life.

When it comes to learning to care for our wellbeing, context, capacity, and curiosity are crucial. In fact, Professor Sonja Lyubomirsky notes that there is no one magic strategy that will help every person be well. We each have unique needs, interests, values, resources, and inclinations that undoubtedly predispose us to put effort into and benefit from some strategies more than others [2].

This is where our use of the PERMAH Framework comes in. Rather than viewing wellbeing as a single concept that we either “have” or “don’t have” – similar to how people report “having” or “not having” a mental illness – The PERMAH Framework’s power is in its multi-dimensional approach to wellbeing. Developed by one of the founders of Positive Psychology, Dr. Martin Seligman, The PERMAH Framework describes wellbeing as comprising six wellbeing pillars: Positive Emotions, Engagement, (Positive) Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health [3].



Dr. Seligman suggests that we consider these wellbeing factors, such as the dashboard allowing a pilot to fly a plane – no single dial indicates how an airplane functions. Rather, the fuel gauge, the airspeed indicator, the altimeter, and the interaction between them provide all the information needed.

To feel good and function effectively, we all must cultivate each PERMAH factor. But the “PERMAH Pillars” we prioritize and our actions to cultivate them will depend on who we are, our energy levels, our circumstances, and the results we seek.

By choosing a flexible wellbeing framework and encouraging small wellbeing actions that can be sustained over time, this intervention is designed to be adapted to any culture or context. It supports each individual client in identifying, developing, and sustaining their wellbeing habits – even through life’s inevitable ups and downs.

Important Notes

- ▶ Depending on the nature of your clients’ personal goals, the manual and practices may require some personal interpretation and usage.
- ▶ As in real life, making a stepwise protocol that would work for every client, problem, and goal would be difficult. Moreover, although many exercises in this manual have been tested in scientific research and found to enhance wellbeing, this manual has not been tested in research directly.
- ▶ Please note that this manual is not a substitute for a coaching certification program, which we recommend you take before you call yourself an official coach and see clients or patients.
- ▶ Note that you are advised to use this manual within the boundaries of your professional expertise. For instance, if you are a certified clinician, you are advised to use the exercises within your field of expertise (e.g., clinical psychology). Likewise, a school teacher may use the exercises in the classroom but is not advised to use the exercises with clinical populations. PositivePsychology.com is not responsible for unauthorized usage of this manual.

Session 1

WELLBEING 101



66

“Wellbeing is our ability to feel good and function effectively.”

- Dr. Felicia Huppert

This quote encapsulates our working definition of “wellbeing” throughout this course. It also exemplifies the power of a simple, accessible, and measurable definition in helping us assess and care for our wellbeing.

Humans have been attempting to define wellbeing for centuries, from ancient religious practices to the self-help section in bookstores. Every author, scholar, and philosopher has their own definition of what wellbeing encompasses. For wellbeing practitioners and educators, ensuring we and our clients have a clear, shared definition of wellbeing is essential. Shared language and concepts – particularly when conducting a workplace wellbeing intervention – are crucial to helping clients identify their focus, desired experiences, and the outcomes they would most like to observe.

In this session, Wellbeing 101, you will provide clients with the foundational wellbeing knowledge they need to be able to understand and care for their wellbeing during and long after this program. In particular, you will:

- ▶ Explore the concept of wellbeing
- ▶ Introduce and overview the PERMAH framework: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health
- ▶ Explain that we are part of a “Wellbeing Ecosystem” that includes Individual, Team, and Organization/Community wellbeing
- ▶ Emphasize the importance of small habits in sustainably caring for our wellbeing

Defining Wellbeing: Questions To Consider

When clarifying a shared definition, researchers highlight various issues and distinctions surrounding the definition of wellbeing that merit consideration, inviting us to consider the following [4]:

- ▶ Will our wellbeing definition use everyday, accessible, less precise language OR expert (academic) terminology?
- ▶ Will our wellbeing definition comprise more subjective (individually experienced) OR objective (externally measurable) viewpoints?
- ▶ Will our wellbeing definition focus on the individual OR the team/group/organization?
- ▶ Will our definition of wellbeing involve unidimensional (measuring one aspect of wellbeing, such as “happiness”) or multidimensional (multiple components comprising wellbeing) conceptions?
- ▶ Will our wellbeing definition focus on experienced (identifying our emotions or moods) OR evaluative (e.g., assessing our satisfaction with life more broadly) notions [5,6]?

A Philosophical Perspective

Although our approach is scientific, any wellbeing scholar would emphasize the importance of identifying the philosophical underpinnings of our wellbeing definition and approach. Many researchers have returned to the wisdom of the ancient Greeks to illuminate the nature and core ingredients of a good life. More specifically, they analyzed the distinction between eudaimonic versus hedonistic wellbeing.

Eudaimonic Wellbeing

Combining the words “eu,” meaning good, and “daemon,” meaning lesser god, guiding spirit, or tutelary deity [7]. Eudaimonic wellbeing emphasizes personal growth, authenticity, meaning, and excellence [8]. It is characterized by a focus on self-fulfillment,

virtue-oriented living, and the pursuit of long-term flourishing. In the workplace context, cultivating eudaimonic wellbeing often takes the form of “job crafting”, where we seek to align the elements of our role (our tasks, relationships, or intentions and beliefs about the work that we do) with our personal values and the positive impact we want to have on the world [9].

Hedonic Wellbeing

In contrast, hedonic wellbeing revolves around pleasure-seeking and desire fulfillment, focusing on maximizing pleasure and minimizing displeasure [7]. This form of wellbeing is subjective and often measured through cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction and the presence of positive or negative affect.

In a workplace context, while increasing enjoyment is often a beneficial byproduct of job crafting, it is not the primary intent of this intervention [10]. Instead, cultivating hedonic wellbeing at work may look like participating in playful social events, having regular team rituals around celebrating “small wins,” incorporating moments of play or fun into your work breaks (e.g., walking around the block to your favorite song or a funny podcast, or playing a game of pickleball with colleagues over lunch, etc.).

Balancing Wellbeing Approaches

While eudaimonic wellbeing is associated with self-realization and the pursuit of a meaningful life, hedonic wellbeing centers on immediate gratification and the pursuit of enjoyable experiences. Many researchers agree that, despite and because of their differences, both eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing contribute to overall life satisfaction and the pursuit of the “good life” [11,12].

Taking all these factors into consideration, for this wellbeing intervention, we have decided to use Dr. Felicia Huppert’s definition of wellbeing: *“Well-being is our ability to feel good and function effectively.”*

We have selected this definition for its accessible and inclusive language (“our” could apply broadly to individuals or groups), its focus on both experienced (“feeling good”) and externally measurable phenomena (“functioning”), and its adaptability to both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives.

The Journey, Not The Definition

While this definition will be used as a talking point and a consistent shared touchstone throughout the intervention, the most valuable learning is the discussion of the elements that comprise wellbeing.

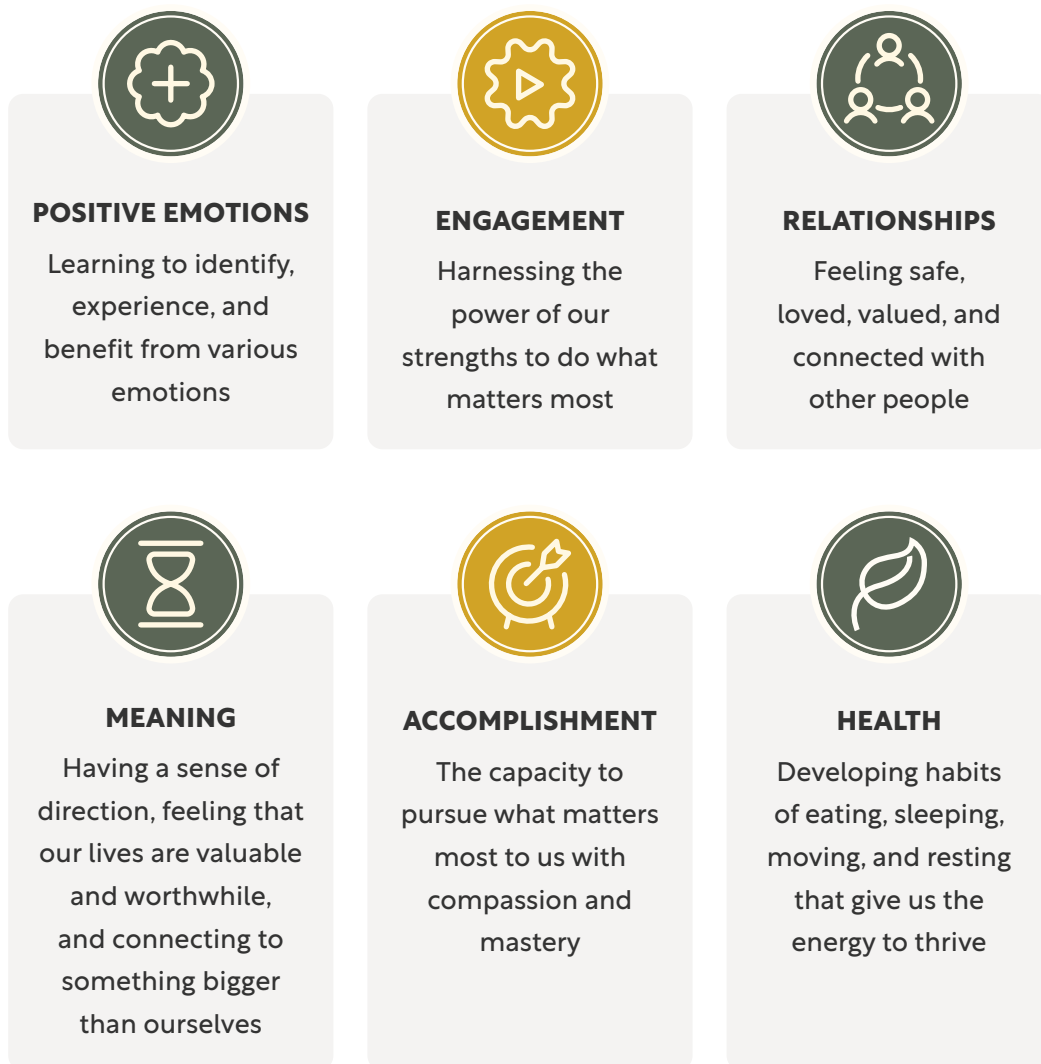
There is no universally accepted definition of wellbeing, except that it is recognized as multi-faceted [13]. So, this should be an ongoing conversation for any wellbeing practitioner with their clients.

Equally, clients should be encouraged to develop their own definitions of wellbeing, based on their unique context, values, and ideally with consideration of some of the wellbeing elements discussed above.

The PERMAH Framework

To better understand and help people to shape their wellbeing proactively, scholars and practitioners have developed various theories and frameworks. Selected for its multi-dimensional approach, measurability, and practical nature, this intervention is built around Professor Martin Seligman's PERMAH Model, which proposes 6 Pillars of wellbeing [14]:

- ▶ **Positive Emotions:** learning to identify, experience, and benefit from various emotions.
- ▶ **Engagement:** harnessing the power of our strengths to do what matters most.
- ▶ **Relationships:** feeling safe, loved, valued, and connected with other people.
- ▶ **Meaning:** having a sense of direction, feeling that our lives are valuable and worthwhile, and connecting to something bigger than ourselves.
- ▶ **Accomplishment:** the capacity to pursue what matters most to us with compassion and mastery.
- ▶ **Health:** developing habits of eating, sleeping, moving, and resting that give us the energy to thrive.



Research has shown significant positive associations between the PERMA(H) components and vitality, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and commitment within organizations [15].

Proactively investing in the various PERMA(H) Pillars increases wellbeing and decreases psychological distress [16]. Moreover, from a measurement perspective, research has shown that the PERMA scale shows relative stability across nationalities, ages, and other demographic factors [17].

However, a recent meta-analysis of the PERMA(H) framework advocates for further refinement of the existing PERMA measurement tools, as certain pillars (engagement and negative emotions) reflected lower relative reliability than others [18].

Researchers also caution against computing an overall “PERMA(H) score” due to lacking a general factor underlying the dimensions. Instead, each pillar should be measured and targeted individually, understanding that, although distinct factors in their own right,

there is inevitable cross-pollination between the PERMAH Pillars. For example, focusing on increasing our levels of positive emotions (e.g., practicing gratitude or creating more moments of shared humor/amusement) will likely impact how we show up in our relationships positively.

**There is some variation in PERMA models studied, with some including an overall ‘Health’ pillar, while others expand on the model to include individual factors like Vitality/Nutrition/Sleep/Optimism, etc. [19].*

Real-World Application

As mentioned earlier, we must cultivate each PERMAH factor to feel good and function effectively. But the “PERMAH Pillars” we prioritize and our actions to cultivate them will depend on who we are, our energy levels, our circumstances, and the results we seek.

Our wellbeing naturally ebbs and flows based on what is happening in the world around us and the choices we’re making. This is not only normal but healthy. Rather than trying to achieve perfect PERMAH scores or even seeking constant improvement in our scores, researchers advise that we focus on enhancing our ability to tune into and take small actions to care for our wellbeing. Here are some brief examples of what this practice might look like:

Pillar	Description	Real-World Example
Positive Emotions	Learning to identify, experience, and benefit from a range of emotions.	<p>In the workplace, this might involve noticing moments of joy or satisfaction during the workday, like receiving positive feedback.</p> <p>Acknowledging these emotions can boost your mood and motivation, making your work experience more enjoyable and productive.</p>
Engagement	Leveraging our strengths and interests to feel capable and deeply absorbed in activities.	<p>Focusing on tasks that leverage your strengths and interests. For example, if you excel in creativity, brainstorming new ideas for a project, or designing innovative solutions to problems. If prudence is your strength, planning, and organizing tasks, ensuring all details are accounted for and risks are minimized.</p>

Pillar	Description	Real-World Example
		Setting aside time for activities that keep you engaged and enthusiastic, like learning new skills or seeking mentorship in areas you're curious about.
Relationships	Feeling safe, loved, valued, and connected with other people.	<p>Making an effort to connect with colleagues by asking them appreciative questions like "What's going well today?" or "What was the highlight of your weekend?"</p> <p>Spotting their strengths and providing strengths-based feedback, such as "Your creativity really elevated the pitch we wrote today."</p>
Meaning	Having a sense of direction, feeling that our lives are valuable and worthwhile, and connecting to something bigger than ourselves.	Reflecting on how your role contributes to the larger goals of the organization, seeking feedback about the impact your actions have had on others or clients, and working with your supervisor to "job craft" your role to better integrate your values, strengths, and more productive personal connections.
Accomplishment	Setting and striving for personal milestones with a sense of pride and self-compassion.	<p>Setting clear, achievable, and personally meaningful goals for yourself and tracking your progress with regular reflections.</p> <p>Celebrating both big victories (like a promotion) and small ones (like finishing a chapter in a book) along the way boosts your sense of capability and confidence.</p>
Health	Developing habits of eating, sleeping, moving, and resting that give us the energy to thrive.	Incorporating small positive changes into your daily routine. This could include taking short breaks to stretch or walk, choosing more nutrient-dense snacks that keep you fuller for longer, or making tiny tweaks to improve your pre-sleep routine.

Throughout this intervention, we will explore each of the PERMAH Pillars and experiment with evidence-based, busy-proof ways to cultivate them in our lives.

The Wellbeing Ecosystem

Wellbeing doesn't exist in isolation – our experiences, choices, and relationships shape and are shaped by the environments we engage with every day. From our personal lives to our communities, wellbeing is an ongoing, interconnected process. The way we care for ourselves, manage stress, and foster positive relationships influences not just our own experiences but also those around us. This interconnectedness is especially evident in workplace settings. Workplace wellbeing extends beyond individual experiences to encompass a complex interplay of factors operating at various organizational levels. Research indicates that workplace wellbeing is influenced by interactions at the individual, team, and organizational levels, with each level impacting the others in a dynamic, ongoing way [20].

In reality, nurturing workplace wellbeing requires a collective effort. Our perceptions, experiences, and behaviors related to wellbeing are intricately intertwined within the social fabric of our workplaces. Studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of wellbeing not only benefit themselves but also contribute to the wellbeing of their colleagues and even customers [1].

Three Levels of Wellbeing

Thus, our approach to promoting wellbeing revolves around three interconnected levels: the “Me” level (Intrapersonal), focusing on individual choices and practices for self-care; the “We” level (Interpersonal), emphasizing relationships and collaboration with others and the “Us” level (Systemic), addressing the broader workplace environment, including values, culture, leadership, and societal structures that shape collective wellbeing.

It is important to note that Wellbeing at the Me (individual), We (team), and Us (broader system) levels are interdependent and dynamically interact. For example:

An employee practicing mindfulness or stress management (Me level) enhances their own resilience and productivity. This positive state influences team dynamics (We level) by fostering a collaborative and calm atmosphere, aiding in effective problem-solving and innovation.

If the organization promotes openness and mental health awareness (Us level), it encourages teams to openly discuss stress and workload management. This support empowers individuals to express their needs and seek help, creating a continuous loop where individual, team, and organizational wellbeing reinforce each other.

A Systems Lens

Taking a “systems lens” when caring for wellbeing is crucial to address the range of relationships and forces present in any community or environment. However, systems science as a discipline can quickly become an abstract and arithmetic-heavy pursuit, so keeping the concepts as simple and relatable as possible is key to practically applying them.



Describing the systemic nature of wellbeing through the metaphor of a “Wellbeing Ecosystem” is one of many ways to convey this systems lens to clients. In this context, each of the wellbeing levels is conveyed as follows:

- ▶ **The Seed (Me):** The individual seed must be in adequate health to begin to grow.
- ▶ **The Surrounding Flora & Fauna (We):** The surrounding plants and animals must be compatible (and non-threatening) with the health of the individual seed.
- ▶ **The Environment (Us):** The permaculture, weather, and environmental forces must support the survival of each of these individual seeds and their coexistence.

A key distinction between plants and humans is our higher level of consciousness and, therefore, ability to consciously tune into and take steps to care for our wellbeing on an individual and group level.

For example, an individual (seed) can use internal resources (e.g., cognitive reflection or interoception of bodily sensations) or external resources (e.g., wellbeing surveys or objective health results) to help them assess their current wellbeing levels and needs. Below are some examples of the kinds of questions you/they may wish to pose to begin this reflective process:

- ▶ Are they experiencing enough curiosity, joy, or gratitude in their daily life?
- ▶ Do they feel connected to what gives your life meaning?
- ▶ Are they setting and achieving goals that matter to them both personally and in the bigger picture?

From here, they may identify an area or two they'd like to focus on more (e.g., increasing the frequency and intensity of positive emotions in their daily life).

With many positive emotional interventions being relational in nature (e.g., expressing gratitude, exploring common interests, or sharing moments of humor), such a wellbeing focus will be impacted by the nature of the relationships (the surrounding flora and fauna) in daily life.

- ▶ What sort of groups or communities are they part of?
- ▶ What are the existing rituals and routines?
- ▶ Do they spend most of their time alone or with others?
- ▶ Do they have enough psychological safety – the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking – in their relationships [21]?

Asking these questions leads to broader inquiries into the larger environment (ecosystem) that has shaped collective norms.

- ▶ What is the overall temperature? Is it one of warmth and safety? Or of frigidity and isolation?
- ▶ What societal values, community norms, or leadership influences might be shaping this environment?
- ▶ How is that affecting the interactions within and between groups?
- ▶ Are there opportunities and space to connect with others meaningfully?
- ▶ How is that affecting them?
- ▶ Do they feel capable of connecting to their feelings and to others in this climate?

In summary, the metaphor of a “Wellbeing Ecosystem” offers a practical and relatable lens to understand and address wellbeing. Just as a thriving ecosystem requires a harmonious balance of individual organisms, surrounding flora and fauna, and a supportive environment, wellbeing depends on the interconnected dynamics between individuals, relationships, and the broader social and environmental context.

By adopting a systems approach to wellbeing, individuals and communities can better understand and nurture the diverse relationships and forces at play within their ecosystem. This approach empowers individuals to consciously assess and enhance their wellbeing while fostering supportive relationships and cultivating a culture that prioritizes health, collaboration, and growth for everyone involved.

Common Derailers To Wellbeing Change

What is one of the most common excuses for not caring for our wellbeing? More likely than not, you’ve used this excuse yourself many times. Sometimes, it may have even been true. We refer, of course, to the “I’m too busy” trap.

While very common and often meant in earnest, this excuse often masks deeper obstacles derailing our intentions for better wellbeing, especially regarding health. Fortunately, behavior change research has identified three common derailers underlying this excuse: “I don’t really want to,” “I’m not sure where to start,” and “I don’t think I can.” [22]

- ▶ The first derailer, **“I don’t really want to,”** can often reflect a misalignment in what we or others suggest we should try and what we actually have the energy and will to do each day. It lives in “woulda, coulda, shoulda” moments of our lives: those gym classes we wish we wanted to hop, skip, and jump into; those online courses we wished we could focus on for more than five minutes; or those hyped up books that we just don’t seem to get into.

Recognizing this reluctance is crucial. It lets us become aware of and own our choices without blaming external factors or feeling guilty about what we're not prioritizing. It helps us become more authentic in our words and actions and become who we really are rather than who we "should" be.

- ▶ The second derail, **"I'm not sure where to start,"** leaves many feeling stuck and disempowered. Even with tools and tips, some of us still trip up on when and how to take the first step in our new valued behaviors. This derail lives in those moments of brain fog, panic, or paralysis when we suspect that any question we wish to ask is a "silly" one, likely to reveal our relative incompetence or inability to follow simple instructions.

When it comes to addressing this common derail, psychological safety is invaluable. Being able to ask our "silly questions," reach for support, and seek guidance without fear of ridicule or punishment not only allows us to learn from each other's successes and struggles, it enhances psychological safety each time we do it.

- ▶ The third common derail, **"I don't think I can,"** is unsurprisingly fueled by fear of failure. It lives in those behaviors we know we value (e.g., writing a nightly journal, trying out that new pilates class, or attending a weekly networking night) but that remain abstract and vague in our minds.

Whether consciously or not, we keep these goals at arm's length, dodging the details or logistics in case it all becomes too difficult. After all, it's easier to talk about improving wellbeing than to risk actually taking action, falling short, and feeling disappointed. But reframing this fear as a sign that this behavior matters to you, recognizing courage concealed in choosing vulnerability, and approaching these activities with curiosity and a willingness to show up and be a beginner can ease the pressure.

By embracing a mindset of continual learning and leveraging support systems, we can navigate these derailers and make strides toward our wellbeing goals – no matter how little or lofty they may be.

The Power of Rooted Routines

In our Wellbeing Ecosystem, we explore the interconnected levels of wellbeing – individual, collective, and environmental. To support growth within this ecosystem, we introduce the concept of Rooted Routines, which serve as the foundation for sustaining personal wellbeing.

Just as strong roots support a plant, small, intentional habits create stability, ensuring that wellbeing is a lasting, continuous journey. Rooted routines ensure that wellbeing isn't fleeting – it's supported by habits that hold firm through life's seasons. These small, intentional practices provide the foundation for personal wellbeing and, when nurtured, can spread to positively impact broader circles.

Rooted Routines within the Wellbeing Ecosystem

Rooted Routines within the Wellbeing Ecosystem begin at the individual level, anchoring personal wellbeing before extending outward to influence our relationships and broader environments. Here is how it works:

The Seed (Me)

Rooted routines are the small, reliable habits that stabilize and nurture our personal wellbeing. These intentional practices form the foundation for lasting wellbeing, promoting growth and resilience.

The Surrounding Flora & Fauna (We)

When individuals nurture their wellbeing through rooted routines, they help create a positive and supportive environment for others. Shared practices, like connecting with others or practicing gratitude, contribute to a flourishing, collective atmosphere.

The Environment (Us)

A community or organization that prioritizes wellbeing fosters an environment that supports positive habits, ensuring collective growth. By cultivating balance, flexibility, and psychological safety, this culture nurtures and sustains wellbeing for everyone.

Rooted Routines: Nourishing Habits for Growth

Rooted routines are simple yet powerful actions that nourish and sustain our wellbeing. Think of them as the small, steady habits that support our growth, much like a plant's deep roots.

Here's how to implement a rooted practice with your client:

Grounded Beginnings

What is an existing action or routine in your client's day that would naturally allow them to add a new wellbeing habit? Ask them about behaviors they already do regularly. How can this moment "nurture" the start of their new habit?

Nurturing Action

What is the small, manageable action they can take right now to help foster their wellbeing? Make sure this is an action so easy, they can do it even on busy days. How will your client take their first step toward growth?

GROUND ED BEGINNINGS	<p>What is an existing action or routine in your day that would naturally allow you to add a new wellbeing habit? Think about behaviors you already do regularly. How can this moment "nurture" the start of your new habit?</p>	<p><i>I drink a cup of tea every morning.</i></p>
NURTURING ACTION	<p>What is the small, manageable action you can take right now to help foster your wellbeing? Make sure this is an action so easy you can do it even on busy days. How will you take your first step toward growth?</p>	<p><i>When I finish my tea, I will take three slow, deep breaths.</i></p>
THRIVING MOMENT	<p>Once you've completed your action, how can you celebrate your success, no matter how small? What will you do to acknowledge your growth? This moment of recognition will help reinforce your habit.</p>	<p><i>I'll say "Well done!" to myself quietly.</i></p>
NOURISHING REFLECTION	<p>What do you expect to feel after completing your action? How do you anticipate this practice supporting your wellbeing? Think about any changes you hope to see in your thoughts, mood, or habits. How might this habit help you in the future?</p>	<p><i>I expect breathing will help me feel calmer and more focused throughout the day.</i></p>

Thriving Moment

Once they've completed their action, how can they celebrate their success, no matter how small? What will they do to acknowledge their growth? This moment of recognition will help reinforce their habit.

Nourishing Reflection

What do they expect to feel after completing their action? How do they anticipate this practice supporting their wellbeing? Ask them about any changes they hope to see in their thoughts, mood, or habits. How might this habit help them in the future?

A Brief History of Small Habits

The concept of small habits isn't new. The idea has been around for decades, with early psychological studies showing that behavior change often begins with small, manageable steps. Research in the 20th century, particularly from B.F. Skinner's work on operant conditioning and Albert Bandura's social learning theory, highlighted how incremental changes in behavior could lead to long-term habits through reinforcement and modeling [23]. Over time, this idea has been refined and popularized in different ways, most notably through frameworks like *Tiny Habits* by B.J. Fogg and *Atomic Habits* by James Clear [24,25]. Both of these approaches emphasize the power of starting small, reducing friction, and building consistency over time to form sustainable habits.

However, the principles of small habit formation have even deeper roots in behavioral psychology, including concepts like *implementation intentions* [26], which stress the importance of specifying when and where a habit will occur, and *habit stacking*, a strategy where new behaviors are anchored to existing ones for easier adoption [25]. The idea also aligns with *Kaizen*, a Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement, which encourages small, incremental progress to achieve lasting change [27].

Today, these principles continue to shape how we understand and create lasting behavior change.

Key Considerations for Rooted Routines

Although small and simple, creating and maintaining a Rooted Routine isn't always easy. We've put together key clarifications, cautions, and considerations to support you in guiding your clients to stay mindful and motivated as they integrate these new behaviors:

1. **Patience and consistency over perfection:** The key to building lasting habits is consistency, not perfection. It's important to be patient with oneself and trust that steady, small actions add up over time. Missing a day or two doesn't erase progress – it's about getting back on track.
2. **Nurturing a growth environment:** Surrounding oneself with supportive cues and resources can make it easier to maintain a consistent routine. This could be setting up physical reminders, finding a supportive community, or simply ensuring that our space aligns with our wellbeing goals. A nurturing environment strengthens our ability to stick with our rooted routines.
3. **Flexibility and adaptation:** Life changes, and so do our needs. It is essential to be open to adjusting our routines as we grow. Adaptability ensures our habits stay relevant, sustainable, and supportive of our evolving wellbeing journey.
4. **Aligning with our values and goals:** A routine is more likely to stick when it aligns with what truly matters to us. Reflecting on our deeper motivations, ensures that our habits support our long-term wellbeing and personal or professional growth.
5. **Balancing structure with ease:** While routines provide stability, they shouldn't feel rigid or overwhelming. Aiming for a balance between structure and flow, allows for moments of spontaneity while maintaining a foundation that keeps us grounded.
6. **Monitoring progress with self-compassion:** Habit tracking should feel encouraging rather than punishing. Using methods like journaling, check-ins, or simple reflections can help highlight progress and reframe setbacks as opportunities for learning rather than failures.
7. **Prioritizing joy and fulfillment:** Routines are most effective when they enhance well-being rather than feel like obligations. Infusing habits with a sense of purpose and enjoyment – such as playing music, engaging in mindful movement, or incorporating small rewards – can help sustain motivation.
8. **Reconnecting with our 'why':** When motivation dips, revisiting the deeper reason behind a routine can help maintain commitment. Whether the goal is improved wellbeing, mental clarity, or greater resilience, keeping this purpose in focus can reinforce consistency and engagement.

Of course, these are just some common struggles and suggestions that may support our Rooted Routines framework. The key to success is, as always, in our ability to reflect on and reshape our efforts when necessary by asking: *What's working well? Where do I notice challenges or resistance? What am I learning? Based on this, what will I try next?*

Rooted Routines Examples

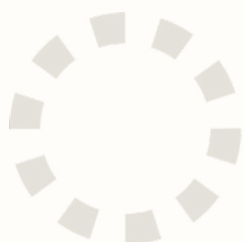
To help clients overcome the “I don’t know how” derailer, we’ve compiled a list of examples of Grounded Beginnings, Nurturing Actions, Thriving Moments, and Nourishing Reflections.

Note: Each session will explore wellbeing behaviors specific to each PERMAH Pillar in depth. However, some example wellbeing behaviors are provided to inspire clients as they experiment with the Rooted Routines approach and integrate new habits into their daily lives.

Grounded Beginnings	Nurturing Action	Thriving Moment	Nourishing Reflections
Finishing a workout	Do a short body scan	Feel a sense of calm and awareness	Increase mind-body awareness
Putting your phone down before bed	Think of a kind thing you did today	Appreciate your own kindness	Foster self-compassion and positivity
Brushing your teeth	Say one thing you’re grateful for	Enjoy the feeling of gratitude	Cultivate a habit of gratitude
Taking a shower	Take a deep breath and enjoy the warmth	Savor the sensation of relaxation	Turn your shower into a mindful experience
Unlocking your front door	Pause and take in your surroundings	Appreciate the comfort of being home	Create a habit of being present and grateful

Session 2

HEALTHY HABITS



66

“No matter how healthy you are today, you can take specific actions to have more energy and live longer.”

- Tom Rath

This quote emphasizes that, whatever our current state of health, we can immediately take small actions that can have a positive, accumulative effect on our health in the longer term.

In the previous session, Wellbeing 101, you provided clients with a philosophical and scientific introduction to wellbeing, the field of positive psychology, and the PERMAH framework as a means of conceptualizing wellbeing. You also explored some of the surprising science of wellbeing change to help set your clients up for small, sustainable wellbeing habits that have a big impact over time. Finally, we provided a practical seven-session plan for using this intervention with your clients.

Although sixth in the PERMAH framework acronym, we begin our wellbeing learning journey with Health because it is the “foundation of the house.” Without adequate levels of energy, focus, and physical stamina, it’s unlikely that participants will be able to cultivate positive emotions, harness their strengths, or build connections.

Therefore, in Session 2, we will explore the small changes we can make to the way that we Eat, Move, Sleep, and Rest & Recover, so that we have adequate health to strive for wellbeing in other areas of our life. In particular, you will:

- ▶ Perform a Health Reflection Round
- ▶ Investigate: Are We Eating Well?
- ▶ Explore: Are We Moving Mindfully?
- ▶ Uncover: Are We Sleeping Enough?
- ▶ Discover: Are We Resting & Recovering?
- ▶ Create: A Rooted Routine for Health

This session is all about giving clients small, powerful, busy-proof tools that they can use to help form a Rooted Routine. Drawing from the research and teachings of researcher and consultant Tom Rath, you'll use this session to systematically help clients explore their current attitudes, as well as their most desired actions in the foundational health areas: Eating Well, Moving Mindfully, and Sleeping Enough. In addition to exploring this "holy trinity" of health, we will also unpack the latest Rest & Recovery research as a means of bolstering wellbeing and preventing burnout [28].

With over half (59%) of young people and 80% of frontline workers reporting feeling burnt out in 2023, the need to address ongoing stress in work and life has become acute [29]. While recent cultural shifts and events like the Global Pandemic, heightened political unrest, increased cost of living, and remote working challenges have undoubtedly played their role in these increasing burnout rates, researchers Emily and Amelia Nagoski suggest that crux of this problem – and indeed, its solution – may reside in our conception of "stress" itself [28].

To live is to encounter adversity, and in today's modern society, many of us see perpetual stress and its myriad physiological consequences, as "our lot" in life. This surrender might be less a reflection of human nature as it is a lack of knowledge about the distinction between "stress" (the body's internal reaction or response to a stressor) and a "stressor" (an external event, situation, or stimulus that triggers the stress response). This distinction, the Nagoski sisters argue, contains the secret to our stress remedy. After encountering a stressor such as unachievable job demands, relationship rifts, or tech-based over-stimulation, it is not enough to simply tell ourselves to "chill out" or try and distract ourselves until it re-emerges: we must actively signal to our nervous system that it is safe if we wish to complete what the Nagoskis call the "Stress Cycle." In their own words, *"If you've dealt with the stressors but haven't dealt with the stress itself, your brain won't let you rest."*

This session is designed to give clients the knowledge, tools, and confidence they need to create the internal health and safety they need to be well, do well, and avoid burnout in an increasingly complex world. Although it is last in the PERMAH acronym, having the ability to care for our physical health is essential if we want to have the energy to invest in any other areas of wellbeing. That is why it's our next stop.

Health Reflection Round

Although we may try to convey otherwise, humans are inherently imperfect, yet adaptable creatures, equipped with curiosity, creativity, and the capacity for growth. The most successful among us – no matter their discipline or notoriety in broader society – are those that, when faced with challenges or setbacks, have learned to view them as opportunities for learning and development.

Whether it's an infant using their caregivers' feedback to gradually refine "googoo" and "gagas" into effective language that allows them to express their needs and identity, or a child experimenting with the nuances of speed and balance as they learn to ride a bike, humans have been Trying, Testing, and Tweaking their way to mastery since our earliest days on earth. Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us has naturally engaged in this process of continuous improvement, which we'll refer to as a "Reflection Round," by:

1. **Trying:** Drawing upon our innate curiosity and creativity, we experiment with various approaches to achieve our goals. Whether it's learning to walk, mastering a language, or cultivating relationships, we playfully explore different strategies.
2. **Testing:** Reflecting on our experiences, we evaluate what's working well, what's not, and what lessons we can glean from our efforts. By recognizing our strengths and areas for improvement, we can refine our approach.
3. **Tweaking:** Armed with insights from our test results, we adapt our behavior accordingly, striving for consistent progress toward our objectives. This iterative process allows us to continually refine our skills and capabilities.

Just because humans are built for this iterative process, doesn't mean we always successfully engage in it. Societal conditioning towards "perfectionism" and the development of a "fixed mindset" (the belief that abilities and intelligence are static traits that can't be developed) can shift our focus to one of "staying small" or "saving face," instead of trying, failing fast, and adapting as we're designed to do [30]. This is why the Reflection Round is best approached with a side of self-compassion and curiosity, which can be operationalized in the following ways:

- ▶ **Trying:** Experimentation and playfulness can bring energy and creativity to any endeavor. Learning opportunities, support from others, and techniques like small habits or environmental cues can all help facilitate action.
- ▶ **Testing:** A balanced perspective comes from recognizing both successes and areas for improvement. Emphasizing lessons learned and how to apply them moving forward can be more valuable than focusing solely on outcomes.

- ▶ **Tweaking:** Navigating challenges becomes more constructive with self-compassion. Rather than focusing on mistakes with self-criticism, approaching them with understanding and encouragement nurtures resilience, confidence, and growth.

In essence, the Reflection Round serves as a blueprint for realizing our full potential allowing us to embrace the journey of continuous learning and growth with grace and resilience.

We will continue that learning journey together by using the Reflection Round to help our clients assess their current experiences in the realm of Health.

Health Reflection Round

The beauty of the Reflection Round is that it is based on an intuitive human experience. It is a simplified version of a learning process each of us has (consciously or unconsciously) experienced many times in life. If you have learned a skill in your life, then you have done some version of a Reflection Round.

The power of this tool comes in making this unconscious (and often compromised or avoided) process a conscious practice that is explicitly communicated with others.

To truly make the most of this tool, we want to emphasize its core strengths, in the form of its: intuitive design (we already do it; now we can do it better, and together) and its flexibility (it can be done individually, in teams, or as an entire organization).

When it comes to our health...

- ▶ What's going well?
- ▶ Where do I notice challenges or resistance?
- ▶ What are we learning?
- ▶ What might we try next?



This tool is a growth mindset operationalized: it is foundational to being able to care for our wellbeing in the inevitable ups and downs of life. It is the antidote to “set and forget” wellbeing initiatives or practices, in that it is asking us to be active participants in shaping our wellbeing practices and outcomes on a regular basis.

With time, running a Reflection Round should become second nature in any aspect of a client's life (work, relationships, hobbies, education, etc.). It is the ultimate transferable skill: a fact we will observe as we apply it to each of the six PERMAH pillars, beginning with Health.

As mentioned, the power of this process is its capacity to render conscious otherwise unconscious thoughts, habits, or behaviors. This is true at both an individual level and a group level, and the more you can identify the shared strengths and struggles of the group, the more effective it will be both as a learning tool and means of forging psychological safety.

Are We Eating Well?

What is your relationship with food?

We ask you now, both as a wellbeing practitioner with a wealth of knowledge and experience in supporting many aspects of wellbeing, and as a human living in this complex, modern world.

Is food just a form of fuel to you? Or does it represent love and togetherness? Is it a source of joy and savoring? Or a source of anxiety and rumination?

Whether we like it or not, to live in modern society is to be conditioned by it (to at least some degree) and our beliefs and behaviors around eating are no exception.

Eating Attitudes & Behaviors

At The “Us Level” (Culture)

If you were raised in Western society, you may have learned to associate your food choices and body shape (as well as those of the people around you) to your levels of worth, beauty, and social acceptance. Indeed, recent studies have found that body dissatisfaction and dieting behaviors can emerge in children as young as 6 or 7 years old, researchers citing exposure to media, peer influence, and parental attitudes toward body image and weight as key contributors to these attitudes and behaviors [31].

Such an emphasis on appearance and the association of certain foods with moral value, such as a salad being labeled as “good,” while a cookie is labeled as “bad,” can contribute to disordered eating patterns and unhealthy relationships with food [32]. Additionally,

for better or worse, Western culture's commodification of food and its emphasis on convenience and efficiency may lead to a utilitarian view of food solely as fuel for the body, devoid of emotional significance or savoring practices, which can enrich the entire eating experience [33].

By contrast, Eastern and tribal societies often have more holistic and communal relationships with food, viewing it as a vital component of social and cultural identity. Food preparation and consumption are often communal activities, fostering bonds within families and communities [33]. In these cultures, food is imbued with cultural significance, and the act of sharing meals is seen as an expression of love and connection, rather than eating being seen as something to rush or do in isolation [34]. Better still, traditional dietary practices often prioritize whole, unprocessed foods that are both culturally meaningful and nutritionally dense, emphasizing an overall more balanced approach to eating [35].

At The “We Level” (Family)

Family attitudes towards food are deeply influenced by the cultural contexts in which they exist, shaping everything from mealtime rituals to dietary preferences. However, within each cultural framework, every family also brings its own unique perspectives and traditions to the table. For instance, some families may prioritize communal dining experiences, gathering around the table to share meals and engage in conversation, while others may opt for more casual dining arrangements, such as eating in front of the television.

Dietary habits, such as whether a family prefers home-cooked meals or relies on convenience foods like ready meals, can also vary significantly [36]. Moreover, factors like shopping frequency (weekly, daily, or bulk), pantry organization, and even condiment storage preferences (such as refrigerating ketchup or not) reflect the individualized practices and preferences that define each family's approach to food.

These diverse familial traditions not only contribute to the rich tapestry of culinary customs within a culture but also underscore the importance of recognizing the unique dynamics that shape our family's (and consequently, our own) relationship with food.

At The “Me Level” (Individually)

As infants, we generally have a very clear idea of when and how much we want to eat [37]. Moreover, advocating for these feeding needs is a frequent and amoral behavior. And yet, as soon as we develop an awareness of self, other, and a basic grasp for language,

so too do we absorb the aforementioned attitudes and behaviors that live within our family and broader culture. Over time, our personal experiences, social interactions, and environmental cues provide the landscape for us to Try, Test, and Tweak our eating habits, contributing to the development of our unique dietary patterns and attitudes [38]. For some of us, these eating habits may support our overall health, energy, and social cohesion; for others, they may do the very opposite.

Whatever our current individual relationship with food, the more we can recognize our current habits and where they came from (the cultural, social, and emotional influences), the better equipped we are to consciously choose what, how, why, and when we eat in the future.

Eating Well Essentials

Are eggs healthy or not right now? It seems to depend on the week and who you ask.

For many of us, navigating the realm of nutrition can feel like finding your way through a constantly shifting maze, with a never-ending assault of conflicting advice. But among all the chatter, there are a few things most nutrition experts agree on: individualize your diet as much as you can; make any changes as small and sustainable as possible, and choose self-compassion and learning over criticism along the way [39].

As we learned in the previous pages, we inherit our eating attitudes and behaviors from many sources and over many years, so to expect sudden, dramatic improvement is often a recipe for disaster. So instead of crash-dieting, eliminating entire food groups, only to binge on them a few weeks later, or feeling we need to ‘atone’ for occasions where we indulge in that chocolate mousse or burger and chips, researchers like Tom Rath suggest that we take a gentler, “one meal at a time” approach to shifting our eating beliefs and behaviors [40]. Below are a few essentials that most nutritionists and researchers agree on.

You’re Sweet Enough

It’s smart to cut back on refined sugars and fried foods [40]. These foods are as pervasive as they are delicious; and they are also loaded with empty calories that do very little to support our bodies to heal and function best. In fact, they’ve been linked to all sorts of health issues like obesity and heart disease. So, keeping tabs on how much of these we eat is key to keeping our bodies happy and healthy.

Count Calorie Quality > Quantity

Understanding food as more than just calories is a game-changer. Everything we eat gets transformed into glucose, which fuels our bodies and brains and allows us to work, play, and live each day [39]. So, what we put in our mouths affects how we feel and function and our ability to achieve (or not achieve) what matters most to us in life.

But not all foods are created equal. Some, like refined pasta and soda, give us a quick energy boost, but then leave us crashing later on [39]. On the flip side, high-fat meals keep us going for longer, but they can make us feel sluggish as our bodies work to digest them.

Protein, along with more complex carbohydrates (e.g., whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits, nuts and seeds), provide us with both long-lasting energy, and satiation. They are primed for conversion into muscle, particularly when we make sure to incorporate some strength/resistance-based movement into our day.

So while there are certainly no “good” or “bad” foods, it helps to be aware of how the kinds of foods we eat will affect how we’re able to shop up in work and life. Indeed, research shows that eating a variety of healthy proteins, fats, and complex carbohydrates can reap rewards that extend far beyond physical health, permeating every aspect of our lives, from our appearance to our mood and productivity levels [41].

Multiple studies have documented the profound impact of nutrition on mental health, with certain dietary patterns – such as a mediterranean diet – being linked to a reduced risk of depression and anxiety [42]. What’s more, emerging research suggests that dietary interventions may hold promise in mitigating the cognitive decline associated with aging, offering hope for preserving cognitive function well into old age [43].

So, while we live in a world of “quick fixes” and “instant meals,” it seems our focus may be better placed on slowing down and making intentional choices that nourish our bodies and souls. If we can make smarter choices when we shop (think less packaging, minimal processing, and more variety of color), and carve out even five minutes a day to plan and prepare simple, nutrient-packed foods, we can fuel up in a way that keeps us feeling our best, inside and out.

That said, any nutritionist worth their salt will also remind us that it’s all about balance – so don’t sweat the occasional indulgence. After all, life’s too short not to enjoy a slice of pizza or a scoop of ice cream every now and then.

Some Shopping Cart Swaps

As we've mentioned previously, whenever we trip up with behavior change we can usually trace it back to one of the three common d-railers: "I don't really want to," "I'm not sure where to start," and "I don't think I can."

To address these issues, it's important to identify and commit to an eating behavior we genuinely want to try.

The table below, which is also in the client workbook, provides some suggested swaps for our weekly shopping that can help us eat healthier, reducing the intake of unhealthy fats, added sugars, and empty calories, while increasing the consumption of nutrients like fiber, protein, and healthy fats to promote better overall health.

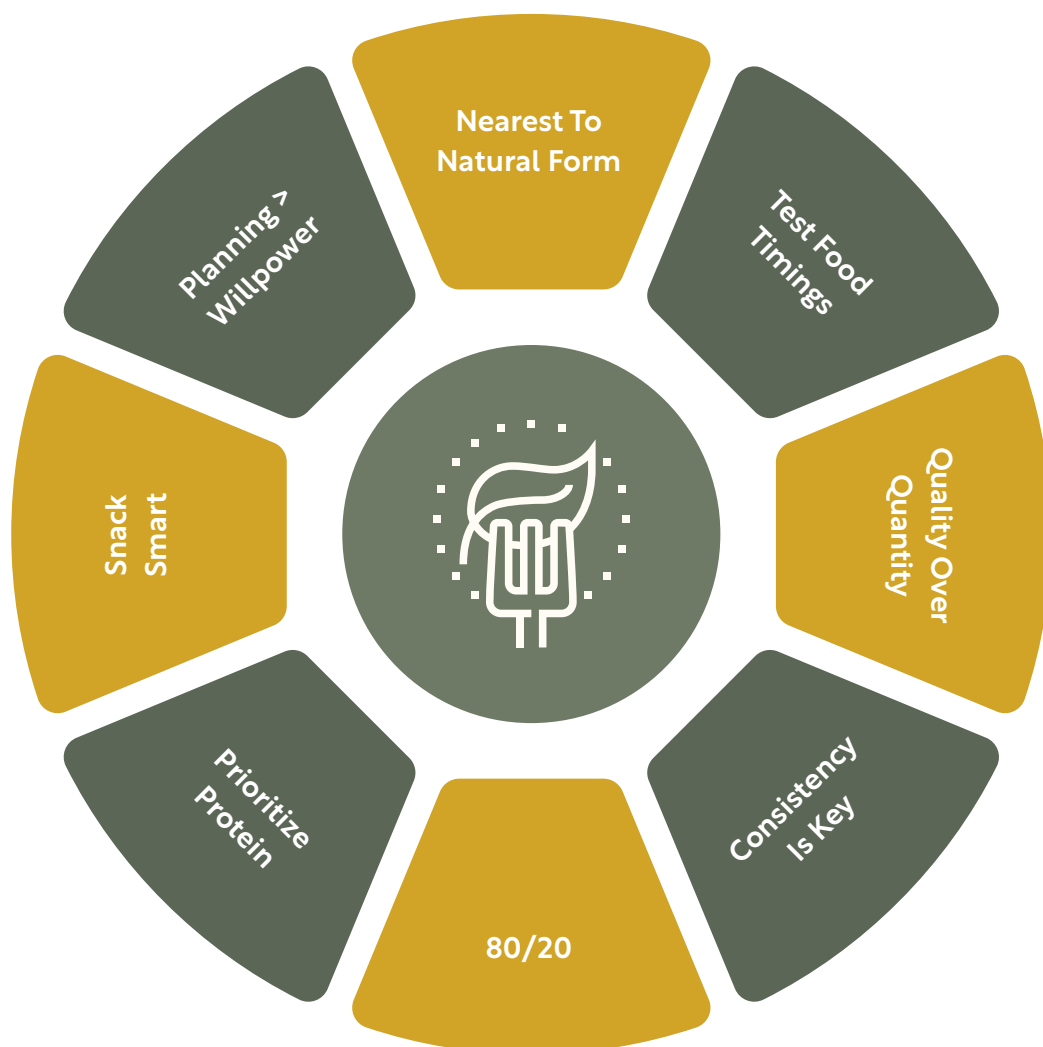
Nutrient-Light Option	Nutrient-Dense Option	Benefits
White bread (rapid blood sugar spikes)	Whole grain bread (better fiber and nutrient retention)	Improves digestion and prolongs satiety.
Regular soda (high in sugar)	Sparkling water (no sugar)	Reduces refined sugar intake and related health risks.
Full-fat dairy milk (high in saturated fat)	Unsweetened almond or oat milk (lower in calories and fat)	Lowers risk of heart disease.
Potato chips (high in sodium and unhealthy fats)	Baked vegetable chips (lower in fat)	Reduces unhealthy fat intake.
White rice (less fiber, more blood sugar impact)	Brown rice or quinoa (higher in fiber)	Supports better blood sugar control.
Store-bought cookies (high in sugar and fats)	Homemade oatmeal cookies (control over ingredients)	Decreases processed sugar and fat consumption.
Sugary cereals (high in sugar and low in nutrients)	Whole grain cereals with no added sugar (more nutrients)	Enhances nutrient intake without sugar spikes.
Cream-based dressings (high in fat and calories)	Olive oil and vinegar (healthier fats)	Improves heart health due to better fat quality.

Nutrient-Light Option	Nutrient-Dense Option	Benefits
Salted butter (high in saturated fat and salt)	Unsalted nuts or avocado (healthy fats and lower sodium)	Lowers risk of high blood pressure and cholesterol.
Regular pasta (simple carbs, quick digestion)	Whole wheat or legume-based pasta (more fiber and protein)	Enhances satiety and nutrient intake.
Fried chicken (high in unhealthy fats)	Grilled chicken (less fat)	Reduces fat intake, better for weight management.
Regular ground beef (higher in fat)	Lean ground turkey or chicken (less fat)	Lowers saturated fat intake, better for heart health.
Sour cream (high in fat and calories)	Greek yogurt (protein-rich, less fat)	Increases protein intake, supports muscle maintenance.
Ice cream (high in sugar and fat)	Frozen yogurt or fruit sorbet (lower in fat, can be lower in sugar)	Decreases fat and potentially sugar intake.
Mayonnaise (high in fat and calories)	Hummus or mashed avocado (healthier fats)	Offers fiber and nutrients with healthier fat profile.
White sugar (causes sugar spikes)	Honey, maple syrup, or brown sugar (lower glycemic impact, wider profile of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants)	Reduces risks associated with high sugar intake.
Canned fruit in syrup (high in added sugar)	Fresh or frozen fruit (no added sugar)	Avoids unnecessary sugar intake, provides more vitamins.
Beef sausage (high in fat and preservatives)	Turkey or chicken sausage (lower in fat)	Reduces saturated fat and potentially harmful additives.
Fruit-flavored yogurt (added sugars)	Plain yogurt with fresh fruit (natural sugars, more fiber)	Reduces processed sugar intake, increases fiber.

Your Positive Eating Pizza

With improved information and ingredients in our kitchen, it can still be difficult to know where to start, which is why we've compiled some of researcher Tom Rath's top tips for better eating behaviors into the "Positive Eating Pizza."

In the session clients will be invited to identify one of these behaviors that they most want to try in order to care for their health. Familiarizing yourself with these different evidence-based actions will help you support clients to select one of these behaviors for their Rooted Routine for Health.



<p>Nearest To Natural Form</p> <p>Consuming foods that are minimally processed preserves more natural nutrients and avoids excessive added sugars, fats, and preservatives, thus supporting overall health and wellbeing [44].</p>	<p>Test Food Timings</p> <p>Eating larger meals early in the day and smaller ones as the day progresses can optimize digestion and energy use, aligning with the body's natural circadian rhythms for better overall metabolic health [45].</p>
<p>Quality Over Quantity</p> <p>It can be easy to focus on food calories (quantity) over quality (nutrient levels). However, focusing on nutrient-dense foods that provide more health benefits is more sustainable and better for our physical and psychological wellbeing [46].</p>	<p>Consistency Is Key</p> <p>Maintaining consistent meal times and eating habits can help stabilize our metabolism, reduce the risk of bingeing, and thereby improve overall health [47].</p>
<p>80/20</p> <p>Life's too short not to indulge. By taking a balanced approach to eating and encouraging healthy eating 80% of the time, while still incorporating more indulgent (less nutrient dense) indulgences 20% of the time, we make healthy eating more sustainable and enjoyable [48].</p>	<p>Prioritize Protein</p> <p>Protein (in the form of meat, nuts, dairy, legumes, etc.) is essential for building and repairing tissues, supporting immune function, and can promote satiety, which helps in managing weight by reducing the impulse for frequent snacking [49].</p>
<p>Snack Smart</p> <p>Choosing snacks that are low in refined sugars and high in fiber and protein helps maintain stable energy levels and mood, reducing the likelihood of overeating later due to hunger spikes [50].</p>	<p>Planning > Willpower</p> <p>Fail to prepare, prepare to fail, as they say. With only a finite amount of willpower to expend on any given day, planning our meals ahead of time can help in making healthier food choices and avoid opting for fast food or processed meals due to convenience or inevitable dips in self-discipline [51].</p>

Encourage clients to identify one of these tools that they most want to playfully experiment with, explaining that we'll potentially create a Rooted Routine for Health behavior later in the session (depending on whether they want to create a Rooted Routine for Health around Eating Well, Moving Mindfully, Sleeping Enough, or Resting & Recovering).

Are We Moving Mindfully?

What is your relationship with movement?

Historically, psychology has focused primarily on the mind, often treating the body as a separate (and somewhat irrelevant) entity. In fact, Seligman’s original PERMA framework did not include a “Health” pillar at all [14]. Fortunately, thanks to positive psychology expanding as a field and taking a more nuanced, interdisciplinary approach, this perspective has shifted towards an appreciation of the interconnectedness of the mind and body [52].

This is why we, and many other researchers, not only incorporate “Health” into the PERMA(H) framework, but lead with it in our teachings. Health and “fitness” are often uttered in the same breath, and it can be a loaded topic for many among us, which is why we will once again start this lesson by taking stock of our clients’ existing beliefs and behaviors around “Movement.”

How do we view movement? Do we see it as different from exercise? Do we see it as a chore, a necessary evil to stay healthy? Or is it a source of mindfulness and joy – both immediate and ongoing – in our lives?

Movement Beliefs and Behaviors

At The “Us Level” (Culture)

In many Western societies, movement and exercise are often approached as tasks to be completed – another box to check. This utilitarian view can strip the joy from movement, turning what could be a pleasurable activity into a source of stress [40]. The societal push towards high-intensity, high-impact exercise regimens can intimidate or alienate those of us who might prefer (or only be capable of) gentler, more inclusive forms of movement [40].

Conversely, some cultures celebrate movement as an inherent part of daily life and community engagement. From the centenarians on the Greek island of Ikaria, who joyfully contribute to farmwork alongside far younger members of their community, to the traditional dances found in daily life of many African and Caribbean cultures, incorporating movement (as opposed to “exercise”) into the fabric of the culture provides opportunities for building strength, cardiovascular health, as well as a heightened sense of identity, belonging, and community [53,54].

At The “We Level” (Families)

In families, the way we think about and engage in physical activity can set the tone for lifelong habits. When families enjoy activities together – like playing outside, going for walks, or dancing at home – it makes movement a fun and natural part of daily life [55]. Parents who lead by example, showing that exercise can be enjoyable, often inspire their kids to be active too [56]. On the flip side, families that don’t emphasize being active might find themselves slipping into more sedentary habits. So, creating a positive and active environment at home is key to promoting healthy lifestyles.

At The “Me Level” (Individuals)

On an individual level, our beliefs and behaviors around movement profoundly impacts both our mental and physical health. Do we view “exercise” as a separate task we do in a sweaty gym, while driving our car and taking the lift whenever possible? Or do we see each moment (e.g., walking to the train station, taking the stairs, stretching between meetings, etc.) as a chance to move a little more? Rath encourages integrating movement into daily routines as a way to make physical activity more natural and enjoyable [40].

Movement researcher Professor Kelly McGonigal even builds upon this invitation by highlighting the psychological and hormonal benefits that arise when movement is joyful and fulfilling. She notes that perceiving movement as a pleasurable activity enhances its sustainability and leads to greater stress resilience and improved mood due to the release of positive neurochemicals [57]. Embracing enjoyable physical activities, whether it’s walking to work, taking the stairs, attending a yoga class, dancing, or playing casual sports, not only promotes physical health but also bolsters emotional wellbeing, making movement a delightful part of daily life.

Are You Moving Enough?

Planning on compensating for eight hours behind a desk by hitting the gym after work? It turns out that this might not go far enough to mitigate the risks of leading a largely sedentary life.

The notion that exercising a few times a week could offset prolonged periods of sitting during work has been challenged by emerging health research. In fact, researchers have found that excessive sitting, often described as the most underrated health threat today, is associated with significant health risks [58]. On average, many of us sit for about 9 hours a day – more than the time we spend sleeping. Alarming, studies have suggested that

prolonged inactivity could be more lethal than smoking, with sitting for over six hours daily significantly raising the likelihood of premature death [59]. Each hour of sitting can decrease our energy and adversely affect our health.

In his book *Eat Move Sleep*, Tom Rath highlights that the detrimental effects of sitting begin almost immediately after we sit down. Muscle electrical activity drops, calorie burning slows, and enzymes that break down fats decrease, along with good cholesterol levels [40]. More than this, extended sitting can literally enlarge our backsides, as sustained pressure on fat cells causes them to expand. Gravity can be a cruel mistress.

So what do we do if the nature of our work is desk-bound? Given that many jobs require extensive sitting, the best strategy is to integrate more movement into our daily routine. Instead of “putting off” exercise for after work, the more we can realize that every bit of movement helps, the more opportunities we’ll identify and create to get our bodies moving. Unsure of where to start? Here are a few practices that most people can integrate into their working day, regardless of their lifestyle:

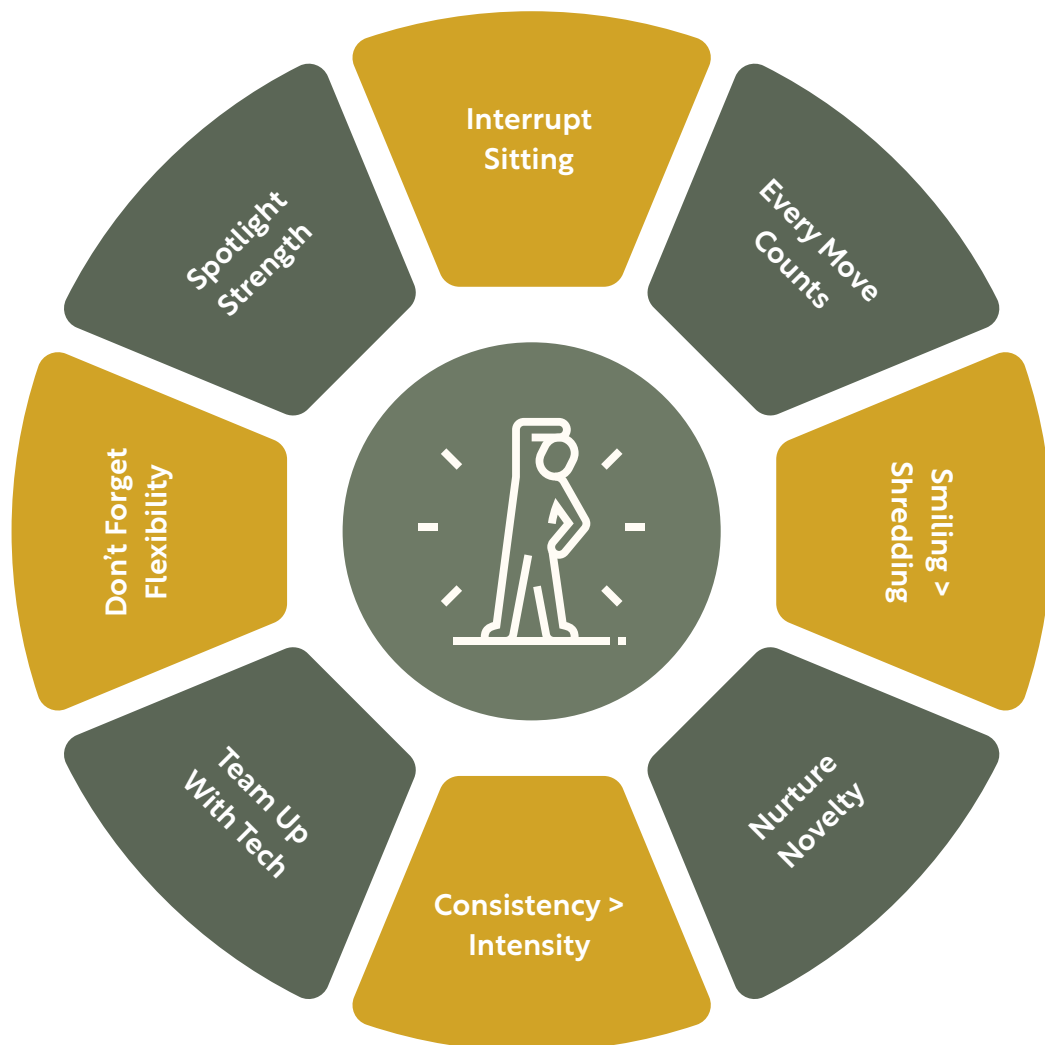
- ▶ **Move Every 20 Minutes:** Interrupting long sitting periods with at least two minutes of standing or walking every 20 minutes can support movement. This simple action can stabilize blood sugar levels, and regular breaks have been shown to enhance creativity and productivity [60].
- ▶ **Move Early:** Beginning the day with at least 20 minutes of moderate activity can elevate mood for up to 12 hours [61]. Morning exercise also stimulates metabolism, enhances fat burning, and improves glucose tolerance, supporting both physical and mental well-being throughout the day [62].
- ▶ **Track Activity:** Tracking daily steps with a device like a Fitbit or a smartphone app can encourage more movement. Setting a modest goal and gradually increasing it supports steady fitness improvement. Even without meeting the target every day, monitoring activity fosters awareness and inspires more movement throughout the day [63].

Some days, lifestyles, and living situations are better suited to daily, frequent movement than others. But, as always, knowledge applied is power: and the more we can both understand the severe implications of prolonged sitting and the opportunities to mitigate or even reverse these effects, the better we’re able to care for our wellbeing, no matter what the day throws at us.

Your Mindful Movement Wheel

Even with the improved awareness and attitude towards movement, it can still be challenging to know where to begin, which is why we've adapted some of researcher Tom Rath's top tips for better movement behaviors into a "Mindful Movement Wheel".

In the session clients will be invited to identify one of these behaviors that they most want to try in order to care for their health. Familiarizing yourself with these different evidence-based actions will help you support clients to select one of these behaviors for their Rooted Routine for Health.



<p>Interrupt Sitting</p> <p>By getting up and moving every 20 minutes, we can mitigate the negative health effects of prolonged sitting, such as reduced metabolism and increased risk of chronic disease [60].</p>	<p>Every Move Counts</p> <p>By seeing each moment as a chance to move – even a little – we make cumulative contributions to our overall health, enhancing circulation, boosting metabolism, and reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases [59].</p>
<p>Smiling > Shredding</p> <p>Choosing enjoyable activities over more strenuous “exercises” that you enjoy less increases the likelihood of long-term consistency, as happier activities promote more sustainable habits [57].</p>	<p>Nurture Novelty</p> <p>Incorporating a variety of movements – from solo activities to social sports or classes – keeps you engaged, prevents boredom, and ensures a more balanced development of physical abilities [64].</p>
<p>Consistency > Intensity</p> <p>Consistent daily movement is better for our long-term health than sporadic, intense workouts, as regular activity helps maintain metabolic health and improves overall physical endurance [65].</p>	<p>Team Up With Tech</p> <p>Utilizing technology like apps and wearables can provide motivational feedback and insightful data, helping to optimize our routine and keep us engaged as our movement journey develops [66].</p>
<p>Don’t Forget Flexibility</p> <p>Incorporating flexibility exercises into our routine is crucial as it enhances joint health, reduces injury risk, and improves overall physical performance, especially as muscles and joints age [67].</p>	<p>Spotlight Strength</p> <p>Incorporating some resistance activities into our week is vital as we age because it helps preserve mobility, prevents falls, maintains our metabolic rate, and reduces the burden on aging joints [68].</p>

Encourage clients to identify one of these tools that they most want to playfully experiment with, explaining that we’ll potentially create a Rooted Routine for Health behavior later in the session. Encourage them to pursue whatever movement/intervention sparks their curiosity or joy the most.

When it comes to identifying specific movements they’d like to try, encourage them to reach out to their local networks (social media, community boards, friends of friends) and remind them that YouTube is abundant in at-home exercises to try, with something to suit any ability, age, or schedule.

Are We Sleeping Enough?

How much sleep do you believe you need a night? Where did you learn this? Was it just a broadly accepted cultural norm? Perhaps you read an article or two, or had the importance of sleep impressed upon you by a medical professional? Where did they learn about sleep norms?

A Social History Of Sleep

In Paleolithic times, humans likely followed a biphasic sleep pattern, consisting of two separate sleep periods with a wakeful period in between. This natural rhythm allowed them to remain vigilant against nighttime dangers [69]. As this very abridged timeline demonstrates, as societies cultural values and demands shifted, so, too, did our sleep beliefs and behaviors:

- ▶ **Paleolithic Era:** Humans practiced biphasic sleep, characterized by two distinct sleep periods with a wakeful interval. This pattern helped early humans stay alert to potential threats at night [69].
- ▶ **Ancient Civilizations:** In ancient Greece and Rome, biphasic sleep persisted. People typically had a first sleep, a period of wakefulness for activities or reflection, followed by a second sleep [69].
- ▶ **Medieval Europe:** Biphasic sleep continued through the Middle Ages. People often woke up for a few hours during the night to read, pray, or engage in quiet activities before returning to bed [69].
- ▶ **Industrial Revolution:** The advent of electric lighting and industrial work schedules promoted a shift towards a monophasic sleep pattern, where people slept for a single, continuous period at night. The 9-to-5 workday became standard, emphasizing productivity and efficiency [70].
- ▶ **20th Century to Present:** With the rise of modern technology, including screens and artificial lighting, sleep patterns have been further disrupted. The demands of a 24/7 society have led to widespread sleep deprivation and irregular sleep schedules [71].

Modern Sleep Beliefs and Behaviors

These historical shifts have profoundly influenced contemporary attitudes toward sleep. The emphasis on productivity during the Industrial Revolution ingrained a belief in the Western world that sleep should be minimized to maximize work output [70]. As a result, many modern individuals struggle to prioritize adequate rest, leading to widespread sleep issues [71].

Some of us may thrive more in society's current sleep beliefs and behaviors more than others. With the current 9-to-5 working schedule still dominating in most cultures, many people that struggle with early nights and mornings struggle to keep up. This often results in a reliance on caffeine and sugar to create bursts of energy – which can, in turn, lead to blood-sugar drops and compromised sleeping habits. Luckily, with an increase in hybrid working options, and a notable increase in legislation supporting flexible working arrangements worldwide (e.g., The Employment Relations Flexible Working Act), the likelihood of people being able to work in a way that plays to both their strengths and their circadian rhythm has increased significantly [72].

Your Sleep Schedule

Finding and setting a sleep schedule that supports us to work and play at our best begins with understanding your body clock type. Researchers suggest the “Night Owl vs Lark” metaphor as a helpful way of deciphering your dominant sleep schedule type [73]. Use the criteria below to self-assess:

Are You a Night Owl?

Characteristics:

- ▶ Difficulty waking up in the morning.
- ▶ Dislike of eating early.
- ▶ Feeling mentally cloudy after waking.
- ▶ Peak mental alertness in the evening.
- ▶ Tendency to fall asleep much later than others, often after midnight.

Night Owls have a circadian rhythm that is shifted later compared to typical schedules. This can make it challenging for them to adhere to traditional 9-to-5 work schedules, leading to sleep deprivation and associated health issues [74].

Are You a Lark?

Characteristics:

- ▶ Sleepiness much earlier than most (usually before 10:00 p.m.).
- ▶ Difficulty staying awake in the evening.
- ▶ Early morning wakefulness without an alarm.
- ▶ Peak mental alertness in the morning, declining in the afternoon.

Larks have a circadian rhythm that aligns with earlier sleep and wake times. They often perform better in tasks requiring early morning alertness but may struggle to stay awake for late-night activities [74].

Note: If we identify as neurodivergent (e.g., having ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, PTSD, etc.) we may find that our sleep and rest needs do not fit either of these molds, and may be better suited to more interval-based sleeping, resting, and working.

Once we determine our sleep window that matches our body clock type, it's essential to maintain this schedule consistently. Irregular sleep patterns can cause insomnia and fatigue.

Navigating Sleep Patterns in Relationships

Conflicts can arise if our sleep schedule differs from that of our partner. It's important to understand that different people have different body clocks. Our ideal sleep pattern is not wrong if it differs from our partner's.

Effective communication and compromise are key. For instance, a morning person can minimize demands on a night person in the early hours, and vice versa. The afternoon can be an optimal time for shared activities, ensuring that both partners' energy levels are considered.

In Summary

Our sleep beliefs and behaviors are shaped by cultural norms, social relationships, and individual experiences. The historical emphasis on productivity, societal expectations, and the demands of modern life often lead to inadequate sleep. Social dynamics, such as cohabitation and differing sleep schedules among partners, further complicate sleep patterns. Additionally, personal experiences and lifestyle choices, including work schedules, technology use, and stress levels, significantly influence sleep quality and duration.

Are We Getting Enough Sleep?

Researchers suggest that people often underestimate how much good-quality sleep affects their performance and overall wellbeing [40]. For instance, a study revealed that losing just 90 minutes of sleep can decrease daytime alertness by almost one-third. Additionally, losing four hours of sleep can impair us as much as consuming a six-pack of beer before work [40].

When it comes to sleep, it's essential to consider not just the quantity but the quality. During sleep, we cycle through REM (rapid eye movement), shallow, and deep sleep stages. The average sleep cycle lasts about 90 minutes, and we typically go through four to six cycles per night. The deep-sleep stage is crucial for recovery and restoration.

Consider a computer: running it continuously with multiple programs can cause it to slow down and malfunction. It needs a reboot to clear out the system and start fresh. Similarly, deep sleep acts as a reboot for our mind. When sleep-deprived, people spend more time in REM or shallow sleep and less in restorative deep sleep. This deficit accumulates over time, negatively impacting energy levels, mental health, cognitive function, work performance, and physical health [75].

Chronic sleep deprivation is linked to numerous health issues, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and weakened immune function. Moreover, adequate sleep is crucial for emotional regulation and mental health, with lack of sleep increasing the risk of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. Additionally, sleep enhances cognitive functions like memory consolidation, problem-solving, and creativity, while insufficient sleep impairs these abilities.

Why Are We Struggling To Sleep?

Researchers report that as much as two-thirds of people are surviving off insufficient sleep, with the top five causes being [40]:

- ▶ **Stress and Anxiety:** It's no surprise that high stress levels can make it difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep, resulting in poor sleep quality [76]. Anxiety increases arousal levels, keeping the brain in rumination, the body in a mode of hypervigilance, and making it very hard to relax and drift off [77].
- ▶ **Electronic Device Use:** If you're a human with a phone, you're already very aware of the sleep-inhibiting consequences of evening screen time. The blue light emitted by screens (phones, laptops, televisions) interferes with the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone, making it harder to fall asleep [78].
- ▶ **Disrupted Sleep Schedules:** Irregular sleep schedules (or circadian rhythms that do not match our current demands in work and life) can lead to sleep disorders like insomnia. Maintaining a consistent sleep routine (that factors in your natural sleep rhythms wherever possible) helps regulate the body's internal clock, promoting better sleep quality [79].

- ▶ **Physical Conditions and Illness:** Physical conditions such as chronic pain, respiratory issues, and other illnesses can greatly impact sleep quality. Conditions like sleep apnea disrupt breathing during sleep, leading to frequent awakenings which limit REM sleep and its vital memory-processing, learning, and hormone-balancing benefits [80].
- ▶ **Environmental Conditions:** Environmental factors like room temperature, noise levels, and light exposure can affect sleep. A comfortable sleep environment – cool, dark, and quiet – is crucial for good sleep hygiene, yet many of us sleep in rooms with light pollution or poor air circulation [81].

The Top Three Sleep Tips

With all of these barriers to sleep, it can feel overwhelming to know what to prioritize first. When it comes to laying a healthy foundation for improved sleep quality, Tom Rath, author of *Eat Move Sleep*, recommends the following strategies:

Create a Bedtime Routine

Spending at least 20 minutes winding down before bed can help signal to the body that it's time to relax. Clear nighttime cues, such as dimming the lights, lowering the temperature by two to four degrees, and turning off electronics, can further promote restfulness. Writing down any thoughts or tasks, trying restorative yoga, meditating, or reading a book can also support a peaceful transition to sleep.

Don't Worry About Waking in the Middle of the Night

Humans have evolved to experience segmented sleep, often including a brief waking period between two sleep sessions. Waking up in the middle of the night is natural and not a cause for concern. Slow breathing or meditation can help encourage relaxation. If needed, getting up for about 20 minutes while keeping the lights low and engaging in a calming activity, such as reading or listening to music, can support a smooth return to sleep.

Stick to a Schedule

Keeping a consistent sleep and wake schedule, even on weekends, helps regulate the body's internal clock. Sleeping in excessively can disrupt this rhythm, so a brief afternoon nap may be a better alternative if extra rest is needed. An alarm can serve as a helpful

reminder to begin a bedtime routine. Since the body naturally tends to push for a later bedtime, going to bed before reaching a second wind can support more restful sleep.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but a helpful foundation upon which we can continue to improve our sleeping practices. On the following pages we'll explore some more small evidence-based strategies to help your clients sleep in a way that supports them to be well and do well.

Your Smart Sleep Circle



With so many cultural and lifestyle barriers between us and a better sleep routine, it can be all too easy to find ourselves with sleep as the source of our stress, instead of the remedy. Luckily, we've collected some of the best, busy-proof, evidence-based strategies for improved sleep into a Sleep Smart Wheel.

In the session clients will be invited to identify one of these behaviors that they most want to try in order to care for their health. Familiarizing yourself with these different evidence-based actions will help you support clients to select one of these behaviors for their Rooted Routine for Health.

<p>Stick To The Schedule</p> <p>Maintaining a regular sleep-wake schedule that aligns with natural Night Owl or Lark tendencies helps regulate the body's internal clock, promoting better sleep quality and overall health [40,79].</p>	<p>Create A Restful Routine</p> <p>Establishing a calming pre-bedtime routine, such as dimming the lights, reading a book, or practicing restorative yoga, signals to the body that it's time to wind down [40,80].</p>
<p>Optimize Your Bedroom</p> <p>Optimizing the sleep environment with comfortable sheets, blackout curtains, and a cool room temperature (around 60–67°F or 15–19°C) enhances sleep quality [71,81].</p>	<p>Screen Freedom</p> <p>Avoiding screens an hour before bed and engaging in relaxing activities like reading, meditating, or listening to calming music helps prepare the mind for sleep [40,78].</p>
<p>Nourish For Nighttime</p> <p>Eating foods that promote sleep, such as almonds, turkey, and chamomile tea, while avoiding caffeine and heavy meals close to bedtime, helps prevent disruptions in sleep [40,82].</p>	<p>Exercise Often & Early</p> <p>Regular physical activity, especially earlier in the day (as opposed to late at night when it may activate your nervous system), helps improve sleep quality and reduces the time it takes to fall asleep [40,79].</p>
<p>Vent The Stress</p> <p>Managing stress through journaling, talking to a trusted friend, or practicing somatic stress release exercises such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation promotes relaxation and better sleep [40,76].</p>	<p>Seek The Sun</p> <p>Exposure to natural sunlight during the day helps regulate the circadian rhythm, improving sleep quality and duration by signaling when to be awake and when to sleep [71,83].</p>

Stress, Rest & Recovery

How do you perceive stress? Is it a sign of weakness or an indicator that you need to slow down? Many people do not recognize they are stressed until it manifests physically, such as through a severe cold, stomach ulcers, or exhaustion that forces them to bed. Fortunately, researchers in stress and resilience have advanced our understanding of stressors and developed methods to help bring our bodies back to a state of rest.

Sources of Stress

Stressors can be both external and internal. External stressors include work pressure, financial concerns, family obligations, time constraints, societal norms, and experiences of discrimination. Internal stressors encompass self-criticism, body image issues, identity concerns, memories, and future uncertainties. These stressors are often perceived by the body as threats [84].

The Stress Responses

In its simplest terms, the stress response refers to a physiological and neurological reaction to perceived threats/stressors. Many of us have heard of “fight or flight” mode as a response to stress, but as both trauma-informed theory and practice evolve, researchers have categorized the stress response into four types: fight, flight, freeze, and fawn [85,86].

Fight Response

- ▶ **Nervous System Reaction:** The sympathetic nervous system is activated, leading to the release of adrenaline and noradrenaline, which prepare the body for confrontation.
- ▶ **What It Feels Like:** We may feel a surge of anger, aggression, or irritability. Physically, this can manifest as clenched fists, tight muscles, or a racing heart.

Flight Response

- ▶ **Nervous System Reaction:** Similar to the fight response, the sympathetic nervous system triggers adrenaline release, but the focus is on escaping the threat.
- ▶ **What It Feels Like:** We may experience intense anxiety, restlessness, or a strong urge to flee. This might look like pacing, fidgeting, or a feeling of being trapped.

Freeze Response

- ▶ **Nervous System Reaction:** The parasympathetic nervous system may dominate, causing a temporary state of immobility. This can involve a drop in heart rate and a sense of dissociation.
- ▶ **What It Feels Like:** We might feel numb, detached, or paralyzed. It can manifest as a sense of being stuck, unable to move or respond to the situation.

Fawn Response

- ▶ **Nervous System Reaction:** This response involves a heightened social engagement system, where we try to appease or please to avoid conflict.
- ▶ **What It Feels Like:** We may feel a compulsive need to please others, often at the expense of our own needs. This might look like over-apologizing, people-pleasing, or difficulty saying no.

The kind of stress response we are likely to shift into depends on a variety of factors, including our developmental conditioning (we may have developed coping strategies that favored standing up to threats, fleeing them, befriending them, or dissociating from them altogether), or the magnitude of the threat itself (e.g., we may pick a fight with a rude peer, but flee a gang of older, tougher strangers).

That said, researchers suggest that we do tend towards one or two of these responses more than the others. As a practitioner, you yourself may notice certain patterns in how you respond to stress. Which of these resonate most with your typical behaviors?

The Stress Cycle

It is commonly believed that resolving the source of stress will return the body to normal functioning. However, research suggests that the fight-flight-freeze-fawn response can become prolonged in modern life due to the absence of clear signals indicating safety. This means that neurochemicals and hormones associated with stress do not fully transition to a state of relaxation [87].

Emily and Amelia Nagoski, in their book *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*, emphasize that simply telling oneself to calm down is ineffective. Instead, it is necessary to engage in activities that signal to the body that it is safe. Evidence-based strategies for achieving this include physical activity, deep breathing exercises, social connection, creative expression, and mindful relaxation practices, each of which we'll explore more in the following pages [87].

Rest & Recovery: Our Stress Remedy

Despite modern “hustle culture” and increasingly blurred lines between work and home life pushing us to work harder, longer, and faster, as humans we are actually designed to oscillate between periods of work and rest. As many of us have experienced (if only for a brief period in our lives), when this natural interval-based approach to performance is respected, it significantly enhances our health, relationships, and work performance. Indeed, research has shown that our ability to perform any task optimally is limited by our capacity for sustained attention, energy, and motivation. After a certain period (depending on our levels of interest and energy), these begin to wane, leading to decreased performance and increased fatigue. However, incorporating rest after intense activities can mitigate the effects of fatigue and restore performance levels [87].

The Science of Work and Rest

When it comes to resting our mind, body, and soul, we can look to the wisdom of the world’s top athletes. However high-performing they may be, each athlete knows that optimal muscle recovery and development requires periods of deliberate, mindful rest. The art is in finding the optimal amounts and activities (or lack thereof) that support this rest. Indeed, muscles (or, for our purposes, strengths or skills) that are not used enough will atrophy; however those worked constantly without rest will fatigue and eventually fail (or, in a work context, the individual will burn out). Conversely, muscles that are exercised and then allowed to rest grow stronger. Appreciating this cycle is crucial for building resilience and strength, both in the body and the mind [67].

How Much Rest Is Enough?

Research suggests that approximately 42% of our time should be dedicated to rest. This equates to about 10 hours out of every 24. Although some researchers suggest that rest may not have to occur daily – and can instead average out over a week or month – the latest research findings advocate for “micro-rest moments” (rest activities that can be done in as little as 30 seconds or five minutes) to signal safety to our bodies and help us return to homeostasis [87]. With this approach, we shift our Rest & Recovery attitude from a “nice to have” to a daily necessity – like brushing our teeth or taking a shower – that is essential for our wellbeing.

Types of Rest and Their Benefits

- ▶ **Sleep:** As we have explored, getting enough sleep is fundamental for recovery. It is during sleep that the body repairs tissues, consolidates memories, and regulates hormones. Chronic sleep deprivation is linked to various health issues, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and impaired cognitive function [71].
- ▶ **Active Rest:** Activities such as light walking, stretching, and yoga help maintain circulation and flexibility without placing significant strain on the body. These activities can also provide mental relaxation and reduce stress [87].
- ▶ **Mental Breaks:** Short breaks during work can prevent mental fatigue. Techniques such as the Pomodoro Technique, which involves working for 25 minutes followed by a five-minute break, have been shown to enhance productivity and mental clarity [88].
- ▶ **Social Interaction:** Positive social interactions can serve as a form of rest, providing emotional support and reducing stress. Social connections are vital for mental health and can buffer the effects of stress and burnout [89].
- ▶ **Creative and Leisure Activities:** Engaging in hobbies, reading, or other leisure activities can provide a mental escape from stressors, fostering creativity and relaxation. These activities allow the brain to recover from work-related stress and improve overall wellbeing [90].

Managing Stress and Promoting Recovery

Understanding the body's need for rest and recovery (on a daily, not quarterly, basis) is essential in managing stress and preventing burnout. Our stress responses (fight, flight, freeze, and fawn reactions) are natural and necessary survival mechanisms: However, in modern life, these responses can become chronically activated due to continuous stressors. Completing the stress response cycle through physical activity, deep breathing, social connection, and creative expression is vital for returning the body to a state of relaxation and keeping us resilient in this challenging modern world [87].

Your Rest & Recovery Wheel

Despite knowing its benefits to our resilience and performance, integrating moments of Rest & Recovery into our lives can be a daunting proposition. Fortunately, we've collated the best evidence-based, busy-proof tools for clients to experiment with to make sure Rest & Recovery doesn't fall off their to-do list.

In the session clients will be invited to identify one of these behaviors that they most want to try in order to care for their health. Familiarizing yourself with these different evidence-based actions will help you support clients to select one of these behaviors for their Rooted Routine for Health.

**Release The Tension**

Engaging in a good cry by watching a sad film or listening to sad music can be therapeutic as it helps to release pent-up emotional tension, allowing the body to move through the stress response cycle [28].

Box Breath

Box breathing, which involves inhaling, holding, and exhaling each for four seconds, helps regulate the autonomic nervous system, reducing stress and improving focus and calmness [91].

<p>Laugh It Off</p> <p>Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s natural stress-relievers, and reduces the level of stress hormones, promoting an overall sense of wellbeing [92].</p>	<p>Shake It Out</p> <p>Somatic practices like shaking or dancing help to physically discharge the energy associated with the fight or flight response, effectively moving the body through the stress cycle [86].</p>
<p>Self-Soothe</p> <p>Engaging in self-soothing behaviors, such as gentle self-touch or offering oneself kind words, can activate the body’s parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes relaxation and a sense of safety [28].</p>	<p>Nurture In Nature</p> <p>Spending time in green spaces has been shown to lower stress hormone levels, enhance mood, and calm the nervous system, contributing to overall stress recovery [93].</p>
<p>Hug It Out</p> <p>Physical touch, like hugging, can increase levels of oxytocin, a hormone that promotes a sense of bonding and reduces cortisol, thus helping to stabilize the nervous system [94].</p>	<p>Find The Fun</p> <p>Engaging in activities that you genuinely enjoy can boost the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which help signal safety and relaxation to the nervous system, aiding in stress recovery [95].</p>

Creating A Rooted Routine for Health

Having explored the four main pillars of health (Eating Well, Moving Mindfully, Sleeping Enough, and Resting & Recovering), we are now going to encourage clients to leverage the best in behavior-change science to create a Rooted Routine for Health.

Invite participants to create just ONE Rooted Routine for Health (around Eating, moving, Sleeping, or Rest & Recovering). Make sure to refresh their memories around each step of the Rooted Routine practice (choosing a Grounded Beginning to support their habit, selecting a Nurturing Action that is small and manageable, reinforcing progress with a Thriving Moment, and reflecting on growth with a Nourishing Reflection) and direct them to the previous chapter of their workbooks for a list of example Rooted Routines.

Remind them that in order to overcome common behavior change derailers (“I don’t really want to,” “I’m not sure where to start,” and “I don’t think I can”), we must choose

a behavior we truly want to do and shrink it until we feel at least 8/10 confident that we can do it each day for the next week.

Reassure them that they can try a new Rooted Routine for Health in coming weeks, but that the research shows that we build our ability and confidence best by starting small and scaling up as our skills and practice improve.

GROUNDED BEGINNINGS		
NURTURING ACTION		
THRIVING MOMENT		
NOURISHING REFLECTION		

Session 3

POSITIVE EMOTIONS



66

“When awareness is brought to an emotion, power is brought to your life.”

- Tara Mayer Robson

This quote emphasizes the profound impact that increased emotional awareness can have on our ability to make informed, authentic choices in our lives.

In the previous session, you helped your clients explore core elements of the PERMAH framework’s “Health” pillar, identifying their existing and ideal thoughts and behaviors in the realms of Eating, Moving, Sleeping and Resting & Recovering. In doing so, you provided them with the knowledge and activities necessary to develop a solid foundation upon which they may build other “higher order” elements of wellbeing (in the sense that, without health, we cannot make meaningful or sustained investments in any other PERMAH Pillars).

In Session 3, beyond just “positive” emotions, you will explore the role that *all* human emotions play in shaping our levels of wellbeing, and the choice and control that we gain as our ability to identify and mindfully respond to our emotions (as opposed to mindlessly reacting to them) increases.

In particular:

- ▶ Your client will reflect on their current experience of a range of emotions through a Reflection Round
- ▶ You will elucidate: What Are Emotions?
- ▶ You will uncover the pivotal role that both “Good” & “Bad” Emotions play in creating a thriving, meaningful life
- ▶ You will clarify that emotions should be used as data to inform mindful, value-based decision-making, not directives to which we must react
- ▶ You will guide your clients in: Creating A Rooted Routine for Emotion

The theory and exercises in this session draw on a range of researchers’ work, including research by Dr. Susan David (emotional agility), Dr. Barbara Fredrickson (positive emotions), and Dr. Viktor Frankl, as well as cognitive behavioral and acceptance and commitment therapy [96]. The exercises are designed to help clients improve their

emotional awareness, granularity (their ability to discern between specific emotional experiences), and foster responsiveness over reactivity. Finally, they will form a Rooted Routine for Emotion to help them playfully experiment with emotional awareness in between sessions.

Emotions: Our Reflection Round

In this first section of Session 3 (Positive Emotions), we will invite clients to reflect on their recent experiences of emotions. While this may seem fluffy or ungrounded, modern Western society tends to teach us to repress (unconsciously) or suppress (consciously) our emotions – often from a very young age.

A hangover from cultural norms that value stoicism and emotional restraint, this tendency may be one of the core contributing factors to increasing rates of mental illness and emotional burnout in modern society. For instance, in the Victorian era, emotional expression was often seen as a sign of weakness and irrationality, leading to a cultural expectation of emotional suppression [97].

This legacy has persisted well into the 21st century, contributing to environments where discussing emotions is discouraged, potentially leading to unaddressed emotional distress. Statistics highlight the urgency of addressing this issue, with mental illness affecting 19% of adults in the United States annually, and suicide being the 10th leading cause of death [98].

Fortunately, we are observing a destigmatization of emotional expression – thanks in part to increased advocacy and visibility on social media platforms. People, including those in workplaces, are becoming more appreciative of the ability to identify and mindfully respond to our emotions, instead of suppressing or reacting to them. This shift is crucial as it aligns with research showing that acknowledging and processing emotions can significantly improve mental health and wellbeing [99].

By fostering environments that support emotional expression, we can mitigate the negative impacts of emotional suppression and promote overall mental health.

Despite this, recent studies reflect that many people have a very limited ability to name, let alone notice, normalize, and mindfully respond to, more than three to four emotions (Brown cites “mad, sad, glad, and scared”), which means that we miss out on important messages from our body that could inform our daily behavior and eventually shape our lives [100].

To help clients gauge where they sit on this spectrum of emotional intelligence and expression, we will invite them to run a Rapid Reflection on their recent experiences, responding to the following prompts:

When it comes to connecting to our emotions:

- ▶ What's going well?
- ▶ Where do we notice challenges or resistance?
- ▶ What are we learning?
- ▶ What might we try next?

By holding space for individual reflection and group discussion, we not only support clients to increase their awareness of their current levels of emotional intelligence and expression, but we allow them to normalize the human struggles we all face when relating to our emotions.

What's more, we hope to pique their curiosity and appetite to learn more about the nature of emotions, and how they might improve their relationship with them using the latest research and practice.

Emotional intelligence defines how and what we learn; it allows us to set priorities and it determines the majority of our daily actions. We hope to end this session with our clients having an increased ability to identify, sit with, and respond mindfully to their emotions.

Let's get started.

What Are Emotions?

Despite our emotions affecting almost every decision we make – even when we pride ourselves on being rational beings – for many of us, the nature and neurological processes of our emotions remains a mystery.

This fact will be brought to light at the beginning of the third session by inviting clients to consider:

- ▶ How would you define an emotion?
- ▶ Why do you think we experience emotions?

Common layperson responses one may receive in response to these questions include:

- ▶ “An emotion is a feeling that we experience, like happiness, sadness, or anger. We have emotions to help us respond to different situations in life, making us aware of how things affect us and helping us communicate with others.”
- ▶ “Emotions are the feelings we have inside, like excitement, frustration, or calmness. Emotions help us understand our experiences and react appropriately, as well as help us express ourselves to others.”
- ▶ “Emotions are intense feelings that come from our experiences and thoughts, like love, fear, or anger. We have emotions to help us make sense of the world and to interact meaningfully with others, guiding our actions and relationships.”

Unless your clients have high levels of emotional literacy (or a degree in psychology), most responses will center around listing types of emotions, how they help us navigate and understand the world, and often conflating an emotion, feeling, and mood [101].

Our aim is not to delve into semantics or academic terms, but describing what we mean (and what we don’t mean) when we discuss “emotions” is central to understanding the process involved in the emergence of an emotion, as well as how and why it grows or shrinks in its intensity. This awareness equally underpins our ability to develop skills in identifying and observing an emotion before it snowballs and becomes too intense to mindfully engage with.

While there are many different theories of emotions and heuristics explaining how they emerge in the brain and body, we have chosen a cognitive-behavioral perspective for its ease of understanding and practical application [102].

THE 3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EMOTION

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE



PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE



BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE



Just as identifying the various components of wellbeing through a heuristic like the PERMAH framework enables us to better observe, assess, and act upon our wellbeing experiences, so, too, are we supported in identifying these three distinct components of emotion [103].

Researchers Don and Sandra Hockenbury describe emotions as complex psychological states that involve three distinct components: subjective experience, physiological response, and behavioral expression [104]. This comprehensive understanding helps in recognizing how emotions influence our thoughts, actions, and interactions/relationships.

Subjective Experience

- ▶ **Definition:** The subjective experience is the personal and internal aspect of emotion, which involves how an individual consciously feels and interprets their emotions. This component is highly personal and can vary greatly from one person to another.
- ▶ **Example:** Discovering that you're being thrown a surprise birthday could make one person excited, another nervous, another frustrated at not being in control, etc. What's more, how they experience these emotions in the body and react or respond to them will vary greatly depending on their conditioning.
- ▶ **Why it matters:** While we all experience emotions, recognizing that each of us will have our own unique way of experiencing and expressing our emotions allows us to remain curious and empathetic to people, even when they don't respond in ways we might anticipate.

Physiological Response

- ▶ **Definition:** The physiological response refers to the physical changes that occur in the body due to an emotional state. These changes are often controlled by the autonomic nervous system and can include alterations in heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, and hormone levels.
- ▶ **Example:** Experiencing a rapid heartbeat and sweating when feeling anxious or frightened or returning to a "rest and digest" state once you're calm.
- ▶ **Why it matters:** Knowing the physiological responses we tend to have in different emotional states can help us identify, respond to, and/or regulate these sensations through techniques such as: deep breathing, meditation, or exercise, to maintain emotional balance.

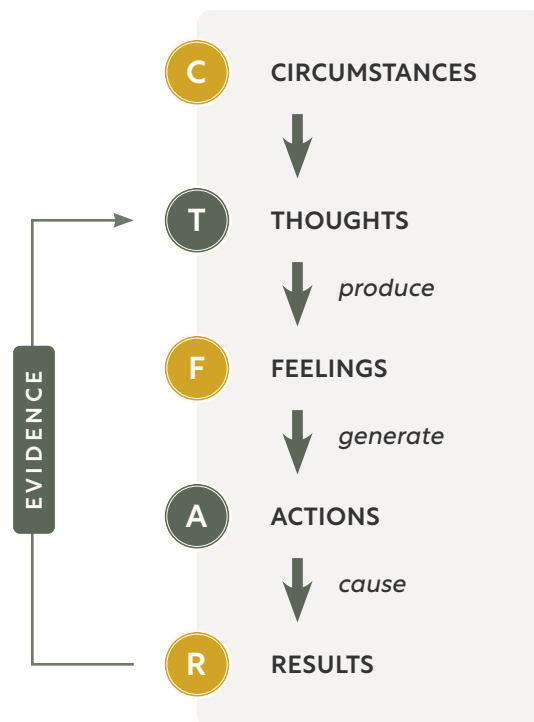
Behavioral Expression

- ▶ **Definition:** Behavioral expression involves the outward display of emotion through facial expressions, body language, and other forms of non-verbal communication. This component is how we express our emotions to others and can be consciously or unconsciously controlled.
- ▶ **Example:** Smiling when happy, frowning when sad, or clenching fists when angry.
- ▶ **Why it matters:** Clear and appropriate expression of emotions can improve relationships and reduce misunderstandings. Additionally, understanding our behavioral expressions can help us learn to control and modify our expressions when necessary, ensuring that we respond mindfully, rather than react mindlessly, to our emotions.

Our Emotional Model

Coach and author Brooke Castillo appropriates the cognitive behavioral approach to emotions through her “Model” [105]. While not an exact reflection of the original cognitive-behavioral model (which can be found [here](#)), this heuristic is very effective in depicting to clients how an emotion may emerge in our experience.

Castillo’s “Model” is a self-coaching tool designed to help individuals understand and manage their thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. It is structured around five key components: circumstances, thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. The Model helps users identify how their thoughts influence their feelings, which in turn drive their actions and ultimately determine their results. Here’s a summary of each component:



1. **Circumstances:** These are the facts or events in our lives that are neutral and can be observed or proven. They are objective and not influenced by personal opinions or feelings.
2. **Thoughts:** Thoughts are the interpretations, beliefs, or opinions we have about our circumstances. These are subjective and can vary greatly between individuals.
3. **Feelings:** Feelings are the emotional responses generated by our thoughts. They are the sensations or emotions we experience as a result of our thinking.
4. **Actions:** Actions are the behaviors or reactions we exhibit in response to our feelings. These can be physical actions or verbal responses.
5. **Results:** Results are the outcomes of our actions. They are the tangible or intangible effects that our actions produce in our lives.

The Emotional Model: An Example

- ▶ **Circumstances:** A person drives their car in front of yours when you weren't expecting them to.
- ▶ **Thoughts:** That person is selfish and doesn't respect other drivers.
- ▶ **Feelings:** Angry, indignant, unsettled.
- ▶ **Actions:** Yelling at them, beeping your horn, or trying to cut back in front of them.
- ▶ **Results:** Feeling dysregulated by the driving process and becoming a more anxious or aggressive driver.

Note: to help you teach this concept in a three-dimensional way, you may wish to think of your own real-world/lived example of the Model in use.

Theoretical Foundations

The model is deeply rooted in principles from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a widely used psychological approach that emphasizes the interconnections between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors [102]. CBT focuses on identifying and changing negative or distorted thinking patterns to improve emotional regulation and develop personal coping strategies.

Here are the key cognitive behavioral concepts reflected in Castillo's model:

1. **Cognitive Restructuring:** Similar to the thoughts component in Castillo's model, cognitive restructuring in CBT involves identifying and challenging distorted or irrational thoughts. The goal is to replace these with more balanced and constructive thinking.
2. **Emotional Regulation:** The feelings component of the model corresponds with CBT's emphasis on understanding how thoughts influence emotions. By altering thought patterns, individuals can better manage their emotional responses.
3. **Behavioral Activation:** The actions component aligns with the CBT practice of encouraging behaviors that are aligned with one's goals and values. Behavioral activation involves engaging in activities that improve mood and reduce negative behaviors.
4. **Outcome Analysis:** The results component reflects CBT's focus on examining the consequences of thoughts and behaviors. By analyzing outcomes, individuals can gain insights into the effectiveness of their cognitive and behavioral strategies.

Castillo's Model offers a more practical framework for developing self-awareness and emotional intelligence by linking cognitive and behavioral elements to achieve our desired results in life, whatever the context. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and modifying the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and so that we can take more values-aligned action and lead more engaged, authentic lives.

Beyond Good & Bad Emotions

In Section 3 of this session, we will challenge the Western belief in "good" and "bad" emotions by reframing all emotions as valuable data that help us understand and mindfully respond to our experiences.

Dr. Susan David explains that emotions, ranging from intense anger to profound love, are immediate physical responses to important signals from the outside world [106]. When our senses pick up information – whether it's danger, romantic interest, or social cues – our bodies physically adjust to these incoming messages. Our heart rate, muscle tension, and mental focus all respond accordingly, aligning our internal state and outward behavior with the situation at hand, which can help us not only survive but thrive.

However, David points out that emotions are not always reliable. In some scenarios, they help us see through superficialities and provide an accurate understanding of the situation. In others, they bring up past experiences that can cloud our judgment and lead to unhelpful reactions. This can result in powerful sensations that overwhelm our bodies and minds.

Many of us often operate on emotional autopilot, reacting without fully understanding how our emotions influence our behavior. Although we pride ourselves on being rational, we often overlook the significant impact emotions have on our immediate responses. By becoming more aware of our emotions and learning to use the information they provide, we can mindfully shape our actions and support our personal growth, connections with others, and overall wellbeing.

Research indicates that emotions are neither inherently positive nor negative [107]. When viewed as data rather than directives, emotions can reveal valuable insights. For instance, sadness might indicate a desire for improvement, social anxiety could prompt better social connections, and workplace boredom might signal a need for growth or new challenges [95]. Acting in ways that align with these values can lead to greater authentic happiness and connection in life [108].

Name It, Normalize It, Navigate It

Every emotion serves a purpose by preparing our bodies for action. The key is to tune in to what our bodies are communicating. Researchers suggest that we can do this by:

1. **Naming It:** Put language to our feelings. Accurately labeling our emotions can create some distance between us and the feeling. Instead of saying “I am sad,” try “I’m noticing that I’m feeling sad” [109].
2. **Normalizing It:** Accept that both comfortable and uncomfortable emotions are normal parts of life. Be open to experiencing the full range of our emotions without judgment [110].
3. **Navigating It:** Use our emotions as data to guide us rather than letting them dictate our actions. Treat them as signposts directing us towards what we value most, rather than as commands [106].

The more mindfully we can name, normalize, and navigate our emotions, the more regulated we’ll be in our system and the better we’ll be able to show up in each (or most) moments as who we truly want to be.

The Benefits of “Positive” Emotions

No emotion is inherently “positive” or “negative.” Indeed, in the words of psychologist Catherine Tardella, “All emotions are positive, in that they provide vital, valuable information about our desires and needs in the moment” [111]. There is significant study into “positive” (pleasurable or desired) emotions that merits our attention, however.

Research indicates that experiencing positive emotions – such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love – can enhance optimism, resilience, openness, acceptance, and purpose [112]. As William James famously stated, “We don’t laugh because we’re happy; we’re happy because we laugh” [113].

Studies by Barbara Fredrickson from the University of North Carolina have consistently shown that positive emotions “broaden and build” the way our brains respond to opportunities and challenges. For instance, her research demonstrates that positive emotions can:

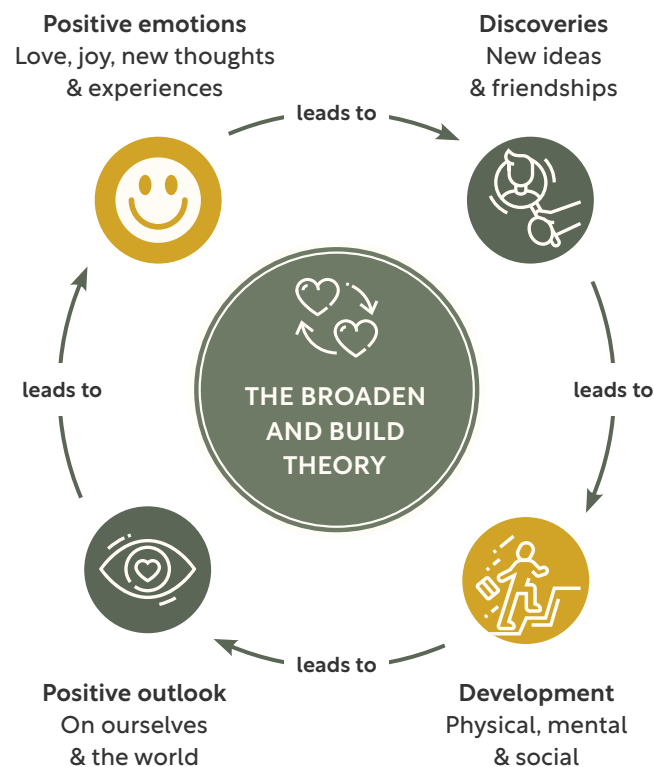
- ▶ Expand our field of peripheral vision, enabling us to identify and seize new opportunities [114].
- ▶ Improve innovative thinking by increasing levels of dopamine and serotonin in the brain [115].
- ▶ Promote collaboration by fostering a sense of safety, which encourages a focus on “we” rather than “me” [116].

Accumulating positive emotions can create an upward spiral, enhancing psychological, intellectual, social, and physical resources, thus increasing resilience.

Broaden & Build: An Example

When we enter into a meeting in an enthusiastic, curious mood, we’re more likely to make **discoveries** through creative, collaborative discussion. These discussions and collaborative projects will assist in the **development** of our social relationships and workplace skills. These shared and individual successes will provide evidence for a more **positive outlook** on ourselves, others, and what might be achievable. This will, in turn, increase our likelihood to enter the next meeting/project with enhanced **positive emotions**, etc.

In contrast, negative emotions can lead to downward spirals, resulting in feelings of overwhelm, helplessness, and despair. Fortunately, Fredrickson’s research suggests that these negative spirals can often be interrupted with a dose of heartfelt positivity [117].



Increasing heartfelt positive (pleasurable and generally adaptive) emotions can be achieved through various activities such as exercising, meditating, spending time with friends, connecting with nature, allowing oneself to play, practicing kindness, savoring good moments, using personal strengths, and incorporating small joys, like listening to a favorite song, into daily life [116]. We'll explore different ways of creating a Rooted Routine for Emotion later in this section.

It is important to approach positivity with balance. Studies show that indulging in unrealistic positive fantasies can lead to depression over time. Moreover, excessively valuing and pursuing happiness can be associated with feelings of loneliness, fewer positive emotions, and increased depression [118].

Finally, it is also possible to experience too much positivity. Meaningful and grounded life experiences often require engagement with negative (uncomfortable) emotions. As positive psychology has evolved, emotional researchers have developed more nuance into their suggestions for emotional wellbeing. Even Barbara Fredrickson – often cited as the lead researcher in positive emotions research – highlights the necessity of mindfully engaging with a balance of emotions for ongoing growth, meaning, and fulfillment in life [119].

The Wheel of Emotions

Brené Brown’s research has revealed a startling truth: most people can only identify three to four emotions: glad, sad, mad, and scared [100]. This limited emotional vocabulary hampers our ability to understand and respond to our needs effectively. By expanding our emotional vocabulary and improving our emotional granularity, we can better attune to our inner experiences and respond to them mindfully.

Emotional Granularity

Emotional granularity refers to the ability to identify and differentiate between a wide variety of emotional states with precision. Instead of merely feeling “bad,” we might distinguish between feeling “frustrated,” “disappointed,” or “anxious.” This specificity allows us to better understand the nuances of our emotional experiences and respond appropriately [120].

Research shows that individuals with high emotional granularity tend to have better emotional regulation, leading to improved mental health and wellbeing [121]. When we can precisely identify our emotions, we gain clarity on what we need at any given moment and can take steps to meet those needs more effectively.

One helpful tool for enhancing emotional granularity is the Wheel of Emotions, developed by psychologist Robert Plutchik [122]. The wheel visually represents a range of emotions and their relationships to each other, from basic emotions like joy and fear to more complex combinations like optimism and aggressiveness. Using this tool can help us become more specific in identifying our emotional states.

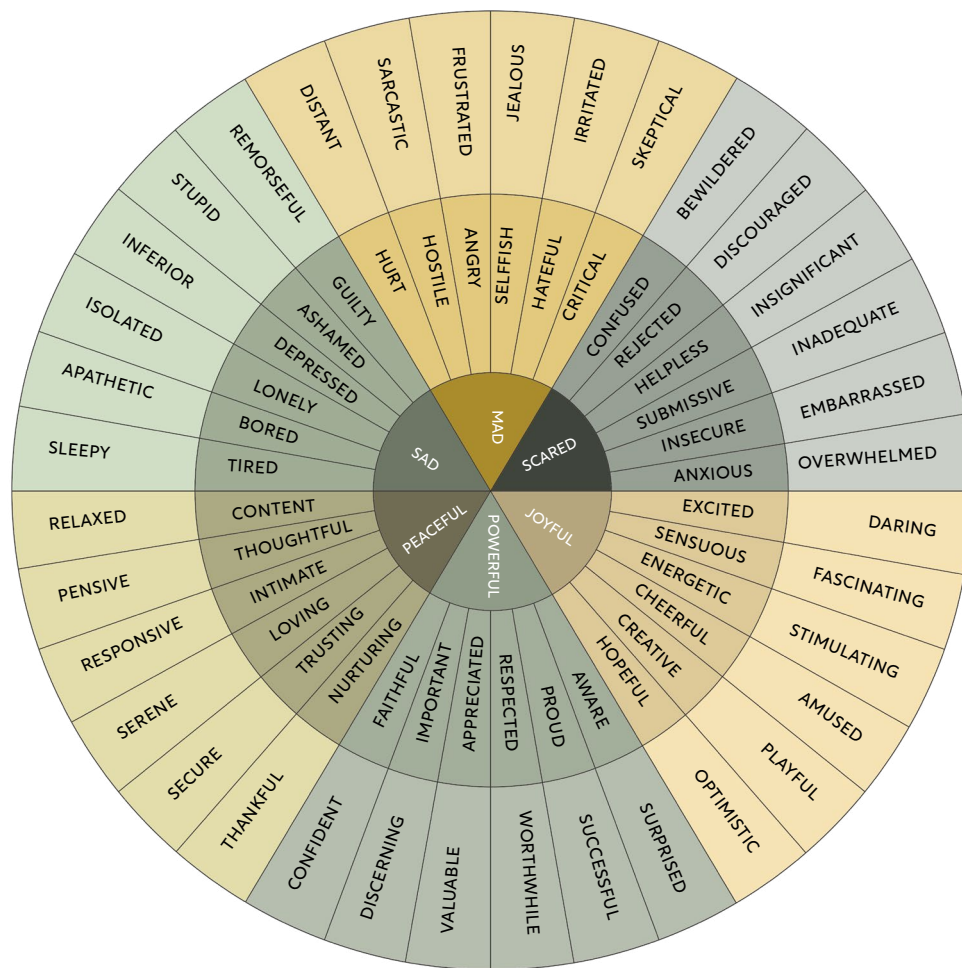
Using the Wheel of Emotions

Here are three ways to use the Wheel of Emotions to improve emotional granularity:

Ask “What The Func?”: Can you use the wheel to identify an uncomfortable emotion you’ve felt in the past week? Rather than seeking to avoid this sensation, ask yourself instead:

- ▶ What function might this emotion serve?
- ▶ What is this feeling trying to tell me?

***Note:** This exercise is best in a group setting, as it allows people to reflect individually, but share their responses together to normalize their experiences. This is why it has been included as an exercise in this session. Below are two other applications you may wish to suggest to clients.*



Journaling: When journaling, encourage your clients to use the Wheel of Emotions to describe their feelings in more detail. Instead of writing “I felt bad today,” they might say, “I felt a mix of disappointment and frustration because my project was delayed.” This practice enhances self-awareness and can provide clarity on how to address the underlying issues [123].

Conflict Resolution: During conflicts, encourage individuals to use the wheel to articulate their emotions accurately. Expressing that they feel “hurt” rather than just “angry” can facilitate more constructive communication and resolution. This specificity helps others understand our perspective and respond with empathy [124].

The Benefits of Increased Emotional Granularity

By enhancing our emotional granularity, we can improve our emotional intelligence, leading to better decision-making, stronger relationships, and greater resilience in the face of stress. Individuals with high emotional granularity can navigate their emotional

landscapes with greater ease, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and others [125].

By expanding our emotional vocabulary and practicing emotional granularity allows us to more effectively identify and respond to our emotions. Tools like the Wheel of Emotions can guide us in this process, helping us to lead more mindful and emotionally intelligent lives.

Emotions: Data, Not Directives

Dr. Susan David emphasizes that emotions should be seen as “data, not directives” [106]. This perspective helps us understand that while our emotions provide essential information about our internal states and external environments, they do not have to dictate our actions. Viewing emotions this way allows us to make more mindful choices, aligning our responses with our values and long-term goals.

The Space Between Stimulus and Response

When we’re caught in the throes of an intense emotion like rage, abandonment, or despair, it can be easy to fall into the trap of acting out of these emotions, or believing that we will never move past them. Indeed, as mindfulness expert and author Russ Harris cautions, “When we let our emotions push us around or we respond on auto-pilot to them, we can be at risk of unhelpful behaviors” [96]. By impulsively reacting to our emotions without giving ourselves time and grace to choose our response, we risk damaging our relationships, reputation, and our sense of self.

Fortunately, pioneering psychologist, author, and holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl’s profound insight offers us a beacon of hope and self-empowerment [126]: “Between the stimulus and response, there is a space. And in that space lies our freedom and power to choose our responses. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Herein lies the essence of emotional intelligence – our ability to pause and reflect before reacting, to harness the power of that space to choose actions that resonate with our true selves.

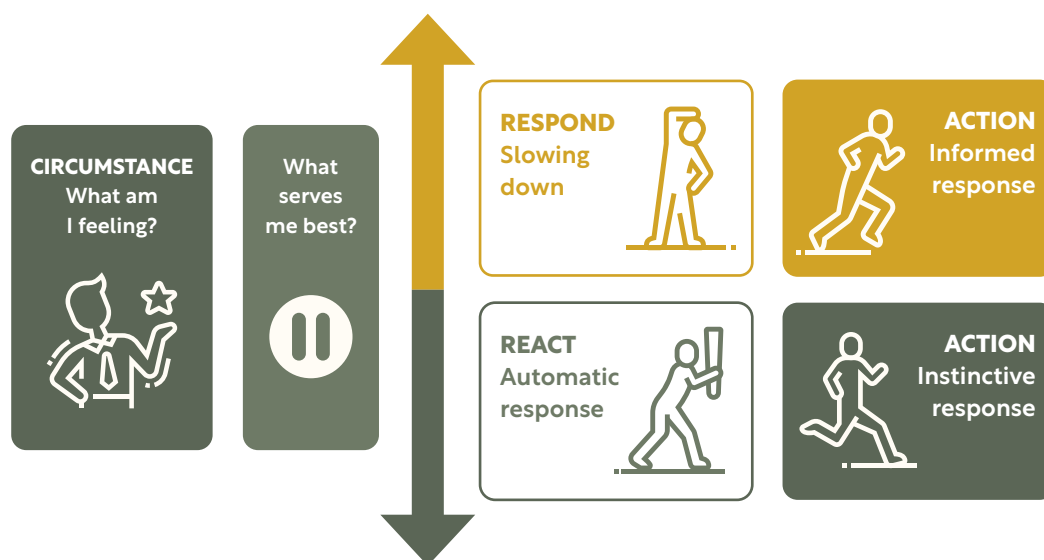
Reaction vs. Response

In moments of intense emotional arousal, our brains shift into survival mode, a state governed by older, more primitive parts of our “limbic brain”. This ancient part of our neural architecture engages the fight-flight-freeze-fawn responses, prioritizing immediate

survival over thoughtful, deliberate action. When we are gripped by this primal state, our ability to act in accordance with our higher values and goals is compromised. In short, we “react” (and often literally “re-act” by engaging in coping strategies commonly used in our younger years) mindlessly, instead of responding, mindfully.

Fortunately, there’s another option. When we’re able to take a moment (sometimes mere seconds) to calm our nervous system, we are able to reengage the prefrontal cortex – the seat of our most advanced cognitive functions. This part of the brain is responsible for rational thinking, planning, and decision-making [127]. By soothing our physiological responses, we can shift from a state of emotional hijack to one of clarity and control, enabling us to respond mindfully and align our actions with our true aspirations.

The diagram below depicts these two thought–action trajectories and the power we have when we take a moment to pause and reflect before we act.



Calming the Nervous System

To navigate the space between stimulus and response effectively, we must develop strategies to calm our nervous systems. As articulated so aptly by Emily and Amelia Nagoski in our Healthy Habits session [28], “Simply telling oneself to calm down is ineffective. Instead, it is necessary to engage in activities that signal to the body that it is safe.”

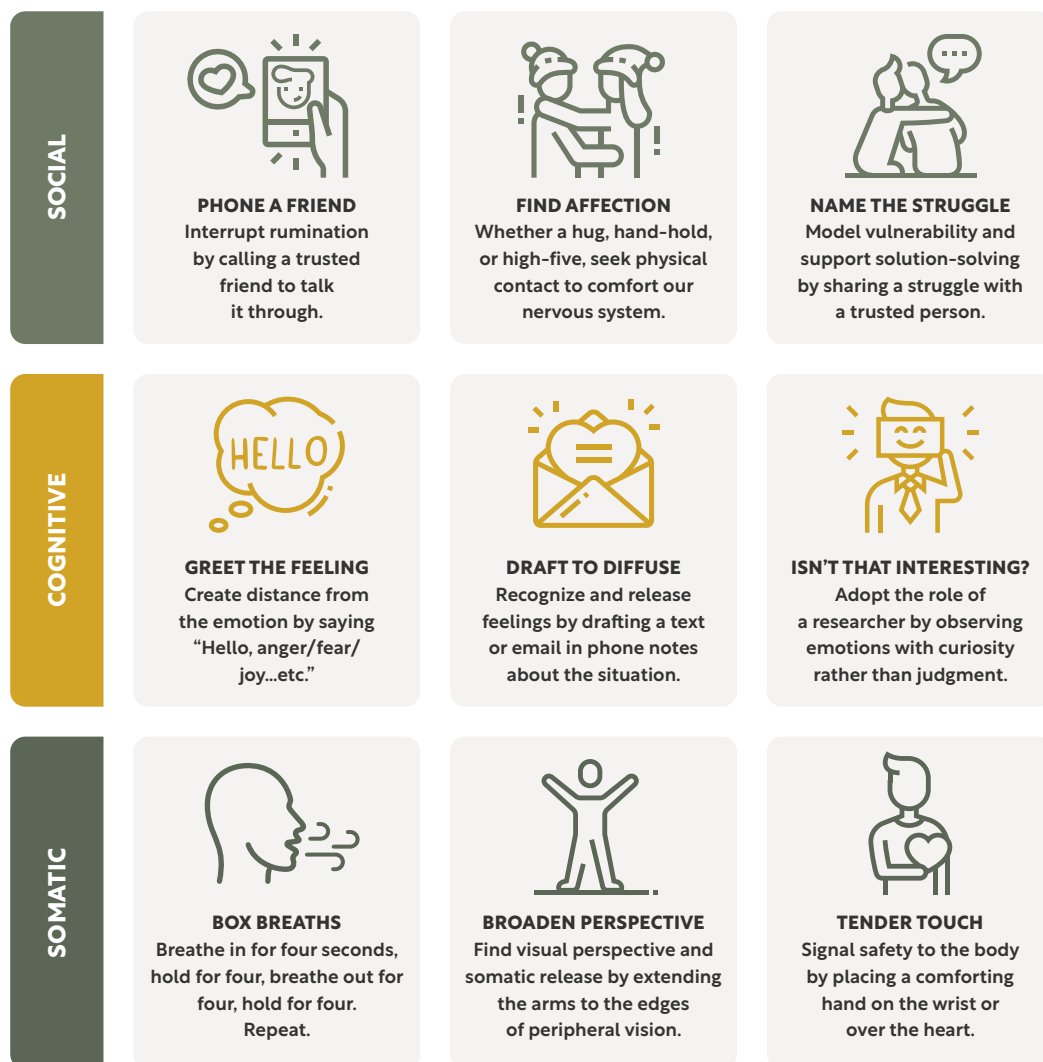
To help signal safety to our body and the various nervous systems it contains, we need to be prepared to try a few different approaches. Depending on our nature, nurture, our context, and the severity of our “emotional hijacking” in the moment, different techniques may suit us more or less in different contexts. The key is to playfully experiment with

those that appeal most to us and find ways of incorporating them into our toolkit of self-care tactics.

Cognitive techniques such as mindfulness meditation and cognitive-behavioral exercises help reframe our thoughts and bring a sense of calm. Somatic practices like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and physical activity can soothe our physiological responses, grounding us in the present moment. Additionally, social support, such as confiding in a trusted friend or seeking professional counseling, provide emotional stability and reassurance.

Evidence-Based Calming Strategies

The diagram below illustrates some evidence-based strategies for calming our nervous systems:



Self-Compassion and Growth

As we navigate the wide variety and intensity of emotions we may experience, it is crucial to extend kindness and compassion to ourselves. We won't always get it right – sometimes we will react impulsively to strong emotions, and that's OK. Each moment of reaction offers a learning opportunity, a chance to understand our triggers and refine our responses.

Dr. Brené Brown's wisdom serves as a guiding light [128]: “We need to acknowledge our emotions and let them steer us toward actions that reflect our truest values and aspirations”. By embracing our emotions as valuable data, we can navigate life's challenges with greater authenticity and purpose, transforming our emotional experiences into catalysts for growth and connection.

Creating A Rooted Routine for Emotion

Having helped our clients to see that all emotions are positive, in that they provide vital, valuable information about our desires and needs in the moment, we are now going to encourage clients to leverage the best in behavior-change science to create a Rooted Routine for Emotion.

Explain that, while it can be anything they choose, they might find it helpful to create a Rooted Routine for Emotion related to:

- ▶ Noticing their emotional sensations and using the Wheel of Emotions to help them name the emotion they're feeling at least once a day
- ▶ Checking in with their emotional sensations daily
- ▶ Journaling for a minute or two each morning/evening about a particular emotion
- ▶ Cultivating positive emotions (such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love) through one of the evidence-based suggestions in their workbook
- ▶ Practicing a central nervous system calming technique (or techniques) each day, etc.

Make sure to refresh their memories around each step of the Rooted Routine practice (choosing a Grounded Beginning to support their habit, selecting a Nurturing Action that is small and manageable, reinforcing progress with a Thriving Moment, and reflecting on growth with a Nourishing Reflection) and direct them to the previous chapter of their workbooks for a list of example Rooted Routines.

Remind them that in order to overcome common behavior change derailers (“I don’t really want to,” “I’m not sure where to start,” and “I don’t think I can”) we must choose a behavior we truly want to do and shrink it until we feel at least 8/10 confident that we can do it each day for the next week.

Session 4

ENGAGEMENT



66

“What would happen if we studied what is right with people versus what is wrong with people?”

- Donald Clifton

This quote emphasizes the power and possibility when we focus on strengths – both in ourselves and others – instead of our weaknesses. As humans evolved, we developed a negativity bias – a tendency to observe and focus on the negative aspects of a situation – to keep us safe in the face of what were once very real threats to their safety (predators, rival tribe members, poisonous food, etc.) [129]. Fortunately, most of modern society is free of these threats, and yet our brains are still playing catch-up. By focusing on what is right and good in ourselves, others, and our context, we not only help rewire our brain towards more positivity, but we enhance our overall wellbeing, performance, and relationships, too.

In the previous session, you helped your clients explore core elements of the PERMAH framework’s “Positive Emotions” pillar, exploring the role that *all* human emotions play in shaping our levels of wellbeing, as well as the choice and control that we gain as our ability to identify and mindfully respond to our emotions (as opposed to mindlessly reacting to them) increases.

In Session 4, you will explore the role our strengths play in enhancing wellbeing, performance, and connection to ourselves and others.

In particular:

- ▶ You will run a Reflection Round, helping clients explore their current knowledge, skills, and behaviors when it comes to their strengths
- ▶ You will elucidate: What Is A Strength?
- ▶ You will explore the role of Strengths & Finding Flow
- ▶ You will highlight the importance of Balancing Our Strengths to avoid overplaying or underplaying our gifts
- ▶ You will uncover the power of taking a strengths-based approach in the workplace
- ▶ You will support your clients in creating A Rooted Routine for Strengths

The Engagement session draws upon the foundational research and theories of Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman's VIA Classification of Character Strengths, emphasizing the role of strengths in fostering wellbeing and happiness. It also explores Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's research around the concept of flow, describing it as a state of optimal experience where one's skills are perfectly matched to the challenges at hand, leading to high engagement and satisfaction. Leading strengths researchers Ryan Niemiec and Alex Linley also provide insights into the balanced use of strengths, cautioning against their overuse or underuse to maintain their benefits. Finally, when it comes to strengths in the workplace, we discuss the power of strengths spotting, as well as David Cooperrider's work on appreciative inquiry to highlight the importance of focusing on strengths to drive positive change.

What Is A Strength?

66

"Strengths are those things we're energized by, good at (or have the potential to become good at), and enjoy doing."

- Gabriella Driver

Defining A Strength

At some point, each of us has experienced what using a strength – those things you're good at and actually enjoy doing – can feel like. These are the moments at work that we find ourselves looking forward to, that completely absorb us, and leave us feeling more confident, energized, and satisfied. According to Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman, strengths are positive traits that energize us, contribute to our wellbeing, and are areas where we demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate high performance [130].

Your strengths may comprise:

- **Character strengths:** These are positive personality traits that lead to benefits for ourselves and others, such as gratitude, perseverance, hope, and creativity. Aligned with our values, they generally represent how we like to work and are the things we'll do whether anyone pays us or recognizes us for them. Clients can discover their character strengths with the free ten-minute survey by googling VIA Character Strengths.

- ▶ **Talents:** Strengths that are innate and to which we may be biologically predisposed, such as spatial reasoning, musical ability, and interpersonal ability. Generally aligned with what we like to do at work, our talents are often framed by Gallup as the natural skills we'd most enjoy being paid for. One way clients can discover their talents with the paid 20-minute survey by searching Gallup Strengths on the internet.

A strength is a strength because it represents the way our brains are wired to perform at their best. Over time, we've spent so much time practicing these particular thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that we've built up neural pathways through our brains that make it easy, effective, and enjoyable to show up at work in these ways [131].

Benefits Of Strengths

Using our strengths has a multitude of benefits supported by research. Strengths use is associated with:

- ▶ Higher levels of happiness and lower levels of depression [130].
- ▶ Increased collaboration, innovation, goal achievement, and job satisfaction [132].
- ▶ Enhanced coping skills and resilience, providing individuals with better tools to manage stress and bounce back from challenges.
- ▶ By aligning tasks with one's innate capabilities, individuals experience a stronger sense of purpose, improved physical health, and increased flow states [133].

Strengths Assessments

Our words create our worlds, so developing a shared language or framework to describe human strengths is essential when we seek to develop them, both as individuals and in larger groups or organizations. Over the years various strengths assessment tools have been developed with varying levels of research and accessibility in terms of pricing, language/translation options, and usability by laypeople. The three most renowned assessment tools currently available to help individuals identify their strengths include:

VIA Character Strengths

The VIA Character Strengths assessment, developed by psychologists Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman, is a pioneering tool in the field of positive psychology. Introduced in their seminal work "Character Strengths and Virtues," this assessment was originally called the "Values in Action Survey" and was created to classify and measure an

individual's virtues or character strengths [130]. The development process involved extensive cross-cultural research to identify 24 universal character strengths that every human has to some degree (the survey simply ranks the level of each in the individual), such as gratitude, curiosity, and perseverance, which contribute to a fulfilling life.

The VIA assessment is widely used in personal development and coaching to help individuals understand their core character strengths and how to leverage them for greater wellbeing and life satisfaction. It is also applied in educational settings to promote positive development in students and in professional settings to enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction. The tool is freely accessible online (with paid options for more comprehensive reports), making it a valuable, accessible resource for personal growth and professional development.

CliftonStrengths

CliftonStrengths, formerly known as StrengthsFinder, was developed by Donald O. Clifton, who is often referred to as the father of strengths-based psychology. The assessment is rooted in Clifton's extensive research on human strengths and talents, which began in the mid-20th century. Published in *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Clifton, the tool identifies 34 themes of talent that are crucial for achieving high performance in professional and personal settings [134].

CliftonStrengths is widely used in organizational and corporate environments to enhance employee productivity, engagement, and team dynamics. It is also a popular tool in executive coaching and leadership development programs, as it helps individuals and teams recognize and maximize their unique talents. The assessment is available for a fee and provides detailed reports that offer insights into how to develop and apply one's top talents effectively.

Strengths Profile

Strengths Profile, previously known as Realise2, was developed by Alex Linley and his team at the Centre of Applied Positive Psychology. This assessment takes a comprehensive approach to identifying strengths by categorizing them into four areas: realized strengths, unrealized strengths, learned behaviors, and weaknesses. The development process involved rigorous academic research and practical applications to ensure its effectiveness in both personal and professional settings.

Strengths Profile is widely used in coaching, career development, and performance management to help individuals and teams understand and leverage their strengths more effectively. It provides a nuanced view of strengths, emphasizing not only what individuals are good at but also what energizes them and what they have the potential to develop further. The tool is available for a fee and includes a detailed report with actionable insights, making it a powerful resource for personal growth and organizational development.

Summary Of The Strengths Assessments

Below is a table to help summarize the key information about the main strengths assessments on the market. You may want to keep this handy when discussing strengths assessment with your clients.

Strengths Assessment	Best Context	Key Focus
VIA Character Strengths	Personal development, wellbeing	Character strengths and virtues
CliftonStrengths	Workplace performance, personal development	Innate talents, performance strengths
Strengths Profile	Personal and professional development	Realized and unrealized strengths, learned behaviors, weaknesses

VIA Classification Of Character Strengths

For the purposes of this program, we will be using The VIA Classification of Character Strengths as a tool for discovering and developing client strengths. This is because the tool is the most accessible in its simplicity and free report options.

Scientists have identified 24 character strengths (contained within six broader virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence) that each of us have the capacity to express. By taking the VIA Survey we can discover our unique character strengths profile. Knowing and applying our highest character strengths is the key to us being our best selves.

Below is a summary of each of the 24 character strengths and the virtue they fall under. To help you understand this strengths tool and possible applications, we advise taking the test yourself and reading up further on the VIA Character Strengths by searching online for VIA Character Strengths.

Strength Category	Strength	Description
Wisdom	Creativity	Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are.
Wisdom	Curiosity	You like exploration and discovery.
Wisdom	Judgment	You think things through and examine them from all sides.
Wisdom	Love of Learning	You have a passion for mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge.
Wisdom	Perspective	People who know you consider you wise.
Courage	Bravery	You do not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain.
Courage	Honesty	You live your life in a genuine and authentic way.
Courage	Perseverance	You work hard to finish what you start.
Courage	Zest	You approach everything you do with excitement and energy.
Humanity	Kindness	You are kind and generous to others.
Humanity	Love	You value close relationships with others.
Humanity	Social Intelligence	You know how to fit into different social situations.
Justice	Fairness	One of your abiding principles is to treat all people fairly.
Justice	Leadership	You excel at encouraging a group to get things done.
Justice	Teamwork	You excel as a member of a group.

Strength Category	Strength	Description
Temperance	Forgiveness	You forgive those who have done you wrong.
Temperance	Humility	You do not seek the spotlight and others value your modesty.
Temperance	Prudence	You are a careful person.
Temperance	Self-Regulation	You are a disciplined person.
Transcendence	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	You notice and appreciate beauty and excellence in all domains of life.
Transcendence	Gratitude	You are aware of good things that happen and don't take them for granted.
Transcendence	Hope	You expect the best in the future and you work to achieve it.
Transcendence	Humor	Bringing smiles to other people is important to you.
Transcendence	Spirituality	Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.

Strengths & Finding Flow

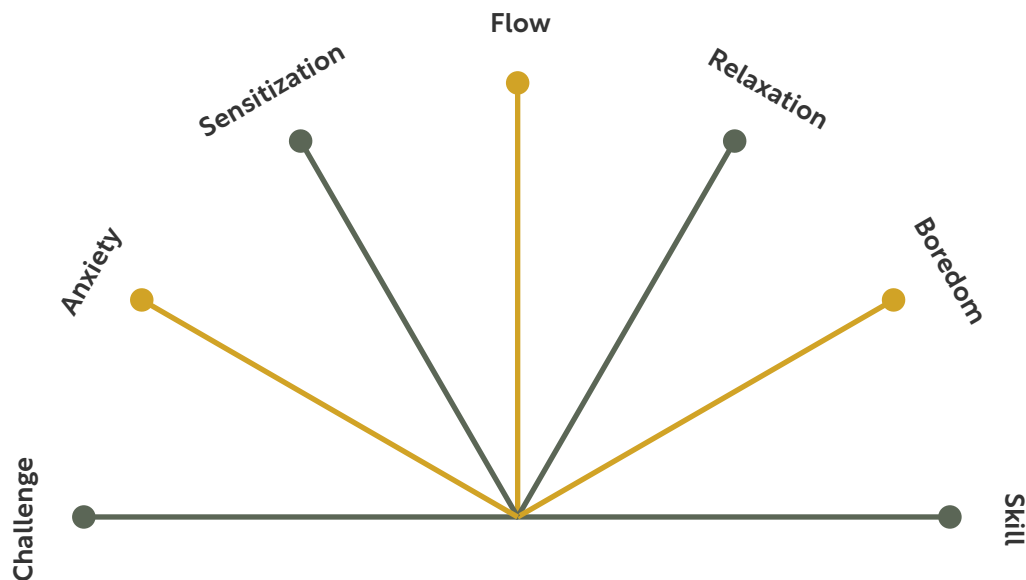
Defining Flow

Flow is both an emotion and a state. Emotionally, flow is described by Daniel Goleman as a state of self-forgetfulness, where individuals are at their best, using their strengths and skills effortlessly [135]. As a state, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as a peak experience where there is a balance between the challenge of the activity and the skill of the performer, leading to a sense of mastery and wellbeing [136].

The Flow Point

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discusses the flow point, which occurs when there is an adequate balance between challenge and skill. When the challenge is too high and skill

is low, individuals may experience anxiety. Conversely, when the challenge is too low and skill is high, individuals may feel boredom. Flow happens when the challenge and skill levels are both high, creating a state of engagement and enjoyment [137].



The diagram above depicts the different emotional states we may experience in response to the challenge-to-skill-level ratio. We see the flow point occur when the challenge and skill level are higher and equally matched.

Fostering Flow

We can increase our chances of experiencing flow and its benefits by optimizing four key elements: temporal, environmental, physical, and social.

Temporal

Definition: This refers to when we choose to engage in tasks – including the time of the day, week, or month. Are we a morning lark or a night owl? Do we prefer leaping into tasks on a Monday or saving creative work for later in the week when we're feeling more energized?

Examples: Scheduling creative tasks during peak energy times; setting aside uninterrupted blocks of time.

Rapid Reflection

When can your client fit flow into their week? What time of the day? How long for?

Environmental

Definition: This refers to our physical surroundings – the sights, sounds, and overall setup that support our focus and productivity.

Examples: Creating a clutter-free space; using noise-canceling headphones to minimize distractions.

Rapid Reflection

Where might your client set themselves up for flow best? What surroundings support their focus? What sounds support their focus?

Physical

Definition: This pertains to how we support our bodies to enhance focus and performance – through eating, moving, sleeping, and resting.

Examples: Eating brain-healthy snacks to get or stay energized; taking short walks to re-energize.

Rapid Reflection

How can your client eat, move, sleep, and rest to support flow? How much? How often?

Social

Definition: This considers whether we work best alone or with others and how our social interactions can facilitate flow.

Examples: Collaborating with someone who inspires us; working alone in a quiet space.

Rapid Reflection

Who does your client go into flow with? When do they flow best solo? What sort of tasks are best done in shared flow vs solo flow?

Your Fostering Flow Toolkit

The toolkit below provides a range of evidence-informed strategies to help cultivate Flow, through the lens of these four flow-supporting elements. Take the time to read these through and consider which ones you yourself may have consciously or unconsciously leveraged before to better focus on a task.

Consider how you might introduce this to your clients and whether you have any personal examples you might use to demonstrate this flow-fostering process.

Temporal	Environmental	Physical	Social
Time Blocking Schedule uninterrupted periods for focused tasks, ideally lasting 90–120 minutes.	Do Not Disturb Find a setting free from interruptions and noise to enhance focus.	Brain Food Prioritize brain-boosting foods, including complex carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats to sustain energy levels.	Solo Flow Zone Opt for solitude when undertaking more creative or demanding tasks to minimize distractions and achieve deeper concentration.
Optimal Work Windows Identify and work during your peak productivity hours, based on whether you're more of a lark or night owl.	Minimalist Magic Keep your workspace uncluttered to reduce distractions and maintain a clear mind.	More Joyful Movement Integrate frequent movement (e.g., standing, stretching, taking stairs, dog walks, dance breaks, etc.) into your day to boost cognitive function and reduce stress.	Collaborative Flow Identify the tasks that benefit most from shared creative input and energy (like strategy, solution-solving, or brainstorming) and set aside time for these flow zones.
Timer Tests Try different timers/ routines (e.g., Pomodoro method, 50 mins on, 10 mins off, etc.) to identify the kinds of stints that best support flow for you.	Sound Support Use background music, white noise, or silence based on what helps you concentrate best.	Sleep Scheduling Know and flow with your natural circadian rhythm to optimize brain and body functioning.	Nurture Neurodiversity Recognize and accommodate individual differences in sensory preferences and social needs (e.g., quiet spaces for introverts, collaborative areas for extroverts).

Temporal	Environmental	Physical	Social
Powerful Pauses Instead of doom scrolling, recharge through gentle movement, nature, a mood-boosting video, or micro-moments of connection.	Nestle Into Nature Incorporate natural light and plants in your space to improve mood and focus.	Body Breaks Practice breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness to calm your nervous system and enhance focus.	Scheduled Social Breaks Boost your social battery by either taking time to reconnect with yourself (through a walk, deep breaths, music), or to others through a quick chat or social break.

Balancing Our Strengths

66

“When a strength is overused or underused it is no longer a strength.”

- Dr. Ryan Niemiec

Overplayed And Underplayed Strengths

When it comes to developing and deploying our strengths, it turns out we can have too much – and indeed, too little – of a good thing. It’s not enough to know and use our strengths as much as possible: when it comes to creating the outcomes and working relationships we desire most, research has shown us that using the right strengths in the right amount and context is crucial.

Indeed, researcher Ryan Niemiec emphasizes that strengths must be used wisely and appropriately to truly benefit an individual (and their broader network) [138]. While underplaying our strengths may be a more familiar concept to many of us (who among us hasn’t held back a skill or suggestion in a meeting or team challenge for fear of getting something wrong or appearing arrogant?), overplayed strengths can equally become weaknesses if they are used excessively.

Overplayed Strengths

When strengths are overplayed, they can become liabilities. For example, a person with a strength in leadership might become overly controlling or domineering. This overuse can lead to strained relationships and burnout. An example is a manager who micromanages their team, resulting in low morale and high turnover. Niemiec explains that overuse of strengths can lead to negative outcomes such as decreased effectiveness and increased stress [138].

Underplayed Strengths

Underplayed strengths represent untapped potential. For instance, an individual with a strength in creativity might feel stifled in a routine job, leading to disengagement and frustration. An example is an employee who has innovative ideas but feels discouraged from sharing them, resulting in a lack of fulfillment and missed opportunities for the organization. Linley discusses how underutilization of strengths can result in a lack of motivation and poor performance [133].

The Golden Mean

Much of positive psychology finds its roots in Ancient Greek philosophy, and this is once again the case when it comes to balancing our strengths. Philosopher Aristotle's concept of the golden mean suggests that virtue lies in finding the balance between deficiency and excess. Here are some examples of the Golden Mean applied to a range of universal human experiences and emotion:

Aristotle's Concept of the Golden Mean		
Deficiency (-)	Balance	Excess (+)
Cowardice	Courage	Rashness
Stinginess/Miserliness	Generosity	Extravagance
Sloth	Ambition	Greed
Humility	Modesty	Pride
Secrecy	Honesty	Loquacity

Aristotle's Concept of the Golden Mean		
Deficiency (-)	Balance	Excess (+)
Moroseness	Good Humor	Absurdity
Quarrelsomeness	Friendship	Flattery
Self-Indulgence	Temperance	Insensibility
Apathy	Composure	Irritability
Indecisiveness	Self-Control	Impulsiveness

Consider the table above. When has your client experienced the balanced expression of one of these experiences (ask them to pick one that resonates most)? Take a moment to consider:

- What factors (e.g., their state of mind, social environment, etc.) enabled this experience?

Equally, ask your client to consider when they fell on either side of that balanced expression of that experience/emotion:

- What factors (e.g., their mental/emotional state, a lack of knowledge/skills, their social context, etc.) inhibited them from embodying that golden mean?

Tip: You may find it helpful to reflect on these questions yourself and jot down your experiences to use as real-world examples when teaching this concept to your clients.

The Golden Mean & Strengths

Applying Aristotle's golden mean principle to strengths invites us to consider how we might use the right strengths, in the right amount, for the right situation [139]. For instance: prudence is a virtue, but it must be balanced to avoid becoming either recklessness or timidity. Equally, the strength of kindness must be balanced to avoid becoming either people-pleasing or ruthlessness. This balanced use ensures that strengths contribute positively without causing negative effects. Linley and Niemiec both advocate for the mindful use of strengths, emphasizing that situational awareness and self-regulation are key to achieving the golden mean [133,138].

The table below applies the golden mean principle to each of the 24 VIA Character Strengths, showing how each strength can become a deficiency or an excess when not balanced properly:

Deficiency	VIA Character Strength	Excess
Cowardice	Bravery	Recklessness
Negligence	Perseverance	Obstinacy
Laziness	Zest	Hyperactivity
Pessimism	Hope	Naïveté
Indifference	Love	Obsession
Insensitivity	Social Intelligence	Manipulativeness
Foolishness	Wisdom	Pedantry
Aimlessness	Perspective	Dogmatism
Cynicism	Curiosity	Nosiness
Rigidity	Creativity	Flightiness (Fantasy)
Apathy	Appreciation of Beauty	Sensationalism
Ungratefulness	Gratitude	Ingratitude
Disrespect	Humility	Self-deprecation
Injustice	Fairness	Over-tolerance
Impulsiveness	Prudence	Over-cautiousness
Unreliability	Honesty	Brutal Honesty
Cruelty	Kindness	Soft-heartedness
Rudeness	Forgiveness	Permissiveness

Deficiency	VIA Character Strength	Excess
Discontent	Contentment	Complacency
Chaos	Self-Regulation	Rigidity
Aimlessness	Purpose	Single-mindedness
Insubordination	Leadership	Dictatorship
Disrespect	Teamwork	Conformity
Misery	Humor	Frivolity

Consider: Which of these might be a good example to share with your clients? Have you got any stories in your own life that you might draw from?

Teaming With Strengths

66

“Appreciating others’ strengths not only elevates them but also enriches our own perspective and understanding.”

- Dr. Chris Peterson

Knowing And Using Strengths

When it comes to taking a strengths-based approach, it takes a village (a systems approach). While we can enjoy great personal benefits (enhanced engagement, performance, enjoyment, etc.) when we take it upon ourselves to discover and incorporate our strengths in work and life, a strengths-based approach becomes more effective, energizing and sustainable when we’re supported by the people and culture around us.

Strengths Spotting

The simplest way to begin applying a strengths based approach is through the practice of strengths spotting. Strengths spotting involves identifying and acknowledging strengths, both in others as well as in ourselves.

At the team (we) and community or organization (us) levels, this process is instrumental in enhancing relationships, building trust, and promoting an overall culture of appreciation. According to Niemiec, strengths spotting is one of the most practical ways to foster a positive work environment and improve team dynamics [138].

Identifying and leveraging our strengths leads to increased self-awareness, enhanced performance, and improved wellbeing. Research indicates that when individuals recognize and utilize their strengths, they experience higher levels of energy, engagement, and resilience [133]. Moreover, reflecting on how our strengths impact others can foster a greater sense of purpose and connection, contributing to a positive social environment [130].

Individual Strengths Spotting

Engaging in a regular journaling practice can help us identify, reflect on, and leverage our strengths. Follow these steps to get started:

Select The Moment

Encourage your client to think of a task or context in which they performed well recently. Then, ask them reflect on what made this experience positive and effective.

Example 1: “I recently led a successful team meeting where we resolved several ongoing issues.”

Example 2: “I organized a family gathering that went smoothly, and everyone enjoyed themselves.”

Pick The Strength

Invite your client to identify which strengths were in use at this time. Refer them to the list of VIA Character Strengths to help them remember.

Example 1: “During the meeting, I used my strengths in leadership and communication.”

Example 2: “While organizing the family gathering, I used my strengths in planning and kindness.”

Observe The Outcomes

Ask your client to reflect on the positive results their strengths contributed to in this situation.

Example 1: “My leadership and communication skills helped the team feel heard and valued, leading to a productive and collaborative meeting.”

Example 2: “My planning and kindness made everyone feel welcomed and comfortable, creating a warm and enjoyable family gathering.”

Test Your Perceptions

Invite your client to ask a trusted person to check their findings. They can ask questions like, “What strengths do you see in me?” or “I’ve noted my strength of leadership in this activity. Does that ring true for you?”

Examples:

Work: “I asked my manager if they noticed my leadership and communication strengths during the meeting, and they confirmed that these were evident and impactful.”

Personal: “I asked my partner if they saw my planning and kindness during the family gathering, and they agreed that it made everyone feel welcomed and relaxed.”

Note: This practice works best within a culture of strengths-based practices. It should be the norm for people to identify strengths in themselves and others, even if such an explicit, appreciative practice may feel a little uncomfortable or unfamiliar to begin with.

Strengths Spotting In Others

Encourage your client to engage in strengths spotting within their work or life through intentional observation and thoughtful feedback. Guide them to follow these steps to effectively identify and reflect on the strengths of those around them:

Set The Intention

Invite your client to decide whether they want to focus on a particular person, period of time, or specific strength.

Example 1: “This week, I will focus on observing Jane during our project meetings to identify her strengths in leadership and collaboration.”

Example 2: “I’ll pay attention to how my friend handles stressful situations to recognize their strength in resilience and problem-solving.”

Perceive The Signs

Encourage your client to observe how individuals embody their strengths through behavior and expression.

Example 1: “During the meeting, I noticed Jane effectively coordinated tasks and motivated the team, showcasing her leadership skills. Her ability to listen actively and incorporate everyone’s ideas highlighted her collaboration strength.”

Example 2: “While spending time together, I noticed how my friend stayed calm during a stressful situation and helped everyone feel at ease. Her ability to listen and offer thoughtful advice showed her strength in empathy and problem-solving.”

Outcome-Based Feedback

Prompt your client to share the observed strengths and their impact on others.

Example 1: “Jane, I observed your leadership and collaboration skills during our meeting yesterday. Your coordination of tasks and motivational approach significantly boosted team morale and productivity. Everyone felt heard and valued, which contributed to a more dynamic and effective discussion.”

Example 2: “I noticed how you handled that stressful situation the other day. Your calm presence and ability to listen really helped everyone feel at ease. Your thoughtful advice made a big impact, helping others feel supported and confident moving forward. It really showcased your strength in empathy and problem-solving.”

Test Your Perceptions

Advise your client to confirm with the individual if they resonate with their observations.

Example 1: “Jane, do you feel that your leadership and collaboration were particularly strong during the meeting? How did you perceive your role, and do these strengths resonate with you?”

Example 2: “Hey, do you feel that you stayed calm and helped others feel at ease during that stressful situation? How did you perceive your role in that moment, and do you think your strength in empathy and problem-solving was evident?”

Note: The best strengths spotting is an ongoing and iterative process – hence the testing of our perceptions. To refine and enhance the impact of Strengths Spotting, open dialogue should be encouraged within group meetings and individual coaching/feedback sessions to help people practice giving and receiving strengths-based praise.

Strengths Vs. Deficit-Based Feedback

Strengths spotting is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to begin building a strengths-based culture. But what about those aspects of ourselves or our lives that inevitably require improvement? Feedback is a cornerstone of personal and professional growth, playing a crucial role in enhancing performance, fostering development, and boosting morale.

Effective feedback can be the difference in whether we strive for success or remain stuck in a sense of helplessness. Appreciative, appropriately delivered feedback can foster a sense of belonging through recognition of an individual's unique skills and contributions; significantly enhancing employees' feeling of being valued and part of a larger purpose [140,141]. According to research by Porath, the manner in which feedback is delivered – whether focusing on strengths or deficiencies – significantly impacts the wellbeing and performance outcomes for individuals, teams, and organizations [142].

Strengths-Based Feedback

If you're reading this handbook, chances are, you've been asked (or likely asked clients) "what went well?" Perhaps the very ethos of positive psychology itself, this question reflects the essence of a strengths-based approach. As such, strengths-based feedback can be described as emphasizing an individual's positive attributes and how these strengths can be leveraged for future success.

This approach involves collaboratively exploring how a person's unique abilities (their character strengths and talents) can enhance their performance and wellbeing. For instance, a manager might praise someone's sense of fairness after they stand up for a colleague in a meeting, as well as discussing how they might apply this strength of fairness to help them prioritize their own self-care, instead of simply telling them to "stop burning themselves out" [143]. This method not only boosts self-esteem but also promotes a growth mindset, making individuals more open to challenges and learning opportunities. Consequently, organizations that prioritize strengths-based feedback often see improvements in job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall performance [142].

Deficit-Based Feedback

In contrast, deficit-based feedback highlights weaknesses and errors, focusing on what needs to be stopped or changed. This approach often involves telling individuals what to prioritize and pointing out recurring mistakes without collaborative exploration. While it might seem straightforward, this method can lead to decreased morale, increased stress, and the underplaying of an individual's strengths [144].

For example, consistently criticizing a friend or family member for not meeting expectations without acknowledging their effort or circumstances can make them feel undervalued and demotivated (instead of exploring how they might leverage their strengths, like resilience or problem-solving, to overcome challenges and improve the situation). As Dweck suggests, such feedback can inadvertently reinforce a fixed mindset, where individuals shy away from challenges for fear of failure, ultimately stifling personal and professional growth [143].

Benefits Of Strengths-Based Feedback

To illustrate the benefits of strengths-based feedback, we will draw on a workplace example. Research by Losada and Heaphy found that the top-performing teams give more strengths-focused feedback to their peers – almost six times more than average teams [144]. In contrast, low-performing teams give nearly twice as much negative feedback. While we're often expected to put on a more reserved and "professional" demeanor at work, the truth is that all of us have a deep need to feel respected, valued, and appreciated. It's no surprise then that cultures centered around strengths-based feedback have been linked to the following benefits:

Individual (Me) Level

1. **Increased Motivation And Engagement:** Strengths-based feedback enhances individual motivation and engagement by recognizing and valuing their unique contributions [142].
2. **Higher Job Satisfaction:** Employees experience greater job satisfaction when their strengths are acknowledged and utilized effectively [143].
3. **Enhanced Self-Esteem And Confidence:** Positive reinforcement of strengths boosts self-esteem and confidence, encouraging employees to take on new challenges [143].

4. **Encouragement Of A Growth Mindset:** Specific feedback on strengths and efforts promotes a growth mindset, making employees more open to learning and development [143].

Team (We) Level

1. **Improved Team Dynamics:** Positive feedback fosters a supportive and collaborative team environment, enhancing team dynamics [144].
2. **Increased Positive Interactions:** High-performing teams that use strengths-based feedback tend to have more positive interactions, leading to better overall team performance [144].
3. **Enhanced Team Cohesion:** Recognizing individual strengths within a team contributes to a sense of belonging and cohesion among team members [142].

Organizational (Us) Level

1. **Higher Retention Rates:** Organizations that focus on strengths-based feedback see higher retention rates as employees feel valued and satisfied with their work [142].
2. **Improved Organizational Culture:** Strengths-based feedback contributes to a positive organizational culture where employees feel respected and appreciated [143].
3. **Better Performance Outcomes:** Organizations that emphasize strengths see better performance outcomes, as employees are more motivated and engaged in their roles [144].

Giving Strengths-Based Feedback

When giving strengths-based feedback, it's crucial to be specific about the strengths observed, the effort made, and what was valued about the application [143]. While it's nice to hear general praise like, "Great job, you're so clever," Professor Carol Dweck from Stanford University found that praising abilities (rather than effort and outcomes) can reinforce a fixed mindset. This makes people avoid future challenges for fear of not meeting expectations.

People generally enjoy being called clever without knowing why, but this can undermine their confidence in repeating the praised behavior. Praising only outcomes can make people less likely to take initiative or tackle difficult tasks. Dweck suggests giving

effort-based praise, like, “Thanks for your persistence in solving this problem,” which encourages a growth mindset that embraces challenges and learning opportunities.

When giving strengths-based feedback, researchers suggest mentioning:

- ▶ **The strengths:** Identify which strengths were used.
- ▶ **The effort:** Describe the actions or words that demonstrated this strength.
- ▶ **How to build upon it/draw upon it in new ways:** Suggest how they can use their strengths more effectively.

Flip The Script

Below are some examples of common deficit-based feedback one might receive, and how it can be flipped to focus and build upon an individual’s strengths instead:

Deficit-Based Feedback Example	Strengths-Based Feedback Example	Changes Made
“You missed the deadline again. You need to manage your time better.”	“I noticed you were really focused on getting the details right for the project. How can we set smaller milestones to help manage the timeline while keeping your attention to detail?”	Emphasizes attention to detail and suggests a collaborative strategy for improvement.
“You always forget to help with the chores. You need to be more responsible.”	“I noticed how focused you were on making sure everything was tidy and organized. How can we create a schedule to help share the chores more effectively while still keeping that attention to detail?”	Highlights a positive trait (focus on detail) and suggests a collaborative approach to improving task management.
“Your presentation was confusing and lacked focus.”	“Your creativity in the presentation was evident. What are some ways we could structure your ideas more clearly next time to enhance your message?”	Highlights creativity and invites a collaborative discussion on improvement.
“You didn’t meet your sales target this quarter. What’s going wrong?”	“I’ve seen your ability to connect with clients shine through. How can we leverage that strength to meet your sales targets next quarter?”	Recognizes ability to connect with clients and seeks constructive, collaborative solutions.

Deficit-Based Feedback Example	Strengths-Based Feedback Example	Changes Made
"You don't help enough around the house. You need to contribute more."	"I saw how you helped with organizing the living room and setting up dinner last night. How can we make sure we're both contributing in ways that play to our strengths and help out around the house?"	Recognizes the positive contribution (helping with the living room and dinner) and frames the conversation around collaboration and strengths-based sharing of responsibilities.
"Your reports are full of errors. You need to be more careful."	"Your analytical skills are strong, and I'd love to see how you can apply that same precision to reviewing your reports for accuracy. What strategies can we implement to help with this?"	Acknowledges analytical skills and guides towards accuracy with a collaborative approach.
"You're always procrastinating and running out of time. You need to start planning better."	"I noticed how focused you were when you finally started your homework, and you managed to get through it. How can we break down your assignments into smaller parts, so it's easier to stay on track without feeling rushed?"	Recognizes the teen's ability to focus once they start and suggests a strategy to make time management easier by breaking down tasks into smaller chunks.
"You talk too much in meetings and don't let others speak."	"Your enthusiasm and ideas are valuable. How about we focus on facilitating the conversation to ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute? What do you think could help with this?"	Values enthusiasm and provides direction for inclusive participation with a collaborative tone.

Consider some deficit-based feedback you've received in the past: how might you identify and leverage one of your authentic strengths to help you address this challenge? This may be a helpful example to bring up when introducing the concept to your clients.

Creating A Rooted Routine for Strengths

Having explored various approaches to cultivating flow, balancing strengths, and integrating strengths-spotting and strengths-based feedback with your clients, we now invite them to leverage the best in behavior-change science to create a Rooted Routine for Strengths.

Explain that, while it can be anything they choose, they might find it helpful to create a Rooted Routine for Strengths related to:

- ▶ Identifying and using a strength each day the coming week at work/home.
- ▶ Selecting a small behavior to experiment with from The Fostering Flow Toolkit.
- ▶ Practicing spotting strengths in themselves and/or others.
- ▶ Practicing giving strengths-based feedback.

Make sure to refresh their memories around each step of the Rooted Routine practice (choosing a Grounded Beginning to support their habit, selecting a Nurturing Action that is small and manageable, reinforcing progress with a Thriving Moment, and reflecting on growth with a Nourishing Reflection) and direct them to the previous chapter of their workbooks for a list of example Rooted Routines.

Session 5

RELATIONSHIPS



66

*“We are biologically wired for connection.”**– Brené Brown*

This quote serves as a powerful reminder that human beings thrive in relationships. But how often do we take the time to reflect on the quality of our connections? How often do we stop and take accountability for the role we play in the dynamics we form with others? In a world where there are more methods and mediums for communication than ever before, why does a sense of disconnection from ourselves and others persevere? In this session, we will draw on the latest research to uncover both the building blocks and barriers when it comes to constructing healthy, supportive relationships.

Having explored the science of strengths (including defining and developing our strengths, spotting strengths in others, and strengths-based feedback) in our previous session, we will continue to take a strengths-based approach as we explore the benefits of positive relationships to our health and happiness.

In Session 5, we'll explore the role that relationships play in building and sustaining our wellbeing, performance, and sense of belonging.

In particular:

- ▶ We'll clarify why connection matters to our health and happiness
- ▶ We'll explore the power of high-quality connections in building strong relationships, enhancing collaboration, and supporting individual and collective wellbeing
- ▶ We'll identify the common barriers that get in the way of connecting
- ▶ We'll explore psychological safety as the social landscape required for real safety, creativity, and belonging
- ▶ We'll apply our learnings through the formation of a Rooted Routine for Relationships

This session draws upon the pioneering research and theories of Brené Brown, whose work on vulnerability and connection emphasizes the fundamental role that authentic relationships play in our wellbeing. It also incorporates insights from Robert Waldinger's Harvard Study of Adult Development, which highlights the critical impact of strong social connections on long-term happiness and health.

Additionally, Jane Dutton's research on high-quality connections provides a framework for understanding the importance of positive, energizing interactions in both personal and professional settings. The session further integrates Amy Edmondson's concept of psychological safety, exploring how creating a safe space for open communication fosters deeper and more resilient relationships. Finally, Gervase Bushe's work on perception bias offers strategies for overcoming common barriers to connection, ensuring that our relationships are built on a foundation of empathy, understanding, and mutual respect.

Reflection Round

As always, we begin this session with a Reflection Round on the session's topic. By engaging in a Reflection Round, clients are able to pause and consider their recent efforts and outcomes when it comes to connecting with themselves and others. Have these connections been fulfilling? Have they encountered difficulties in building or sustaining them? Reflection not only increases self-awareness but also lays the foundation for personal growth in how individuals relate to others.

As always, they will be following the four powerful Reflection Round questions:

When it comes to connecting to themselves and others lately:

- ▶ What has been going well for them?
- ▶ Where do they notice challenges in connecting with others?
- ▶ What lessons might they be learning about themselves through these experiences?
- ▶ What steps could they take to enhance their ability to connect with others?

Reflecting on these questions will help clients to better understand the dynamics of their existing relationships and the role they play within them. Equally, to help you personalize the material and enhance your teaching experience, you are equally encouraged to reflect on these questions. Are there any examples you could share with your clients if they are stuck? Do you have a variety of stories or contexts to draw from?

Why Relationships Matter

Wells of Wellbeing

Why do some relationships seem to enhance our lives while others drain us? According to Robert Waldinger, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, the quality of our relationships is one of the most significant predictors of our overall happiness and health [145]. Over 75 years of research has shown that individuals who maintain strong, supportive relationships are not only happier but also healthier and live longer. This highlights the profound impact that positive relationships can have on our lives.

In fact, the study found that close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. Those who are socially connected to family, friends, and community are happier, physically healthier, and live longer lives than those who are less well connected. Even more telling, the study revealed that loneliness can be toxic. People who are isolated are more likely to experience health declines earlier in midlife, their brain functioning declines sooner, and they live shorter lives overall. This evidence strongly suggests that investing in our relationships is not just beneficial; it is vital for our long-term wellbeing.

The Benefits Of Positive Relationships

Below is a list of 10 benefits of positive relationships across various contexts (platonic, workplace, romantic, familial):

1. **Enhanced Emotional Wellbeing:** Positive relationships provide emotional support, reduce stress, and enhance overall life satisfaction by fostering feelings of belonging and security [146,147].
2. **Improved Physical Health:** Engaging in positive relationships is associated with better physical health outcomes, including lower blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, and a stronger immune system [148,149].
3. **Increased Longevity:** Positive social ties have been linked to longer life expectancy. Strong relationships can act as a buffer against harmful health behaviors and promote healthier lifestyles [148].
4. **Enhanced Cognitive Functioning:** Positive relationships contribute to better cognitive functioning, including improved memory and mental acuity, particularly in older adults [150,151].

5. **Greater Resilience:** People with strong, positive relationships are more resilient in the face of adversity. These relationships provide support systems that help individuals cope with and recover from stressful situations [152,153].
6. **Higher Levels of Happiness:** Positive relationships are one of the strongest predictors of happiness and life satisfaction. The sense of connection and mutual support enhances individual wellbeing [146,154].
7. **Improved Workplace Performance:** In the workplace, positive relationships lead to increased job satisfaction, collaboration, and productivity. Employees are more engaged and motivated when they feel connected to their colleagues [155,156].
8. **Better Conflict Resolution:** Positive relationships promote better communication and understanding, which are essential for effective conflict resolution. Individuals in these relationships are more likely to resolve disagreements constructively [157,158].
9. **Support For Personal Growth:** Positive relationships encourage personal growth by providing a safe space for individuals to express themselves, try new things, and develop their potential [159,160].
10. **Stronger Family Bonds:** In familial contexts, positive relationships foster a sense of belonging and mutual support, which are critical for a stable and nurturing family environment. These bonds are crucial for the development of children and the wellbeing of family members [161,162].

Reflect on the people who have contributed to your growth and happiness. Who has been there for you during challenging times, and how would your life be different without their support? Reflecting on these connections can help you – and eventually your clients – appreciate the value of your relationships and inspire you to invest more time and energy into nurturing them.

High-Quality Connections

The critical role that our relationships play in making or breaking our wellbeing and performance is evident from both the research and our own personal reflections. So how can we cultivate these relationships in today's busy, often remote, world? Researchers like Jane Dutton suggest that we consciously cultivate more "high-quality connections."

Dutton defines high-quality connections (HQC) as short-term, positive interactions that leave individuals feeling energized, respected, and valued [164]. Unlike deep, long-term

relationships, HQCs can happen in brief encounters, such as a positive exchange with a colleague or a meaningful conversation with a stranger.

These small moments of connection may seem insignificant, but they can have a powerful impact on our wellbeing. Research shows that HQCs boost emotional resilience, reduce stress, and even enhance workplace performance [156]. In our fast-paced world, where deep connections can sometimes feel out of reach, focusing on cultivating HQCs can be a practical and effective way to enhance our sense of connection and overall happiness.

Moreover, HQCs are essential because they provide a sense of belonging and mutual support, even in environments that are not typically associated with close relationships, such as the workplace. These connections are characterized by mutual trust, openness, and a willingness to engage with others in a meaningful way. They are also reciprocal, meaning that both parties benefit from the interaction. This reciprocity helps to build a foundation of trust and respect, which is essential for effective collaboration.

What Does An HQC Look Like?

HQCs are often marked by a sense of mutual trust and positive regard, even in brief encounters. Here are some examples that you yourself might have experienced or observed:

- ▶ A colleague genuinely listens to your ideas during a meeting, offering thoughtful feedback that makes you feel heard and appreciated.
- ▶ A friend remembers a small detail about your life and checks in on you during a difficult time.
- ▶ A meaningful conversation with a mentor challenges you to grow while also supporting your efforts.
- ▶ A moment of shared laughter with a coworker lightens the mood and strengthens your bond.
- ▶ A brief exchange with a stranger, such as a smile or a compliment, creates a moment of genuine connection and leaves both parties feeling uplifted.

Can you think of any other examples of HQCs that you've either witnessed or experienced in your own life? Personal stories add color and passion to the research and theories that we share with clients.

Your HQC Toolkit

Now that we know the benefits, and how to spot an HQC, it's time to get practical. Below is an HQC Toolkit to help clients immediately begin cultivating HQCs in busy-proof, playful ways.

Encourage your client to try one or more of the following strategies:

Dare To Share

Be open and vulnerable in your interactions by sharing something personal about yourself – whether it's a recent challenge, a lesson learned, or a small success. Brené Brown's research highlights that vulnerability is the key to fostering deeper, more authentic connections [163]. By daring to share, you invite others to connect with you on a more meaningful level, which can help build trust and mutual respect.

Listen To Learn

Practice active listening in your conversations, focusing not just on the words being spoken but also on the underlying emotions and intentions. According to Jane Dutton's research on HQCs, listening deeply and empathetically shows that you value the other person's perspective, which is crucial for creating energizing and supportive connections [164]. Make it a habit to listen with the intention of learning something new about the other person.

Ask Appreciatively

Frame your questions in a way that highlights the other person's strengths or positive experiences. Drawing from David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney's appreciative inquiry, ask questions like, "What's a recent success you're proud of?" or "What do you enjoy most about your work?" These types of questions encourage others to share their positive experiences and insights, fostering a sense of appreciation and connection [165].

Spot Strengths

Regularly identify and acknowledge the strengths you observe in others, whether they're colleagues, friends, or family members. Ryan Niemiec's work on character strengths suggests that recognizing and affirming strengths in others not only boosts their confidence but also strengthens your connection with them [166]. You might say, "I noticed how patient you were in that meeting, it really helped keep things on track," or "Your creativity really shines in this project."

Seek Out Strangers

Make an effort to initiate brief, positive interactions with people you don't know well, whether it's a colleague you don't often speak to or someone you pass by regularly. Research on HQCs shows that even small, positive exchanges with strangers can contribute to a sense of belonging and wellbeing [164]. A simple "Good morning!" or a compliment can create a moment of connection that leaves both parties feeling uplifted.

Ask For Help

Don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it, whether it's advice, a favor, or just a listening ear. According to research by Vanessa Bohns, asking for help not only provides you with the support you need but also strengthens your relationships by giving others the opportunity to contribute and feel valued [167]. Asking for help can deepen trust and build reciprocity in your connections.

Five-Minute Favors

Offer to do small, unsolicited favors for others that take five minutes or less, such as making an introduction, sharing a helpful resource, or providing quick feedback. Adam Grant's research on "givers" shows that small acts of kindness can significantly enhance relationships and build goodwill, contributing to a culture of mutual support and collaboration [168].

Keep It Curious

Approach conversations with genuine curiosity, especially when discussing differing opinions or perspectives. Nick Epley's research on perspective-taking suggests that curiosity helps bridge gaps in understanding and reduces conflict [169]. Instead of assuming you know what the other person thinks, ask open-ended questions like, "What led you to that conclusion?" or "Can you tell me more about your perspective on this?"

Celebrate Successes

Take the time to celebrate others' successes, whether big or small. Research by Shelly Gable and others on active-constructive responding shows that how we respond to good news is critical for building strong relationships [170]. When someone shares a success with you, respond enthusiastically, ask for details, and express your genuine happiness for them. This not only strengthens the connection but also reinforces a positive and supportive relationship.

What Is An HQC Question?

While there are many ways to create HQCs with others, one of the best and most efficient ways to do so is through asking powerful, appreciative questions. These questions search for the true, the good, the possible, and the poignant in life. They invite us to see each other as complex human beings with rich internal worlds, rather than another name on an email list. Here are some examples of HQC questions your client could ask:

- ▶ What's something you're passionate about and why?
- ▶ What's a simple pleasure that brings you joy?
- ▶ If you could make one small change in the world, what would it be?
- ▶ Who has been a mentor in your life and what did they teach you?
- ▶ Who or what are you most grateful for in this moment?
- ▶ What personal accomplishment are you most proud of and why?
- ▶ What is something you've learned recently that excited you?
- ▶ If you could spend the day doing anything, what would it be?
- ▶ What's the best piece of advice you've received?

Once again, we encourage you to explore and experience the theory in your own life, so why not playfully experiment with some of these questions?

While high-quality connections are essential, they don't happen by chance. They require intentional effort, and sometimes, we encounter barriers that prevent us from connecting with others effectively.

Common Barriers To Connection

The Imperfection Of Perception Bias

Why do misunderstandings so often arise in our relationships? Anaïs Nin famously said, "We don't see the world as it is; we see it as we are." This statement reflects the concept of perception bias – the tendency to see things through the filter of our own experiences, beliefs, and emotions. This bias can create significant barriers to connection, as we may misinterpret others' intentions or fail to understand their perspectives fully.

In everyday interactions, this bias might manifest as defensiveness or miscommunication. For example, we might assume that a colleague's curt email reflects their dissatisfaction

with our work, when in fact, they were simply pressed for time. Gervase Bushe explains that our belief in our ability to read others' minds is often misplaced, leading to unnecessary conflicts and strained relationships [171].

Overcoming perception bias requires a conscious effort to step outside of our own perspectives and consider alternative viewpoints. This can be challenging, especially in situations where emotions are running high. However, by practicing empathy and actively listening to others, we can begin to break down these barriers and build more understanding and connection. Research by Nick Epley on perspective taking suggests that even small efforts to see the world through another person's eyes can significantly improve our ability to connect and communicate effectively [169].

Judgment Vs. Curiosity

Building on the concept of perception bias, another significant barrier to connection is our tendency to judge others quickly, often based on incomplete information or assumptions. Brené Brown's research emphasizes the importance of choosing curiosity over judgment in our interactions. She advocates for what she calls "the most generous interpretation" – the idea that we should assume that others are doing the best they can with the resources they have [172]. This mindset shift from judgment to curiosity allows us to approach situations with empathy and understanding, rather than defensiveness or blame.

Assuming The Best

When we assume the best in others, we open ourselves up to more compassionate and meaningful interactions. This approach not only reduces the likelihood of conflict but also fosters a sense of psychological safety, where individuals feel understood and valued. For example, if a colleague misses a deadline, instead of immediately assuming they are careless or irresponsible, we can choose to be curious. What challenges might they be facing that we are unaware of? This shift in perspective can transform our relationships, allowing for deeper connection and collaboration.

What If People Are Doing The Best They Can?

Choosing curiosity over judgment also aligns with the principle of believing that people are doing the best they can. This belief requires us to extend grace to others, recognizing that everyone has struggles and limitations that may not be immediately visible. Brown's work suggests that when we approach others with this mindset, we create an environment

where vulnerability is embraced, and trust is strengthened. This does not mean we ignore problems or avoid addressing issues; rather, it means we approach these conversations with an open heart and a desire to understand, rather than to criticize.

To help facilitate this shift from judgment to curiosity, we can introduce tools and practices that encourage more empathetic and generous interpretations of others' actions. One effective approach is to actively swap judgmental behaviors with curious, kind ones. This could involve replacing thoughts like, "They're being difficult" with "I wonder what they're going through?" or changing a reaction like, "They should know better" to "How can I support them in this situation?"

To help clients begin to swap their judgmental behaviors with more generous ones, we've created the Judgment Vs. Curiosity Toolkit:

Judgment Vs. Curiosity Toolkit

Judgment	Curiosity
Pointing The Finger When a family gathering doesn't go as planned, you immediately blame a family member for not helping with the preparations, thinking, "If they had pitched in, it would have gone smoothly."	Pondering Our Part Instead of blaming a family member, reflect on your own contributions. Ask yourself, "How did I contribute to this outcome? What could I have done differently to make things run more smoothly?"
Assuming The Worst You receive a brief and seemingly abrupt email from your manager and immediately think, "They must be angry with me for something I did."	Actively Asking Instead of jumping to conclusions, you decide to ask for clarification. You might respond with, "I noticed the email was quite brief. Was there something specific you wanted to discuss further?"
Sitting In Silence During a meeting, you disagree with a decision being made but choose to stay silent, thinking, "It's not worth the hassle to speak up. They won't listen to me anyway."	Speaking Up Instead of staying silent, you choose to voice your concerns respectfully. You might say, "I have a different perspective I'd like to share. Can we explore this option further?"

Judgment	Curiosity
Over-Functioning When a team member is struggling with their workload, you take on extra tasks without asking for help or setting boundaries, thinking, “If I don’t do it, it won’t get done right.”	Owning Our Needs Instead of overextending yourself, recognize your own limits and communicate your needs. You might say, “I want to help, but I’m also managing a heavy workload. Can we find a way to distribute this task more evenly?”
Talking About After a frustrating interaction with a friend, you vent to another friend, saying, “I can’t believe how stubborn they are. Why don’t they just listen to me?”	Talking To Instead of discussing the issue with someone else, you choose to address the person directly: “I felt frustrated during our conversation earlier. Can we talk about what happened?”

As the facilitator, take a moment to consider which of these judgmental behaviors you tend to fall into. Could you swap it for a curious behavior this week to help you experience this concept first-hand?

Recognizing our biases is a critical step in improving our relationships. However, it’s equally important to understand the role that psychological safety plays in fostering an environment where connections can truly thrive.

Psychological Safety

How often do we hold back from speaking our minds because we fear negative consequences? Psychological safety is the belief that we can express ourselves without fear of ridicule, rejection, or retribution. Dr. Amy Edmondson has extensively researched this concept, particularly in the workplace, where psychological safety is linked to increased innovation, learning, and team performance [173].

In relationships, psychological safety is just as crucial. Without it, individuals may withhold their true thoughts and feelings, leading to superficial connections and unresolved issues. Creating an environment of psychological safety requires trust, openness, and the willingness to be vulnerable. When people feel safe, they are more likely to engage in honest and meaningful conversations, which strengthens the relationship.

The benefits of psychological safety extend beyond the individual, also positively impacting the overall health of relationships and connections. When people feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to take risks, share their ideas, and collaborate effectively. This creates a culture of trust and mutual respect, which is essential for any relationship to thrive. In contrast, a lack of psychological safety can lead to fear, anxiety, and disengagement, which can undermine even the strongest relationships.

To help you live and breathe this theory, reflect on a relationship where you feel psychologically safe: What contributes to this sense of safety? Are there relationships where you do not feel safe to speak openly? What changes might help create a safer environment? While striving for psychological safety is essential, it's also important to recognize that some discomfort is inevitable in relationships, especially when engaging in difficult conversations.

By reflecting on these questions and working on your own relationships, you'll be better equipped to support your clients in creating safe and open environments.

Striving For “Safe Enough”

Is it realistic to expect complete comfort in all our conversations? Dr. Vikki Reynolds argues that instead of striving for perfect safety, we should aim for a sense of “safe enough” – a space where we feel secure enough to engage in challenging discussions without the expectation of complete comfort [174]. This concept acknowledges that growth often comes with discomfort, and avoiding tough conversations can lead to stagnation in relationships.

Common experiences show that avoiding difficult conversations often leads to unresolved issues that can fester and weaken the relationship over time. By striving for “safe enough,” we create room for honest dialogue, even when it's uncomfortable. This approach encourages us to embrace the messiness of human interaction as a necessary part of building stronger, more resilient relationships.

Research on conflict resolution supports this idea, showing that avoiding conflict or difficult conversations can lead to greater dissatisfaction and disengagement over time [175]. On the other hand, addressing issues head-on, even when it's uncomfortable, can lead to deeper understanding and stronger bonds. The key is to create an environment where both parties feel safe enough to express their thoughts and feelings honestly.

To make this theory real for you as a facilitator, you may wish to reflect on a conversation you've been avoiding. What fears are holding you back? How might you approach this conversation with the goal of creating a safe enough environment? Consider the potential long-term benefits of addressing uncomfortable issues sooner rather than later.

Creating a safe enough environment is about more than just navigating discomfort; it's also about clear communication. Clarity in our interactions is a key component of building trust and ensuring our relationships are strong and resilient.

The Power Of Clear Communication

Why is it that unclear communication often leads to conflict? Brené Brown emphasizes that "Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind," highlighting the importance of transparency in our interactions [172]. Clear communication helps prevent misunderstandings and builds trust, as it reduces the chances of misinterpretation. On the other hand, unclear communication can lead to confusion, frustration, and ultimately, a breakdown in the relationship.

Common experiences illustrate that when we are vague or indirect in our communication, others are left to fill in the gaps, often with their own assumptions. This can lead to misaligned expectations and unnecessary conflict. Researchers like Brown argue that being clear, even when it's uncomfortable, is a form of respect and kindness that strengthens relationships [172].

In addition to preventing misunderstandings, clear communication also fosters a sense of reliability and predictability in relationships. When we are clear and direct, we signal to others that we can be trusted to say what we mean and mean what we say. This builds confidence in the relationship and reduces the likelihood of conflict. In contrast, unclear communication can create uncertainty and mistrust, which can erode the foundation of even the strongest relationships.

To help this theory land for you personally as a facilitator, reflect on a time when unclear communication led to a misunderstanding. How might clarity have changed the outcome? What steps can you take to ensure your communication is clear and direct? Consider how clear communication can build trust and reduce conflict in your relationships.

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Clear communication is essential, but it's also important to be aware of the stories we tell ourselves in our interactions. These narratives can shape our perceptions and influence how we engage with others. Brené Brown's phrase, "The story I'm telling myself is ..." encourages us to become more aware of the narratives we construct in our interactions [172]. These stories are often based on assumptions rather than facts, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

For example, you might interpret a friend's silence as disinterest, when in reality, they might simply be preoccupied with their own concerns. Recognizing that these stories are just that – stories – can help us approach our interactions with more curiosity and less judgment. Researchers like Brown suggest that by naming the stories we tell ourselves, we can separate our assumptions from reality and engage in more honest and effective communication [172].

In addition, understanding our inner narratives can help us identify patterns of thought that may be influencing our behavior and interactions. For example, if we consistently tell ourselves stories that others are judging us, we may become defensive or withdrawn, which can negatively impact our relationships. By recognizing these patterns, we can challenge our assumptions and adopt a more balanced perspective, which can lead to more positive and constructive interactions.

Having Kind Conversations

Inspired by the principles of nonviolent communication and the work of Brené Brown, "kind conversations" are a powerful approach to navigating difficult conversations with empathy, clarity, and respect. The core idea behind kind conversations is to foster understanding and connection, even when addressing conflicts or misunderstandings. This approach encourages individuals to express their needs and feelings honestly while also considering the needs and feelings of others. By doing so, we can transform potential conflicts into opportunities for deeper connection and mutual respect.

The theory behind kind conversations is rooted in the idea that most conflicts arise from unmet needs and miscommunications rather than ill intent. Instead of blaming or criticizing, kind conversations focus on clearly articulating what we observe, how we feel, the story we are telling ourselves, what we need, and what we would like to happen next. This approach not only helps to reduce defensiveness in others but also fosters a collaborative atmosphere where solutions can be found that meet everyone's needs.

The OFTEN Process For Having Kind Conversations

To help structure a kind conversation, we can use the acronym OFTEN, which stands for observations, feelings, telling the story, essential needs, and next steps. This process provides a clear framework for expressing ourselves in a way that is both honest and compassionate.

O: Observations – “I’m noticing ...”

Start by objectively describing the situation without attaching judgment or interpretation. This step is crucial because it sets the stage for a conversation based on facts rather than assumptions.

Example: “I’m noticing that during our recent meetings, you’ve been arriving about 10 minutes late.”

By focusing on a specific observation, you avoid making generalizations or accusations. This helps the other person understand exactly what behavior or situation you are referring to without feeling attacked.

F: Feelings – “This is making me feel ...”

Express how the observation makes you feel. This step is about sharing your emotional response to the situation, which helps the other person understand the impact of their actions on you.

Example: “This is making me feel a bit frustrated and concerned.”

Naming your feelings helps to humanize the conversation and opens the door for empathy. It shifts the focus from blaming to sharing your emotional experience, which can encourage the other person to be more receptive.

T: Telling the Story – “The story I’m telling myself about this is ...”

Share the narrative or interpretation you’ve created in your mind about the situation. This step is crucial because it allows you to acknowledge that your interpretation may not be the only or correct one, inviting dialogue rather than defensiveness.

Example: “The story I’m telling myself about this is that maybe these meetings aren’t a priority for you, or that there might be something else going on that’s preventing you from arriving on time.”

By framing it as “the story I’m telling myself,” you leave room for the other person to provide their perspective, reducing the likelihood of misunderstanding or conflict.

E: Essential Needs – “This is preventing me from meeting my need of ...”

Clearly state what need of yours is not being met due to the situation. This step is about identifying what’s at the heart of your concern and why the situation matters to you.

Example: “This is preventing me from meeting my need of starting our meetings on time, which is important for staying on schedule and respecting everyone’s time.”

Expressing your needs helps the other person understand why the situation is important to you, creating a sense of urgency and importance that can motivate change.

N: Next Steps – “In the future, can you please ... And I will”

End the conversation by proposing a clear, actionable request for how to move forward. This step is about collaboratively finding a solution that works for both parties.

Example: “In the future, can you please try to arrive on time for our meetings? And I will make sure to send reminders if that would help.”

Offering a next step that includes a specific request and a commitment on your part fosters collaboration and sets a clear path forward. It reinforces the idea that you are both working together to find a solution.

Kind Conversations: Tips & Tricks For Your Clients

- ▶ **Prepare:** Run through the OFTEN process beforehand. Consider jotting down your thoughts or even bringing your notes into the conversation, especially if Kind Conversations tend to make you feel anxious or frazzled.
- ▶ **Pick Your Time:** Choose a moment when both of you are not busy or stressed. Ensure that you’re both mentally and emotionally ready to engage in the conversation.
- ▶ **Pick Your Place:** Find a setting where both parties will feel safe and comfortable. Sometimes, stepping outside or choosing a neutral space can help facilitate a more open and relaxed dialogue.
- ▶ **Pitch The Conversation:** Make sure your conversation request models the clarity and kindness you want throughout the whole process. To prevent unnecessary worry

on the part of your conversation partner, make sure to state your intentions clearly. For example: “Hey [Name], when are you free to have a quick conversation around [Topic/Project, where appropriate to mention it]. It will probably take around [time] minutes. I thought we could [go for a walk/grab a coffee/meet in your office... etc.]. Does that suit you?”

- ▶ **Pace Yourself:** It’s easy to feel the urge to get everything out quickly, but take your time. Speak slowly, breathe deeply, and allow pauses to process what’s being said.
- ▶ **Practice Grounding Yourself:** Stay centered during the conversation by using grounding techniques such as deep breathing, feeling your feet on the floor, or noticing the contact between your body and the seat.
- ▶ **Pose Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage dialogue by asking open-ended questions that invite the other person to share their thoughts and feelings, such as, “Can you tell me more about your perspective?”
- ▶ **Patiently, Actively Listen:** Focus on truly understanding the other person’s point of view. Avoid interrupting, and reflect back what you’ve heard to ensure clarity and show that you’re listening.
- ▶ **Plan Another Conversation:** Don’t expect to resolve everything in one go. Plan a follow-up conversation to check in on progress, address any new issues, and continue the dialogue.

Tip: To try this process out for yourself, consider: What situation in your life could benefit from a kind conversation? Can you use the OFTEN process to write down each step of the conversation?

Creating A Rooted Routine for Relationships

Having explored the importance of relationships, high-quality connections, common barriers to connection, and psychological safety, it’s time to apply what you’ve learned by creating and practicing a Rooted Routine for Relationships.

Explain that, while it can be anything they choose, they might find it helpful to create a Rooted Routine for Relationships related to:

- ▶ Creating moments of high-quality connection
- ▶ Asking a daily HQC question

- ▶ Using the OFTEN process to help you clarify your thoughts and feelings around conflict – and have a conversation where necessary
- ▶ Sparking a kind conversation
- ▶ Or any other ideas you have!

Make sure to refresh their memories around each step of the Rooted Routine practice (choosing a Grounded Beginning to support their habit, selecting a Nurturing Action that is small and manageable, reinforcing progress with a Thriving Moment, and reflecting on growth with a Nourishing Reflection) and direct them to the previous chapter of their workbooks for a list of example Rooted Routines.

Session 6

MEANING



66

*“One with a why can overcome any how.”**- Friedrich Nietzsche*

This quote speaks to the profound power of meaning in our lives. But how often do we take the time to reflect on what (or who) truly gives our lives meaning? How do we navigate the complex and sometimes uncomfortable journey of uncovering and aligning with our deepest values and purpose?

In a world that often prioritizes productivity and immediate gratification, why do so many of us feel a lingering sense of emptiness or disconnection from what really matters? In this session, we will delve into the latest research to explore the critical role that meaning plays in our wellbeing, resilience, and overall life satisfaction.

Building on our previous session’s exploration of relationships, where we examined the importance of connection, high-quality interactions, and psychological safety, we now turn inward to examine the personal and often deeply individual journey of discovering and sustaining meaning in our lives. We will explore how aligning with our core values and purpose can provide us with the strength and motivation to navigate life’s challenges.

In Session 6, we’ll explore the vital role that meaning plays in our overall wellbeing and how we can actively cultivate a sense of purpose and significance in our daily lives.

Specifically:

- ▶ We’ll reflect on our existing experiences of meaning in our lives through a Reflection Round
- ▶ We’ll examine the foundational role a sense of meaning in life plays in our health, happiness, and resilience
- ▶ We’ll explore the distinction between harmonious and obsessive passions and how balancing our passions can enhance our life satisfaction
- ▶ We’ll learn about job crafting and how we can shape our work to better align with our values and strengths

This session draws upon the foundational research and theories of Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane Dutton, whose work on job crafting and meaningful work emphasizes the importance of actively shaping our roles to align with our strengths and values. With the help of Michael F. Steger’s pioneering research, we’ll demystify the monolith of meaning by exploring and applying its three elements: coherence, purpose, and significance. We’ll also delve into Robert Vallerand’s studies on harmonious and obsessive passions to guide us in navigating our passions in ways that enhance, rather than detract from, our wellbeing, relationships, and work-life balance. Finally, Rob Baker’s practical, busy-proof “micro-crafting” approach will teach us to make small, significant changes that keep us connected to our sense of meaning at work every day.

While this session will touch on work-life balance, it’s important to note that “work” can mean many things beyond professional employment. It could refer to the various roles we play in our personal lives – such as caregiving, volunteering, or pursuing passions and hobbies – that require effort and commitment. In exploring work-life balance, we’ll look at how these different areas of “work” impact our sense of meaning and purpose in a broader context.

Reflection Round

Understanding Our “Why”

What drives us to get up every morning and face the challenges of the day?

When deeply connected to our purpose, we find that we’re better equipped to handle life’s difficulties, big or small. In our daily lives, those with a strong sense of purpose tend to feel more motivated and resilient. Whether it’s finding meaning in our work, our relationships, or our personal pursuits, this sense of purpose often correlates with higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of stress [176].

Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, famously argued that the search for meaning is a primary human drive. In his harrowing first-hand account of experiences in concentration camps, he recollected that not only were some people able to find meaning – even in the most horrific of circumstances – but that this capacity for meaning-making was the cornerstone for their survival [177]. This perspective emphasizes just how vital it is to identify and connect with our personal “why” as a source of strength and motivation.

But what about the rest of us? For those of us living a seemingly lower-stakes, more mundane existence, discovering our “why” can feel like a complex, confronting, and ever-changing process. What feels meaningful at one stage of life may change as we grow and our circumstances shift. That’s why regular reflection on what gives us purpose is crucial. It allows us to realign our goals and actions with our evolving sense of meaning, ensuring that we stay connected to what truly drives us.

That is why, perhaps more than any other session so far, the Meaning session is best begun with a Reflection Round, asking:

When it comes to cultivating a sense of meaning in life:

- ▶ What has worked/gone well?
- ▶ What are the areas of your life where you have found it challenging to find meaning?
- ▶ What have you been learning about “meaning” and what it translates to for you and others?
- ▶ What would you like to try next to support a healthy sense of meaning in your life?

As a facilitator going into a potentially profound and poignant session, it’s highly recommended to reflect on these questions yourself. After all, you’ll be asking your clients to do so.

Why Meaning Matters

The Pursuit Of Meaning

Is happiness the ultimate goal in life, or is there something deeper that we should strive for? Emily Esfahani Smith argues that while happiness is often seen as the end-all, it is the pursuit of meaning that truly makes life worthwhile. Echoing Frankl, Smith asserts that meaning, unlike happiness, is enduring and provides a sense of coherence and purpose that can sustain us through life’s inevitable challenges [178].

In real life, many of us find that the pursuit of happiness alone can lead to a paradox – where the more we chase it, the more elusive it becomes. This phenomenon is supported by research showing that those who prioritize meaning over happiness tend to experience greater wellbeing, resilience, and life satisfaction [179]. Meaning connects us to something larger than ourselves, whether through relationships, personal growth, or contributing to the community, thereby providing a stable foundation for long-term fulfillment.

However, the pursuit of meaning is not without its challenges. It often requires us to confront difficult questions about our values, purpose, and the impact of our actions. Moreover, meaning can sometimes come with discomfort, as it may involve sacrifice, responsibility, or facing difficult truths. But it is precisely this complexity that makes meaning so fulfilling. When we find meaning, we gain a sense of direction and significance that transcends momentary pleasures.

Aligning Efforts With Values

What “why” are we working towards? Do many of us even know? Henry David Thoreau’s observation, “It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?” prompts us to examine whether our efforts align with our deeper values and goals [180]. In today’s fast-paced world, it’s easy to become caught up in the busyness of life, but busyness without purpose can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction.

Recent statistics reveal a troubling rise in burnout, with nearly 77% of professionals feeling burned out at their current jobs [181]. Burnout is often the result of prolonged stress and can manifest as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment [182]. A lack of meaning in one’s work or life can significantly contribute to these feelings, as individuals may struggle to find value or purpose in their daily activities. On the other hand, an excess of meaning – where one becomes overly consumed by their purpose/passions – can also lead to burnout, as the pressure to continually fulfill a meaningful role can become overwhelming [183]. This paradox of meaning is something we will explore in more detail later in this session.

Many of us have experienced working hard without feeling fulfilled. This misalignment between effort and meaning is often linked to the concept of workaholism, where we become so focused on productivity that we lose sight of the bigger picture [184]. Research suggests that aligning our efforts with our values and long-term goals is key to experiencing a sense of fulfillment and purpose [185]. When our actions are congruent with what we truly care about, we are more likely to feel that our lives are meaningful.

However, aligning our efforts with our values can be complicated. It requires self-awareness and reflection to identify what truly matters to us and the courage to make changes that reflect these priorities. This might involve setting boundaries, redefining success, or letting go of activities that do not serve our long-term goals.

The Benefits Of Meaning

As long as humans have had the ability to communicate, we have puzzled over and pursued a sense of meaning in our lives. It seems that there is an inherent understanding that having something to work towards and contribute to is integral to a life well lived: but what does the research say on the matter? Just some of the recent research has found that having a sense of meaning can result in:

- ▶ **Increased Life Satisfaction:** Individuals with a high sense of meaning in life report significantly greater life satisfaction, with a meta-analysis showing a correlation of 0.55 between meaning and life satisfaction [186].
- ▶ **Enhanced Psychological Wellbeing:** Research indicates that people who perceive their lives as meaningful are two to four times more likely to report high levels of psychological wellbeing compared to those with lower levels of meaning [187].
- ▶ **Reduced Risk Of Depression:** A strong sense of meaning in life is associated with a 30% to 50% lower risk of developing depression over time [188].
- ▶ **Lower Mortality Risk:** A study found that individuals with a high sense of purpose in life had a 20% lower risk of mortality over a 5-year period compared to those with lower purpose [189].
- ▶ **Better Physical Health:** People with a strong sense of meaning report better physical health, including lower levels of chronic illness and reduced risk of heart disease [190].
- ▶ **Greater Resilience:** Individuals who feel that their life has meaning are 1.5 times more likely to exhibit resilience and recover more quickly from adverse events [191].
- ▶ **Higher Levels Of Positive Affect:** Those with a high sense of meaning experience more frequent positive emotions and fewer negative emotions, with a study showing a correlation of 0.42 between meaning and positive affect [192].
- ▶ **Improved Social Relationships:** A sense of meaning in life is positively associated with stronger and more satisfying social relationships, as people with meaning tend to be more socially connected [193].
- ▶ **Greater Academic And Work Engagement:** Students and employees who perceive meaning in their activities show 20-40% higher engagement levels in academic and professional settings [194].
- ▶ **Lower Levels Of Anxiety And Stress:** Individuals with a clear sense of meaning report significantly lower levels of anxiety and stress, with meaning serving as a buffer against these negative emotions [195].

This list is not exhaustive, but begins to elucidate how powerful a seemingly abstract concept like “meaning” can be in shaping our wellbeing and the trajectory of our lives. Part of being able to study the impact of meaning is to understand the elements that comprise it, so let’s move into this next.

Meaning = Coherence, Purpose, And Significance

Just as we long to contribute to something bigger, we also want to understand our place in the wider world: How do the different parts of our lives fit together to tell a coherent story? Michael F. Steger’s work emphasizes that meaning in life involves making sense of the world and our place within it. This involves three key components: coherence, purpose, and significance. Coherence refers to the extent to which we see our life as making sense; purpose involves having goals that provide direction, and significance is the belief that our life matters [176].

Coherence, Purpose, And Significance: An Example

Imagine someone working in environmental conservation. They might experience **coherence** by understanding their role as part of a broader effort to protect the planet – knowing that their daily work contributes to a larger environmental movement that aligns with their personal values of sustainability and respect for nature. This coherence is further reinforced when they see how their efforts to reduce pollution or restore habitats fit into a global narrative of combating climate change.

Purpose, for this individual, might come from a clear goal: working to preserve endangered species so future generations can experience the same natural wonders that we do today. This purpose provides motivation and direction, helping them stay focused on what matters most, even when the work is challenging or progress seems slow. For instance, knowing that their work helps prevent the extinction of a species or contributes to reversing deforestation gives their daily actions a clear and compelling focus.

Significance, then, is the belief that their actions have a real impact. They might feel significant when they receive feedback from community members who express gratitude for their conservation efforts or when they see the tangible results of their work, such as the increase in a once-endangered species population. This sense of significance is also reinforced by being part of a network of environmentalists and organizations that rely on their contributions to achieve broader ecological goals, making them feel that their work truly matters.

In practice, like this conservationist, people who experience high levels of coherence, purpose, and significance tend to report greater wellbeing and resilience. Coherence allows us to make sense of the world, even in the face of adversity. Purpose provides motivation and direction, helping us stay focused on what matters most. Significance gives us the sense that our lives have value and that our actions have an impact on the world.

Making (And Remaking) Meaning

Achieving coherence, purpose, and significance can be challenging, especially during times of change or uncertainty. Life events such as job loss, illness, or the end of a relationship can disrupt our sense of coherence and purpose. For instance, if our conservationist were to lose their job or face an insurmountable environmental setback, they might struggle to maintain these elements of meaning.

Similarly, not all of us have a clear passion or cause for which we feel compelled to advocate. In fact, many of us might feel adrift without a singular mission that drives us. The good news is that, no matter our context or role, we can begin to make tiny tweaks that infuse our daily actions with more meaning. By making small adjustments to how we approach our work, relationships, or personal routines, we can start to rebuild or even discover coherence, purpose, and significance in new ways. Stay tuned, as we'll explore how to do just that shortly.

As facilitators/educators, how do we ensure that our efforts in teaching others about meaning align with our values? How can we help our clients see the connection between coherence, purpose, and significance in their own lives? What personal experiences can we draw on to make these concepts resonate more deeply with those we teach?

Balancing Our Passions

Meaning Through Impact

How does our work impact others? Adam Grant's research highlights that the single strongest predictor of meaningfulness is the belief that what we do has a positive impact on others. This sense of contribution not only enhances personal fulfillment but also drives greater engagement and satisfaction in work and life [168].

In practical terms, this can be seen in how we derive meaning from work that benefits others, whether through helping a colleague, contributing to a team project, or serving customers. When we feel that our efforts are making a positive difference, we are more likely to experience a deep sense of satisfaction and purpose [176]. This sense of impact can be particularly strong in professions like healthcare, education, and social work, where the connection between our actions and the wellbeing of others is clear.

However, it's important to note that the perception of impact can vary greatly between individuals and situations. Some of us may struggle to see how our work benefits others, particularly in roles that are more removed from direct service. In such cases, it may be helpful to reframe how we view our work and find ways to connect even small tasks to a larger sense of purpose.

Falling Out Of Balance

Is our passion enhancing our life or taking over it? Robert Vallerand's research distinguishes between harmonious and obsessive passion, highlighting the dangers of the latter. Obsessive passion is characterized by a compulsion to engage in an activity that dominates one's life, driven by external pressures such as the need for validation, fear of failure, or societal expectations [196]. While having a strong sense of purpose and dedication can be deeply fulfilling, it can also become overwhelming when it starts to dominate our lives. We often hear stories of people who are "married to their work," unable to switch off even when they're home or those who feel their worth is entirely tied to their professional success. These individuals may find themselves working late into the night, unable to disconnect, or constantly striving to prove their value through their contributions.

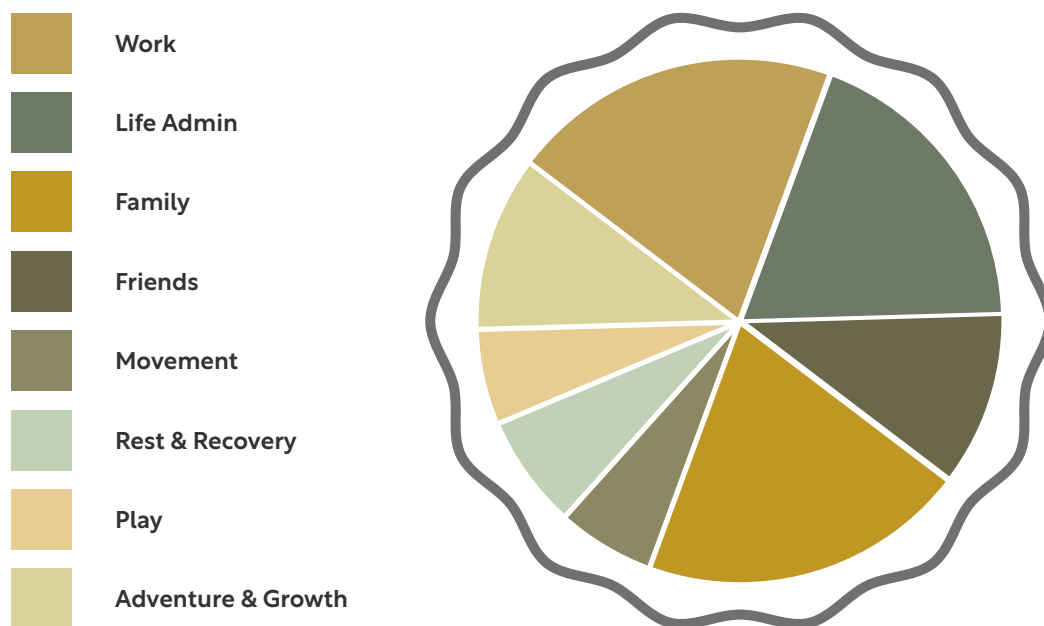
Obsessive passion can lead to burnout, stress, and strained relationships, as it consumes our time and energy at the expense of other important aspects of life. This type of passion is often driven by external pressures, such as the need to prove ourselves or fear of failure, rather than intrinsic enjoyment [197]. While it may lead to short-term achievements, obsessive passion is unsustainable and can ultimately detract from our overall wellbeing. When we begin to equate our identity and self-worth with our work, we risk falling into the trap of obsessive passion, where our work becomes our only source of validation. This not only harms our mental and physical health but can also damage our personal relationships and overall life satisfaction.

In contrast, harmonious passion is characterized by a balanced engagement in meaningful and enjoyable activities. This type of passion is integrated into our lives without

overshadowing other important domains, leading to greater wellbeing and life satisfaction. When we cultivate harmonious passions, we can pursue our interests while maintaining healthy relationships, work-life balance, and self-care [198]. Harmonious passion allows us to find joy and fulfillment in our work without it becoming all-consuming, ensuring that our other life roles – such as being a partner, friend, or parent – are also honored and nurtured.

What Is Our “Passion Pie”?

A useful tool for helping clients assess the balance (or imbalance) in their lives is the “Passion Pie.” This metaphor encourages clients to visually reflect on their work-life balance by considering their lives as a pie chart. By breaking down their daily activities into slices, they can better understand how much time and energy they are dedicating to different aspects of life.



Here’s how we guide them through this process:

1. **Reflect On Current Allocation:** Ask clients to consider what percentage of their life is currently taken up by work. How much space is left for other vital areas, such as family, friends, movement, rest and recovery, play, and personal growth? This reflection can help them identify where their energy is overly concentrated or perhaps lacking.

2. **Assess The Impact:** Encourage clients to consider the consequences of this allocation. For example, if work dominates their Passion Pie, they might experience stress, burnout, or strained relationships. Conversely, too little investment in work or growth areas might lead to a lack of fulfillment or purpose.

This exercise not only fosters awareness but also sets the stage for intentional change. By visualizing their Passion Pie, clients can begin to see where adjustments are needed to create a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Rapid Reflection

As facilitators, it's important that we also reflect on our own Passion Pie to guide our clients better:

- ▶ Thinking of your life as a pie chart, what percentage is currently devoted to work?
- ▶ How does this compare to the time and energy you dedicate to other areas, such as family, friends, self-care, and growth?
- ▶ How does this distribution impact your wellbeing and effectiveness as a facilitator?
- ▶ Where might there be too much or too little energy spent?

Understanding our own balance – or imbalance – can help us better empathize with our clients and provide more personalized guidance.

Making Our Passion Pie

If the commitments and context of our life are the ingredients of our pie, we can think of the following image as representing the factors that shape how we “bake” our Passion Pie. These three elements include:

Purpose



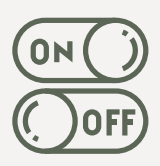



What drives us and gives our life meaning. As we know, research suggests that when we are clear about our purpose, we are more likely to experience higher levels of motivation and satisfaction [199]. However, an excessive focus on purpose, particularly when tied exclusively to work, can lead to “obsessive passion,” where our identity and self-worth become overly dependent on our professional success [196].

Investments

These are the areas where we choose to put our time, energy, and resources. Mindfully choosing and prioritizing tasks that align with our values can lead to “harmonious passion,” where work and life are in balance, and personal fulfillment is achieved without burnout [196]. Conversely, when we feel trapped in nonstop tasks, we may be driven by external pressures rather than intrinsic motivation, contributing to stress and a sense of entrapment.

Energy Levels

How we manage our energy – through rest, recovery, and self-care – determines our ability to sustain our efforts and enthusiasm over the long term. Scheduling rest and recovery is essential for maintaining high energy levels and avoiding burnout [200]. Difficulty in switching off or neglecting self-care can indicate an imbalance, potentially leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

	PURPOSE	INVESTMENTS	ENERGY
OBSESSIVE	 <p>Self-worth = defined by our work</p>	 <p>Non-stop task we feel trapped by</p>	 <p>Difficult to switch off</p>
HARMONIOUS	 <p>Self-worth = derived from many different areas</p>	 <p>Mindfully chosen and prioritized tasks</p>	 <p>Scheduled rest and recovery</p>

As the image suggests, we can further explore whether our passions are Obsessive or Harmonious by reflecting on how we engage with these three elements. For instance, do we derive our self-worth solely from our work, leading to obsessive tendencies? Or do we find value in diverse areas of life, allowing for a more balanced and harmonious approach?

This reflection not only helps us understand the current state of our Passion Pie but also guides us in making necessary adjustments to foster wellbeing and fulfillment.

Harmonious Passion For Fulfillment

How do we cultivate passion that enriches our life rather than controls it? According to Robert Vallerand, harmonious passion is characterized by a strong desire to engage in activities because they are meaningful and enjoyable, not because of external pressures or a need to prove ourselves. This type of passion leads to positive outcomes such as resilience, satisfaction, and overall life balance [196].

In real life, those of us with harmonious passions often find that we can integrate our passions into our lives without compromising other important areas such as family, work, or health. This balance allows us to enjoy our activities fully without feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Research shows that individuals with harmonious passions are more likely to experience positive emotions, sustained motivation, and a sense of accomplishment [201].

However, cultivating harmonious passion requires ongoing mindfulness and self-awareness. It involves recognizing when passion is tipping into the realm of obsession and taking proactive steps to maintain a healthy balance. Some effective strategies include:

Setting Clear Boundaries

Establish physical, temporal, and cognitive boundaries between work and personal life. For example, avoid checking work emails after a certain time or designate specific spaces for work versus leisure.

Research by Kreiner and colleagues found that individuals who set such boundaries were more successful in maintaining work-life balance and experienced less work-related stress [202].

Prioritizing Self-Care

Integrate regular practices of physical exercise, meditation, or hobbies unrelated to work into your daily routine. These activities help to rejuvenate your energy and prevent burnout.

A study by Sonnentag and Fritz highlights that individuals who engage in relaxation activities, physical exercise, and detachment from work during their free time are more likely to maintain higher levels of job performance over time [203].

Pursuing Passions With Genuine Interest

Reflect periodically on your motivations to ensure that your passions are pursued out of intrinsic enjoyment rather than external pressure. This might involve reassessing your workload to focus more on tasks that align with your personal values.

The self-determination theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation [160]. For instance, a teacher passionate about inspiring students might adjust their responsibilities to engage more with teaching rather than administrative tasks that don't align with their intrinsic interests.

These strategies – setting boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and pursuing passions out of genuine interest – help create a more balanced relationship with our passions. By implementing these tactics, we can sustain our enthusiasm and avoid the pitfalls of burnout, cultivating a harmonious passion that enriches our lives rather than consumes them.

Consider for yourself as someone who will teach this concept: What strategies have you found helpful in your own life for maintaining balance, and how can we share these with others? Or, how can you normalize struggle and enhance psychological safety by sharing your own challenges?

Crafting Meaningful Work

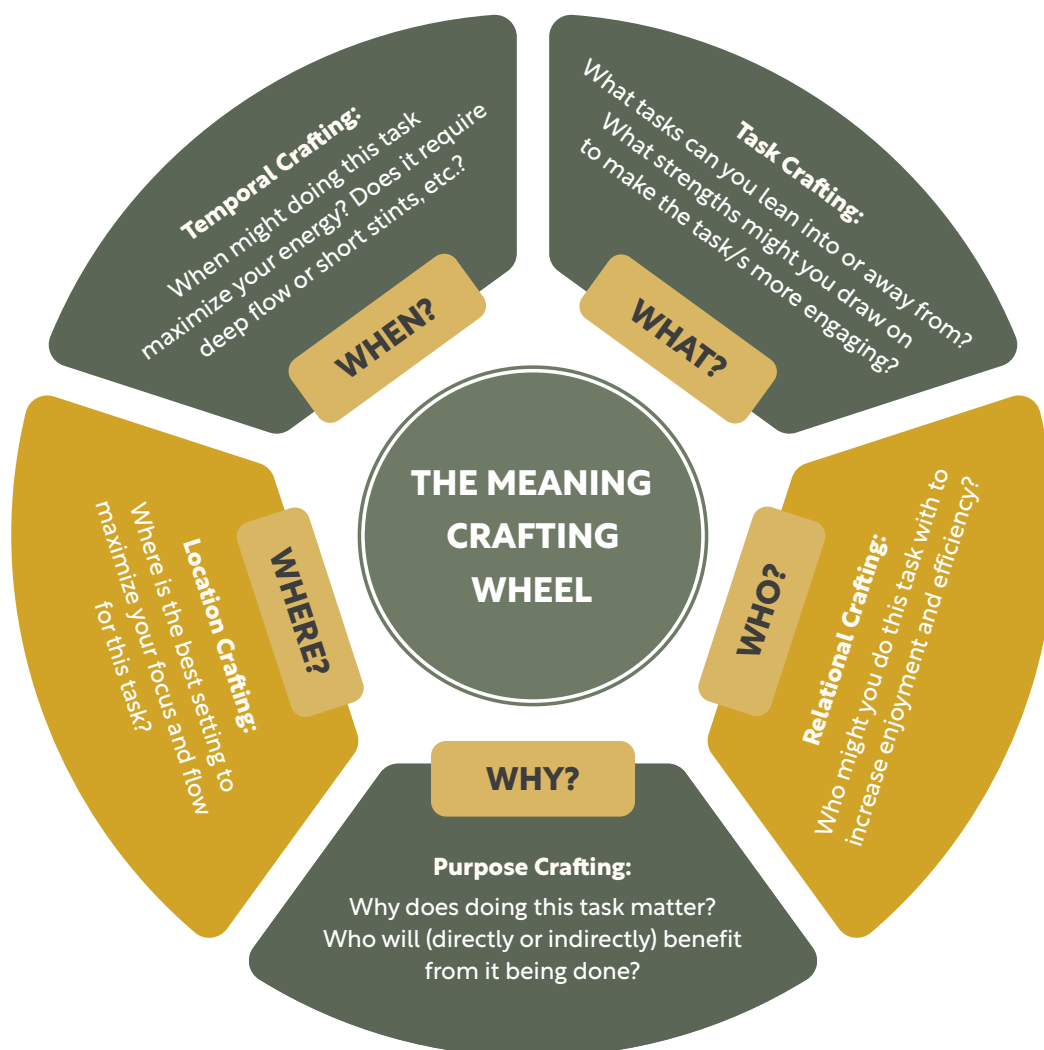
The Importance Of Enjoying Work

Are we finding joy in our work? Leo Tolstoy's quote, "If you're not enjoying your work, you should either change your attitude or change your job," emphasizes the importance of finding satisfaction and meaning in our work [204]. If our current role doesn't bring us fulfillment, it might be time to consider changes in our approach or even a career shift.

Research in organizational psychology suggests that job satisfaction is closely linked to overall wellbeing. When we find meaning and joy in our work, we're more likely to experience higher levels of engagement, productivity, and life satisfaction [205]. However, finding this joy is not always straightforward, and it often requires a proactive approach, such as job crafting.

Job Crafting: What, Who, Why, Where, When

How can we craft our jobs to make them more meaningful? Building on Amy Wrzesniewski's foundational work, Rob Baker expands the concept of job crafting to include five key elements: what, who, why, where, and when. Each element provides a different dimension through which we can shape our work experience to better align with our values and goals [206].



What

Task crafting involves changing the tasks we perform, either by taking on new responsibilities that are more aligned with our strengths or by finding new approaches to existing tasks. For example, Baker discusses experimenting with new methods for completing routine tasks, such as dictating rather than typing, to make them more engaging [206].

Who

Relationship crafting focuses on building and nurturing relationships at work. This might involve seeking new connections with colleagues who inspire and support us or strengthening existing relationships. Baker highlights the importance of regular, informal check-ins with colleagues to foster a sense of community and collaboration [206].

Why

Purpose crafting is about redefining how we think about our work. By connecting our tasks to a larger purpose, we can find greater meaning even in routine activities. Baker suggests viewing mundane tasks, such as financial management, as acts of care for the business and its stakeholders, thereby transforming how these tasks are perceived [206].

Where

Environment crafting involves changing our physical or virtual work environment to better suit our needs and preferences. This might include rearranging our workspace, choosing different work locations, or adjusting our work-from-home setup to enhance comfort and productivity.

When

Temporal crafting is about altering when we perform certain tasks. This could involve restructuring our workday to align with our natural energy levels or setting specific times for focused work. Baker discusses the challenges of maintaining rigid work schedules and the benefits of finding flexible, personalized approaches to time management [206].

Expanding job crafting beyond the traditional categories of task, relational, and cognitive crafting allows for a more holistic approach to shaping our work. By considering each of these five elements, we can create a work experience that is more fulfilling, balanced, and aligned with our personal goals and values.

Practical Applications Of Job Crafting

How can we apply these job-crafting strategies to our work? Job crafting is not just a theoretical concept; it's a practical tool that can be applied in various ways to enhance our work experience. Rob Baker emphasizes that job crafting is an ongoing process of experimentation and adaptation, where small changes can lead to significant improvements in wellbeing and performance [206].

For example, if we find certain tasks draining, we might experiment with different approaches, such as batching similar tasks together or using new tools to streamline the process. If we struggle with building relationships at work, consider setting aside time for regular check-ins with colleagues or seeking new connections within the organization.






It's important to recognize that job crafting is not always easy, and not every experiment will be successful. There will be job-crafting failures, such as struggling to maintain meeting-free Fridays or setting unrealistic boundaries around work hours. That's why having a spirit of playful experimentation and curiosity is key. To help you and your clients playfully experiment, we've created a Micro-Crafting Toolkit packed with tiny tweaks to help infuse more meaning into the work we do each day.

The Micro-Crafting Toolkit

Looking at the tasks you currently have in your own role (as a facilitator or more broadly), choose one of your more de-energizing tasks and:

- ▶ Identify the job-crafting area you'd like to leverage (what, who, why, where, when).
- ▶ Within that job-crafting area, choose a behavior (or create your own) from the Micro-Crafting Toolkit to playfully experiment with.

Consider: What challenges have you faced in your own job-crafting efforts (even simply selecting a micro-crafting behavior), and how can we use these experiences to guide others in their job-crafting endeavors?

 WHAT (TASKS)	 WHO (RELATIONSHIPS)	 WHY (PURPOSE)	 WHERE (ENVIRONMENT)	 WHEN (TIMING)
But First, Fun Prime your brain for success by starting with the easiest or most energizing tasks.	Find A Strengths Buddy Spend more time working with people whose strengths complement your own.	Reframe The Mundane Consider who benefits from a boring task. How might it eventually help someone else?	Place–Activity Fit Seek spaces compatible with your task: e.g., office for focus, lunchroom for collaboration.	Schedule Set Tasks Save precious decision-making resources by scheduling regular tasks.
Draw Upon Strengths Identify and align your strengths to your tasks to make them more engaging.	Lean Into Learning Seek out a mentor, colleague, or client that you believe you can learn the most from.	Tweak Your Job Title Dig for the deeper purpose of your role. If you could rename it, what would it be?	Optimize Your “Office” Wherever you work, optimize the lights/sounds/furniture for how you work best.	Time–Task Fit Ask yourself what time of day might suit you and the task best based on its demands.
Introduce Interests Shift your job towards tasks or growth areas you’re genuinely interested in.	Play Your Part Be conscious of the energy you bring to interactions. Set the tone you want to receive.	Be Mission-Mindful Reconnect to the overall vision and mission of your workplace. Why does it exist?	Swap Out Scenery Feeling stuck? Take your work to a new café, the balcony, backyard, library, etc.	Find Your Flow Set aside uninterrupted blocks of time to absorb yourself in creative, challenging tasks.

Creating A Rooted Routine for Meaning

Having identified the advantages of having a sense of meaning in work and life, uncovered the opportunities and challenges we face when balancing our passions, and explored the potential benefits of crafting meaningful work, it's time to apply what you've learned by creating and practicing a Rooted Routine for Meaning.

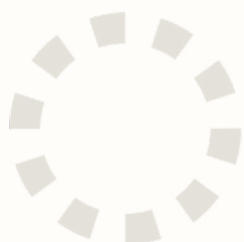
Explain that, while it can be anything they choose, they might find it helpful to create a Rooted Routine for Meaning related to:

- ▶ Taking a photo each day of something that fills our life with meaning.
- ▶ Choose one of the strategies to help cultivate more harmonious passion.
- ▶ Redraw your ideal Passion Pie and perform a daily Reflection Round on your efforts to better balance your commitments.
- ▶ Playfully experiment with a daily micro-crafting behavior at work.

Make sure to refresh their memories around each step of the Rooted Routine practice (choosing a Grounded Beginning to support their habit, selecting a Nurturing Action that is small and manageable, reinforcing progress with a Thriving Moment, and reflecting on growth with a Nourishing Reflection) and direct them to the previous chapter of their workbooks for a list of example Rooted Routines.

Session 7

ACCOMPLISHMENT



66

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

- Jane Goodall

This quote speaks to the profound impact our actions can have on our lives and the world around us. It reminds us that every decision, every goal we pursue, shapes not only our own experience but also the experience of those we influence. In the context of wellbeing, accomplishment isn't just about achieving goals; it's about pursuing goals that truly matter and reflect our deepest values. As we explore the concept of accomplishment, we consider how our actions align with the difference we want to make in our lives and the lives of others.

In the previous session, we delved into the role that a sense of meaning in life plays in our overall health, happiness, and resilience. We explored the distinction between harmonious and obsessive passions, discussing how balancing these passions can significantly enhance our life satisfaction. Additionally, we explored how job crafting how, when, where, why, and with whom we work can help us actively shape our work to better align with our values and strengths, thereby creating a more fulfilling and purpose-driven professional life.

In today's session, we'll focus on Accomplishment, helping you set and achieve goals that are not only significant but also deeply satisfying and aligned with your core values.

In particular, you will:

- ▶ Reflect on past accomplishments and current challenges
- ▶ Explore how values drive meaningful achievements
- ▶ Experiment with setting goals that align with our deepest values
- ▶ Examine how we can both strive and savor the journey as we pursue our goals
- ▶ Uncover the benefits of navigating setbacks with self-compassion
- ▶ Unpack the Wellbeing Ripple action clients will take to create positive change in your community

This session draws upon the foundational research and theories of Russ Harris and Steven C. Hayes, whose work in acceptance and commitment therapy emphasizes the importance of aligning goals with core values to foster meaningful accomplishment. We'll explore Albert Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, which highlights the critical role of belief in one's abilities in setting and achieving challenging goals. The session also integrates insights from Fred B. Bryant and Joseph Veroff on savoring, underscoring the importance of appreciating the journey as much as the destination. Rick Hanson's work on "Taking in the good" will guide us in building resilience by savoring positive experiences. Drawing from Kristin Neff's pioneering research on self-compassion and Brené Brown's work on vulnerability, we'll examine how kindness toward oneself can enhance resilience and sustained motivation. Finally, we'll discuss how you can help your clients achieve their personal goals and create their Wellbeing Ripple in their chosen context.

Let's dig in.

Reflection Round

When it comes to achieving what truly matters, reflection is not just beneficial – it's essential. Reflective practice allows us to pause, consider our progress, and realign our efforts with our core values and long-term objectives. Without reflection, we may continue on a path that leads to accomplishments devoid of personal significance, or worse, find ourselves pursuing goals that no longer serve us.

Reflection helps us identify what has worked well and where we have struggled, providing insights that are critical for future success. David Kolb's experiential learning cycle emphasizes the role of reflection in learning and personal growth, suggesting that reflective practice is crucial for setting and achieving meaningful goals (Kolb, 1984). Through reflection, we gain a deeper understanding of our motivations, strengths, and areas for growth, enabling us to set goals that are not only achievable but also aligned with our values.

It makes sense, then as we move into this final session, that, just as we invite clients to reflect on their own experiences of accomplishment, we take some time as facilitators/educators to consider our own. To help you live and breathe the content you are about to teach, why not run your own Reflection Round around your experiences of accomplishment in your own life?

Thinking about your experiences of accomplishment over the years:

- ▶ What has gone well in your efforts to accomplish what matters most to you?
- ▶ What has challenged you?
- ▶ What have you been learning about yourself and accomplishment?
- ▶ What would you like to try next?

Values In Action: Accomplishing What Matters

Have you ever achieved something significant only to find that it didn't bring the satisfaction you expected? This common experience often occurs when our goals are not aligned with our core values. Values-aligned goals resonate deeply with what truly matters to us, providing a sense of purpose and fulfillment beyond achieving the goal itself.

Research by Steven C. Hayes, the founder of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), emphasizes the importance of values in goal-setting. Hayes describes values as a compass that guides us in setting meaningful goals that reflect our true selves [207]. When our goals align with our values, we are more likely to stay motivated and committed, even in the face of challenges. This alignment ensures that the pursuit of our goals contributes to our overall wellbeing, rather than leading to a sense of emptiness or dissatisfaction.

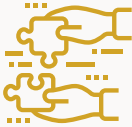





Goals Vs. Values

Russ Harris, another key figure in ACT, highlights the distinction between goals and values. While goals are specific outcomes we strive to achieve, values are the principles that guide our behavior and decision-making. Harris argues that goals should be seen as the stops on a journey, while values are the direction in which we are traveling [96]. This perspective encourages us to focus not just on what we want to achieve but on how we want to live our lives along the way.

Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci's self-determination theory supports this approach, suggesting that goals aligned with intrinsic values – such as personal growth, relationships, and health – lead to greater wellbeing and sustained motivation [160]. These intrinsic goals, which are inherently satisfying, stand in contrast to extrinsic goals that are often pursued for external rewards, such as money or status. By aligning our goals with our values, we can ensure our efforts contribute to a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

Remembering VIA Strengths

THE VIA CLASSIFICATION OF STRENGTHS

	WISDOM	COURAGE	HUMANITY	JUSTICE	TEMPERANCE	TRANSCENDENCE
PERSPECTIVE People who know you consider you wise.	CREATIVITY Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are.	BRAVERY You do not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain.	KINDNESS You are kind and generous to others.		FORGIVENESS You forgive those who have done you wrong.	APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY + EXCELLENCE You notice and appreciate beauty and excellence in all domains of life.
LOVE OF LEARNING You have a passion for mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge.	CURIOSITY You like exploration and discovery.	HONESTY You live your life in a genuine and authentic way.		FAIRNESS One of your abiding principles is to treat all people fairly.	HUMILITY You do not seek the spotlight and others value your modesty.	GRATITUDE You are aware of good things that happen and don't take them for granted.
PERSEVERANCE You work hard to finish what you start.	JUDGMENT You think things through and examine them from all sides.		LOVE You value close relationships with others.		PRUDENCE You are a careful person.	HOPE You expect the best in the future, and you work to achieve it.
ZEST You approach everything you do with excitement and energy.	LOVE OF LEARNING You have a passion for mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge.	PERSEVERANCE You work hard to finish what you start.		LEADERSHIP You excel at encouraging a group to get things done.		HUMOR Bringing smiles to other people is important to you.
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE You know how to fit in to different social situations.	PERSPECTIVE People who know you consider you wise.	ZEST You approach everything you do with excitement and energy.	TEAMWORK You excel as a member of a group.	SELF-REGULATION You are a disciplined person.	SPIRITUALITY Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.	

One practical way to explore our values is through the VIA Character Strengths survey, developed by Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman as part of the positive psychology movement. The VIA framework identifies 24 character strengths universally valued across cultures, including qualities such as kindness, perseverance, and gratitude [130]. These strengths can provide valuable insights into our core values and help us align our goals with what truly matters to us.

In addition to the VIA Character Strengths, other frameworks offer lists of values to consider. For example, Russ Harris provides a list of common values in his work on ACT, which can be seen in the table below [96]. Exploring these values can help us clarify what drives our behavior and decision-making and serve as a foundation for setting meaningful goals and guiding daily actions.

Example Values

Value	Description
Achievement	Pursuing excellence and striving to accomplish goals in various areas of life.
Adventure	Seeking out new and exciting experiences; embracing change and uncertainty.
Authenticity	Being true to oneself; expressing one's genuine feelings and thoughts.
Balance	Maintaining a healthy equilibrium between work, play, rest, and personal life.
Compassion	Showing empathy, kindness, and care for others, especially in times of need.
Community	Being involved in and contributing to a group, society, or community.
Courage	Facing fears, taking risks, and standing up for what is right.
Creativity	Engaging in imaginative thinking; bringing new ideas and concepts to life.
Curiosity	Having a desire to learn, explore, and understand new things.
Fairness	Treating others with justice and equality; valuing impartiality and objectivity.
Family	Prioritizing relationships and connections with family members.
Freedom	Valuing independence and autonomy; making choices that align with personal desires.
Generosity	Giving time, energy, or resources to help others without expecting anything in return.

Value	Description
Gratitude	Appreciating what you have; recognizing and acknowledging the good in life.
Growth	Continually developing and improving oneself personally and professionally.
Health	Prioritizing physical and mental wellbeing through lifestyle choices.
Honesty	Being truthful, sincere, and transparent in your actions and words.
Humility	Recognizing one's limitations and valuing the strengths and contributions of others.
Humor	Finding joy in life; using laughter and play to connect with others and cope with challenges.
Integrity	Adhering to moral and ethical principles; being consistent in values and actions.
Justice	Advocating for fairness, equality, and rights in society.
Kindness	Being friendly, generous, and considerate to others.
Knowledge	Valuing education and the pursuit of learning and understanding.
Love	Valuing deep affection and connection with others; prioritizing close relationships.
Mindfulness	Being present and fully engaged in the moment, with a nonjudgmental awareness.
Patience	Tolerating delay or hardship without frustration; understanding the importance of timing.
Perseverance	Persisting in the face of challenges and difficulties; maintaining effort over time.
Respect	Valuing the dignity of others; treating people with consideration and honor.
Responsibility	Being accountable for one's actions; fulfilling obligations and duties.
Security	Valuing stability, safety, and predictability in life.
Service	Contributing to the wellbeing of others; acting in the service of others or society.
Spirituality	Seeking a connection with something greater than oneself; valuing religious or spiritual beliefs.
Trust	Valuing reliability and faith in others; fostering trust in relationships.
Wisdom	Applying knowledge, experience, and insight to make sound decisions.

To help you experience the content that you'll be teaching, consider for yourself:

- ▶ Which of these values immediately stand out to you as priorities in your own life?
- ▶ Are you enacting these values regularly?
- ▶ Why/why not?

Setting Goals That Matter

Are We Setting The Wrong Goals?

Many of us set goals based on external expectations or societal pressures, only to find that achieving them doesn't bring the satisfaction we hoped for. This often happens when our goals are misaligned with our core values or when they lack clarity and focus. The importance of setting the right goals – those that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) – cannot be overstated.

Russ Harris, in his work on ACT, emphasizes that goals should be values-congruent, meaning they should align with our deepest values [96]. When our goals are not aligned with our values, we may achieve them but still feel unfulfilled. This disconnect can lead to burnout or a sense of emptiness as the goals we pursue fail to resonate with what truly matters to us.

Steven C. Hayes also highlights the importance of values in goal setting, arguing that goals should serve as milestones on a path guided by our values [207]. This approach ensures that our goals contribute to a meaningful and purposeful life, rather than being merely tasks to complete.

Job Crafting As Goal Support

Job crafting, as you've learned, is a powerful way to align work with core values by making intentional changes to the tasks performed, the relationships we engage in, the purpose behind our work, the environment in which we work, and how we manage our time. By experimenting with these elements, we can create a work experience that is more fulfilling and aligned with what matters most to us [206,208].

Remember, a job can mean more than just typical work. It can include any role or responsibility that contributes to your daily life and sense of purpose.

For example, if **creativity** is one of your core values, you might consider the following changes:

- ▶ **What (Tasks):** Seek out or create opportunities to work on projects that require innovative thinking or problem-solving. You might also introduce new methods or tools to express your creativity more fully.
- ▶ **Who (Relationships):** Collaborate with others who inspire creativity or mentor others in creative processes, thus fostering an environment where creative ideas are encouraged and valued.
- ▶ **Why (Purpose):** Reframe your tasks by focusing on how they contribute to the larger creative goals of your organization or the impact your creativity has on others.
- ▶ **Where (Environment):** Modify your environment to include elements that stimulate creative thinking, such as art, music, or even the arrangement of your desk.
- ▶ **When (Time):** Allocate specific times of day when you feel most creative to work on tasks that require creative thinking, ensuring you're at your best during those periods.

If **service** is a core value, you might explore these adjustments:

- ▶ **What (Tasks):** Volunteer to take on tasks that involve helping others directly, such as assisting with community outreach, mentoring others, or providing support in areas that benefit those around you.
- ▶ **Who (Relationships):** Strengthen relationships with individuals who benefit from your support, or connect with others who share your commitment to helping and making a positive impact.
- ▶ **Why (Purpose):** Focus on the impact of your work on others, reminding yourself of the difference your service makes in their lives or in the community.
- ▶ **Where (Environment):** Adjust your environment to be more welcoming and supportive of those you serve, such as making it more accessible or comfortable for individuals you assist or work with.
- ▶ **When (Time):** Schedule your most service-oriented tasks during times when you can be most attentive and present, ensuring you're fully engaged in those moments.

As these examples demonstrate, when we align our daily actions more closely with our values, we're more likely to experience greater satisfaction and a deeper sense of accomplishment in our work [206,208].

The Valuable Goals Template

The Valuable Goals Template is a tool designed to help us set and achieve goals that are aligned with our values, clearly defined, and supported by our environment. This template incorporates the principles of SMART goals, value-congruent goal setting, and job crafting to create a comprehensive approach to goal achievement.

Valuable Goals: An Example

Below is an example of how one might complete the Valuable Goal Template.

Objective (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound)	Finish my self-reflection for my performance review.
PERMAH Pillar/s This Supports Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Health	Accomplishment
Why? What values does this contribute to? Why does it matter?	Personal growth. Mindfulness. It gives me time to pause and reflect on my efforts and what I need to keep growing.
Values What personal values/strengths will help me do this?	Perspective and fairness. A quiet space in the morning. A coffee to get my mind working. I'll take myself for a tech-free walk in the park for five minutes.
What Does "Done" Look Like? By when? Where? Who?	The email sent to my boss by 5 p.m. tomorrow.
Supports What/Why/Who/Where/When?	A quiet space in the morning. A coffee to get my mind working.
Celebration How will I immediately embody a celebration of my success?	I'll take myself for a tech-free walk in the park for five minutes.

This template ensures that our goals are not only clear and actionable but also deeply connected to our values and supported by our environment. By using this template, we can increase the likelihood of achieving goals that are both meaningful and fulfilling.

Your Turn

To help you internalize the content you're about to teach, take a moment to complete your own Valuable Goal Template, using a small, achievable goal you'd like to complete in the next 48 hours.

Objective (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound)	
PERMAH Pillar/s This Supports Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Health	
Why? What values does this contribute to? Why does it matter?	
Values What personal values/strengths will help me do this?	
What Does "Done" Look Like? By when? Where? Who?	
Supports What/Why/Who/Where/When?	
Celebration How will I immediately embody a celebration of my success?	

A Goal Properly Set Is Halfway Reached

Zig Ziglar, a renowned motivational speaker and author, famously stated that “a goal properly set is halfway reached” [209]. This statement highlights the importance of effective goal-setting in achieving success. Research supports the idea that setting clear, specific goals can significantly increase the likelihood of achieving them [210].

A study by Locke and Latham found that specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance than easy or vague goals [210]. This finding underscores the importance of setting goals that are aligned with our values and clearly defined and appropriately challenging. By setting the right goals, we set ourselves up for success, ensuring that our efforts lead to meaningful and satisfying accomplishments.

As someone who will teach this content, consider for yourself: What current goals do you have, and how well do they align with your values?

Savoring & Striving

Accomplishment: The Journey & The Destination

Accomplishment is often seen as the result of our efforts, but research suggests that the journey toward our goals is just as important as the destination. Savoring, or the act of fully engaging in and appreciating positive experiences, plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation and enhancing overall wellbeing during the pursuit of goals.

Fred B. Bryant and Joseph Veroff describe savoring as “the capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance positive experiences” [211]. This practice involves being present and mindful during the journey toward our goals, allowing us to derive satisfaction and joy from the process itself, rather than solely focusing on the outcome. Savoring helps us stay connected to the positive aspects of our journey, making pursuing our goals a more fulfilling experience.

Step-By-Step Guide: “Taking In The Good”

Rick Hanson’s “taking in the good” exercise is a powerful practice designed to help you savor positive experiences and build inner resources of happiness, resilience, and wellbeing. This simple yet profound exercise involves intentionally focusing on and absorbing positive experiences, whether they are big accomplishments or small, everyday

moments. By practicing this exercise yourself, you'll better understand how to guide your clients in doing the same to support their wellbeing. Here's how they can practice it:

Step 1: Notice The Good

Begin by paying attention to positive experiences as they happen. This could be something small, like the warmth of the sun on your face, a kind word from a colleague, or the satisfaction of completing a task. It could also be a more significant moment, such as achieving a goal or sharing a meaningful connection with someone. The key is to be mindful and aware of these positive moments as they occur.

Step 2: Enrich The Experience

Once you've noticed a positive experience, take a moment to enrich it. This means staying with the experience for a bit longer than you normally would, allowing it to fill your awareness. Focus on the details. What do you see, hear, feel, or even smell? Let the experience grow in your mind, becoming richer and more vivid. Try to feel it in your body, allowing it to deepen and intensify.

Step 3: Absorb The Good

Next, consciously absorb the positive experience. Imagine that the good feelings and sensations are sinking into you, like warmth soaking into your skin. You might visualize the experience being stored in your mind and body, becoming a part of you. This step is about allowing the positive experience to really land, helping it to shift from short-term memory into long-term storage.

Step 4: Link Positive And Negative Material (Optional)

This step is optional but can be very powerful. While holding the positive experience in your awareness, bring to mind a related negative experience or feeling. Keep the positive experience stronger in your mind, and see if it can soothe or even replace the negative material. The idea is not to suppress the negative but to allow the positive experience to act as a counterbalance, helping to heal old wounds or soften challenging emotions.

Step 5: Reflect And Repeat

Finally, reflect on the practice and how it felt. Notice any changes in your mood or mindset. The more you practice taking in the good, the more natural it will become. Over time, this exercise can help build a reservoir of positive emotions and memories that support your resilience and overall wellbeing.

By regularly practicing taking in the good, you can train your brain to focus more on positive experiences, helping you to build lasting inner resources that enhance your life and increase your capacity to handle challenges.

Smart Striving

While savoring is essential for maintaining motivation and wellbeing, striving – taking consistent, purposeful actions toward our goals – is equally important. James Clear, in his book *Atomic Habits*, discusses the power of small habits and incremental improvements in achieving long-term success [25]. Clear’s concept of “1% improvement” suggests that making small, consistent changes can lead to significant progress toward our goals over time [25].

BJ Fogg’s research on behavior change also supports the importance of starting with tiny, manageable actions. Fogg’s Tiny Habits approach argues that small, easy-to-do behaviors can build momentum and lead to larger, more significant changes [24]. This approach is particularly effective for those who may feel overwhelmed by large goals or who struggle with maintaining motivation.

By combining the principles of savoring with smart striving, we can create a balanced approach to goal achievement that is both sustainable and fulfilling. This approach allows us to enjoy the journey while steadily progressing toward our goals, ensuring we derive satisfaction from both the process and the outcome.

Daily Striving Sheet

The Daily Striving Sheet is a practical tool that integrates the principles of savoring, daily goal striving, and small habits into one simple framework. This sheet is designed to help your clients set and achieve their daily goals in a way that aligns with their values, supports their wellbeing, and allows them to savor the journey.

The Daily Striving Sheet includes the following sections:

- ▶ **Three Main Goals:** Identify the three most important goals you want to achieve each day.
- ▶ **Values I'll Enact And How:** Specify which values you will honor in the pursuit of these goals and how you will do so.
- ▶ **Rest & Recovery:** Plan how you will rest and recover throughout the day to maintain your energy and focus.
- ▶ **Support I Might Need:** Identify any support you might need from others to achieve your goals.
- ▶ **How I'll Take In The Good:** Plan how you will savor the positive aspects of your day, both big and small.
- ▶ **How I'll Celebrate My Wins:** Identify how you will celebrate your achievements, no matter how small.

By using the Daily Striving Sheet, your clients can ensure that their daily efforts align with their values, support their wellbeing, and allow them to savor the journey toward their goals.

Your Turn

Below is the template that clients will receive. To help you understand the process and achieve your own Valuable Goals, we recommend using it for at least a few days. You may find you want to incorporate it into your daily routine!

My 3 Main Goals	
The Values I'll Enact	
How I'll Rest & Recover	
Support I Might Need	

How I'll Take In The Good	
How I'll Celebrate My Wins	

Struggle & Self-Compassion

The Misunderstood Inner Critic

The inner critic is a voice that many of us are all too familiar with – a voice that often tells us we're not good enough, that we've failed, or that we'll never achieve our goals. While this inner critic is often harsh and unrelenting, its intention is not to harm but to protect us from failure, rejection, or disappointment. However, research shows that excessive self-criticism can be counterproductive, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and a lower likelihood of achieving our goals [212].

Kristin Neff, a leading researcher on self-compassion, explains that the inner critic is often a misguided attempt to keep us safe [212]. However, rather than motivating us to improve, self-criticism often undermines our confidence and resilience. This can create a vicious cycle where the fear of failure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, preventing us from taking the risks necessary to achieve our goals.

Self-Compassion

Contrary to popular belief, self-compassion is not about being easy on ourselves or making excuses for our shortcomings. Instead, self-compassion involves treating ourselves with the same kindness and understanding we would offer to a close friend. Research by Kristin Neff shows that self-compassion is associated with greater emotional resilience, lower levels of anxiety and depression, and higher overall wellbeing [212].

Brené Brown, a researcher known for her work on vulnerability and shame, also emphasizes the importance of self-compassion in fostering sustained motivation and avoiding burnout [163]. Brown's research suggests that individuals who practice self-compassion are more likely to take responsibility for their actions and to engage in behaviors that promote personal growth and wellbeing. This is because self-compassionate individuals are motivated by a desire to improve rather than by a fear of failure or criticism.

Kristin Neff defines self-compassion as being composed of three main elements: mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness. Mindfulness involves being aware of our thoughts and feelings without judgment, common humanity involves recognizing that suffering and imperfection are part of the shared human experience, and self-kindness involves treating ourselves with warmth and understanding during difficult times [212].

Research has shown that self-compassion can profoundly impact our mental health and wellbeing. A meta-analysis of 14 studies found that self-compassion was strongly associated with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional resilience [213]. These findings suggest that self-compassion is a powerful tool for enhancing our overall wellbeing and helping us navigate life's challenges with greater ease and resilience.

Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Judgment

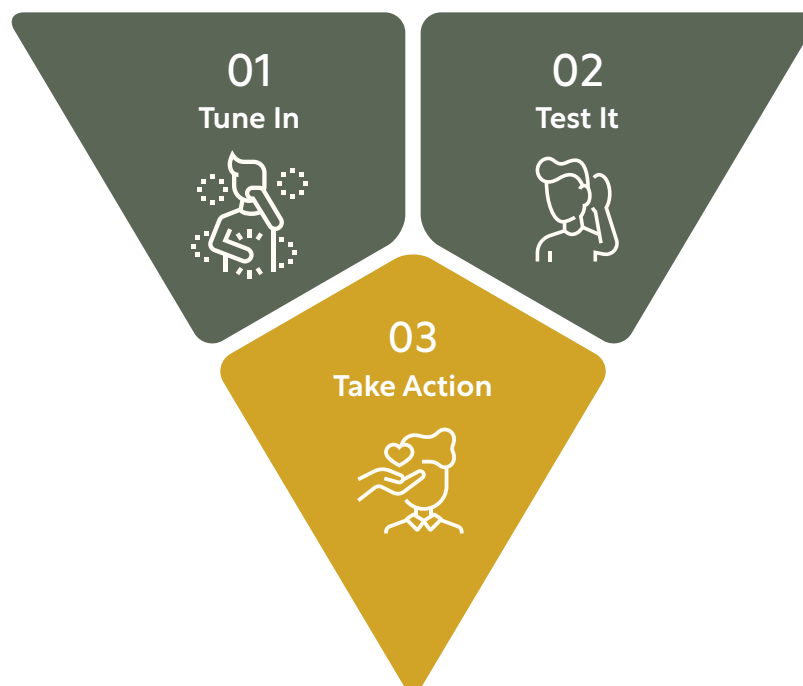
The concept of self-compassion can be better understood by comparing it to self-judgment, which is its opposite. While self-compassion involves treating ourselves with kindness and understanding, self-judgment involves harshly criticizing ourselves for our perceived failures or shortcomings. This dichotomy can be broken down into three key polarities:

Self-Compassion	Self-Judgment
Mindfulness Observing our negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity, allowing them to be held in mindful awareness.	Over-Identification Getting swept up in negative self-narratives or resisting the body's signs of struggle.
Common Humanity Recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy are part of the shared human experience.	Isolation Feeling alone and ashamed in our struggles, leading to a sense of separation from others.
Self-Kindness Being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate.	Self-Judgment Shaming or suppressing our pain, or harshly criticizing ourselves for perceived shortcomings.

By understanding these polarities, we can begin to cultivate greater self-compassion and reduce the impact of self-judgment on our wellbeing.

Self-Compassion Steps

Kristin Neff emphasizes the importance of tuning in to our bodies, testing our self-talk, and taking kind action to meet our needs [214]. A practical way of applying her key teachings is through the self-compassion steps, where we:



1. **Tune In:** Notice the signs of struggle in your brain and/or body, engaging all your senses to become fully aware of your experience. What struggle signs are you noticing?
2. **Test:** Ask yourself how you are speaking to yourself. Would your words pass the best friend test? What would someone who loves and cherishes you say in this situation?
3. **Take Kind Action:** Consider what you need at this moment. Again, tune into your body to determine how you can best support yourself with kindness and understanding. What action can you take right now to be kind to your body and mind?

By taking these steps whenever they find themselves struggling, your clients can begin to cultivate greater self-compassion and reduce the impact of self-criticism on their wellbeing.

As someone about to teach this content, it can be helpful to reflect on your own relationship with self-compassion. So, consider for a moment: How do you usually respond to setbacks? What would change if you approached your struggles with self-compassion?

Creating A Wellbeing Ripple

Where We've Been

As we reach the final session of the Wellbeing X program, it's essential to reflect on the journey we've taken together. Each session has built upon the last, providing you with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to support your client's wellbeing and guide them in creating positive change in their life. Let's briefly revisit the key content we've covered:

Session 1: Wellbeing 101

Humans have been attempting to define wellbeing for centuries, from ancient religious practices to modern self-help literature. Every author, scholar, and philosopher has their own definition of what wellbeing encompasses. For wellbeing practitioners and educators, ensuring we and our clients have a clear, shared definition of wellbeing is essential. Shared language and concepts – particularly when conducting a workplace wellbeing intervention – are crucial to helping clients identify their focus, desired experiences, and the outcomes they would most like to observe.

In this session, we explored the foundational concepts of wellbeing, including:

- ▶ The concept of wellbeing and its various definitions
- ▶ The PERMAH framework: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health
- ▶ The Wellbeing Ecosystem, which includes individual, team, and organizational/community wellbeing
- ▶ The importance of small habits in sustaining wellbeing [25]

Session 2: Healthy Habits

Although health is the sixth element in the PERMAH framework, it serves as the foundation for all other aspects of wellbeing. Without adequate levels of energy, focus, and physical stamina, it's unlikely that we can effectively cultivate positive emotions, harness our strengths, or build meaningful connections.

In this session, we explored the small changes we can make to the way we eat, move, sleep, and rest & recover, ensuring we have the health necessary to pursue wellbeing in other areas of our lives. Key topics included:

- ▶ Performing a Health Reflection Round
- ▶ Investigating whether we are eating well
- ▶ Exploring mindful movement
- ▶ Uncovering the importance of adequate sleep
- ▶ Discovering the role of rest & recovery in preventing burnout [28]

Session 3: Positive Emotions

This session went beyond just “positive” emotions, exploring the role that all human emotions play in shaping our levels of wellbeing. We explored how to identify and mindfully respond to emotions, increasing our ability to choose and navigate emotional experiences with greater control.

Key topics included:

- ▶ Reflecting on our current emotional experiences
- ▶ Understanding the role of both “good” and “bad” emotions in a thriving, meaningful life
- ▶ Clarifying that emotions should be used as data to inform mindful, value-based decision-making
- ▶ Creating a Rooted Routine for Emotion [106]

Session 4: Engagement

In this session, we explored the role of strengths in enhancing wellbeing, performance, and connection to ourselves and others. By identifying our strengths and learning to balance them, we discovered how to achieve a state of flow – a deep engagement and satisfaction in our activities.

Key topics included:

- ▶ Running a Reflection Round on strengths
- ▶ Defining what a strength is
- ▶ Exploring strengths and finding flow [136]
- ▶ Balancing our strengths to avoid overplaying or underplaying them
- ▶ Creating a Rooted Routine for Strengths

Session 5: Relationships

This session focused on the role of relationships in building and sustaining wellbeing, performance, and a sense of belonging. We examined the impact of high-quality connections, identified barriers to connection, and explored the concept of psychological safety.

Key topics included:

- ▶ Understanding why connection matters to our health and happiness
- ▶ Experiencing the power of high-quality connections in creating supercharged teams and supporting individual and organizational wellbeing [156]
- ▶ Identifying common barriers to connection
- ▶ Exploring psychological safety as the foundation for real safety, creativity, and belonging [173]
- ▶ Creating a Rooted Routine for Relationships

Session 6: Meaning

In this session, we explored the vital role that meaning plays in our overall wellbeing and how to actively cultivate a sense of purpose and significance in our daily lives. We learned about the importance of balancing our passions and crafting our work to better align with our strengths and values.

Key topics included:

- ▶ Reflecting on our existing experiences of meaning in our lives
- ▶ Examining the foundational role of meaning in your health, happiness, and resilience
- ▶ Exploring the distinction between harmonious and obsessive passions [197]
- ▶ Learning about job crafting and how to shape our work to better align with our values and strengths [208]
- ▶ Creating a Rooted Routine for Meaning

Session 7: Accomplishment

In this final session, we explored the concept of accomplishment, focusing on how to set and achieve goals that are meaningful, values-aligned, and deeply satisfying. We also learned about the importance of savoring the journey, practicing self-compassion, and creating a Wellbeing Ripple to share the knowledge and skills we've gained with others.

Key topics included:

- ▶ Why accomplishment matters and why some accomplishments matter more than others
- ▶ The importance of values in goal-setting [96]
- ▶ Effective goal-setting practices [210,215]

► Balancing striving for goals with savoring the journey [211]

► Practicing self-compassion in the face of setbacks [212]

Our Wellbeing Ripple

As your clients reach the end of the Wellbeing X program, it's time for them to consider how they can create a ripple effect of wellbeing in their community. Using the knowledge and skills they've gained, they have the opportunity to make a positive impact on those around them. This is their chance to apply what they've learned and create a Wellbeing Ripple in their workplace, community, or family.

The Wellbeing Ripple plan draws upon both the theory we've studied in the Wellbeing X program and the best of goal-setting theory to guide your clients in identifying the Wellbeing Ripple action they'd most like to make. The plan includes the following prompts for your clients:

- Who would you like to help? Is it at the me, we, or us level?
- What area of PERMAH might they need support with? How will you discover this?
- What PERMAH behavior will you share with them?
- How will you share it with them? In person? Over video conference? Via email/newsletter? On a noticeboard?
- When will you do this?
- How will you measure your impact?
- What strengths and values will support you on this journey?
- How will you savor the process and the outcomes?

Perfection Is The Enemy Of Progress

Starting a new project, especially one that involves helping others, can feel daunting. It's natural to feel lost or unsure of how to begin. That's why the first drafts of your client's Wellbeing Ripple plan will be started together in this session. Brené Brown's concept of "scrappy first drafts" reminds us that the first step is to simply start, knowing that perfection isn't the goal – progress is [163].

Celebrate Good Times (Come On!)

Celebration is a crucial part of the accomplishment process. It's important to take the time to acknowledge and celebrate our successes, both big and small. As a facilitator, remember to celebrate your own achievements as well. Reflect on the journey you've taken through the Wellbeing X program and consider the impact it has had on your life and the lives of those you've worked with.

Final Reflections

Reflect on the following questions:

- ▶ What was the most enjoyable part of the course for you?
- ▶ What was the most meaningful part of the course?
- ▶ One thing you're most proud of so far?

As you conclude the Wellbeing X program, take a moment to thank yourself for your dedication to learning and sharing this knowledge. You are creating many positive ripples that will continue to grow and spread wellbeing in your community and beyond.

PROGRAM

Session 1

WELLBEING 101



Aims

The aims of this session are to:

- ▶ Explore the concept of wellbeing.
- ▶ Introduce and overview the PERMAH framework: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health.
- ▶ Explain that we are part of a “Wellbeing Ecosystem” that includes Individual, Team, and Organization/Community wellbeing.
- ▶ Emphasize the importance of small, sustainable efforts when caring for our wellbeing.

PART 1: OPENING

Here are the actions for opening your first session.

Welcome and Introduction

- ▶ Welcome your client and do introductions.
- ▶ Discuss rules and expectations as follows:
 - ▶ Anything clients disclose during the sessions is kept in strict confidence.
 - ▶ All information shared in sessions and as part of the homework is privileged and confidential.
 - ▶ Both practitioner clients are committed to being on time for each session.
 - ▶ Both practitioner and clients are honest about all matters discussed.
 - ▶ The client shares what they choose. The client always holds the right not to share information.
 - ▶ The practitioner repeatedly evaluates the cooperation with the client throughout the intervention.
- ▶ Invite people to ask any questions.

Summarize the presentation

Read the following aloud:

In this session, we will be covering the following topics:

1. *How Do We Define Wellbeing?*
2. *Positive Psychology & The PERMAH Framework*
3. *Beyond “Feeling Good”: Our Wellbeing Goal*
4. *The Wellbeing Ecosystem: Me, We, & Us*
5. *The Power of Rooted Routines*

Ask if there are any questions or comments before you get started.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING WELLBEING

In this part, you’ll help participants understand and define the concept of wellbeing.

How Do We Define Wellbeing?

Explain the need to begin by defining wellbeing:

It makes sense, as we begin this journey together, we start by developing a shared understanding of what wellbeing means – both for us as individuals, as well as a broader group. So let’s take a moment now to reflect:

How do you define wellbeing? Don’t overthink it, just write something down in the next 30 seconds. We’ll have time to re-draft later.

You can write down your responses in your workbook. In a moment, I’ll invite a few people to share their responses.

Then, highlight any similarities and differences in the responses. Note any themes of relevance or any common misconceptions that may have come up.

Wellbeing definitions can vary greatly in length, depth, and the particular aspects of wellbeing they focus on. When defining wellbeing, researchers may:

- ▶ *Focus more on subjective aspects (for example: the feelings or moods we experience) and/or objective aspects of wellbeing (e.g. the number of doctors visits we have, our health outcomes... etc.)?*
- ▶ *Take the lens of the Individual, group, or society as a whole (or maybe all three)?*
- ▶ *Use academic, technical terms, or language that is accessible for everyday people?*
- ▶ *Explore different factors/dimensions of wellbeing (e.g. emotions, thoughts, relationships, success... etc.) instead of looking at it as one overall concept?*

Explaining Wellbeing

Take a moment to explain wellbeing:

Humans have been attempting to define wellbeing for centuries, from ancient religious practices to the self-help section in bookstores. When it comes to measuring and caring for our wellbeing, having a clear, shared definition of wellbeing is essential – especially in a workplace setting.

By developing a shared understanding and language around what we mean when we say “wellbeing” – as opposed to “wellness,” “happiness,” or “feeling good” – we’re better able to identify what we want to focus on, the kind of experiences we desire, and the results we hope to achieve.

Introduce the working definition you will use:

Wellbeing is our ability to feel good and function effectively. We have selected this definition for its accessible and inclusive language (“our” could refer to an individual worker or an entire organization) and its focus on both feelings (“feeling good”) and visible results (“functioning”).

Ask the following questions and invite clients to reflect in pairs for 5-10 minutes. Then invite a few pairs to share their key thoughts with the broader group.

1. *What are your thoughts on this definition?*
2. *How might you amend or enhance your own definition of wellbeing?*

Make sure to invite a variety of people to share, making sure their partner is comfortable with them sharing any insights before they speak and inviting them to share the lessons, rather than the details.

PART 3: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PERMAH FRAMEWORK

Positive Psychology

Introduce positive psychology:

To help us get on the same theoretical footing, I'll do a quick overview of positive psychology and introduce The PERMAH Wellbeing Framework – which will be our guiding theory as we make our way through this course together.

Invite clients to share:

What words come to mind when you think of positive psychology?

Highlight any similarities and differences in the responses. Note any themes of relevance or any common misconceptions that may have come up.

Introduction to positive psychology:

Today, we're going to explore positive psychology, which is the scientific study of human flourishing. Beyond just studying wellbeing, positive psychology is an applied science. It asks the question: How can we improve our wellbeing? It is about helping people find ways to live their best life.

Provide historical context for positive psychology by explaining:

For many years, psychology focused mostly on fixing problems and reducing illness. But around the year 2000, there was a shift. Positive psychology began looking at what helps people thrive and find meaning in life – on our strengths as individuals and groups.

Introduce positive psychology's second wave:

At first, positive psychology was criticized for focusing only on the positive. But it quickly evolved to also consider the negative. In what has become known as the "second wave" of positive psychology greater efforts are made to acknowledge that:

- ▶ *Negative experiences can actually help us grow and improve.*
- ▶ *Positive experiences and qualities can sometimes be harmful to our wellbeing.*
- ▶ *It's important to address negative thoughts and behaviors.*

Set aside 5 minutes to invite individuals to share their thoughts with the group. Have some examples of your own ready to share if nobody puts up their hand straight away:

What are your thoughts on how negative experiences might contribute to personal growth?

Do you think positive experiences can sometimes be harmful?

The PERMAH Framework

Explain that if we treasure something (value it), we should measure it:

When the father of positive psychology, Professor Martin Seligman, was asked how to best start caring for our wellbeing, he said to 'measure it'. This is based on the poetic principle – the idea that what we focus on grows. It makes sense, then, to focus on the aspects of wellbeing we want to cultivate.

Explain why we have chosen the PERMAH Wellbeing Framework as a wellbeing model for this program:

There are many models for wellbeing in the field of positive psychology, we have chosen to use the PERMAH Wellbeing Framework for its measurable, practical nature. By breaking down wellbeing into six main "pillars" we can assess and target the things we most want to focus on when it comes to caring for our wellbeing.

Provide a summary of each of the PERMAH Framework's six pillars of wellbeing, giving specific examples for each:

- ▶ **Positive Emotions:** *experiencing positive emotion not only feels good, but actually broadens our minds, and builds our mental, physical, and social resilience. This might involve noticing moments of joy or satisfaction during your workday, like receiving positive feedback.*
- ▶ **Engagement:** *Developing strengths can improve energy, confidence and performance. This could involve focusing on tasks that use our core strengths and creating frequent experiences of "Flow" (which is when we are fully absorbed in an enjoyable task that makes the best use of our strengths).*

- ▶ **Relationships:** *Feeling safe with others boosts trust, creativity, learning, and connection, while reducing stress. This might involve reaching out to create micro-moments of connection with the people around us, being open to different perspectives, and practicing compassion with ourselves and others.*
- ▶ **Meaning:** *Positively impacting others elevates motivation, commitment and satisfaction. This might involve reflecting on and getting involved with causes you care about, or actively reflecting on how your role contributes to the larger goals of the organization.*
- ▶ **Accomplishment:** *Believing we can improve our abilities, moves us beyond our limitations to realize our potential. This might look like setting clear goals and celebrating both big victories (like a promotion) and small ones (like finishing a chapter in a book) as you dedicate yourself to what matters most to you.*
- ▶ **Health:** *How we eat, move, recover and rest shapes mental, physical, and social energy. This might look like creating small tweaks to your routines to help you eat a little better, move a little more, and rest more frequently and effectively so you have the energy to do what matters to you.*

The Benefits of Wellbeing

Summarize the benefits of wellbeing:

Wellbeing doesn't just feel good. When it comes to the benefits we might experience at work, studies have found that workers with higher wellbeing are:

- ▶ *Up to 8 x time more engaged*
- ▶ *Up to 3 x more productive*
- ▶ *Up to a 32% average reduction in claims*
- ▶ *Up to 30% reduction in sick leave*
- ▶ *Up to 4 x reduction in likeliness for workers quit*
- ▶ *For every \$1 spent on improving wellbeing, companies are likely to see a ROI of \$2.30 in benefits for the organization*

Introduce The PERMAH Short Scale

Invite the group to take the PERMAH Short Scale in their workbooks.

The father of positive psychology, Professor Martin Seligman, insists that, when it comes to studying and caring for our wellbeing: "if we treasure it, we should measure it."

So in line with this, we've created The PERMAH Short Scale, a quick assessment to help you check in with your recent wellbeing levels. It can be found on page 14 of your workbook.

Take some time now to read the instructions and when you're ready complete the quick PERMAH Short Scale.

Reflect on Wellbeing Levels

Invite clients to take a few minutes to respond to the following questions in their workbook.

What's going well when it comes to your wellbeing?

Where do you notice challenges or resistance?

Reassure and Invite Questions

Reassure them about their current wellbeing:

Whatever your current levels of wellbeing, you can make positive changes. As behavioral scientist Professor BJ Fogg says:

'When you know how to adjust the components of human wellbeing behavior, you can begin to tackle any wellbeing behavior-change challenge.'

Invite any final shares or questions before moving on to the next part or taking a break.

PART 4: BEYOND "FEELING GOOD"

Understanding Wellbeing

Introduce types of wellbeing:

Very often we conflate wellbeing with "feeling good" or happiness. In this portion of the session we're going to explore the wellbeing world beyond simply trying to "feel good" all the time.

Set aside a few minutes to invite a few individuals to share their responses to the following questions with the broader group:

Thinking back to our working wellbeing definition, what matters more to you: feeling good or functioning effectively?

Highlight any similarities and differences in the responses. Ask any follow-up questions.

Hedonic vs Eudaimonic Wellbeing

Introduce the idea that there are different lenses through which we can look at wellbeing:

Discussions about what constituted wellbeing date all the way back to the ancient Greek philosophers, who talked about two main types of wellbeing: eudaimonic and hedonic.

Introduce eudaimonic wellbeing:

Eudaimonic wellbeing means living ‘the good life’ by focusing on personal growth, authenticity, and meaning. It’s about finding fulfillment and purpose in life, not just temporary pleasures.

For instance, a teacher might feel great satisfaction from helping students learn and grow, not just from teaching itself but from making a positive impact on their students’ lives. This is eudaimonic wellbeing.

Invite them to reflect on their experiences of eudaimonic wellbeing and write their responses down in their workbook:

When have you experienced eudaimonic wellbeing? Think about times you learned a new skill, dedicated yourself to something or someone bigger than yourself, or did something you care about that gave you a sense of purpose. Write down some of your thoughts in your workbook.

Introduce hedonic wellbeing:

In contrast to Eudaimonic wellbeing, Hedonic wellbeing is about seeking pleasure and fulfilling desires, focusing on maximizing pleasure and minimizing displeasure. It’s measured by how satisfied you feel with life and the presence of positive or negative feelings.

At work, we might see this through fun social events, celebrating small wins with the team, or adding playful moments to your day, like listening to your favorite song on a walk or playing a game during lunch.

Invite them to reflect on their experiences of hedonic wellbeing and write their responses down in their workbook:

Now, let's think about hedonic wellbeing. When have you experienced it? Think about times you enjoyed sensory experiences, like savoring a delicious meal, relaxing in a hot bath, having fun with friends, or moments of leisure when you felt at ease. Write some examples down on page 10 of your workbook.

Invite individuals to share with the broader group:

What do you think we should focus on when trying to cultivate wellbeing in work and life? Why do you say that?

Highlight any similarities and differences in the responses. Ask any follow-up questions.

PART 5: THE WELLBEING ECOSYSTEM

Levels of Wellbeing

Explain that we're going to explore how wellbeing extends beyond the individual, to the people and culture we surround ourselves with. Explain that:

When it comes to caring for wellbeing in all areas of life, it's not just about how we feel individually; it's about a mix of factors at the personal, relational, and community levels. People with high wellbeing not only benefit themselves but also positively impact those around them.

Explain that:

There are three levels of wellbeing we will focus on in this course, including:

- ▶ **The 'Me' level:** This is about individual choices and self-care practices.
- ▶ **The 'We' level:** This emphasizes relationships and collaboration with others.

- ▶ **The ‘Us’ level:** This addresses the broader environment, including values, culture, leadership, and societal structures that shape collective wellbeing.

Each of these can be looked at in isolation, but the true value comes in reflecting on their interdependent relationship, which we’ll dive into more now.

Invite any questions or comments.

The Ecosystem Metaphor

Explain the wellbeing ecosystem:

When it comes to applying the “Me, We, Us” lens in the workplace, it can be helpful to use the metaphor of a ‘Wellbeing Ecosystem’. Let me explain:

First, we have The Seed. This is you. Just like a seed needs to be healthy to grow, you need to take care of yourself.

Next, we have The Surrounding Flora and Fauna. These are the plants and animals around the seed. In life, these are the people you interact with regularly. For a seed to grow well, the plants and animals nearby need to be friendly and work well together. It’s the same in our lives – we thrive when we have positive relationships with those around us.

Finally, we have The Environment. In a garden, this is the weather and the soil. In life, it’s the overall setting and the way things are arranged. Just like good soil and weather help all seeds grow, a positive environment supports everyone’s wellbeing.

Remember, all these parts work together. A healthy seed, friendly surroundings, and a good environment all help create a thriving garden – or in our case, a space where everyone can flourish.

Invite clients to reflect on their own wellbeing ecosystems:

To help you reflect on the wellbeing ecosystem within your own life, I invite you to take 5 minutes to journal on the following questions:

How do you take care of yourself in your daily life?

How do your relationships with others impact your wellbeing?

What aspects of your environment might help or hinder our overall wellbeing?

Invite a few people to share their responses to each of the questions. Note any similarities and differences in responses. Highlight any themes or topics that will be covered in the program to pique their interest.

PART 6: THE POWER OF ROOTED ROUTINES

Understanding Wellbeing Change

Explain that we're now going to explore common obstacles to creating wellbeing change, and why small steps can make a big impact when caring for our wellbeing.

Invite clients to reflect:

What are some common obstacles that get in the way of creating new wellbeing habits?

Highlight any similarities and differences in the responses.

Behavior Change Derailers

Explain the derailers to behavior change:

When it comes to behavior change, research has identified three common derailers to creating new habits: 'I don't really want to,' 'I'm not sure where to start,' and 'I don't think I can.' Let's dive a little deeper into each of these derailers.

The "I Don't Really Want To" derailer often reflects a misalignment between what we think we should do and what we actually want to do.

For example: Sarah's friends all love yoga class, but she has never enjoyed it and finds excuses not to go.

Ask the group:

Have you ever experienced this derailer?

Continue sharing:

Recognizing this reluctance helps us make authentic choices without feeling guilty about not prioritizing activities that don't genuinely interest us.

The "I'm Not Sure Where to Start" derailder occurs when we haven't got a clear enough understanding of the task or process and can leave us feeling stuck and disempowered.

For example: when Tom wanted to start a healthier diet, he felt overwhelmed by all the information and didn't know where to begin, leading to inaction.

Ask the group:

Have you ever experienced this derailder?

Continue sharing:

Finding support and asking questions, even if they seem simple, can help us take the first step and feel more confident.

Finally, the "I Don't Think I Can" derailder is unsurprisingly driven by fear of failure.

For example: Emily wanted to join a weekly networking event but doubted her ability to connect with others, so she kept putting it off.

Ask the group:

Have you ever experienced this derailder?

Continue sharing:

Recognizing that fear indicates the importance of the activity and approaching it with curiosity and a willingness to be a beginner can help overcome this obstacle.

Understanding Small Habits

Explain and normalize struggle with creating new wellbeing habits:

Many of us struggle to establish new wellbeing habits, not because we lack willpower, but because we don't have the right tools, knowledge, or encouragement.

Rooted Routines: Nourishing Habits for Growth

Explain the Rooted Routines concept:

Rooted routines are simple yet powerful actions that nourish and sustain our wellbeing. Think of them as the small, steady habits that support our growth, much like a plant's deep roots.

Grounded Beginnings

What is an existing action or routine in your day that would naturally allow you to add a new wellbeing habit? Think about behaviors you already do regularly. How can this moment "nurture" the start of your new habit?

Nurturing Action

What is the small, manageable action you can take right now to help foster your wellbeing? Make sure this is an action so easy you can do it even on busy days. How will you take your first step toward growth?

Thriving Moment

Once you've completed your action, how can you celebrate your success, no matter how small? What will you do to acknowledge your growth? This moment of recognition will help reinforce your habit.

Nourishing Reflection

What do you expect to feel after completing your action? How do you anticipate this practice supporting your wellbeing? Think about any changes you hope to see in your thoughts, mood, or habits. How might this habit help you in the future?

Rooted Routine Examples

Invite them to explore some examples and try their own Rooted Routine:

In your workbooks, there are a range of examples of Rooted Routines.

Take 5 minutes now to review some of these examples and feel free to ask any questions or flag any concerns with me as you read.

Invite them to make their own Rooted Routine:

Now that you've looked at some of the examples of Rooted Routines, please use the Rooted Routine worksheet in your workbook to formulate your very first Rooted Routine for Wellbeing.

You may draw from any of the examples as inspiration, or feel free to create your own. There's no such thing as the wrong choice when it comes to trying a new Rooted Routine, so just pick a habit that focuses on an area of wellbeing you'd most like to care for right now. Remember, we're just playfully experimenting and seeing what works.

Invite them to consider and write down any obstacles they might face when creating and trying out their new Rooted Routine for Wellbeing:

Because failing to prepare is preparing to fail, it's worth considering:

What are some common obstacles that get in the way of creating new wellbeing habits?

PART 7: CLOSING

Here are the actions for closing this session.

- ▶ During the last few minutes of the session, summarize what you have discussed with the client and offer some feedback.
- ▶ See if there is anything else the client needs to discuss and address questions/concerns.

Explain this session's homework:

In this session, we learned about the basics of wellbeing, The PERMAH Framework, and the power of Rooted Routines.

For this session's homework, you will:

- 1) *Create and action a daily Rooted Routine using the Rooted Routine Template.*
- 2) *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook.*
- 3) *Run a Reflection Round on your first Rooted Routine experiment.*

Go through each of the pages and answer any questions they may have on the tasks.

Following Sessions

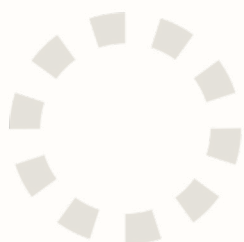
Explain about following sessions:

We will use the following sessions to explore each of the PERMAH Wellbeing Pillars. Say that, although it is last in the acronym, we will begin by focusing on "Health," because it is the foundation of wellbeing and necessary for all the other pillars.

Ask for any final questions and thank them for their time and attention. Make sure to let them know they can reach out to you or a trusted loved one if they are struggling.

Session 2

HEALTHY HABITS



Aims

The aims of Session 2 are to:

- ▶ Review your clients' homework.
- ▶ Perform a Health Reflection Round about our existing health behaviors.
- ▶ Investigate: Are We Eating Well?
- ▶ Explore: Are We Moving Mindfully?
- ▶ Uncover: Are We Sleeping Enough?
- ▶ Discover: Are We Resting & Recovering?
- ▶ Create: A Rooted Routine for Health.

PART 1: OPENING

Here are the opening actions for your second session:

Review Homework

The exercises for the last session's homework were:

1. Creating a Rooted Routine
2. Logging their Rooted Routine
3. Reflecting on their experience of trying a Rooted Routine

Ask the clients to reflect in pairs for a few minutes each, taking turns to share with one another the following questions:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you struggle with your Rooted Routine Homework?*
- ▶ *What have you learned about Rooted Routine?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Then invite any pairs that would like to share their responses with the group, noting any similarities and differences in responses, whilst normalizing any struggle people may be having creating and sticking to their habits.

Remind them that the human brain is wired to “stay safe” by doing the same thing every day. It’s up to us to find ways of introducing new habits in safe, sustainable ways, so we can achieve what matters most.

Review and Session Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session and introduce Health as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, Wellbeing 101, we introduced the basics of wellbeing and positive psychology, using the PERMAH framework to understand it. We learned about making small, lasting changes to improve wellbeing and explored our roadmap for the rest of the course.

Today, we’ll start with the first letter of PERMAH: Health. Although it’s last in the PERMAH acronym, Health is the foundation of our wellbeing. Without good health, it’s hard to build other aspects of wellbeing like positive emotions or strong relationships.

Provide a more detailed summary of the plan for the session:

In this session, we’ll focus on small but powerful changes in four areas: Eating, Moving, Sleeping, and Resting. By improving our health in these areas, we can better support overall wellbeing. Here’s what we’ll cover today:

- ▶ *Health Reflection Round*
- ▶ *Are We Eating Well?*
- ▶ *Are We Moving Mindfully?*
- ▶ *Are We Sleeping Enough?*
- ▶ *Are We Resting & Recovering?*

We’ll finish by creating a Rooted Routine for Health (around Eating, Moving, Sleeping, or Recovering), which will be your homework between now and the next session. Let’s get into it.

PART 2: HEALTH REFLECTION ROUND

In this part you'll help clients reflect on their current Health behaviors and beliefs through the use of a "Reflection Round." You'll begin by introducing the "Reflection Round" and its benefits and then invite them to put it into practice.

Introduce the three steps that we tend to go through as humans in order to learn:

We're now going to explore the practice of running a "Reflection Round" as a means of developing our wellbeing skills and knowledge. But before we do that, we need to take a moment to explore how exactly we learn new skills as humans. From this, we can learn how to optimize this process so we learn faster and more frequently.

*So, when it comes to learning new skills, whether it's a toddler using their caregivers' feedback to gradually refine their baby talk into understandable words or a child experimenting with the nuances of speed and balance as they learn to ride a bike, humans have been **Trying**, **Testing**, and **Tweaking** their way to mastery since our earliest days on earth.*

Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us has naturally engaged in this process of continuous improvement by:

*Firstly "**Trying**": this means using our curiosity and creativity to try new things and see what works. Think about how babies learn to walk or how we learn to talk.*

*Secondly, "**Testing**": this is about looking back at what we've tried to see what worked well and what didn't. This helps us understand our strengths and areas for improvement.*

*And thirdly, "**Tweaking**": this is about making small adjustments based on what we've learned from testing. This helps us keep improving over time.*

The Reflection Round

Explain how the Reflection Round lets us practice this reflective learning process:

So, knowing this is how we learn and develop skills, researchers got to work creating a practice by which we can streamline this process. It's called "The Reflection Round."

The Reflection Round is a simple four-question process that helps us build our skills, our confidence, and develop a "growth mindset" by doing something, reflecting on it, making improvements, and then doing it again.

It integrates the three elements of learning and growth by:

- ▶ *Reflecting on the most/least successful things we've been trying, asking: "What's going well? Where do you notice challenges or resistance?"*
- ▶ *Identifying what we're learning from these peak/weak experiences by asking: "What are we learning?"*
- ▶ *And Committing to actions informed by our experiences and interests by considering: "What will we try next?"*

Reflecting on Health

Invite clients to quietly reflect for a few moments on the following questions, which are also included in their workbooks (see page 33). Read them aloud and then ask clients to write their responses in the corresponding spaces of their workbook.

When it comes to caring for your health lately ...

- ▶ *What has been going well for you?*
- ▶ *Where do you notice challenges or resistance?*
- ▶ *What are you learning?*
- ▶ *What might you try next, based on these learnings?*

Then, invite a few people to share their responses to each of the questions.

Highlight any similarities or differences in their responses. Normalize any struggles by reminding them that learning is an inherently vulnerable process; one that never stops, but that we can learn to become more comfortable and confident with.

Highlight the moments of Trying, Testing, and Tweaking in their stories.

PART 3: ARE WE EATING WELL?

In this part, you'll explore clients' existing eating beliefs and behaviors, and the societal and familial factors that may have influenced them. You'll then overview some of the science of nutrient-dense eating and provide them with some evidence-based Eating actions they may like to use to create a Rooted Routine for Health at the end of the session.

Note: While this part of the session has been deliberately created to focus on boosting nutrients in our diets – not on triggering topics such as “good” or “bad” foods, calories, or body size, etc. – discussing eating habits can be triggering for some clients. Therefore, make sure to navigate this section mindfully. You may wish to flag that if people find discussing eating habits/nutrition triggering, they may sit this out or take a break when needed.

Our Eating Habits

Introduce the notion that our relationship with food is often complex. Then invite them to take a few minutes to do the Rapid Reflection in their books around their current relationship with food.

Eating well is fundamental to maintaining health and wellbeing. However, our relationship with food is complex and influenced by various factors, including cultural norms, family traditions, and individual experiences.

To help us assess where we’re at when it comes to our relationships with food, we’re going to take a few minutes to complete the Rapid Reflection on page 34 of your workbook. The questions are as follows:

- ▶ *On a scale of 1 (for example: you’re not eating in ways that support your wellbeing at all) to 10 (for example: you eat in ways that truly support your mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing), how healthy is your current relationship with food?*
- ▶ *Why might this be?*

Once people have had a few minutes to do their reflections, invite anyone who’d like to share their score (1–10) and their reasoning for the score.

Normalize clients’ responses and highlight the average score that people seem to be giving. Note any themes in the factors contributing to their relationship with food.

Eating: Cultural Beliefs & Behaviors

Explain how society influences our eating habits and how we can make healthier food choices:

In modern society, especially in the West, we often see food as fuel, prioritizing convenience over nutrition, leading to unhealthy habits with processed foods high in sugars and fats. In contrast,

many Eastern and tribal societies view food as part of social and cultural identity, focusing on whole, unprocessed foods that foster healthier eating.

Our eating habits are shaped by personal experiences and social interactions, such as media, friends, and family influences. By becoming aware of these influences, we can make more conscious and healthier food choices.

Eating Well Essentials

Explain how to navigate nutrition amidst conflicting advice and make sustainable changes to our eating habits:

Does anyone else feel overwhelmed when it comes to knowing what “eating healthy” means on any given day? You’re not alone.

Navigating nutrition can feel overwhelming due to conflicting advice, but most experts agree on a few key points:

- ▶ *Individualize your diet.*
- ▶ *Reduce refined sugar.*
- ▶ *Focus on the quality (nutrient density) of calories, not the quantity.*
- ▶ *Make changes small and sustainable.*
- ▶ *Choose self-compassion over criticism.*

Since our eating attitudes and behaviors are inherited from various sources over many years, expecting sudden, dramatic improvement is unrealistic.

Instead of crash dieting or eliminating food groups only to binge later, it’s better to take a gentle, ‘one meal at a time’ approach to changing our eating habits. Balance is crucial, so don’t worry about occasional indulgences. Life is too short not to enjoy a slice of pizza or a scoop of ice cream now and then.

Shopping Cart Swaps

Explain that small swaps to what we get at the grocery store are a great way to nudge ourselves towards more nutrient-dense eating.

In your workbook you’ll find a table listing some easy swaps you might want to make to your weekly shop. Each swap aims to reduce the intake of unhealthy fats, added sugars, and empty

calories, while increasing the consumption of nutrients like fiber, protein, and healthy fats to promote better overall health.

You can see the benefit of each swap in the table provided.

I know for me, a swap I'd like to make is... (share a personal example) because while I love (this less healthy option) I know that (this healthier option) has more wellbeing benefits.

What about you? Have you tried any of these "swaps" in the past? How sustainable did you find these swaps? Are there any surprising swaps on there that you might like to try? Does anything else stand out to you from this list?

Discuss the table and give examples of the benefits of swapping certain items. Invite discussion about the table.

Positive Eating Pizza

Explain that we will use our newfound nutrition knowledge and resources to contemplate a Rooted Routine for Eating. We'll draw inspiration from the Positive Eating Pizza, which you can find in your workbook.

With improved information and ingredients in your kitchen, it can still be difficult to know where to start, so we've compiled some top tips for better eating behaviors into a "Positive Eating Pizza."

Take a moment to review the evidence-based eating habits you might want to try. Feel free to ask any questions.

Eating Well Reflection

Ask the clients to reflect upon how they might use one or more of the behaviors in the Positive Eating Pizza. Explain that they can respond to these questions in their workbook:

- ▶ *Which of the Positive Eating Pizza suggestions appeals to you most and why?*
- ▶ *How might you incorporate this behavior into your existing daily routine?*
- ▶ *What support or structure might you need around this behavior to set you up for success? For example...*

PART 4: ARE WE MOVING MINDFULLY?

In this part, you will help clients explore their current relationship with movement and then move into some of the science of moving often and joyfully to support consistency and wellbeing.

Rapid Reflection

Start by asking participants to reflect on their relationship with movement:

We're now going to explore how mindfully we're moving in our daily lives. As always, the best place to begin is by reflecting on our current behaviors and beliefs, so let's take a moment to reflect in our workbook on page 41:

- ▶ *What is your relationship with movement?*
- ▶ *Where do you think this has come from?*

Encourage participants to consider the origins of their movement habits and beliefs. Identify any themes and emphasize that we can always adapt our behaviors and beliefs.

Movement Beliefs & Behaviors

Explain how movement is often perceived in different societies:

In many Western societies, movement and exercise are often seen as tasks to complete, which can make exercise feel like a chore. High-intensity exercise trends can be intimidating or alienating for those who prefer gentler forms of movement.

However, there are many cultures that integrate movement into daily life, such as the Greek island of Ikaria, where even the elders of the community joyfully engage in physical activities like farmwork well into their 90s, or in African and Caribbean cultures where traditional dances are part of daily life. These cultures show how movement can be a source of joy and community.

Are You Moving Enough?

Discuss the impact of a sedentary lifestyle and then invite individuals to share any reflections and/or their responses to the question below with the wider group:

As you may already be aware, sitting for long periods, which is common in desk jobs, poses significant health risks. Research suggests that prolonged sitting can be more harmful than smoking and is linked to serious health issues.

The negative effects of sitting start almost immediately, such as reduced calorie burning and decreased good cholesterol levels.

How do periods of prolonged sitting affect how you personally function and feel?

Make some time for people to share. Highlight any similarities or differences in their responses.

Quick Movement Tip

Maximize Daily Movement

Invite individuals to share how they try to incorporate movement into their day. Then, offer some additional research-based tips to incorporate more movement into daily routines:

What are some ways that you like to incorporate movement into your day?

Create space to share and note any themes.

When it comes to increasing our daily movement, simple actions like taking the stairs, walking to work, or stretching between tasks can add up. These small changes can provide substantial health benefits without overwhelming us.

Emphasize the importance of enjoying movement:

The key to sustaining movement habits is to make them enjoyable for YOU: It's not about what you'd "like to like," the latest workout trends, or what your neighbor loves to do to stay fit. Engaging in activities that we genuinely enjoy can improve stress resilience and mood, and make it more likely that we'll actually stick with these activities.

Moving Mindfully Reflective Questions

Invite participants to discuss the following questions in pairs (and make any notes in their workbook). Then, after 5–10 minutes, invite any willing pairs to share some of their answers.

In a moment we're going to break into pairs and take turns responding to the following questions. Make sure each partner gets a chance to speak. We'll then come back as a group to debrief and share. So, when it comes to moving more often and more joyfully.

- ▶ *How do you manage periods of prolonged sitting in your day?*
- ▶ *What strategies can you use to increase movement?*
- ▶ *What types of physical activities bring you joy?*
- ▶ *How can you incorporate them into your daily routine?*

If people are stumped, provide some evidence-based suggestions. Or ask what they have tried in the past that has worked. Highlight any themes that emerge from people's responses.

Your Mindful Movement Wheel

Introduce the Mindful Movement Wheel as a tool for better movement behaviors:

We all know that moving more and moving joyfully is important. But where do we start? We've compiled some top tips for moving more mindfully in the Mindful Movement Wheel.

Take a moment to look over the evidence-based movement habits you might want to try. You may want to commit to one of them at the end of the session as your new Rooted Routine for Health. Feel free to ask any questions.

Reflective Questions

Conclude with questions to help participants individually reflect on the Mindful Movement Wheel. Explain that they can respond to these questions in their workbook:

- ▶ *Which of the Mindful Movement Wheel suggestions appeals to you most and why?*
- ▶ *How might you incorporate this behavior into your existing daily routine?*
- ▶ *What support or structure might you need around this behavior to set yourself up for success?*

Invite people to share any ideas or questions they may have. Explain that shortly we'll move on to exploring evidence-based ways we can sleep better.

PART 5: ARE WE SLEEPING ENOUGH?

In this part, we'll be looking at our existing sleeping schedules, rhythms, and exploring evidence-based ways to enhance our sleep quality.

Introduce the topic:

Who here has struggled with sleep in the past?

As we know, sleep is essential for providing us with the energy to do anything else. So, we will talk about our sleep habits, how to set a sleep schedule that works for us, and strategies to improve our sleep quality.

Rapid Reflection

Invite people to take some time to complete the Rapid Reflection on page 47 of their workbook.

Before we dive into the science, let's start by reflecting on our current sleep habits via the Rapid Reflection in our workbooks. Take a few minutes to yourself to respond to these questions now:

- ▶ *When, where, and how much do you sleep?*
- ▶ *Where have these habits come from?*

Invite people to reflect individually. Then, when they've made some notes, invite them to share with the group if they feel comfortable. Highlight any similarities or differences in responses.

Our Sleep Schedules

Overview the different types of sleep schedules and invite clients to use their workbook to reflect on whether they're more of a "Night Owl" or a "Lark":

To set a sleep schedule that helps you work and play at your best, you need to understand your body clock type. Researchers use the “Night Owl vs. Lark” metaphor to help identify your sleep type.

Use the list of common characteristics for each type in your workbook to help you determine whether you relate more to a “Night Owl” or a “Lark.” Check all characteristics that apply to you.

Overview: Night Owls vs Larks

Overview the key characteristics of Night Owls vs Larks:

Night Owls have a circadian rhythm that is shifted later, making traditional 9-to-5 schedules challenging and often leading to sleep deprivation and health issues.

Larks have a circadian rhythm that aligns with earlier sleep and wake times. They perform better in the morning but may struggle to stay awake late at night.

Make sure to share: If they identify as neurodivergent, they may find their sleep needs don’t fit these molds and may be better suited to interval-based sleeping, resting, and working.

Emphasize the importance of setting a sleep schedule:

Once you determine your sleep window that matches your body clock type, it’s essential to maintain this schedule consistently. Irregular sleep patterns can cause insomnia and fatigue.

Why Are We Struggling to Sleep?

Explain the main factors that negatively impact our sleep schedule:

Many people struggle with sleep due to various reasons. Research has identified five main factors, including:

- ▶ **Stress and Anxiety:** *High stress levels make it hard to fall and stay asleep. Anxiety keeps the brain active, making it difficult to relax.*
- ▶ **Electronic Device Use:** *Evening screen time interferes with sleep due to blue light disrupting melatonin production.*
- ▶ **Disrupted Sleep Schedules:** *Irregular schedules can lead to insomnia. A consistent routine helps regulate the body’s clock.*

- ▶ ***Physical Conditions and Illness:** Chronic pain, respiratory issues, and illnesses like sleep apnea disrupt sleep.*
- ▶ ***Environmental Conditions:** Room temperature, noise, and light exposure affect sleep. A cool, dark, quiet environment is crucial for good sleep hygiene.*

Rapid Reflection

Invite them to use the Rapid Reflection on page 49 of their workbook to individually reflect on the main barriers to better sleep in their life:

Using the Rapid Reflection in your workbook, consider which of these issues you experience most frequently in your own life.

Invite people to reflect individually. Then, when they've made some notes, invite them to share with the group if they feel comfortable. Highlight any similarities or differences in responses.

Your Smart Sleep Circle

Introduce the Smart Sleep Circle as a tool they may wish to use to develop a Rooted Routine for Sleep:

With many barriers to a good sleep routine, it can be easy to see sleep as a source of stress. Fortunately, we've collected some of the best, busy-proof, evidence-based strategies for improved sleep into a "Smart Sleep Circle."

Invite participants to take 5–10 minutes to read over the different options in their workbook and highlight any that appeal to them.

Reflective Questions

Invite them to share in pairs on the following questions around the Smart Sleep Circle strategies:

- In pairs, take turns to respond to the following questions. Once you've both helped each other come up with some meaningful answers, note down your responses in your workbook.*
- ▶ *Which of the Smart Sleep Circle suggestions appeals to you most and why?*

- ▶ *How might you incorporate this behavior into your existing daily routine?*
- ▶ *What support or structure might you need around this behavior to set yourself up for success?*

Invite people to reflect and write down their responses in their workbook. Invite them to share any responses or questions they may have.

Explain that the next part of this Health session will focus on Rest & Recovery.

PART 6: ARE WE RESTING & RECOVERING?

In this part, we'll be exploring the effects of stress and our need for Rest & Recovery.

Introduce this part of the session:

In this part of the session we'll explore how stress affects us, the importance of rest and recovery, and how to incorporate effective relaxation techniques into our daily lives.

Rapid Reflection

Introduce a Rapid Reflection exercise around Rest & Recovery:

As we've done previously, let's start by reflecting on our current behaviors on page 52 of your workbooks. How are you currently resting and recovering? For example:

- ▶ *On average, over the last week, what percentage of your time was spent on rest and recovery?*
- ▶ *What are some of your favorite and most effective forms of rest and recovery?*
- ▶ *What, if anything, makes it challenging for you to prioritize time for rest and recovery?*

Invite people to reflect and write down their responses in their workbook. Then, invite them to share their responses and pose any questions they may have.

Sources of Stress

Note: Discussing stress reactions may be triggering for some people. Look out for signs of people looking uncomfortable, fidgeting, zoning out, etc and make sure to check in with how people are doing discussing this topic.

Introduce the idea of stress and stressors:

Stress can come from both external and internal sources:

- ▶ **External Stressors:** *These include work pressure, money problems, family duties, lack of time, societal expectations, and facing discrimination.*
- ▶ **Internal Stressors:** *These include self-criticism, worries about appearance, identity issues, past memories, and concerns about the future.*

Whether we're always aware of these stressors or not, our bodies perceive them as threats.

The Stress Responses

Explain the four main stress responses of our brain and body:

Our body and brain react to stress through different types of stress responses: fight, flight, freeze, and fawn.

Fight Response

- ▶ *In the Fight response, the body releases adrenaline to prepare for confrontation.*
- ▶ *In this response you might feel angry, aggressive, or irritable, with clenched fists, tightened muscles, and a racing heart.*

Flight Response

- ▶ *In the Flight response, the body releases similar hormones and prepares itself to escape or run away.*
- ▶ *You may feel anxious or restless, with a strong urge to run away, which can look like pacing or fidgeting.*

Freeze Response

- ▶ *In the Freeze response the body becomes immobile, heart rate drops, and you might feel disconnected.*
- ▶ *You might feel numb, stuck, or unable to move or respond. Many of us experience this in the face of conflict or aggression – going blank and only coming up with responses once our nervous system has calmed down.*

Fawn Response

- ▶ *In the Fawn response – fawn meaning to attempt to be on someone’s good side or to submit to them and their wishes. The mind may dissociate from the body to prioritize others’ needs.*
- ▶ *You might feel an urgency to meet others’ needs, quickly agreeing to things or trying to make others happy to stay safe.*

Our past experiences and the size of the threat influence which stress response we use. Researchers say we typically rely on one or two stress responses more often than the others.

Rapid Reflection

Invite them to use their workbook Rapid Reflection to consider which of these responses (it may be more than one) they tend towards in the face of stress:

Using the Rapid Reflection on page 54 of your workbook, consider: which of these stress responses reflect how you typically behave when feeling stressed?

This can be a tender topic, so instead of asking people to share, you may wish to simply list the responses and invite people to raise their hand for the response/responses they most relate to.

Make sure to emphasize that all responses – while often uncomfortable – are normal and simply our body trying to keep us safe.

The Stress Cycle

Explain the stress cycle. Then invite individuals to share with the wider group around their own strategies for completing the stress cycle:

So we know about stress responses, but how do we move out of these responses and back to a state of calm and connection?

Many people think that solving the cause of our stress will simply make the body relax, but research shows that the fight-flight-freeze-fawn response can persist because we don’t always get clear signals that we’re safe. This means stress chemicals stay in our bodies.

In their book Burnout, Emily and Amelia Nagoski explain that simply telling ourselves to calm down doesn’t work. Instead, we need to do activities that show the body it’s safe, such as

exercise, deep breathing, socializing, being creative, and relaxing mindfully. We'll explore these strategies next.

Which of these strategies have you used in the past to calm yourself or unwind?

Invite people to share their strategies for calming their bodies. Note any themes.

Your Rest & Recovery Wheel

Introduce the Rest & Recovery Wheel as the final tool from which they might draw inspiration for their Rooted Routine for Health:

Despite knowing the benefits of rest and recovery, integrating them into our lives can be challenging. Fortunately, we've gathered the best evidence-based, busy-proof tools to ensure rest and recovery don't fall off our to-do list.

Take a moment to look over the strategies on page 55-56 in your workbook and highlight any that you might want to try.

Reflective Questions

Explain that it's time to reflect on the Rest & Recovery Wheel strategies:

Let's reflect on these strategies together as a group:

- ▶ *Which of the Rest & Recovery Wheel suggestions appeals to you most and why?*
- ▶ *How might you incorporate this behavior into your existing daily routine?*
- ▶ *What support or structure might you need around this behavior to set yourself up for success?*

Once again, invite people to take notes in their workbook. Invite any questions.

Explain that in the next and final part of the course we'll be creating a Rooted Routine for Health around Eating, Moving, Sleeping, or Resting & Recovering.

PART 7: CREATING A ROOTED ROUTINE FOR HEALTH

Introducing The Rooted Routine for Health

In this part of the session we'll be creating a Rooted Routine for Health. Introduce the final part of the Health session, creating a Rooted Routine for Health:

We've explored the four main pillars of health: Eating Well, Moving Mindfully, Sleeping Enough, and Resting & Recovering. Now, it's time to create a Rooted Routine for Health.

To overcome common behavior change barriers like "I don't really want to," "I'm not sure where to start," and "I don't think I can," we must choose a behavior we truly want to do and make it small enough that we feel at least 8/10 confident we can do it each day for the next week.

If you're tempted to take on multiple habits or set bigger goals, we'd encourage you to hold back for now. Research shows that starting small and scaling up as our skills and practice improve is the best way to build ability and confidence. We will have plenty of time to try our new Rooted Routines in the coming weeks.

Refresher On Rooted Routines

Refresh them briefly on Rooted Routines:

Remember that Rooted Routines consist of an:

Grounded Beginnings

An existing action or routine in your day that would naturally allow you to add a new wellbeing habit.

Nurturing Action

A small, manageable action you can take right now to help foster your wellbeing.

Thriving Moment

Once you've completed your action, how you will celebrate your success, no matter how small.

Nourishing Reflection

How you expect to feel after completing your action.

You'll find a list of Rooted Routines inspiration in the first session of your workbook. Are there any questions?

Choosing Your Rooted Routine for Health

Explain how to use the Rooted Routine Template to create a Rooted Routine for Health:

Use The Rooted Routine Tool below to create your Rooted Routine for Health.

To decide on your Rooted Routine, think about each of the four health areas (Eating, Moving, Sleeping, or Resting & Recovering) and your reflections on each of them.

Which of them do you most want to focus on this week and why?

Do you want to try a Rooted Routine for Eating, such as Prioritizing Protein at each mealtime? Or a Rooted Routine for Movement, such as setting a timer to get up once every 20 minutes at work? Perhaps you have your own idea which isn't on any of the suggestions in the workbook.

Feel free to playfully experiment with any behavior that appeals to you: Just make sure it's small and doable each day.

Hold space for people's responses and highlight the wins and key lessons.

PART 8: CLOSING

Here are the actions for closing this session.

- ▶ During the last few minutes of the session, summarize what you have discussed and offer some feedback.
- ▶ Invite a Rapid Reflection and see if there is anything else clients need to discuss and address questions/concerns.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions on page 58 in their workbook:

As we wrap things up, take a moment to write down your final reflections on page 58 of your workbook. Then we'll share any key a-ha's we had with each other.

- ▶ *What was one surprising insight you had around the science of Healthy Habits?*
- ▶ *What was the most useful piece of information you received today?*
- ▶ *Who might you share this information with to create a wellbeing ripple in your life?*

After people have spent a few minutes writing their responses, hold space for people to share and highlight the wins and key lessons of the day.

Homework

Explain this session's homework:

For this session's homework, you will be asked to:

- 1) *Create and action a daily Rooted Routine for Health using the Rooted Routine Template.*
- 2) *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook.*
- 3) *Run a Reflection Round on your Rooted Routine for Health experiment.*

Go through each of the pages and answer any questions they may have on the tasks.

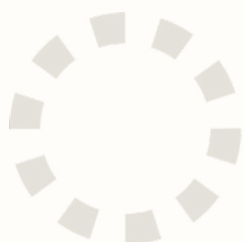
Following Sessions

Explain that we will use the following session to explore Positive Emotions.

Invite people to ask any questions.

Session 3

POSITIVE EMOTIONS



Aims

The aims of Session 3 are to:

- ▶ Review your clients' homework.
- ▶ Reflect on clients' current experience of a range of emotions through a Rapid Reflection.
- ▶ Explore: What Are Emotions?
- ▶ Uncover: The pivotal role that both "good" and "bad" emotions play in creating a thriving, meaningful life.
- ▶ Clarify: Emotions are data to help us make meaningful choices, not directives upon which we must react.
- ▶ Create: A Rooted Routine for Emotion.

PART 1: OPENING

Here are the opening actions for your third session:

Review Homework

Remind them of their homework:

As you'll remember, the exercises for the last session's homework were to:

- ▶ *Create a Rooted Routine for Health*
- ▶ *Log whether you successfully completed your Rooted Routine for Health each day*
- ▶ *And finally, to reflect on the experience of trying your Rooted Routine for Health*

How did we do with this homework?

You may want to let individuals share with the group how far along they got with their homework, or to do a "show of hands" for who completed: all, some of, or didn't get around to doing their homework.

Introduce the Rooted Routine for Health Rapid Reflection:

Remember, wherever you got to with your homework since last session, the Rapid Reflection will help you clarify your strengths, struggles, and next actions you might take to improve your practice when we create another Rooted Routine this week.

So, take some time now to individually reflect on your Rooted Routine for Health homework by responding to the following questions on page 62 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine for Health homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you notice challenges or resistance with your Rooted Routine for Health Homework?*
- ▶ *What are you continuing to learn about Rooted Routines?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Once you've had some time to reflect, turn to the person next to you and spend 5–10 minutes taking turns sharing your responses.

We'll then come together as a group and I'll invite some pairs to share their responses, including any similarities or differences in their strengths, struggles, and strategies going forward.

Provide the group with 5–10 minutes for individual reflection. Then another 5–10 minutes for paired reflection. Finally, take 5–10 minutes to let the group debrief. Make sure to normalize any struggles, reminding them that choosing to learn and experiment is a brave and vulnerable act.

Review and Session Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session and introduce positive emotions as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, we explored the core elements of the PERMAH framework's "Health" pillar. We identified your existing and ideal thoughts and behaviors in the areas of Eating, Moving, Sleeping, and Resting & Recovering. This helped provide you with the knowledge and activities necessary to develop a solid foundation for your wellbeing.

Today, in Session 3, we will go beyond just positive emotions. We'll explore the role all human emotions play in shaping our wellbeing. We'll discuss how identifying and mindfully responding to our emotions, rather than reacting mindlessly, can give us more choice and control over our emotional health.

Session 3 Overview

Provide a more detailed summary of the plan for the session:

In this session, we'll be exploring emotions and the way they guide our actions and shape our lives, by:

- ▶ *Reflecting on your current experience of a range of emotions through a Rapid Reflection*
- ▶ *Clarifying what we mean when we describe an "emotion"*
- ▶ *Uncovering the pivotal role that both "good" and "bad" emotions play in creating a thriving, meaningful life*
- ▶ *Exploring how emotions can be used as data to inform mindful decision-making, rather than being used as directives to which we must react*

We'll finish by creating a Rooted Routine for Emotion, which will be your homework between now and the next session. Let's get into it.

PART 2: RAPID REFLECTION

Reflective Exercise

Begin the session by inviting participants to reflect on their current knowledge of emotions. Emphasize that spelling and grammar don't matter and that this is not a test, just a brainstorm:

To begin, we're going to play a quick brainstorming game and see how many emotions we can name. Don't worry, spelling and grammar don't matter and this is not a test – just a way to wake our brains up.

So, how many emotions can you list? Take 60 seconds to write down as many as you can in your workbook.

Explain that people struggle to name more than three to four emotions and why this is a problem.

Most of us struggle to name more than three to four emotions: mad, sad, glad, and scared. When you can't name or recognize different emotions, it's like having a gap in your vocabulary. This

makes it hard to understand the important signals your body is sending about what you need. If you can't notice these emotions, you'll struggle to make good decisions and act in ways that feel true to yourself.

Rapid Reflection

Introduce the Rapid Reflection as a means of reflecting on our recent experiences around emotions:

To help you gauge your recent experiences around noticing, naming, and responding to your emotions, we're going to perform a Rapid Reflection. So, please take a moment to reflect on and write down answers to the following questions on page 65 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What has gone well in feeling and identifying your emotions in the past?*
- ▶ *Where have you been noticing challenges or resistance?*
- ▶ *What have you been learning?*
- ▶ *What might you try next?*

Go through each question and invite people to share if they feel comfortable. Note any similarities and variances in themes.

PART 3: WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

Rapid Reflection

Invite participants to consider these questions and write their responses down on page 67 of their workbooks:

- ▶ *How would you define an emotion?*
- ▶ *Why do we experience emotions?*

Once again, this is not an exercise in academic referencing, spelling, grammar, or even "getting it right," this is a chance to reflect and gauge where you are when it comes to your understanding of emotions. There are no wrong answers.

The Three Key Elements of Emotion

Overview the three key components of emotions:

Experiencing an emotion involves three main parts:

1. *How you personally experience the emotion*
2. *How your body reacts to the emotion*
3. *How you behave in response to the emotion*

Let's look at each of these components in more detail.

Work through each of the three components of emotions providing examples for each to make sure they are understood. Invite any questions or clarifications along the way.

Your Personal Experience

Let's begin with the personal experience of emotions. How you experience emotions is subjective, meaning it is deeply personal and influenced by things like your background, beliefs, and past experiences. Here are some examples:

Example 1: *John is hosting a birthday party for his wife, Carol. He doesn't know many people and feels uneasy and self-conscious in the crowd. Carol, however, is highly extroverted and knows most of the guests, so she feels excited and appreciative of the celebration.*

Example 2: *John and Carol are at the park when an off-leash dog runs up to them. John, who had dogs growing up, is thrilled by the unexpected encounter. Carol, who never had pets, feels unnerved and frightened by the unrestrained dog.*

Encourage people to share any examples they might have and invite questions.

How Your Body Reacts

When experiencing an emotion, whether it's joy, fear, anger, or sadness, your brain sends signals to your body. These signals often lead to involuntary physical changes. Here are some examples:

Example 1: *At the birthday party, John's discomfort manifests physically as he feels hot, his hands get clammy, and his stomach feels unsettled. In contrast, Carol feels a rush of excitement, her heart beats faster in anticipation, and she has a warm feeling of happiness.*

***Example 2:** When the dog approaches, John's body relaxes, and he smiles, showing physical signs of enjoyment. Carol, on the other hand, feels her muscles tense, her heart races, and she instinctively steps back, showing physical signs of fear.*

Encourage people to share any examples they might have and invite questions.

How You Behave

Next is how you behave: This refers to what you do when you experience an emotion, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Here are some examples:

***Example 1:** At the party, John tries to stay in the background, speaks minimally, and avoids eye contact, behaviors that reflect his discomfort. Carol, enjoying the party, moves around the room, engaging in lively conversations and laughing with friends, which reflects her joy and excitement.*

***Example 2:** In the park, John reaches out to pet the dog, laughing and inviting the dog to play. Carol, feeling scared, crosses her arms, takes a step back, and asks John to keep the dog away from her. Her actions show her fear and discomfort with the situation.*

Encourage people to share any examples they might have and invite questions.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to take a moment to reflect on the following questions by writing down their responses in their workbook:

Now that we've explored the three elements of emotions, take a moment to reflect on these questions by writing down some responses on page 69 of your workbook:

- ▶ *Which of the three elements of emotional experience are you usually most aware of in yourself?*
- ▶ *What is the impact of each of us having unique, subjective experiences of emotions?*

Encourage people to share any examples they might have and invite questions.

Our Emotional Model

Introduce the Model as a means of helping us understand and manage our emotions:

The “Model” is a self-coaching tool designed to help people understand and manage their thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. It consists of five key components:

- ▶ **Circumstances:** *The facts or situations happening around you.*
- ▶ **Thoughts:** *What you think about those circumstances.*
- ▶ **Feelings:** *How your thoughts make you feel.*
- ▶ **Actions:** *What you do based on your feelings.*
- ▶ **Results:** *What happens as a result of your actions.*

The Model shows how your thoughts influence your feelings, which in turn drive your actions and ultimately determine your results. This approach simplifies the process of understanding how emotions emerge and impact our experiences. Let’s work through an example to help bring this theory to life:

- ▶ **Circumstances:** *A person drives their car in front of yours when you weren’t expecting them to.*
- ▶ **Thoughts:** *That person is selfish and doesn’t respect other drivers.*
- ▶ **Feelings:** *Angry, indignant, unsettled.*
- ▶ **Actions:** *Yelling at them, beeping your horn, or trying to cut back in front of them.*
- ▶ **Results:** *Feeling more hypervigilant when driving and becoming a more anxious or aggressive driver.*

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to think of their own real-world example of the Model in use by completing the exercises in their workbooks:

Let’s take a moment to apply the Model in your own unique lived experience. Turn to page 71 of your workbook to complete this exercise.

Think of a time recently where you acted in a way you’re not proud of or that doesn’t reflect who you want to be. It doesn’t have to be serious. It can be something small.

Then, use the Model to help you unpack this action you took by responding to the following questions:

- ▶ *What were the objective circumstances (what actually happened)? (E.g., My partner got home two hours late from work and missed dinner. They didn't call or message to say they'd be late).*
- ▶ *What thoughts did you have about these circumstances? (E.g., They don't care enough to tell me where they are or maybe they've been in an accident, etc.)*
- ▶ *What feelings were created by these thoughts? (E.g., frustration, resentment, worry, etc.)*
- ▶ *What action(s) did these feelings push you to take (or not take)? (E.g., sending an angry message, or calling them repeatedly to make sure they were OK, etc.)*
- ▶ *What was the result of these actions? (E.g., an angry texting war, them feeling guilty for not calling and worrying you, etc.)*

It's important to note that the Model can be used in any direction/order. The most important thing is that we are building up awareness of the interplay of our actions, feelings, and thoughts.

PART 4: BEYOND GOOD & BAD EMOTIONS

Emotions: True Or False?

In this part of the session, you'll be exploring the value of all emotions, and dispelling the myth that there is such a thing as a "good" or "bad" emotion.

To begin, you will run a quick game of True or False to help clients reflect on some of the facts and fictions they may have learned over the years when it comes to emotions. The activity can be found on page 74 of their workbooks.

In this part of the session, we'll be exploring the value of all emotions, and dispelling the myth that there is such a thing as a "good" or "bad" emotion. To begin, we're going to test our knowledge with a fun game of True or False.

Turn to page 74 of your workbook, where you'll find a list of statements about emotions. As I introduce each fact or fiction on the slide, share or write down if you think this is true or false. I'll then reveal the answers one by one.

Go through the True or False statements on the slide. The True statements will turn green when you click and the False statements will turn red.

Share any extra science you'd like that relates to each statement and invite people to share their thoughts or questions as you go.

Can You List And Label Your Emotions?

Introduce another reflective exercise, where participants will list and label their emotions (as positive or negative) in the past 24 hours:

To help us personalize our exploration of emotions more, we're going to reflect on kinds of emotions we've experienced recently.

Please turn to page 74 in your workbook and write down some of the emotions you've experienced in the last 24 hours. Don't overthink it or worry about spelling; just go with your gut.

Once you've done this, label each emotion as positive (P) or negative (N). Don't overthink it; just do this quickly and intuitively.

After people have listed and labeled their emotions, invite them to discuss what made them label each emotion as such.

Now that we have a list of labeled emotions, I'd love to know: what made you label an emotion as positive or negative?

Hold space and note any similarities and differences in responses. Make sure to emphasize that all experiences are valid and normal.

Note: Reflecting on emotions can be unsettling for some people – particularly if they've experienced more uncomfortable ones recently – so encourage them to only participate to the extent that they're comfortable and to take a break at any time. Equally, be vigilant about signs of discomfort in people (through facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, etc.) and check in with anyone you feel may be struggling.

Are Emotions Good Or Bad?

Segueing from the discussion you've just had around positive vs. negative emotions, explain that emotions are actually neither “good” nor “bad” but important signals from our body to our brain to help moderate our behavior:

Emotions, from strong anger to deep love, are quick physical reactions to important signals around us. When we sense something, like danger or interest in someone, our bodies react by changing our heart rate, muscle tension, and focus. This helps us deal with situations effectively.

However, emotions aren't always accurate. Sometimes they help us understand things clearly, but other times they bring up past experiences that can confuse us and lead to bad reactions. This can

make us feel overwhelmed. Many of us react on emotional autopilot without realizing how much our emotions affect our behavior. By becoming more aware of our emotions and learning to use the information they provide, we can better control our actions and improve our personal growth, relationships, and overall wellbeing.

Name It, Normalize It, Navigate It

Introduce the fact that every emotion has a purpose by preparing us for action.

Every emotion serves a purpose by preparing our bodies for action. The key is to tune in to what our bodies are communicating. One way we can do this is by using the three Ns: naming, normalizing, and navigating. Let's explore these now:

- ▶ **Naming It:** Describe your feelings. Saying "I'm noticing that I'm feeling sad" instead of "I am sad" can help create some distance from the emotion.
- ▶ **Normalizing It:** Accept that all emotions, both good and bad, are normal. Be open to experiencing all emotions without judgment.
- ▶ **Navigating It:** Use your emotions as information to guide your actions, not as commands. Treat them as signs pointing to what you care about most.

The more mindfully we can name, normalize, and navigate our emotions, the more regulated we'll be in our system and the better we'll be able to show up in each (or most) moments as who we truly want to be.

The Benefits Of Positive Emotions

Explain the benefits of so-called "positive" emotions:

While no emotion is inherently positive or negative – as psychologist Catherine Tardella puts it, "All emotions are positive, in that they provide vital, valuable information about our desires and needs in the moment" – there is significant research into "positive" (pleasurable or desired) emotions that deserves our attention.

Indeed, experiencing positive emotions – like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love – can boost optimism, resilience, openness, acceptance, and purpose.

As William James famously said, "We don't laugh because we're happy; we're happy because we laugh."

The Broadening & Building Power Of Positive Emotions

Overview the broaden and build research:

Research has repeatedly shown that positive emotions broaden and build our brains' responses to opportunities and challenges. For example, positive emotions can:

- ▶ **Broaden your perspective:** *When we feel positive emotions, our minds open up, and we're more likely to see and seize new opportunities. Think of it like having a wide-angle lens on your camera. You can take in more of the scene around you and spot things you might have missed otherwise.*
- ▶ **Boost creative thinking:** *Positive emotions can increase levels of certain chemicals in our brains, like dopamine and serotonin. These chemicals help us think more creatively, kind of like giving our brains a spark that helps us come up with new ideas.*
- ▶ **Promote teamwork:** *When you feel good, you feel safer and more connected to others. This shifts your focus from just thinking about yourself to considering the group as a whole, making it easier to work together and support each other.*

*Building up positive emotions can lead to an **upward spiral** in our growth and development, improving our resources:*

- ▶ **Psychologically:** *Positive feelings help you think more clearly and solve problems better.*
- ▶ **Intellectually:** *They make it easier for you to learn new things and be creative.*
- ▶ **Socially:** *Positive emotions help you get along better with others and build stronger friendships.*
- ▶ **Physically:** *Improve your overall health, like boosting your immune system and giving you more energy.*

An Example of Broadening & Building Emotions

Explain the concept through a more concrete example:

Imagine starting your workday feeling optimistic and curious. In a team meeting, your positive mood leads you to actively participate, ask insightful questions, and suggest innovative solutions. This sparks a creative discussion, resulting in a successful strategy for a project. Teamwork strengthens your relationships with coworkers, boosts your confidence, and reinforces the value of your contributions. This positive experience encourages you to approach future meetings with even more enthusiasm.

Invite people to reflect on this example. Which parts of it resonate? Have they experienced something similar?

Your Experience: Broaden & Build

Ask participants to think of a time when they experienced the “broaden and build” effect of positive emotions and reflect on the following questions:

Let’s reflect on when we’ve experienced the broadening and building effect of positive emotions. Turn to page 77 of your workbook and write down your responses to the following prompts: Thinking back to a recent experience of positive emotions:

- ▶ *What emotions were you feeling?*
- ▶ *What discoveries or collaborations did this lead to?*
- ▶ *What connections, skills, or knowledge did you gain from these?*
- ▶ *How did these experiences change your outlook for the better?*

Remember, these expansive moments created by positive emotions (even the less intense ones like serenity or calm) happen more often than we realize. Sometimes they’re in the smallest moments that we can overlook, like when we share a smile with a stranger or a laugh with our barista, etc.

If anyone is stuck, remind them that it may have been in an activity today, or in a recent small moment they may have overlooked.

The Benefits Of Balance

Explain the benefits of experiencing an array of emotions, both comfortable and uncomfortable, in order to lead a meaningful life:

As we’ve all experienced, negative/uncomfortable emotions can easily lead to downward spirals, resulting in feelings of overwhelm, helplessness, and despair.

Fortunately, these negative spirals can often be interrupted with a dose of heartfelt positivity. Increasing positive emotions can be done through various activities like exercising, meditating, spending time with friends, connecting with nature, playing, practicing kindness, savoring good moments, using personal strengths, and enjoying small joys like listening to a favorite song. Later in this section, we’ll explore different ways to create a Rooted Routine for Emotion.

That said, it's important to keep positivity in balance. Studies show that indulging in unrealistic positive fantasies can lead to depression over time. Also, excessively valuing and pursuing happiness can lead to feelings of loneliness, fewer positive emotions, and increased depression.

Experiencing too much positivity is also possible. Meaningful life experiences often require dealing with negative emotions. As positive psychology has evolved, researchers have developed more nuanced suggestions for emotional wellbeing. Even Barbara Fredrickson, a leading researcher of positive emotions, emphasizes the importance of mindfully balancing emotions for ongoing growth, meaning, and fulfillment in life.

Invite people to reflect and share on the importance of balancing comfortable and uncomfortable emotions. You may wish to ask questions like: What has been their experience of this? Have uncomfortable emotions provided value in their lives?

Can You Identify Your Emotions?

Explain that you are now going to explore the importance of emotional granularity: being able to identify and name specific emotions:

As we discovered earlier, most people can only identify three to four emotions: glad, sad, mad, and scared. This limited emotional vocabulary hampers our ability to understand and respond to our needs effectively. By expanding our emotional vocabulary and improving our “emotional granularity,” we can better attune to our inner experiences and respond to them mindfully.

Emotional granularity reflects a high level of clarity. It is about how well you can distinguish the most subtle differences between emotions and label them precisely, with lots of detail. Put simply, rather than using broad and general terms like “happy” or “sad,” with emotional granularity, you can be specific and distinguish between emotions like contentment, joy, satisfaction, melancholy, and disappointment.

*Research shows that individuals with high emotional granularity tend to have better emotional regulation, leading to improved mental health and wellbeing. When we can precisely identify our emotions, **we gain clarity on our unmet needs** in that given moment and can take steps to meet those needs more effectively.*

Let's look at an example, here. Being able to distinguish between feeling “embarrassed” vs. feeling “overwhelmed” may lead to very different actions. Embarrassment may lead us to seek reassurance from a trusted friend or reach for self-compassion through some kind self-talk. Overwhelm, on the other hand, may lead us to delegate or seek practical support in organizing our tasks, so that we have time to calm our body and brain and get back to work when we're ready.

The Wheel of Emotions

Introduce the Wheel of Emotions as one of many tools for identifying our emotions:

A great tool for boosting emotional granularity is the Wheel of Emotions. This can help us identify and understand our feelings better. The wheel shows a variety of emotions and how they are related, from basic ones like feeling scared or happy to more specific ones like feeling bewildered or optimistic.

Using this wheel can help you pinpoint exactly what you're feeling. For instance, if you're generally feeling sad, the wheel can help you figure out if that sadness is more about confusion or maybe feeling isolated.

The wheel can also help us understand our deeper emotions. For example, if you're feeling inadequate, the wheel might help you see that this feeling could be connected to deeper feelings of hurt or sadness.

So, by using the Wheel of Emotions, we can become more aware of our feelings, better understand what's really going on inside us, and take the appropriate action for the specific emotion we're feeling.

Using the Wheel of Emotions

Explain that you're now going to use the Wheel of Emotions to help identify and investigate the function of an emotion. Ask participants:

Can you use the wheel of emotions on page 80 of your workbook to help you identify an uncomfortable emotion you've felt in the past week? Rather than seeking to avoid this sensation, write down your response to this question in your workbook:

► *What function might this emotion serve? In other words, what action might it inspire in me?*

Needs include things like safety, connection, fun, reassurance, belonging, autonomy, freedom. What is this feeling trying to tell me about my unmet needs might be going unmet right now and how might I meet it?

PART 5: EMOTIONS: DATA, NOT DIRECTIVES

In this part of the session you're going to reframe emotions as data, not directives: information we can receive, take a moment to process, and then mindfully respond to (instead of mindlessly reacting).

Revisiting The Model

Invite clients to think back to the Model and the example of a behavior they regret.

Let's think back to the Model for a moment. Remember, our thoughts lead to our feelings, which lead to our actions, which create our results, and so on.

Using the example of a recent action we regret taking, we're now going to explore how else that situation may have played out if we'd been in a different emotional state (and therefore taken a different action). Turn to page 82 in your workbook and respond to the following questions:

- ▶ *What was the result you had recently that you didn't want (e.g., cutting someone off in traffic)?*
- ▶ *What different action might you have preferred to take instead to avoid this result (e.g., taken a deep breath and let the driver cut in before me)?*
- ▶ *What emotional state might you have needed to be in to choose that action (e.g., calm, understanding, compassionate, etc.)?*

Emotions: Data, Not Directives

Explain that emotions are data, not directives:

Emotions should be seen as data, not directives. This means our emotions give us important information about ourselves and our surroundings, but they don't have to control our actions. By seeing emotions this way, we can make thoughtful choices that match our values and goals.

The Space Between Stimulus and Response

When we feel intense emotions like rage, abandonment, or despair, it's easy to act on these feelings or think they will never end. However, if we let our emotions control us or react without thinking, we might behave in ways that can harm our relationships, reputation, and sense of self.

However, psychologist, author, and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl offers hope: “Between the stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”

This idea is central to emotional intelligence – it’s about pausing and thinking before we react, using that space to choose actions that reflect who we truly are.

Reaction vs. Response

Highlight the vital difference between reacting mindlessly to our emotions and responding mindfully:

When we feel intense emotions, our brains go into survival mode, which is controlled by the older, primitive part called the limbic brain. This part makes us react quickly with fight, flight, freeze, or fawn responses to ensure immediate survival, rather than taking thoughtful, deliberate actions. In this state, it’s hard to act according to our higher values and goals. We end up reacting mindlessly, often using old coping strategies from our younger years, instead of responding mindfully.

But there’s a better way. If we can take a moment to calm down, even for a few seconds, we can reengage the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for rational thinking, planning, and decision-making. By calming our bodies, we can move from an emotional hijack to a state of clarity and control. This allows us to respond mindfully, rather than impulsively, and make choices that align with our true goals and values.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions:

Now that we’ve discussed the difference between mindlessly reacting and mindfully responding, let’s take a moment to reflect on the following questions in your workbook on page 84:

- ▶ *When have you managed to stop yourself from being hijacked by your emotions?*
- ▶ *What did you do/not do that allowed you to pause and reflect, instead of react?*

After people have had five minutes to write their answers in their workbooks, invite individuals to share. Appreciate those that share and invite quieter people to speak up. Highlight any similarities and differences in the responses.

Calming the Nervous System

Explain that to effectively manage the space between stimulus and response, we need strategies to calm our nervous systems.

To effectively manage the space between stimulus and response, we need strategies to calm our nervous systems. Researchers have found that simply telling ourselves to calm down doesn't work. Instead, we need activities that signal to our bodies that we are safe.

Different techniques work for different people, depending on their nature, nurture (how they've been taught to process emotions) and the severity or intensity of the triggering event/s. It's important to experiment with various methods and find what works best for us.

There are three main avenues we can take to calm our nervous system:

Cognitive Techniques: *Practices like mindfulness meditation and cognitive-behavioral exercises help reframe our thoughts and bring calm.*

Example: *Sarah, a college student, uses mindfulness meditation to manage her anxiety before exams. She sets aside 10 minutes each morning to sit quietly, focus on her breath, and observe her thoughts without judgment. This practice helps her stay calm and focused during her studies and exams.*

Somatic Practices: *Techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and physical activity can soothe our physical responses and ground us in the present moment.*

Example: *Emily, a nurse, practices progressive muscle relaxation to unwind after her shifts. She systematically tenses and then relaxes different muscle groups in her body, starting from her toes and working up to her head. This helps her release physical tension and promotes a sense of relaxation.*

Social Support: *Talking to a trusted friend or seeking professional counseling provides emotional stability and reassurance.*

Example: *David, a teacher, regularly meets with a close friend for coffee to talk about his day and share his thoughts and feelings. This social support helps him feel connected and emotionally supported, reducing feelings of isolation.*

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to discuss the following questions in pairs and then write their responses in their workbook:

To help ground this in our own lives, let's take a few minutes to share in pairs around the following questions. Then take a moment to write your responses in your workbook on page 87. Then we'll debrief your responses as a wider group. The questions are:

- ▶ *Have you ever deliberately tried any of these techniques (or similar practices) to calm your nervous system before?*
- ▶ *Which of these techniques are you most curious to test out and why?*

Invite pairs to share any a-ha's or interesting points of discussion they'd like to share.

Self-Compassion and Emotional Growth

Highlight the importance of self-compassion as we try to build our emotional intelligence:

As we navigate the wide variety and intensity of emotions we may experience, it is crucial to extend kindness and compassion to ourselves. We won't always get it right – sometimes, we will react impulsively to strong emotions, and that's OK.

Each moment of reaction offers a learning opportunity, a chance to understand our triggers and refine our responses. Dr. Brené Brown's wisdom serves as a guiding light: "We need to acknowledge our emotions and let them steer us toward actions that reflect our truest values and aspirations."

By embracing our emotions as valuable data, we can navigate life's challenges with greater authenticity and purpose, transforming our emotional experiences into catalysts for growth and connection.

Invite any reflections or questions on the content so far. Explain that in the next part of the session, they're going to use what they've learned to create a Rooted Routine for Emotion.

PART 6: CREATING A ROOTED ROUTINE FOR EMOTION

Explain that they are now going to use what they've learned to make a Rooted Routine for Emotion:

Having reframed emotions as positive, in that they provide vital, valuable information about our desires and needs in the moment, we are now going to create a Rooted Routine for Emotion.

Choosing Your Habit

While you may create any Rooted Routine for Emotion you like (after all, the best habits are those we're most eager to experiment with), if you're unsure where to start, here are a few suggestions, based on our shared learning during this session. You may wish to form a habit around:

- ▶ *Noticing your emotional sensations and using the Wheel of Emotions to help you name the emotion you're feeling at least once a day*
- ▶ *Journaling for a minute or two each morning/evening about a particular emotion you've experienced*
- ▶ *Cultivating positive emotions (such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love) through one of the evidence-based suggestions in your workbook*
- ▶ *Practicing a central nervous system calming technique (or techniques) each day, etc*

Remember, in order to overcome common behavior change derailers ("I don't really want to," "I'm not sure where to start," and "I don't think I can") we must choose a behavior we truly want to do and shrink it until we feel at least 8/10 confident that we can do it each day for the next week.

PART 7: CLOSING

Update participants on their homework and the next session.

In this session, we explored the science of emotions, we explored the importance of emotional granularity in helping us identify and meet our needs, and we learned the importance of calming our nervous system so we can respond mindfully to our emotional data, instead of reacting mindlessly.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions on page 89 in their workbook:

As we wrap things up, take a moment to write down your final reflections on page 89 of your workbook. Then we'll share any key a-ha's we had with each other.

- ▶ *What was one surprising insight you had around the science of Positive Emotions?*
- ▶ *What was the most useful piece of information you received today?*
- ▶ *Who might you share this information with to create a wellbeing ripple in your life?*

After people have spent a few minutes writing their responses, hold space for people to share and highlight the wins and key lessons of the day.

Homework

Explain this session's homework:

For this session's homework, you will be asked to:

- ▶ *Create and action a daily Rooted Routine for Emotion using the Rooted Routine Template.*
- ▶ *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routine Logbook.*
- ▶ *Run a Rapid Reflection on your Rooted Routine for Emotion experiment.*

Go through each of the pages and answer any questions they may have on the tasks.

Following Sessions

We will use the following session to explore engagement, including the science of strengths. Are there any questions before we wrap up?

Session 4

ENGAGEMENT



Aims

The aims of this session are to:

- ▶ Review Homework: Rooted Routine for Emotion
- ▶ Reflect on current knowledge, skills, and behaviors regarding strengths.
- ▶ Understand what a strength is and its benefits.
- ▶ Explore the concept of flow and how to achieve it.
- ▶ Learn how to balance strengths to avoid overuse and underuse.
- ▶ Practice strengths spotting in oneself and others.
- ▶ Create a Rooted Routine to consistently use strengths.

PART 1: OPENING

In this part of the session, you will review the homework and then introduce the content for today's session. Here are the opening actions for your fourth session:

Review Homework

Remind clients of their homework:

As you'll remember, the exercises for the last session's homework were to:

- ▶ *Create a Rooted Routine for Emotion*
- ▶ *Log whether you successfully completed your Rooted Routine for Emotion each day*
- ▶ *And finally, to reflect on the experience of trying your Rooted Routine for Emotion*

How did we do with this homework?

You may want to let individuals share with the group how far along they got with their homework, or to do a “show of hands” for who completed: all, some of, or didn't get around to doing their homework.

Introduce the Rooted Routine for Emotion Reflection Round:

Remember, wherever you got to with your homework since last session, the Reflection Round will help you clarify your strengths, struggles, and next actions you might take to improve your practice when we create another Rooted Routine this week.

So, take some time now to individually reflect on your Rooted Routine for Emotion homework by responding to the following questions on page 93 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine for Emotion homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you struggle with your Rooted Routine for Emotion Homework?*
- ▶ *What are you continuing to learn about Rooted Routines?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Once you've had some time to reflect, turn to the person next to you and spend 5 –10 minutes taking turns sharing your responses.

We'll then come together as a group, and I'll invite some pairs to share their responses, including any similarities or differences in their strengths, struggles, and strategies going forward.

Provide the group with 5–10 minutes for individual reflection. Then another 5–10 minutes for paired reflection. Finally, take 5–10 minutes to let the group debrief. Make sure to normalize any struggles, reminding them that choosing to learn and experiment is a brave and vulnerable act.

Review Session & Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session (Positive Emotions) and introduce Engagement (Strengths) as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, we explored the core elements of the PERMAH framework's "Positive Emotions" pillar. We explore the role ALL human emotions play in shaping our wellbeing, not just those that feel good. We also explored how identifying and mindfully responding to our emotions, rather than reacting mindlessly, can give us more choice and control over our emotional health.

Are there any questions or comments related to this session?

Allow time for clients' questions and a brief discussion.

Today, we are going to delve into the theme of engagement. Now, engagement can mean all sorts of different things, from: the number of clicks we get in social media, to the commitment of marriage. In the positive psychology context, engagement refers to the sense of enjoyment and effectiveness we experience when we're able to identify and use our strengths. Therefore, the focus of this session will be on unpacking the science of strengths, exploring how we can leverage them to enhance our wellbeing, how to find "flow" in our daily tasks, and how to spot strengths in ourselves and others.

Session 4 Overview

Provide a more detailed overview of the plan for the session:

Here's a more detailed overview of the session today. We'll begin by reflecting on our current knowledge, skills, and behaviors regarding strengths. Then we'll explore what a strength is and its benefits. We'll then describe the concept of flow and how to achieve it. We'll also discuss how to balance strengths to avoid overuse and underuse. We'll then learn to appreciate the good in life by practicing strengths spotting in oneself and others. Finally, we'll apply our learning by creating a Rooted Routine for Strengths. Are there any questions?

Hold space for a few minutes for questions or comments. Then move into the Reflection Round.

PART 2: REFLECTION ROUND

In this part of the session, you will run a Reflection Round on how clients have engaged with their strengths in the past.

Introduce the Reflection Round as a means of reflecting on our recent experiences with recognizing and using strengths:

To help you gauge your recent experiences with recognizing and using your strengths, we're going to perform a quick Reflection Round. So, please take a moment to reflect on and write down answers to the following questions on page 96 of your workbooks:

- ▶ *What has gone well when you have used your strengths?*
- ▶ *Where have you been noticing challenges or resistance?*
- ▶ *What have you been learning?*
- ▶ *What might you try next?*

After people have had five minutes or so to reflect in their workbooks, go through each question and invite people to share their responses if they feel comfortable. Note any similarities and variances in themes.

PART 3: WHAT IS A STRENGTH?

In this part of the session, you will explain what we mean when we discuss strengths, answering questions such as: What are the benefits of using our strengths? How can we identify our strengths?

Introduce a reflection activity:

The best way to understand strengths is to reflect on when and how they show up in our everyday lives. To do this, turn to page 97 of your workbook so you can write your responses down over the next few minutes.

Once you've found the page, take a moment to think of a recent time at work/in life when you felt energized, interested, and truly capable. Consider and then write down:

- ▶ *What was happening in that moment? Who was there? What was the context?*
- ▶ *What did you do? What actions did you take?*
- ▶ *Finally, what was the impact of your actions?*

Give people 5–10 minutes to reflect individually and write down their responses. Then debrief as a group, asking people to share some of their responses. Note any similarities or differences in responses and highlight any elements of strengths that emerge. This might include enjoyment, being good at the skill, being energized by the activity, and so on.

Introduce the concept of strengths and their types:

Next, let's explore what we mean by "strengths."

Strengths are those things we're energized by, good at (or have the potential to become good at), and enjoy doing.

There are two main types of strengths:

Character strengths, which are positive personality traits like gratitude, perseverance, hope, and creativity, and

Talents, which are natural abilities such as musical talent, spatial reasoning, or social skills.

A strength is a strength because it shows how your brain is wired to perform at its best. Over time, practicing these particular thoughts, feelings, and behaviors builds up pathways in your brain.

This makes it easy, effective, and enjoyable to use them in your life.

Benefits Of Strengths

Introduce the benefits of strengths:

Now, let's explore the benefits of using our strengths. When we tap into what we're naturally good at, we unlock several powerful advantages.

First, we experience higher levels of happiness and lower levels of depression. Doing what we excel at brings a sense of joy and fulfillment, which naturally boosts our mood.

Second, there's a noticeable increase in collaboration, innovation, goal achievement, and job satisfaction. When we're working within our strengths, we're more engaged and productive, which positively impacts those around us and the results we achieve together.

Next, using our strengths enhances our coping skills and resilience. This means we have better tools to manage stress and can bounce back more quickly from challenges, which is crucial in today's fast-paced world.

Additionally, aligning our work with our strengths gives us a stronger sense of purpose. It also contributes to improved physical health and leads to more frequent flow states – those moments when we're fully immersed and highly effective in what we're doing.

Finally, when we focus on tasks that align with our strengths, we experience more fulfillment and effectiveness. We're not just going through the motions; we're thriving and making meaningful contributions.

So, by leveraging our strengths, we don't just work harder – we work smarter, and we live happier, healthier lives.

These are just some of the benefits of using our strengths. Can you think of any others?

Invite people to ask any questions or share any reflections. You may wish to ask if they have noticed these benefits when they've taken a strengths-based approach or which of those benefits they'd like to see in their own life, etc.

Strengths Assessments

Introduce the idea of strengths assessments:

Next, let's look at strengths assessments. There are several key tools available to help you identify your strengths. Let's explore them now.

Review each of the main strengths assessments, starting with The VIA Character Strengths Survey:

The VIA Character Strengths assessment was created by psychologists Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman. It helps people identify their personal strengths, like gratitude, curiosity, and perseverance, by ranking 24 universal character strengths that everyone has to some degree. This tool is widely used in personal development and coaching to help individuals understand their core strengths and improve their wellbeing. It's also used in schools to support positive growth in students and in workplaces to boost employee engagement. The basic version is free online, with paid options for more detailed reports.

Ask if there are any questions. Then move into summarizing The CliftonStrengths Assessment:

CliftonStrengths, formerly known as StrengthsFinder, was developed by Donald Clifton. This assessment identifies 34 different talents that are important for performing well in life and work. It's widely used in businesses to improve employee productivity, engagement, and team dynamics. It's also popular in executive coaching and leadership development programs because it helps people recognize and maximize their unique talents. The assessment costs money but provides detailed reports to help you understand and develop your top talents.

Ask if there are any questions. Then move into summarizing **Strengths Profile**:

Strengths Profile, formerly known as Realise2, was developed by Alex Linley and his team. This assessment takes a detailed approach to identifying strengths by categorizing them into four areas: realized strengths, unrealized strengths, learned behaviors, and weaknesses. It's used in coaching, career development, and performance management to help individuals and teams leverage their strengths more effectively. The tool is available for a fee and includes a detailed report with actionable insights, making it a valuable resource for personal growth and organizational development.

You can use these summaries as a starting point for your own research to find the right tool for you. Are there any questions? Have any of you used these assessment tools before?

The VIA Character Strengths

Explain why we are focusing on The VIA Character Strengths for this program:

For this program, we'll be using the VIA Classification of Character Strengths to help discover and develop your strengths. This tool is easy to use and offers free reports, making it very accessible.

If you turn to page 190 of your workbook, you'll find a table of the VIA Character Strengths.

Scientists have identified 24 character strengths, which are grouped into six broad categories called virtues. These virtues are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. By taking the VIA Survey, you can find out your unique strengths profile. Knowing and using your top strengths is key to being your best self.

You'll find a summary of each of the 24 character strengths and the Virtue they belong to. To get a better understanding of this tool and how you can apply it, we recommend taking the test yourself and learning more about VIA Character Strengths by googling VIA Character Strengths.

Make some time for people to read through the list of VIA Character Strengths. Ask if there are any questions.

Invite them to complete the Rapid Reflections in their workbook, giving them five minutes to write their responses.

To help you reflect more deeply on the VIA Character Strengths, take a moment to write your responses to the following questions on page 101 of your workbook:

Which of these VIA Character Strengths would someone who knows and loves you consider to be in your top five strengths?

Why might they identify these strengths?

Invite people to share once everyone has written their responses. Invite them to consider the effect that looking through a loved one's eyes might have when it comes to identifying their strengths.

Explain that we'll now do a quick reflection to help us identify a few of our unique VIA Character Strengths.

We'll now do a quick reflection to help us identify a few of our unique VIA Character Strengths in action. You'll find these prompts on page 102 of your workbook.

Thinking back to your example of when you were energized, interested, and capable; use the VIA Character Strengths to identify three strengths that you were drawing on.

How did you recognize these strengths?

How frequently in a week do you use these strengths?

What impact might this have on your wellbeing and performance?

Give them 5–10 minutes to write their responses and then invite participants to share as a group or in pairs about their responses. Highlight any common themes or responses.

PART 4: STRENGTHS & FINDING FLOW

In this part of the session, you will introduce the concept of flow and how to cultivate more moments of flow in our lives.

Introduce the concept of flow and its elements:

Now, let's talk about flow. Flow is a state of optimal experience where one's skills are perfectly matched to the challenges at hand. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the psychologist who popularized this concept, describes flow as a state where people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter.

To foster flow, we can optimize four key elements: temporal, environmental, physical, and social.

Unpack each of these elements of flow, inviting clients to do a Rapid Reflection on how they might leverage each element to support more flow in their lives:

Let's unpack these elements of flow and consider how we might leverage each of them in our own lives:

Let's start with the temporal element. This is about when you choose to engage in tasks – the time of day, week, or month. For example, you might schedule creative tasks during your peak energy times or set aside uninterrupted blocks of time.

Now, take a moment to reflect on these questions in your workbook: When can you fit flow into your week? What time of the day works best for you? How long can you set aside?

Now, the environmental element: This is about your physical surroundings – what you see, hear, and how your space is set up. For instance, you might create a clutter-free space or use noise-canceling headphones to minimize distractions.

Now, take a moment to reflect on these questions in your workbook: Where might you set yourself up for flow best? What surroundings support your focus? What sounds help you concentrate?

Onto the physical element of flow: This is about how you support your body – through eating, moving, sleeping, and resting. For example, you might eat brain-healthy snacks to get or stay energized or take short walks to reenergize.

Now, take a moment to reflect on these questions in your workbook: How can you eat, move, sleep, and rest to support flow? How much do you need? How often should you do it?

Finally, the social elements of flow. This is about whether you work best alone or with others. For example, you might collaborate with someone who inspires you or work alone in a quiet space.

Now, take a moment to reflect on these questions in your workbook: Who do you go into flow with? When do you flow best by yourself? What tasks are best done with others versus alone?

Allow participants three minutes for each flow element to reflect and write down their thoughts, then spend 15 minutes inviting any willing individuals to share their responses in the group. You may wish to note down any unique or interesting techniques on some paper/a whiteboard, etc.

Your Fostering Flow Toolkit

Introduce the Fostering Flow Toolkit:

If you're still unsure of how you want to cultivate more flow in your life, don't worry! We've created a Fostering Flow Toolkit full of strategies to help you cultivate flow in each of these four elements. Read through them and think about which ones you may have already used, even without realizing it, to help you focus better on tasks. Circle or put an X next to the ones you might like to try.

I'll give you five minutes to read through and highlight any that you've tried or would like to try. Any questions?

Answer any questions and then give clients 5–10 minutes to read through the toolkit and highlight the most appealing Fostering Flow techniques. You may wish to have an example of how you've created more moments of flow in your own life using one or more of these techniques.

PART 5: BALANCING OUR STRENGTHS

In this part of the session, you will discuss overplaying and underplaying our strengths as well as finding the “golden mean” (or ideal balance) of strengths usage in your work and life.

Introduce the concept of balancing strengths and the golden mean:

Let's dive into the concept of balancing our strengths. Think back to a moment when you struggled with a task. Perhaps, despite your best efforts, you couldn't achieve the outcome you wanted. Maybe you felt overwhelmed or found it hard to be your best self in that situation.

It's important to understand that even strengths can be overused or underused. It's not just about how often we utilize our strengths, but about applying them appropriately and in the right measure.

Sometimes, relying too heavily on a strength can backfire. For example, a natural leader who overextends their leadership might become overly controlling, leading to issues like increased stress and strained relationships. Consider a manager who constantly micromanages their team – this behavior can lower morale and increase turnover.

Conversely, not tapping into a strength enough can also have negative effects. A creative individual stuck in a monotonous role may feel unfulfilled and frustrated. Similarly, an employee with great ideas might hold back from sharing them if they feel discouraged, missing opportunities for both personal growth and team contribution.

Now, let's bring in the idea of the golden mean from Ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotle taught that virtue is about finding the right balance between excess and deficiency. Let's look at some examples:

Firstly, bravery: Too little bravery turns into cowardice, while too much leads to recklessness. The key is to have courage when it's needed without becoming foolhardy.

Consider perseverance: Insufficient perseverance might mean giving up too easily, whereas too much could lead to stubbornness. The ideal balance is sticking with a task but knowing when it's time to let go.

Finally, zest: Too little zest may result in laziness, while too much can lead to hyperactivity. The balance lies in maintaining energy and enthusiasm without overexerting oneself.

By finding this balance – this golden mean – we can harness our strengths effectively without letting them turn into weaknesses. By being mindful of when we're overusing or underusing our strengths, we can adjust our actions to be more effective and build healthier relationships.

Now, let's apply the golden mean principle to the 24 VIA Character Strengths. In your workbook, there's a table that illustrates how each strength can become either a deficiency or an excess when it's not well-balanced.

Read through some of the examples in the table of the VIA Character Strengths (excess, golden mean, deficiencies), inviting people to reflect. Do they agree with these examples? Have they experienced any of these strengths (as a strength, deficiency, or excess)?

Take a moment to review the table and think about your own strengths. Are there any of your strengths that tend towards excess or deficiency?

Balancing Strengths

Introduce the activity:

We're now going to make this concept more real by reflecting on how we might be overplaying or underplaying strengths in our own lives. Turn to page 111 of your workbook and take 10 minutes to reflect on the following questions. We'll then come together and share some of our answers as a group. These are the prompts:

- ▶ *Think about a recent obstacle you faced.*
- ▶ *Reflect on whether you might have overplayed or underplayed any strengths in that situation.*
- ▶ *What factors influenced your use of strengths?*
- ▶ *How could you balance these strengths better to achieve your goal?*

Once you've reflected for 10 minutes or so we'll come back as a group and have individuals share some of their reflections.

Any questions?

Allow participants 10 minutes to reflect and write down their thoughts, then spend 10 minutes discussing reflections in the group.

PART 6: TEAMING WITH STRENGTHS

In this part we'll discuss the benefits of a strengths-based approach, including strengths spotting in ourselves and others.

Introduce the importance of a strengths-based approach:

We're now going to explore how we can apply strengths in our personal life and in group settings.

It's all well and good to know and try to use your strengths as an individual, but if you don't have the support of the people and systems around you, these efforts often die on the vine. That's why applying a strengths-based approach works best when we involve and support each other.

Explain the process of strengths spotting:

An easy way to begin incorporating a strengths-based approach is through something called strengths spotting. This involves identifying and valuing the strengths we see in ourselves and those around us.

At both the team and organizational levels, strengths spotting is a powerful tool for fostering better relationships, building trust, and nurturing a culture of appreciation. It's an effective way to cultivate a positive environment and enhance group dynamics.

When we recognize and leverage our strengths, we boost our self-awareness, performance, and overall wellbeing. People who are aware of and actively use their strengths tend to feel more energized, engaged, and resilient. Reflecting on how our strengths influence others can also deepen our sense of purpose and connection, contributing to a more positive social atmosphere.

To begin spotting your own strengths in your everyday activities, consider the following steps:

Begin by selecting the moment: Think of a recent task or situation where you did well. Reflect on what made this experience positive and effective. For example: "I recently led a successful team meeting where we resolved several ongoing issues."

Next, pick the strength: Identify which strengths you used during this time. Refer to the VIA Character Strengths list if needed. For example: "During the meeting, I used my strengths in leadership and communication."

Then, observe the outcomes: Consider the positive results your strengths brought to this situation. For example: "My leadership and communication skills helped the team feel heard and valued, leading to a productive and collaborative meeting."

Finally, test your perceptions: Ask a trusted manager or colleague to confirm your observations. You can ask, "What strengths do you see in me?" or "I've noted my strength of leadership in this activity. Does that ring true for you?" For example: "I asked my manager if they also noticed my leadership and communication strengths during the meeting, and they confirmed that these were evident and impactful."

By regularly practicing strengths spotting, you can better understand and use your strengths to improve your work and relationships.

Individual Strengths Spotting

Introduce the Individual Strengths Spotting activity:

It's time to give it a try. Take 5–10 minutes now to complete the Individual Strengths Spotting exercise on page 112 of your workbook.

Once you're done we'll come back together as a group to discuss. Any questions?

Once people have come back together as a group, you may wish to ask them how they found the experience: How easy or hard was it to identify and write about your own strengths? Reassure them that we're often taught in western society to downplay our strengths, so it's natural for this process to feel strange or uncomfortable.

Introduce the Strengths Spotting activity:

Let's practice strengths spotting with a partner. Pair up and share a recent positive experience with your partner. As your partner listens, they should try to spot the strengths you used in that situation. After sharing, discuss and confirm the observed strengths with each other.

Allow participants 10 minutes for each partner to share and discuss. Come back together as a group and invite some pairs to share the strengths they noticed in one another.

Strengths Spotting In Others

Overview the process of how we can spot strengths in others:

Now, let's talk about how to spot strengths in others. It uses the same SPOT acronym as Individual Strengths Spotting, but with a twist. Here's how you can do it:

*First up, **set** your intention. Decide who or what you're going to focus on – maybe it's a specific person, a particular time, or a certain strength.*

For example, you might think, "This week, I'm going to watch how Jane handles our project meetings to see her strengths in leadership and collaboration."

*Next, start to **perceive** the signs. Pay attention to how people show their strengths through what they do and how they act.*

You might notice something like, “In today’s meeting, Jane was great at coordinating tasks and keeping the team motivated, which really showed her leadership skills. Plus, she listened to everyone and brought their ideas together, highlighting her strength in collaboration.”

*Then, share **outcome**-based feedback. Tell the person what strengths you saw and how it made a difference.*

For example, you could say, “Jane, I saw your leadership and collaboration in action during our meeting yesterday. The way you organized tasks and motivated the team really boosted morale and productivity. Everyone felt heard and valued, and that led to a better discussion.”

*Finally, test your **perceptions**. Check in with them to see if they agree with what you noticed.*

You might ask, “Jane, do you think your leadership and collaboration were strong in the meeting? How did you see your role, and do these strengths feel right to you?”

And remember, strengths spotting is something you should keep doing. To make it even more effective, try to encourage open conversations during team meetings and feedback sessions. This helps everyone get used to giving and receiving strengths-based feedback

Ask if there are any questions. Then, introduce the Strengths Spotting In Others activity:

Now we’re going to experiment with this process, in the same pairs you were in before.

Once you’re in your pair, think back to the exercise we did earlier, spotting the strengths of the partner, can you SPOT their strengths? Take turns filling in the worksheet on page 115 of your workbook.

Make notes of any of the strengths you spotted. If you’ve forgotten some details, politely ask your partner to remind you of the key points of their story again.

Once you’ve filled out the sheet, tell your partner about the strengths you spotted in them and the impact of these strengths in the situation they shared. Then swap roles.

You’ll have 10 minutes each. Any questions?

Give them 10–20 minutes to complete the worksheet for each other. Then invite everyone back to the main group and ask some pairs to share about their experience of both spotting strengths and having their strengths spotted. Normalize any road-blocks or resistance.

Strengths-Based Feedback

Introduce the concept of strengths-based feedback:

Strengths spotting is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to build a strengths-based culture. But what about areas where we or our team need improvement? Feedback is essential for personal and professional growth, performance, and morale.

Research has shown that top-performing teams give much more positive, strengths-focused feedback to their peers compared to average teams. In contrast, low-performing teams tend to give more negative feedback.

***Strengths-based feedback** highlights positive attributes and how to use them for future success. It boosts self-esteem and promotes a growth mindset, making individuals more open to challenges and learning opportunities. This approach improves job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall performance.*

*In contrast, **deficit-based feedback** focuses on weaknesses and mistakes, which can decrease morale and increase stress. Constantly criticizing without acknowledging effort can make employees feel undervalued and demotivated, reinforcing a fixed mindset and hindering growth.*

Provide examples of common deficit-based feedback and guide participants in rewriting these into strengths-based feedback:

Let's explore some examples of both deficit-based feedback and strengths-based feedback:

Deficit-based feedback might sound like: "You missed the deadline again. You need to manage your time better."

Whereas strengths-based feedback would sound more like: "I noticed you were really focused on getting the details right for the project. How can we set smaller milestones to help manage the timeline while keeping your attention to detail?"

Guide participants to the table of Deficit vs. Strengths-based Feedback in their workbook.

Let's turn to page 119 of your workbook and read through some more examples together.

Read through some examples, inviting individuals to read some examples from the table aloud to the class. Invite people to share what differences they notice between the examples.

Then, introduce the activity of Flipping The Script:

Now we're going to put this to the test ourselves. Turn to page 121 in your workbook. Consider a piece of deficit-based feedback you've either given or received in the past: how might you "Flip the Script" to transform this into strengths-based feedback?

Use the worksheet to write down the deficit-based feedback you gave/received, the strengths-based feedback you'd change it into, and note the changes you made.

You have five minutes. We'll then come back together and discuss the changes we made to the feedback as a group.

Allow participants five minutes to work on rewriting feedback, then spend five minutes sharing and discussing as a group.

PART 7: CREATING A ROOTED ROUTINE FOR STRENGTHS

Remind them of Rooted Routines and guide participants in creating their own:

Now that we've explored the science of strengths, including ways to foster flow, balancing our strengths, spotting strengths in ourselves, and strengths-based feedback, it's time to apply our learning by creating our Rooted Routine for Strengths.

To begin, you can create any Rooted Routine for Strengths you like. The best habits are those we're most eager to experiment with. As usual, you'll find the Rooted Routine Template in your workbook, ready for you to fill in.

If you're unsure where to start with your project, don't worry – I've got a few suggestions that tie in nicely with what we've been learning in this session.

First, you might try identifying and using one of your strengths each day this week, whether at work or at home. This can be a great way to bring our discussions on strengths to life.

Another option is to select a small behavior from The Fostering Flow Toolkit and experiment with it. This toolkit is full of practical strategies, so choose one that resonates with you and see how it feels to implement it in your daily routine.

You could also practice spotting strengths in yourself or in others. This is a powerful way to reinforce positive behavior and boost morale – both for yourself and those around you.

Another idea is to practice giving strengths-based feedback. Think about how you can frame your feedback to highlight what someone is doing well, which can make your feedback more constructive and encouraging.

And of course, feel free to come up with any other ideas you have! The key is to choose something that feels meaningful and manageable for you.

Remember, to overcome common behavior change obstacles like “I don’t really want to,” “I’m not sure where to start,” and “I don’t think I can,” we must choose a behavior we truly want to do. Then, shrink it down until we feel at least 8 out of 10 confident that we can do it each day for the next week.

Allow participants 10 minutes to complete the template, then spend five minutes inviting individuals to share their chosen habits with the group.

PART 8: CLOSING

Here are the actions for closing this session.

- ▶ During the last few minutes of the session, summarize what you have discussed with the client and offer some feedback.
- ▶ See if there is anything else the client needs to discuss and address questions/concerns.

Rapid Reflection

If time permits, ask participants to reflect on the following questions on page 123 in their workbook:

As we wrap things up, take a moment to write down your final reflections on page 123 of your workbook. Then we’ll share any key a-ha’s we had with each other.

- ▶ *What was one surprising insight you had around the science of strengths today?*
- ▶ *What was the most useful piece of information you received today?*
- ▶ *Who might you share this information with to create a wellbeing ripple in your life?*

After people have spent a few minutes writing their responses, hold space for people to share and highlight the wins and key lessons of the day.

Homework

Explain this session's homework:

For homework, you'll put your Rooted Routine for Strengths into practice. Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook provided in your workbooks. We'll start our next session by reflecting on your habit experiments.

Thank you for your participation today. Any final questions or thoughts before we conclude?

Session 5

RELATIONSHIPS



Aims

The aims of this session are to:

- ▶ Reflect on the importance of relationships in life.
- ▶ Understand the benefits of positive relationships and high-quality connections.
- ▶ Identify common barriers to forming strong relationships and learn how to overcome them.
- ▶ Explore the concept of psychological safety in relationships.
- ▶ Develop practical strategies to strengthen relationships both personally and professionally.

PART 1: OPENING

Review Homework

Remind clients of their homework:

As you'll remember, the exercises for the last session's homework were to:

- ▶ *Create a Rooted Routine for Strengths.*
- ▶ *Log whether you successfully completed your Rooted Routine for Strengths each day.*
- ▶ *Reflect on the experience of trying your Rooted Routine for Strengths.*

How did we do with this homework?

You may want to let individuals share with the group how far along they got with their homework or do a “show of hands” for who completed: all, some, or didn’t get around to doing their homework.

Introduce the Rooted Routine for Strengths Reflection Round:

Remember, wherever you got to with your homework since the last session, the Reflection Round will help you clarify your strengths, struggles, and next actions you might take to improve your practice when we create another Rooted Routine this week.

So take some time now to individually reflect on your Rooted Routine for Strengths homework by responding to the following questions on page 126 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine for Strengths homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you struggle with your Rooted Routine for Strengths homework?*
- ▶ *What are you continuing to learn about Rooted Routines?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Once you've had some time to reflect, turn to the person next to you and spend 5–10 minutes taking turns sharing your responses.

We'll then come together as a group, and I'll invite some pairs to share their responses, including any similarities or differences in their strengths, struggles, and strategies going forward.

Provide the group with 5–10 minutes for individual reflection. Then another 5–10 minutes for paired reflection. Finally, take 5–10 minutes to let the group debrief. Make sure to normalize any struggles and draw in any themes you've been noticing develop in their Rooted Routines practices over the previous sessions.

Review Session & Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session (Engagement) and introduce Relationships as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, we explored the core elements of the PERMAH framework's Engagement pillar. We discussed how identifying and leveraging our strengths can enhance our wellbeing, performance, and relationships. We also explored the concept of flow and how to achieve it by balancing our strengths and practicing strengths spotting in ourselves and others.

Were there any questions or comments related to this session?

Allow time for clients' questions and a brief discussion.

Today, we are going to delve into the theme of relationships. Relationships are crucial for our overall wellbeing. In this session, we will explore why relationships matter, the benefits of positive relationships, and how to overcome barriers to forming strong connections. We'll also discuss the concept of psychological safety and develop practical strategies to strengthen your relationships both personally and professionally.

Provide a more detailed overview of the plan for the session:

To get into the details a bit more, today we'll begin by:

- ▶ *Reflecting on the importance of relationships in our lives*
- ▶ *Then we'll explore the benefits of positive relationships, including high-quality connections (or HQCs for short).*
- ▶ *Next, we'll identify common barriers to forming strong connections and*
- ▶ *Discuss the vital role psychological safety plays in building and maintaining relationships at work and beyond.*
- ▶ *Finally, we'll then commit to applying our learnings by creating a Rooted Routine for Relationships.*

Are there any questions?

Hold space for a few minutes for questions or comments. Then move into the Reflection Round.

PART 2: REFLECTION ROUND

In this part of the session, you will run a Reflection Round on how clients have engaged with their relationships in the past.

Introduce The Reflection Round

To help you gauge your recent experiences with relationships, we're going to perform a quick Reflection Round. So please take a moment to reflect on and write down answers to the following questions on page 130 of your workbooks:

- ▶ *What has gone well in your relationships over the past few weeks?*
- ▶ *Where have you encountered challenges in connecting with others?*
- ▶ *What are you learning about yourself through these interactions?*
- ▶ *What changes or improvements would you like to make in your relationships?*

After you've had five minutes or so to reflect in your workbooks, we'll go through each question together as a group and invite some people to share their responses so we can reflect together.

Go through each question and invite people to share if they feel comfortable. Note any similarities and variances in themes.

PART 3: WHY CONNECTION MATTERS

This part of the session explores the benefits of positive connections and introduces the concept and practice of high-quality connection.

Introduce a Reflection Round on the benefits clients have experienced from their own relationships:

To help us appreciate the role that relationships – both short- and long-term ones – play in our lives, we’re going to do a quick reflection round on the following prompts:

- ▶ *Consider where you are in your life right now – your home, your health, your hobbies, your career.*
- ▶ *Who are the people that helped you get here?*
- ▶ *How would life be different without those connections?*

Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts on page 131 of your workbook.

After participants have had 5–10 minutes to reflect individually, invite some people to share their responses.

Introduce the concept of why relationships are important:

Now that we’ve explored some personal stories and examples of how relationships can support us, let’s turn our attention to the research behind this. Decades of studies – over 75 years, in fact – have consistently shown that the quality of our relationships is one of the most significant factors influencing our overall happiness and health. Let’s take a closer look at some of the benefits that come from having positive relationships in our lives.

Unsurprisingly, having good relationships is key to our emotional wellbeing. They offer us emotional support, help ease stress, and enhance our overall life satisfaction by making us feel safe and part of a group. Next, nurturing relationships are strongly linked to better physical health. When we have solid social ties, we’re more likely to have lower blood pressure, a reduced risk of heart disease, and a more robust immune system.

Supportive relationships can actually help us live longer. Positive connections, particularly with happy, healthy people, both encourage healthier lifestyle choices and protect us from unhealthy behaviors. Good relationships also help keep our minds sharp. They play an important role in maintaining cognitive health, boosting memory, and improving mental clarity, particularly as we get older, which is why we should keep connecting no matter our age.

These supportive bonds also build our resilience. During challenging times, the support we get from nurturing relationships helps us cope better and bounce back more quickly from stress. When it comes to the workplace, supportive relationships are just as essential. They lead to higher job satisfaction, foster better teamwork, and drive increased productivity. Employees who feel connected with their colleagues tend to be more engaged and motivated.

Positive relationships also enhance our ability to resolve conflicts. They improve communication and understanding, which are critical for working through disagreements in a way we won't regret later. Additionally, these close bonds support our personal growth. They provide a safe environment where we can express ourselves, experiment with new ideas, and achieve our full potential.

Lastly, within families, strong relationships create a deep sense of belonging and support. This is crucial for the healthy development of children, who will then be better equipped to build more positive relationships within and beyond their own families.

As you consider these benefits, think about which ones you've experienced in your own life. Are there any other benefits you'd add to this list?

Hold space for five minutes or so for people to share their experiences. Note any themes or variety in responses. You may also wish to invite people (before reading the list aloud) to raise their hand for any of the benefits they've experienced.

Note: You may not want to read all of the benefits aloud. But list a few as a conversation starter and invite people to share their own experiences.

High-Quality Connections (HQCs)

Introduce the concept of HQCs and how to cultivate them in your daily life.

Now that we've discussed the benefits of positive relationships, it makes sense to look into ways we might cultivate more positive connections, even in the hustle and bustle of our busy, modern lives.

One way we can do this is through consciously creating what researchers have called high-quality connections. High-quality connections are short, positive interactions that make us feel energized, valued, and connected. Unlike deep, long-term relationships, High-quality connections can happen in brief moments – like a positive chat with a colleague or a meaningful conversation with someone you just met.

These small connections might seem minor, but they can have a big impact on our wellbeing. HQCs help us be more emotionally resilient, lower our stress, and even improve our work performance.

Explain the benefits of HQCs:

HQCs are especially important because they give us a sense of belonging and support, even in places where close relationships aren't common, like the workplace. These connections are built on trust, openness, and a willingness to engage with others in a meaningful way. They are also reciprocal, meaning that both people benefit from the interaction. This mutual benefit helps to build trust and respect.

Introduce some examples of high-quality connection moments:

So we know what they are, and how they can benefit us. But what do they look like in real life? Some examples of high-quality connections might include:

- ▶ *A colleague really listening to your ideas during a meeting, giving thoughtful feedback that makes you feel heard and appreciated.*
- ▶ *Sharing a moment of laughter with a coworker, which lightens the mood and strengthens your bond.*
- ▶ *A stranger giving you a smile or a compliment, creating a moment of genuine connection that leaves both of you feeling uplifted.*

What are some other examples that you've either experienced yourself or witnessed?

Hold space for individuals to share their own experiences of HQCs with the group. Note any themes or variety in responses.

Your High-Quality Connection Toolkit

Introduce the High-Quality Connection Toolkit:

So now that we've heard about the benefits and explored some examples of high-quality connections, it's time to see how we might put them into practice ourselves. If you turn to page 134 in your workbook you'll find your High-Quality Connection Toolkit. This Toolkit provides practical ideas you can use to foster these meaningful micro-interactions in your daily life.

Take some time individually to read through these strategies and think about which ones you may have already used, even without realizing it. Circle or put an X next to the ones you might like to try.

Allow participants a few minutes to read and reflect.

HQC Conversation Starters

Introduce the HQC Conversation Starters activity:

Let's practice creating high-quality connections. On page 136 of your workbook, you'll find some HQC conversation starters designed to spark meaningful interactions.

Pair up with someone and take turns posing at least one of these prompts to one another. Let the conversation flow and go where it naturally goes. Follow the energy and enthusiasm. After 10 minutes, we'll come back together and share what you noticed about these conversations.

Allow 10 minutes for discussion in pairs, then gather the group to share their experiences. Some possible questions: What did they notice? How was it different from everyday conversations they usually have? How are they feeling in their body and brains?

PART 4: COMMON BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

In this part of the session, you will explore the barriers to forming strong relationships and how to overcome them.

Introduce the Rapid Reflection activity:

Before we dig into the theory, take a moment to write down your reflections on these questions on page 137 of your workbook:

- ▶ *On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (ideal), how would you rate the quality of your relationships?*
- ▶ *What about at work?*
- ▶ *Why do you think that is?*

Spend a few minutes writing your responses and then we'll share as a group.

Once people have had five minutes or so to write their responses, invite individuals to share their responses with the group, noting any themes or variances in responses.

Perception Bias

Introduce the concept of perception bias (you may wish to tie in the previous activity, connecting any examples of how our stories/perceptions get in the way of connections):

Let's talk about why misunderstandings are so common in our relationships. It often comes down to something called perception bias. This is when we view situations and interactions through the filter of our own experiences, beliefs, and emotions, which can distort our understanding of others.

To put it another way, we tend to see the world not as it truly is, but as we are. This makes it easy to misinterpret someone else's actions or words, leading to unnecessary conflicts or strained relationships. For instance, you might assume that a friend's brief text message means they're upset with you, when in reality, they're just busy or distracted.

Perception bias is sneaky because it feels so natural to us; we think we're being objective, but often we're not. One of the most common outcomes of this bias is defensiveness. If we think someone is criticizing us, we might respond sharply without fully understanding their actual intent. Similarly, this bias can lead to poor communication, where we might not express ourselves clearly because we assume others know what we mean or what we're feeling.

To navigate around perception bias, it's crucial to develop the habit of pausing and trying to see things from the other person's perspective. This doesn't mean you have to agree with them, but it does mean taking a moment to consider how they might be feeling or what they might be thinking. A useful technique here is to ask yourself, "What else could be going on?"

This kind of reflection can be especially helpful in moments of conflict or confusion. By intentionally practicing empathy – putting yourself in someone else's shoes – you can reduce misunderstandings and build stronger connections. It's not always easy, especially when emotions are running high, but the effort to understand others more deeply can significantly improve how we relate to one another.

Let's take a quick show of hands. Who here has ever assumed someone was upset with them, only to find out later that they were completely off base? It's a common experience, right? And it's a perfect example of how perception bias can trip us up. Remember, even small shifts in how we view and respond to others can lead to much better communication and relationships.

Be as playful and vulnerable around this topic as possible. You may want to share some light-hearted examples.

Judgment Vs. Curiosity

Introduce the polarity of judgment vs. curiosity:

Building on the idea of perception bias, another big barrier to connection is our tendency to judge others quickly, often based on incomplete information or assumptions. Instead of jumping to conclusions, it's helpful to choose curiosity over judgment in our interactions. This means giving others the benefit of the doubt and assuming they're doing the best they can with what they have.

When you shift from judgment to curiosity, you approach situations with empathy and understanding instead of defensiveness or blame.

For example, if a colleague misses a deadline, instead of thinking they're careless or irresponsible, ask yourself, "What might they be going through that I don't know about?" This change in perspective can transform your relationships, leading to deeper connections and better collaboration.

Assuming The Best

When we assume the best in others, we naturally set ourselves up to have more compassionate and meaningful interactions. This approach reduces the chances of conflict and fosters a sense of psychological safety, where people feel understood, cared for, and valued.

For example, rather than assuming a colleague is carelessly leaving the fridge open at lunch, we can assume they meant to close it, but have some other challenges they're facing: maybe they're in a rush to get back to their desk to help a colleague, or have extra stressors at home distracting them.

Choosing curiosity over judgment involves choosing to believe that people are doing the best they can. This means extending grace to others and recognizing that everyone has challenges and limitations that may not be visible. When you approach others with this mindset, you create an environment where vulnerability is welcomed, and trust is strengthened. This doesn't mean ignoring problems or avoiding difficult conversations; rather, it means approaching these situations with an open heart and a desire to understand, rather than to criticize.

Shifting From Judgment To Curiosity

So these are all compelling, heart-warming ideas, but how do we put them into practice?

An easy way to do this is to consciously replace judgmental statements with curious, kind questions. For example, instead of thinking, "They're being difficult," try asking yourself, "I wonder what

they're going through?" Or instead of reacting with, "They should know better," consider, "How can I support them in this situation?"

To help you start swapping judgmental behaviors for more generous ones, we've created the Judgment vs. Curiosity Toolkit.

Judgment Vs. Curiosity Toolkit

Introduce the Judgment Vs. Curiosity Toolkit. You may wish to simply invite them to read it themselves, look over it and discuss each of the behaviors with a partner, or invite different people from the group to read out each of the dot points (the judgment behavior and the curious behavior alternative):

To help you swap judgmental behaviors for more generous ones, let's use the Judgment Vs. Curiosity Toolkit. First, identify the judgment behaviors you might fall into – don't worry, we all do it – and consider the curious behavior you might replace it with. I'll quickly share a few examples from the toolkit:

► **Judgment:** Pointing The Finger

When a family gathering doesn't go as planned, you immediately blame a family member for not helping with the preparations, thinking, "If they had pitched in, it would have gone smoothly."

Curiosity: Pondering Our Part

Instead of blaming a family member, reflect on your own contributions. Ask yourself, "How did I contribute to this outcome? What could I have done differently to make things run more smoothly?"

► **Judgment:** Assuming The Worst

You receive a brief and seemingly abrupt email from your manager and immediately think, "They must be angry with me for something I did."

Curiosity: Actively Asking

Instead of jumping to conclusions, ask for clarification. You might respond with, "I noticed the email was quite brief. Was there something specific you wanted to discuss further?"

You can look at the rest of the examples in your workbooks on page 139. I'll give you some time to read them now and discuss with the person next to you.

Rapid Reflection

To help you personalize this list, let's take a moment to reflect on the following questions on page 140 of our workbooks:

- ▶ *Which of the judgment behaviors do you tend to fall into?*
- ▶ *What is a curious behavior you'd like to replace it with?*

Write down your thoughts in your workbook.

Allow participants a few minutes to reflect on their thoughts, then invite a discussion about their reflections.

PART 5: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

In this part of the session, you will discuss the concept of psychological safety in relationships. We'll begin with a Rapid Reflection on the qualities of clients' existing safe, supportive relationships.

Rapid Reflection

Before we dive into the theory, take a moment to reflect with a partner about the following questions on page 141 in your workbook:

- ▶ *When you're feeling creative, listened to, and able to speak freely, what's happening?*
- ▶ *What are you thinking and feeling?*
- ▶ *Who is there?*
- ▶ *What are they doing or not doing? How are they showing up?*

You have 10 minutes to discuss. We'll then share our key findings as a larger group.

Give people 10 minutes to discuss in pairs and then bring together the whole group to share and discuss key themes in the responses.

What Is Psychological Safety?

Introduce psychological safety:

Let's talk about psychological safety, a concept that's crucial for fostering open and honest communication in any setting, especially in the workplace. Have you ever hesitated to share your true thoughts or opinions because you were worried about the potential fallout? That hesitation is a sign that psychological safety might be lacking.

Psychological safety, as extensively researched by Dr. Amy Edmondson, is the feeling of being able to express yourself without fear of negative consequences – whether that's being judged, rejected, or even punished. This sense of security is incredibly important at work because when people feel safe to speak up, it leads to greater innovation, better learning opportunities, and more effective teamwork. In short, it's good for the workplace and the worker.

But this concept isn't just important in professional settings. In any relationship, psychological safety is just as vital. Without it, people tend to hold back, keeping their real thoughts and feelings to themselves. This can lead to surface-level connections where important issues remain unaddressed, ultimately weakening the relationship. To create a truly safe environment, it's essential to build trust, encourage openness, and be willing to be vulnerable with one another.

When psychological safety is present, individuals feel more confident to engage in honest and meaningful conversations, which strengthens the bonds within the relationship. It's not just about individual comfort; it's about the overall health of the relationship or team. People are more likely to take risks, share ideas, and collaborate effectively when they feel secure, creating a culture of mutual respect and trust. On the flip side, when psychological safety is absent, it can foster fear, anxiety, and disengagement, making even the strongest connections feel shaky.

Striving For “Safe Enough”

Now, let's consider the idea of “safe enough.” Is it realistic to expect that every conversation we have will be completely comfortable? Dr. Vikki Reynolds offers a different perspective, suggesting that instead of aiming for perfect safety in our interactions, it's more practical and more beneficial to strive for a sense of “safe enough.”

What does “safe enough” mean? It's about creating a space where we feel secure enough to engage in difficult or uncomfortable discussions without expecting them to be entirely free of tension. This approach acknowledges that growth often involves discomfort. Avoiding tough conversations can lead to unresolved issues that fester over time, potentially causing more harm to the relationship than the difficult conversation itself.

By striving for “safe enough,” we make room for honesty and vulnerability, even when it’s challenging. This mindset encourages us to embrace the complexities and messiness of human interactions as a necessary part of building stronger, more resilient relationships. It’s not about avoiding discomfort but rather learning to navigate it in a way that ultimately strengthens our connections with others.

As you think about your own relationships – whether at work or in your personal life – consider how you can cultivate an environment that feels “safe enough” for open dialogue. What steps can you take to build trust and encourage others to speak their truth, even when the conversation might be tough?

Rapid Reflection

To help us ground this theory in our experience, turn to page 143 of your workbooks and, in pairs, take turns sharing on the following prompts:

Reflect on a conversation you’ve been avoiding:

- ▶ *What fears are holding you back?*
- ▶ *What is the likelihood of these fears actually happening?*
- ▶ *What positive outcomes could arise from this conversation?*
- ▶ *How might you set up a “safe enough” environment?*
- ▶ *What could be some short- and long-term benefits of addressing this issue sooner rather than later?*

You’ll have 10 minutes – five each – so you may wish to set a timer to swap roles and make sure each person has had a chance to share on each question. Take any notes on the activity page that may help you reflect later on.

Give people 10 minutes to converse about these prompts and then invite a few pairs to share their general learnings (not the details of the stories) with the group. What themes stood out? What was similar between them? What was different?

The Power Of Clear Communication

Introduce the power of clear communication:

Why does unclear communication often lead to conflict? Brené Brown emphasizes that “Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind,” highlighting the importance of clear communication in preventing misunderstandings and building trust. When we’re vague or indirect, others may fill in the gaps with their own assumptions, leading to misaligned expectations and unnecessary conflict. Being clear, even when it’s uncomfortable, is a form of respect that strengthens relationships.

Clear communication also builds reliability and predictability in relationships. When we’re clear and direct, we show others that we can be trusted to say what we mean and mean what we say. This builds confidence in the relationship and reduces the likelihood of conflict. In contrast, unclear communication creates uncertainty and mistrust, which can erode even the strongest relationships.

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Introduce the fact that we tell ourselves stories that can get in the way of connection:

Clear communication is essential, but it’s also important to be aware of the stories we tell ourselves in our interactions. Brené Brown uses the phrase, “The story I’m telling myself is ...” to help us recognize the narratives we create in our minds. These stories are often based on assumptions rather than facts, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

For example, you might think a friend’s silence means they’re not interested, when in reality, they might just be dealing with their own issues. Recognizing that these stories are just that – stories – can help you approach interactions with more curiosity and less judgment. By naming the stories you tell yourself, you can separate your assumptions from reality and engage in more honest and effective communication.

Having Kind Conversations

Introduce kind conversations:

Inspired by nonviolent communication and the work of Brené Brown, kind conversations are a powerful approach to handling difficult discussions with empathy, clarity, and respect. The goal is to foster understanding and connection, even when dealing with conflicts or misunderstandings. This approach encourages you to express your needs and feelings honestly while also considering

the needs and feelings of others. By doing so, you can turn potential conflicts into opportunities for deeper connection and mutual respect.

Most conflicts arise from unmet needs and miscommunications rather than ill intent. Instead of blaming or criticizing, Kind conversations focus on clearly expressing what you observe, how you feel, the story you're telling yourself, what you need, and what you'd like to happen next. This approach reduces defensiveness and creates a collaborative atmosphere where solutions can be found that meet everyone's needs.

The OFTEN Process For Kind Conversations

Introduce the OFTEN process for scaffolding kind conversations:

To help structure a kind conversation, you can use the acronym OFTEN: observations, feelings, telling the story, essential needs, and next steps. Let's go through each step now.

- ▶ **O: Observations** – This usually begins with something like, “I’m noticing ...” You start by objectively describing the situation without judgment. Example: “I’m noticing that during our recent meetings, you’ve been arriving about 10 minutes late.”
- ▶ **F: Feelings** – This usually begins with something like, “This is making me feel ...” Here you express how the observation makes you feel. Example: “This is making me feel a bit frustrated and concerned.”
- ▶ **T: Telling the Story** – This usually begins with something like, “The story I’m telling myself about this is ...” This is about sharing the narrative you’ve created in your mind about the situation. Example: “The story I’m telling myself about this is that maybe these meetings aren’t a priority for you, or that there might be something else going on.”
- ▶ **E: Essential Needs/Values** – This might sound like, “This is going against my need to/ value of ...” Here, you clearly state how this scenario is compromising your needs/values. Example: “This is preventing me from meeting my need of starting our meetings on time, which is important for staying on schedule.”
- ▶ **N: Next Steps** – This might sound like, “In the future, can you please ... And I will ...” End by proposing a clear, actionable request for how to move forward. Example: “In the future, can you please try to arrive on time for our meetings? And I will make sure to send reminders if that would help.”

It should be noted: While it’s helpful to work through each of the OFTEN steps in our own time, you may find that you don’t need to share all your reflections in the conversation. Sometimes just opening up about what you’re observing and sharing your needs may be enough to start an effective dialogue.

Kind Conversations: Tips & Tricks

Introduce the tips and tricks that can support clients to have kind conversations. Note: You may want to read them aloud, invite people to read them aloud to the class and discuss them, or simply invite people to read in pairs and reflect on them.

In your workbook on page 147, you'll find a list of tips and tricks to help you have kind conversations.

Rapid Reflection

We're going to take a moment to engage in a Rapid Reflection exercise. This exercise is designed to help you think through a situation in your life that could benefit from a kind conversation. The goal is to clarify your thoughts and feelings so that you can approach the conversation with empathy, clarity, and respect.

Please turn to page 149 in your workbook and take some time to reflect on the following prompts as I read them out. You may find it helpful to refer to the emotions listed in the Wheel of Emotions as you consider your feelings.

First, think about a situation in your life that could be resolved with a kind conversation. What are your observations? These should be the objective facts of the situation. Take a moment to jot these down.

Pause for reflection.

Next, reflect on how this situation has been making you feel. Again, consider using The Wheel of Emotions to help identify and name these feelings. Write down your emotions.

Pause for reflection.

Now, think about the stories you've been telling yourself about this situation or the people involved. What assumptions or narratives have you created in your mind? Note these down.

Pause for reflection.

Consider what essential needs or values might be in play here. What is it that you need or value that may be influencing how you feel? Write these down.

Pause for reflection.

Finally, think about the next steps that you or others could take to improve the situation. What actions could lead to a positive resolution? Write down your ideas.

Pause for reflection.

Once you've completed your reflections, take a few moments to review what you've written. This will help you approach the kind conversation with a clear and thoughtful perspective.

PART 6: CREATING A ROOTED ROUTINE FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Guide participants in creating a Rooted Routine for Relationships:

Having explored the benefits of positive relationships, common barriers to connection, the power of psychological safety and kind conversations, we'll now take what we've learned and apply it by creating a Rooted Routine for Relationships.

While you may create any Rooted Routine for Relationships you like (after all, the best habits are those we're most eager to experiment with), if you're unsure where to start, here are a few suggestions based on our shared learning during this session. You may wish to form a habit around:

- 1. Creating moments of high-quality connection.*
- 2. Asking a daily HQC question.*
- 3. Using the OFTEN process to help you clarify your thoughts and feelings around conflict – and have a conversation where necessary.*
- 4. Spark a kind conversation.*
- 5. Or any other ideas you have.*

Remember, the key is to choose a behavior you truly want to do and make it small enough that you're confident you can do it every day for the next week.

Take 10 minutes now to complete the Rooted Routine Template on page 153 of your workbook. Once you're done, those who want to can share their habits with the group.

Allow time for participants to complete the template, then invite them to share their chosen habits.

PART 7: CLOSING

Summarize the session:

Thank you all for your participation today. We've covered a lot about relationships, from why they matter to how we can overcome barriers and build stronger connections.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions on page 152 in their workbook:

As we wrap things up, take a moment to write down your final reflections on page 152 of your workbook. Then we'll share any key a-ha's we had with each other.

- ▶ *What was one surprising insight you had around the science of Relationships?*
- ▶ *What was the most useful piece of information you received today?*
- ▶ *Who might you share this information with to create a wellbeing ripple in your life?*

After people have spent a few minutes writing their responses, hold space for people to share and highlight the wins and key lessons of the day.

Homework

Explain the homework:

For homework, you'll put your Rooted Routine for Relationships into practice. Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook provided in your workbooks and come ready to do a Reflection Round at the start of our next session.

Any final questions or thoughts before we conclude?

Session 6

MEANING



Aims

The aims of this session are to:

- ▶ Reflect on what gives your life meaning.
- ▶ Understand the role of meaning in enhancing overall wellbeing.
- ▶ Explore how balancing passions contributes to a fulfilling life.
- ▶ Learn strategies to craft more meaningful work experiences.
- ▶ Create a Rooted Routine to sustain a sense of meaning in everyday life.

PART 1: OPENING

In this opening section, we'll review the homework from the previous session, engage in a Reflection Round on Rooted Routines, and introduce the theme of today's session: Meaning.

Review Homework

Remind clients of their homework:

As you'll remember, the exercises for the last session's homework were to:

- ▶ *Create and action a daily Rooted Routine for Relationships.*
- ▶ *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook.*
- ▶ *Reflect on the experience of trying your Rooted Routine for Relationships.*

How did we do with this homework?

You may want to let individuals share with the group how far along they got with their homework or do a "show of hands" for who completed: all, some, or didn't get around to doing their homework.

Introduce The Rooted Routine Reflection Round

Remember, wherever you got to with your homework since the last session, the Reflection Round will help you clarify your strengths, struggles, and next actions you might take to improve your practice when we create another Rooted Routine this week.

So take some time now to individually reflect on your Rooted Routine for Relationships homework by responding to the following questions on page 155 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine for Relationships homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you notice challenges and resistance with your Rooted Routine for Relationships homework?*
- ▶ *What are you continuing to learn about Rooted Routines?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Once you've had some time to reflect, turn to the person next to you and spend 5–10 minutes taking turns sharing your responses.

We'll then come together as a group, and I'll invite some pairs to share their responses, including any similarities or differences in their strengths, struggles, and strategies going forward.

Provide the group with 5–10 minutes for individual reflection. Then another 5–10 minutes for paired reflection. Finally, take 5–10 minutes to let the group debrief. Make sure to normalize any struggles and draw in any themes you've been noticing develop in their Rooted Routines practices over the previous sessions.

Review Session & Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session (Relationships) and introduce Meaning as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, we focused on the R in the PERMAH model: Relationships. We delved into the importance of building and maintaining high-quality connections, understanding common barriers to deep connections, and fostering psychological safety to enhance our relationships. The session provided practical strategies for strengthening both personal and professional relationships.

Today, we shift our focus to "Meaning" in the PERMAH model. We'll explore the critical role meaning plays in our overall wellbeing and how we can actively cultivate a sense of purpose and significance in our daily lives. The session will guide you through reflecting on your current sources of meaning, balancing your passions, crafting meaningful work, and creating Rooted Routines that reinforce your sense of purpose.

Give a deeper overview of the content:

To get into the detail a bit more, today we'll be:

- ▶ *Reflecting on what gives our lives meaning.*
- ▶ *Exploring the role of meaning in enhancing overall wellbeing.*
- ▶ *Inquiring into how balancing passions contributes to a fulfilling life.*
- ▶ *Learning strategies to make our work more meaningful. After all, many of us are at work most of our waking hours!*
- ▶ *We'll then create a Rooted Routine to help us experience a sense of meaning more frequently in everyday life.*

Are there any questions before we start?

Hold space for any questions, then begin.

PART 2: REFLECTION ROUND

In this part of the session, participants will engage in a Reflection Round to explore their personal experiences with meaning and purpose. This will help them identify what's been working well and where they might be struggling in their quest for meaning.

To help you connect with a sense of meaning in your life, we're going to start with a Reflection Round. This activity is designed to help you reflect on your experiences with meaning and how you can deepen that sense in your life.

Please turn to page 159 of your workbooks and take a moment to think about the following questions and write your responses:

- ▶ *When it comes to connecting to a sense of meaning in your life in the past, what has gone well?*
- ▶ *What challenges have you faced in connecting with a sense of meaning?*
- ▶ *What lessons have you learned about what is meaningful in your life?*
- ▶ *What would you like to try to reconnect with a sense of meaning?*

Then, with a partner, take 10 minutes to share your responses with each other. Make sure that each person gets time to share and listen actively for any similarities or differences between you. We'll then come together and share as a group.

Allow participants five minutes to reflect on these questions in their workbooks. Afterward, ask them to turn to the person next to them and take turns sharing their responses. Facilitate a group discussion afterward, asking if anyone would like to share their insights.

PART 3: WHY MEANING MATTERS

In this section, we'll explore the concept of meaning, why it's crucial for our wellbeing, and how it differs from mere happiness. Participants will reflect on what brings meaning into their lives and consider the benefits of living a life with purpose.

The Importance Of Meaning

Is happiness the ultimate goal we should be striving for, or is there something deeper and more enduring? While happiness is certainly valuable, it's often fleeting. Moments of joy and pleasure come and go. What truly sustains us through the ups and downs of life is meaning. Meaning gives us a sense of coherence, purpose, and direction that anchors us, even when happiness feels out of reach.

In our everyday lives, the pursuit of happiness alone can sometimes feel shallow or unsatisfying. We might find ourselves chasing after fleeting moments of joy, only to be left wanting more. But when we focus on finding meaning, we connect to something greater than ourselves, whether it's through relationships, personal growth, or contributing to our community. This connection creates a strong, stable foundation for long-term fulfillment and wellbeing.

Finding meaning isn't always straightforward; it often requires us to dig deep, reflect on our values, and consider the purpose behind our actions. There's a richness in this process that goes beyond the surface level. Sometimes, discovering meaning can be challenging, as it may involve facing difficult truths, making sacrifices, or stepping out of our comfort zones. Yet, it's precisely this complexity that makes meaning so rewarding.

When we invest in meaning, we gain more than just temporary satisfaction – we gain a sense of significance and direction that guides us through life's challenges. Meaning doesn't just fill our days with purpose; it gives us the resilience to handle the tough times and the clarity to appreciate the good ones.

Introduce The Reflection Activity

A life rich in meaning is associated with greater vitality, happiness, and even longevity. While the journey to find meaning is deeply personal, opportunities to do so are all around us. By choosing to spend our moments wisely – through acts of kindness, pursuing passions, and fostering relationships – we can forge a powerful purpose that transforms not only our lives but also the lives of those we touch. Let's take time now to reflect on sources of meaning in our own lives.

- ▶ *If you had a scrapbook of photos capturing sources of meaning in your life, who or what would be in there?*
- ▶ *What makes these things, people, or places meaningful to you?*

Please turn to page 161 of your workbook and take some time to write down your reflections.

After a few minutes, ask if anyone would like to share their thoughts with the group. Encourage sharing and discussion around the different sources of meaning in participants' lives.

The Benefits Of Having Meaning

Explain the benefits of meaning, pausing to ask some reflective questions around any research findings. We've suggested some, but use any that interest you or your clients, inviting people to discuss them as a whole group.

Since the dawn of communication, humans have been trying to figure out what gives life meaning. It's as if we have an innate understanding that having something to strive for and contribute to is crucial to living a good life. But what does modern research tell us about the importance of meaning?

Recent studies have shown that having a strong sense of meaning in life can lead to a wide range of positive outcomes. Let's take a closer look at some of these findings:

First, individuals who feel that their lives are meaningful tend to report much higher levels of life satisfaction. In fact, a comprehensive review of the research found a strong connection between meaning and life satisfaction, suggesting that the more meaning people find in their lives, the more satisfied they feel overall.

Ask the individuals to share with the group:

Why do you think there is such a strong connection between meaning in life and life satisfaction?

Second, having a sense of meaning greatly enhances psychological wellbeing. People who see their lives as meaningful are two to four times more likely to report feeling good mentally and emotionally compared to those who don't have that sense of meaning.

Third, a strong sense of meaning can even protect against depression. Research has found that people who feel their lives have meaning are 30% to 50% less likely to develop depression over time. This shows how important it is to have something that gives our lives purpose, especially when we're facing challenges.

But the benefits don't stop there. Having a sense of purpose in life can also help us live longer. One study discovered that individuals with a strong purpose had a 20% lower risk of dying over a five-year period compared to those who didn't feel as purposeful.

It's also been shown that people with a strong sense of meaning tend to be healthier physically. They report lower levels of chronic illnesses and have a reduced risk of heart disease. This connection between meaning and physical health highlights how deeply our mental and physical wellbeing are intertwined.

Ask the individuals to share with the group:

Why do you think meaning can have such a profound effect on our physical health?

Moreover, meaning boosts our resilience. People who feel that their lives have meaning are one and a half times more likely to bounce back quickly from difficult situations. This resilience helps them navigate life's ups and downs more effectively.

Those with a strong sense of meaning also experience higher levels of positive emotions. They feel good more often, with research showing that meaning is linked to more frequent positive feelings and fewer negative ones. This makes it clear that meaning plays a significant role in our emotional wellbeing.

Another important benefit is that a sense of meaning leads to better social relationships. People who find meaning in their lives are more likely to have strong, satisfying connections with others. They're more socially connected, which contributes to their overall wellbeing.

In addition, meaning has been linked to greater engagement in academic and work settings. Students and employees who see meaning in what they do tend to be more involved and motivated.

They show 20-40% higher levels of engagement, which leads to better performance and satisfaction in both school and work.

Finally, having a clear sense of meaning can help reduce anxiety and stress. People who know what gives their lives meaning report much lower levels of these negative emotions. Meaning acts as a buffer, helping them manage stress and anxiety more effectively.

Much of the research suggests that finding meaning in our lives is not just a philosophical pursuit; it has real, tangible benefits that can enhance every aspect of our wellbeing. From better mental and physical health to stronger relationships and greater resilience, the pursuit of meaning is a powerful tool for living a fulfilled and balanced life.

Ask the individuals to share with the group:

But over to you: I'm curious to know: how has a sense of meaning – or making meaning – helped you to navigate challenges in your life? Take a few minutes to discuss with the person next to you.

Encourage a paired discussion, followed by a brief group discussion on how having or pursuing meaning has supported them in their lives. Note any themes and normalize if people are still working on a sense of meaning. Remind them it is a “moving feast” and our sense of meaning changes as we do.

What Are We Working Towards?

Let's begin by asking ourselves an important question: What are we really working towards in our lives? Are our daily efforts truly aligned with what matters most to us? It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of life, constantly moving from one task to the next without pausing to consider whether these activities actually align with our values.

When we're busy without a clear purpose, it can lead to burnout and a deep sense of dissatisfaction. Burnout often occurs when we're under stress for too long without finding meaning in what we do, leaving us feeling exhausted and unfulfilled.

Many of us have experienced working hard without feeling fulfilled. This usually happens when our efforts don't align with our core values or long-term goals. On the other hand, when our actions reflect what we truly care about, we're much more likely to feel that our lives have purpose and meaning. Achieving this alignment requires self-awareness and the courage to make changes that better reflect our priorities.

Meaning = Coherence, Purpose, And Significance

Let's take a moment to explore what it really means to find meaning in our lives. There are three core elements that help us cultivate a deep sense of meaning: coherence, purpose, and significance.

***Coherence** is about understanding how the different pieces of our lives fit together into a bigger picture. It's the sense that our experiences, roles, and actions aren't just random, but that they connect in a way that makes sense to us.*

***Purpose**, on the other hand, is having clear goals or aspirations that guide our actions and give us a sense of direction. It's what drives us to get up in the morning and pursue something meaningful.*

***Significance** is the belief that what we do matters – that our efforts have value and make a difference, both to ourselves and to others.*

Let's consider an example to illustrate these concepts: Imagine someone working in the field of environmental conservation. For this individual, coherence might come from recognizing how their daily tasks are part of a much larger mission to protect the environment. They see their work as more than just a job; it's a contribution to a global effort to combat climate change, which aligns with their deep-seated values of sustainability and care for the planet.

Purpose for this conservationist could be centered around a specific, impactful goal, such as preserving a certain endangered species. This clear objective provides them with motivation and direction, helping them stay committed to their work even when faced with obstacles or slow progress. Purpose gives their work a sense of urgency and importance.

Significance, the third element, might be felt when they witness the tangible outcomes of their hard work. For instance, seeing an increase in the population of an endangered species they've been working to protect can be incredibly fulfilling. Additionally, when they receive appreciation from the community or recognition from peers, it reinforces the value of their contributions, making them feel that their work is truly meaningful.

People who nurture these three elements – coherence, purpose, and significance – often experience greater overall wellbeing and resilience. These aspects of meaning help us navigate life's complexities with a clear sense of direction and a deeper understanding of our place in the world. They remind us that what we do matters, not just to ourselves but to the broader community and the world at large.

Making (And Remaking) Meaning

It should be noted that finding meaning isn't always straightforward, especially during tough times. Life events like job loss, illness, or the end of a relationship can disrupt our sense of meaning. However, even in these challenging moments, we have the ability to make small changes that infuse our daily lives with more meaning.

By adjusting how we approach our work, relationships, or daily routines, we can rebuild or discover new sources of coherence, purpose, and significance. This process of making and remaking meaning helps us navigate life's difficulties while maintaining a sense of direction and fulfillment.

Rapid Reflection: Coherence, Purpose, And Significance

Now, let's take some time to reflect on how these three elements of meaning – coherence, purpose, and significance – show up in your own life.

Please turn to page 163 in your workbook, where you'll find a set of questions designed to help you explore these elements. As you reflect on each question, consider how the different parts of your life fit together, what goals keep you motivated, and what makes your actions feel significant. The questions are as follows:

For coherence (making sense) we'll explore:

- ▶ *How do the different parts of your life fit together to tell your story?*
- ▶ *When things get tough, how do you make sense of what's happening?*

Then for purpose (making progress), we'll ask:

- ▶ *What goals or dreams keep you motivated each day?*
- ▶ *How do your daily activities help you work toward something bigger?*

Finally, when considering significance (making an impact), we'll ask:

- ▶ *What makes you feel like your life really matters?*
- ▶ *How do your actions and relationships make you feel valuable to others?*

Take 10 minutes to reflect individually on these questions, then we'll discuss in pairs for five minutes and then as a whole group. Let's begin.

Allow participants 10–15 minutes to reflect on these questions and write down their responses. After everyone has had time to complete the activity, invite participants to share in pairs and then invite any willing pairs to share their insights with the whole group.

You may wish to encourage a discussion by asking participants to consider questions like:

- ▶ Which element of meaning do they feel most connected to right now?
- ▶ Is there an area where they're struggling to find coherence, purpose, or significance?
- ▶ What small changes could they make to bring more meaning into their daily lives?

Facilitate the conversation, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences. This discussion can help participants gain new perspectives on how to align their efforts with their values, ultimately leading to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

PART 4: BALANCING OUR PASSIONS

In this part of the session, we'll explore how we can sometimes fall into obsessive passion, where one aspect of our lives takes over and disrupts balance. Participants will assess their current life balance using the Passion Pie activity and reflect on how they can create a more harmonious passion.

Finding Meaning Through Impact

Let's begin by thinking about the impact our work has on others. How does your work influence those around you? One of the most powerful ways to find meaning in what we do is by recognizing that our efforts make a positive difference in the lives of others. Whether it's helping a colleague, contributing to a team project, or serving customers, knowing that our actions have a meaningful impact can bring a deep sense of satisfaction and purpose.

For instance, people working in fields like healthcare, education, or social work often experience a strong connection between their daily tasks and the wellbeing of others. This connection can make their work particularly meaningful. But even if your role doesn't involve direct service, you can still find meaning by considering how your work contributes to a larger goal or benefits others in some way.

Recognizing When Passion Becomes Obsessive

Now, let's shift our focus to the role passion plays in our lives. Passion can be a wonderful thing. It drives us to excel and pursue our goals. But there's a fine line between passion that enhances our lives and passion that starts to take over everything. Robert Vallerand, a researcher on passion, explains that when our drive to succeed becomes obsessive, it can start to dominate our lives. We might feel like we constantly need to prove ourselves or fear failure, leading to stress, burnout, and strained relationships.

This kind of obsessive passion consumes our time and energy at the expense of other important areas of life, leaving us feeling out of balance. On the other hand, harmonious passion is about finding a healthy balance. It allows us to engage in activities we love and find meaningful without letting them overshadow other crucial parts of our lives. When we cultivate harmonious passions, we can pursue our interests while maintaining healthy relationships, work-life balance, and self-care. This balance brings joy and fulfillment without the negative consequences of letting one passion take over everything else.

Assessing Your “Passion Pie”

To help you assess the balance in your life, let's imagine your life as a pie chart – your “Passion Pie.” Each slice of this pie represents a different area of your life, such as work, family, friends, rest, and personal growth. By breaking down your daily activities into these slices, you can gain a clearer understanding of how much time and energy you're dedicating to each area.

Please turn to page 167 in your workbook and take a moment to reflect on how you're currently allocating your time and energy.

Start by considering what percentage of your life is taken up by work. Shade in the portion of your pie that represents work.

Then, allocate and shade in the other important areas of your life – family, friends, movement, rest, play, and personal growth.

This visual representation can help you see where your energy is overly concentrated or where it might be lacking.

Reflecting On The Impact Of Your Passion Pie

Now that you've shaded in your Passion Pie, let's reflect on what this distribution means for your wellbeing and effectiveness as a facilitator.

Take a moment to consider the consequences of this allocation. If work dominates your Passion Pie, you might be experiencing stress, burnout, or strained relationships. On the other hand, if there's too little investment in work or areas of personal growth, you might feel a lack of fulfillment or purpose.

Reflect on these questions:

- ▶ *What is the impact of this distribution on your overall wellbeing?*
- ▶ *Where might there be too much or too little energy spent?*

This exercise is designed to help you become more aware of where adjustments are needed to create a more balanced and fulfilling life. Once you've had some time to reflect and write down your responses, we'll come together and make space to share any ah-has we've had and ask any burning questions.

Give clients time to reflect and invite them to ask any questions as they complete the practice as well.

Cultivating Harmonious Passion For Fulfillment

Let's explore how we can nurture a passion that truly enriches our lives without overwhelming us. We've all heard about the importance of finding our passion, but it's equally important to ensure that this passion brings harmony, rather than taking over our lives. Harmonious passion is about engaging in activities because they bring us joy and meaning – not because we feel obligated or driven by the need to meet external expectations. This approach to passion leads to a more balanced life, where resilience, satisfaction, and a sense of fulfillment naturally follow.

Think about your own life for a moment. Are there any activities you engage in that get you into a flow state? These absorbing, enjoyable hobbies are likely sources of harmonious passion – things you do because they genuinely make you feel alive, rather than because you think you should be doing them.

People who cultivate harmonious passions find that they can pursue their interests without sacrificing other vital areas of their lives, such as family, work, or health. This balance is key; it allows them to dive into their passions wholeheartedly while maintaining their overall wellbeing.

When passion is in harmony, it fuels positive emotions, keeps motivation high, and provides a deep sense of accomplishment. But, how do we ensure that our passions remain harmonious rather than becoming all-consuming?

Here are a few strategies to consider:

The first is setting clear boundaries, which can be easier said than done, I know. But it's essential to establish boundaries between different aspects of your life. This might mean setting specific times for work and sticking to them, or perhaps designating certain areas of your home as work-free zones to create a clear separation between professional and personal life. For example, you might decide not to check work emails after 7 p.m. or choose to keep your weekends free for personal activities. These boundaries help protect your work-life balance and prevent the stress that comes from constantly being "on."

Then we have prioritizing self-care, which involves making room for activities that recharge you – whether it's physical exercise, meditation, or hobbies that are unrelated to your work. These practices are not just 'nice-to-haves'; they are essential for sustaining your energy and preventing burnout. Consider how you currently unwind and relax. Are you making enough time for these activities, or are they falling by the wayside? Remember, detaching from work during your free time isn't just about rest; it's also about enhancing your performance when you're back in action.

The last example is pursuing passions with genuine interest. It can be all too easy to start a hobby or project and go on autopilot, so we should regularly ask ourselves: Am I doing this out of genuine interest, or is there another motive, such as an underlying pressure to prove something? For example, imagine a software developer who loves problem-solving and creating new things. They might thrive by taking on innovative projects that align with their strengths and values, rather than getting bogged down in repetitive tasks that don't excite them. It's important to ensure that what drives you is your passion, not external validation.

These strategies – setting boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and pursuing passions with genuine interest – are crucial in maintaining a balanced relationship with your passions. When applied thoughtfully, they help you sustain enthusiasm, avoid burnout, and allow your passions to enrich your life rather than dominate it.

Rapid Reflection: Maintaining Balance

Now that we've discussed harmonious passion, let's take a moment for a final Rapid Reflection. Please turn to page 169 in your workbook and consider the following question:

- ▶ *What strategies have you found helpful in your own life for maintaining balance?*

Invite participants to individually write down and then share their strategies and experiences with the wider group. Encourage an open discussion about how they can continue to apply these strategies to maintain balance and cultivate harmonious passions in their lives.

Making Your Passion Pie

Let's imagine that the commitments and context of our lives are like the ingredients we use to bake a pie. But what shapes the final result – our "Passion Pie" – are three essential elements: our purpose, our investments, and our energy levels. These are the factors that determine whether our passions nourish us or lead us down a path of imbalance.

First, let's talk about purpose. Purpose is the driving force that gives our life meaning. It's the "why" behind everything we do. When we have a clear sense of purpose, it can be incredibly motivating and satisfying. It pushes us forward, especially when challenges arise. However, there's a fine line between being purpose-driven and letting that purpose take over our lives. If we tie our self-worth too closely to our purpose – particularly if that purpose is centered solely around our work – it can lead to an unhealthy obsession. Imagine a teacher who is so focused on student success that they work late every night, neglecting their own health and personal life. Over time, this can result in burnout and a loss of the very passion that once fueled them.

Next, let's consider where we invest our time, energy, and resources. These investments are the building blocks of our daily lives. When we choose tasks and activities that align with our core values, we naturally create a healthy balance between work and personal life. For instance, someone who values creativity might choose to spend their free time painting or writing, which not only brings joy but also recharges them for their professional responsibilities. However, if we're constantly bombarded by external pressures – like unrealistic deadlines or societal expectations – our investments might start to feel more like burdens. This can lead to stress, frustration, and a sense of being stuck in an endless loop of tasks that don't bring us fulfillment.

Finally, let's talk about energy levels. Our energy is the fuel that powers everything we do. How we manage our energy – through adequate rest, recovery, and self-care – determines how well we can maintain our efforts and enthusiasm over time. Picture someone who is passionate about marathon running. They know that in order to perform well, they need to balance intense training with proper rest and nutrition. Without this balance, they risk injury and exhaustion. The same principle applies to all areas of our lives. If we neglect self-care or struggle to switch off from work, it could be a sign that we're out of balance. Over time, this can lead to exhaustion, both physically and mentally.

Taking the time to reflect on these three elements – purpose, investments, and energy – can give us valuable insights about areas we might need to adjust to ensure that we not only satisfy our hunger for meaning and achievement, but also support our overall wellbeing.

Rapid Reflection: Passion Pie

Having explored our current Passion Pie, and the ingredients that affect whether we fall into more obsessive or harmonious passion, let's now move into a Rapid Reflection to further explore how you can create more balance and meaning in work and life. Please turn to page 171 in your workbook and reflect on the following questions:

Purpose

- ▶ *What matters most to me right now? Based on this, how would I ideally divide up my Passion Pie?*

Investments

- ▶ *What small actions might I take to better balance my investments in a way that is sustainable and fills my “meaning bucket”?*

Energy

- ▶ *How am I resting and recovering? Am I giving myself enough rest to have the energy to live out my more balanced passion pie?*

Sharing

- ▶ *Whom might I need to share my passion pie with (e.g., colleagues, boss, partner)? How and when will I share it?*

Allow participants 10–15 minutes to reflect on these questions and jot down their thoughts. Afterward, invite participants to share their reflections with the group. Facilitate a discussion by encouraging participants to think about which areas of their lives may need rebalancing and how they can take practical steps to achieve this.

PART 5: CRAFTING MEANINGFUL WORK

In this part of the session, we'll dive into the importance of crafting meaningful work. Participants will reflect on the tasks they perform at work and explore strategies to infuse more meaning into their daily activities. This section includes a practical activity where participants will use job-crafting techniques to make their work more engaging and fulfilling.

The Importance Of Meaningful Work

Are you finding joy in your work? Leo Tolstoy once said, "If you're not enjoying your work, you should either change your attitude or change your job." This highlights how important it is to find satisfaction and meaning in what we do. Meaningful work doesn't just happen; it's often the result of individuals actively shaping their tasks, relationships, and perceptions.

Rapid Reflection: Crafting Meaningful Work

Let's start by reflecting on the tasks that make up your role at work. Please turn to page 173 of your workbook and list your 10 most important tasks this week.

Next to each task, mark it as either energizing (E), de-energizing (D), or neutral (N).

Reflect on what makes the energizing tasks so engaging. Consider the following questions:

- ▶ *Does the task call on your strengths?*
- ▶ *Is it interesting or meaningful to you?*
- ▶ *Do you enjoy collaborating with the people involved in this task?*
- ▶ *Does the timing, pacing, or location of the task suit you?*

These reflections will help you identify what factors make your work meaningful and where there's room for improvement.

After participants have completed their reflections, invite them to share some of their insights with the group. Discuss how recognizing these factors can help them craft more meaningful work.

Introduce Job Crafting

Explain how we can shape our job for more meaning:

We spend a significant portion of our waking lives at work, so it's crucial that our work feels meaningful and fulfilling. Job crafting is a powerful approach that allows us to reshape our work experience to better align with our values and goals, making our daily tasks more engaging and purposeful.

Let's explore how we can make our jobs more meaningful. Building on the concept of job crafting, Rob Baker expands the idea into five key areas: what, who, why, where, and when. Each of these areas offers a way to tailor your work experience so that it better aligns with your values and personal goals.

What (Tasks)

This involves changing the tasks you perform, either by taking on new responsibilities that match your strengths or by finding new ways to approach the tasks you already do. For example, you might experiment with a different method for handling routine tasks, such as using voice dictation instead of typing, to make them more engaging and enjoyable.

Who (Relationships)

Focus on the relationships you build and nurture at work. This might involve connecting with colleagues who inspire and support you, or deepening the relationships you already have. Regular, informal check-ins with coworkers can help foster a sense of community and collaboration, making your work environment more supportive.

Why (Purpose)

This is about reimagining how you view your work. By linking your tasks to a broader purpose, you can find more meaning in routine activities. For example, you might begin to see everyday tasks like managing finances as a way to support your business and its stakeholders, giving these tasks a deeper sense of purpose.

Where (Environment)

This involves modifying your physical or virtual work environment to better suit your needs. It could involve rearranging your workspace, working from different locations, or tweaking your home office setup to boost comfort and productivity. Even small changes can significantly improve how you feel about your work.

When (Timing)

This involves changing when you tackle certain tasks. This might mean reorganizing your workday to match your natural energy levels or designating specific times for focused work. Adopting flexible, personalized time management strategies can help you achieve a better work-life balance and make your daily tasks feel less overwhelming.

By considering these five elements – what, who, why, where, and when – you can craft a work experience that feels more fulfilling, balanced, and aligned with what matters most to you.

Practical Applications Of Job Crafting

Let's dive into how we can take the concept of job crafting and apply it to our daily work life. Job crafting isn't just a theoretical idea; it's a practical approach that can make your work more engaging and fulfilling. Think of it as customizing your job to better fit your strengths, interests, and values.

Let's say you're finding it difficult to build meaningful relationships at work. This is an area where job crafting can really make a difference. Maybe you could start by scheduling regular coffee chats or informal check-ins with colleagues to build stronger connections. Or perhaps you could take the initiative to join a work group or committee that aligns with your interests, allowing you to meet new people within the organization.

The key is to experiment with small, manageable changes that could have a big impact on your job satisfaction and overall wellbeing. This idea of making small adjustments is what Rob Baker and other experts refer to as "micro-crafting." It's about fine-tuning the details of your workday to better align with what energizes and motivates you.

Ask yourself: What small tweaks could you make to your current tasks or routines that would make your workday more enjoyable? How could you better structure your time, your interactions, or your environment to support your own wellbeing and performance? Remember, even small changes can lead to significant improvements over time.

By practicing micro-crafting, you can gradually shape your work experience to be more aligned with your personal goals and values, leading to greater fulfillment and less stress in the long run.

Your Micro-Crafting Toolkit

Introduce the toolkit. You may want to read through each of the suggestions, or invite members of the cohort to take some time to read through the toolkit and ask some people to share their favorite micro-crafting actions and why.

To help you start experimenting with job crafting, we've put together a Micro-Crafting Toolkit. This toolkit includes small adjustments you can make to bring more meaning into your daily work in each of the five areas of crafting. Take a look at the toolkit now and note down or highlight any micro-crafting actions you might want to try. We'll be expanding on this shortly in a reflective activity.

Remember, job crafting is a process of trial and error. Not every attempt will be successful, and that's perfectly okay. What's important is to approach it with a playful and curious mindset, being open to trying new things.

Rapid Reflection: Micro-Crafting

Let's now take a moment to reflect on how you can apply these ideas to your own role. Please turn to page 177 in your workbook and consider the following:

- ▶ *Look at the tasks you currently have in your role. Choose one that feels particularly de-energizing or neutral to you.*
- ▶ *Next, identify which area of job crafting you'd like to focus on (what, who, why, where, when).*
- ▶ *Within that job-crafting area, select a behavior from the Micro-Crafting Toolkit – or create your own – to experiment with.*

Take 10 minutes to write down your responses and then share with the person next to you. We'll then come together as a group and share some of our micro-crafting ideas.

Give participants a few minutes to complete this reflection. Afterward, encourage them to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. Facilitate a discussion about the small changes they plan to implement and how these might help create a more meaningful and fulfilling work experience.

PART 6: CREATING A ROOTED ROUTINE FOR MEANING

In this final part of the session, participants will consolidate their learning by creating a Rooted Routine for Meaning. This habit will help them sustain a sense of meaning in their everyday lives. The facilitator will guide participants through the process of choosing and designing their Rooted Routine for Meaning, ensuring it is practical and achievable.

Introduce The Concept Of Rooted Routines for Meaning:

Having explored the advantages of having a sense of meaning in work and life, and the opportunities and challenges we face when balancing our passions, it's time to apply what you've learned by creating and practicing a Rooted Routine for Meaning. Rooted Routines are small, simple actions that you can integrate into your daily routine to reinforce your sense of purpose.

Choosing Your Habit

You may create any Rooted Routine for Meaning you like, but if you're unsure where to start, here are a few suggestions:

- ▶ *Take a photo each day of something that fills your life with meaning.*
- ▶ *Choose one of the strategies we discussed to help cultivate more harmonious passion.*
- ▶ *Redraw your ideal Passion Pie and perform a daily Reflection Round on your efforts to better balance your commitments.*
- ▶ *Playfully experiment with a daily micro-crafting behavior at work.*

Designing Your Rooted Routine

Please turn to page 181 of your workbook and use the Rooted Routine Toolkit to design your Rooted Routine for Meaning. Remember, the key to success lies in choosing a behavior you truly want to do and shrinking it until you feel at least 8/10 confident that you can do it each day for the next week.

Here's a refresher on how you'll structure your Rooted Routine:

Grounded Beginnings

An existing action or routine in your day that would naturally allow you to add a new wellbeing habit.

Nurturing Action

A small, manageable action you can take right now to help foster your wellbeing.

Thriving Moment

Once you've completed your action, how you will celebrate your success, no matter how small.

Nourishing Reflection

How you expect to feel after completing your action.

Give participants time to create their Rooted Routine for Meaning. Encourage them to think of simple, practical actions that they can easily integrate into their daily routines.

PART 7: CLOSING

Summarise the session:

Thank you all for your participation today. We've explored what gives our lives meaning, how we might balance our passions, and the potential we have to craft more meaningful work.

Rapid Reflection

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions on page 180 in their workbook:

As we wrap things up, take a moment to write down your final reflections on page 180 of your workbook. Then we'll share any key a-ha's we had with each other.

- ▶ *What was one surprising insight you had around the science of meaning?*
- ▶ *What was the most useful piece of information you received today?*
- ▶ *Who might you share this information with to create a wellbeing ripple in your life?*

After people have spent a few minutes writing their responses, hold space for people to share and highlight the wins and key lessons of the day.

Homework

Explain this session's homework:

For homework, please:

- ▶ *Create and action your daily Rooted Routine for Meaning using the Rooted Routine Template.*
- ▶ *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook.*
- ▶ *Run a Reflection Round on your Rooted Routine for Meaning experiment, considering what's working well, where you're noticing challenges or resistance, and what you're learning.*

Inform them that for the final week, instead of creating a Rooted Routine, you'll be planning and then enacting a Wellbeing Ripple in your chosen community/workplace.

And because happiness is best when it's shared, instead of creating a Rooted Routine at the end of next week's session, you'll be planning a Wellbeing Ripple in your chosen community/workplace. Don't stress! This can be as small as asking "What Went Well?" at the lunch table or introducing your team to the VIA Character Strengths Survey.

What's more, we'll have a coaching session after our final teaching session to help you plan your Wellbeing Ripple.

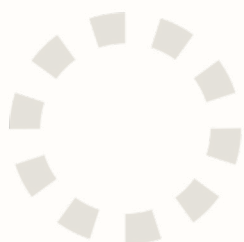
The best bit? We'll be coming back together in a few weeks time (insert dates here) to share our Wellbeing Ripple experiences together.

In the meantime, focus on your Rooted Routine for Meaning and have a wonderful week.

Do you have any final questions or thoughts before we wrap up?

Session 7

ACCOMPLISHMENT



Aims

The aims of this session are to help clients:

- ▶ Reflect on what accomplishment means to them personally.
- ▶ Understand how values drive meaningful accomplishments.
- ▶ Explore strategies for setting goals that align with their core values.
- ▶ Learn how to balance striving for success with savoring the journey.
- ▶ Develop self-compassion to navigate challenges effectively.
- ▶ Create a Wellbeing Ripple in their chosen workplace or community.

PART 1: OPENING

In this opening section, we'll review the homework from the previous session, engage in a Reflection Round on Rooted Routines, and introduce the theme of today's session: Accomplishment

Review Homework

Remind clients of their homework:

As you'll remember, the exercises for the last session's homework were to:

- ▶ *Create and action a daily Rooted Routine for Meaning.*
- ▶ *Log your experiences in the Rooted Routines Logbook.*
- ▶ *Reflect on the experience of trying your Rooted Routine for Meaning.*

How did we do with this homework?

You may want to let individuals share with the group how far along they got with their homework or do a “show of hands” for those who completed: all, some, or didn't get around to doing their homework.

Introduce The Rooted Routine Reflection Round

Remember, wherever you got to with your homework since the last session, the Reflection Round will help you clarify your strengths, struggles, and next actions you might take to improve your practice when we create another Rooted Routine this week.

So take some time now to individually reflect on your Rooted Routine for Meaning homework by responding to the following questions on page 183 of your workbook:

- ▶ *What went well with your Rooted Routine for Meaning homework?*
- ▶ *Where did you struggle with your Rooted Routine for Meaning homework?*
- ▶ *What are you continuing to learn about Rooted Routines?*
- ▶ *How might you improve your Rooted Routine outcomes in the future?*

Once you've had some time to reflect, turn to the person next to you and spend 5–10 minutes taking turns sharing your responses.

We'll then come together as a group, and I'll invite some pairs to share their responses, including any similarities or differences in their strengths, struggles, and strategies going forward.

Provide the group with 5–10 minutes for individual reflection. Then another 5–10 minutes for paired reflection. Finally, take 5–10 minutes to let the group debrief. Make sure to normalize any struggles and draw in any themes you've been noticing develop in their Rooted Routines practices over the previous sessions.

Review Session & Introduction

Summarize the message of the previous session (Meaning) and introduce Accomplishment as the focus for the current session:

Welcome back! In our last session, we focused on the M in the PERMAH model: Meaning. We explored the critical role meaning plays in our overall wellbeing and how we can actively cultivate a sense of coherence, purpose, and significance in our daily lives. We reflected on your current sources of meaning, the importance of balancing our passions, and explored how we can craft more meaningful work.

Today, we shift our focus to Accomplishment in the PERMAH model, where we explore the importance of setting and achieving goals that are aligned with our values, uncover the importance of savoring the journey as we strive towards our goals, explore the benefits of practicing self-compassion in the face of struggle and more.

Give a deeper overview of the content:

To get into the detail a bit more, today we'll be:

- ▶ *Reflecting on what accomplishment means to us personally*
- ▶ *Uncovering how values drive meaningful accomplishments*
- ▶ *Exploring strategies for setting goals that align with our core values*
- ▶ *Learning how to balance striving for success with savoring the journey*
- ▶ *Discovering how to develop self-compassion to navigate the inevitable struggles we'll face*
- ▶ *Beginning to create our Wellbeing Ripple plan as a first step for creating positive wellbeing change in our chosen workplace or community.*

Before you panic, we'll cover all the details later in the session together.

Are there any questions before we start?

Hold space for any questions, then begin.

PART 2: REFLECTION ROUND

In this part of the session, participants will engage in a Reflection Round to explore their personal experiences with accomplishment. This will help them identify what's been working well and where they might struggle to achieve what matters most.

To help you connect with a sense of accomplishment in your life, we're going to start with a Reflection Round.

Please turn to page 187 of your workbooks and take a moment to think about the following questions and write your responses:

When it comes to your accomplishments:

- ▶ *What has gone well recently in your efforts to achieve your goals?*
- ▶ *Where have you noticed challenges or resistance in accomplishing what matters most to you and why?*
- ▶ *What have you learned about yourself through your recent successes and setbacks?*
- ▶ *What would you like to try to accomplish more of what matters most to you?*

Then, with a partner, take 10 minutes to share your responses with each other. Make sure that each person gets time to share and listen actively for any similarities or differences between you. We'll then come together and share as a group.

Allow participants five minutes to reflect on these questions in their workbooks. Afterward, ask them to turn to the person next to them and take turns sharing their responses. Facilitate a group discussion afterward, asking if anyone would like to share their insights.

PART 3: VALUES IN ACTION

In this section, we'll explore how aligning goals with core values enhances accomplishment and wellbeing. Participants will reflect on their values, assess whether their goals are in harmony with what truly matters to them, and understand how this alignment can lead to deeper fulfillment and motivation in their personal and professional lives

Introduction To Values In Action

Today, we're diving into a crucial element of accomplishment: understanding whether our achievements are aligned with our core values. Picture this – how many times have you set a goal, worked hard to achieve it, and then felt a surprising lack of satisfaction once you did? This experience is more common than you might think, and it often stems from pursuing goals that don't truly reflect what matters most to us.

The renowned psychologist Steven C. Hayes, who developed acceptance and commitment therapy, likens values to a compass. Just as a compass helps you find your way in the wilderness, your values guide you through the complexities of life's decisions and challenges. But here's the catch: if the goals you set don't align with your inner compass, you might reach your destination only to find it wasn't where you wanted to go.

Invite people to consider (either to reflect individually or to briefly discuss for five minutes in pairs if there is time):

Have you ever been in a situation where you worked tirelessly toward a goal, only to feel that something was missing when you finally achieved it? What do you think was lacking?

Goals Vs. Values

Make the distinction between goals and values.

Let's delve into an important distinction: goals versus values. Goals are the tangible milestones we set – like landing a promotion or completing a marathon. But values are the underlying principles that drive these actions. Imagine you're on a road trip. Your goals are the cities you plan to visit, but your values are the scenic route you choose, the music you play, and the company you keep.

For instance, let's say you've set a goal to climb the corporate ladder. If this goal is aligned with your values of personal growth and continuous learning, you're likely to find the journey rewarding. But if the goal is driven by a need for external validation or societal expectations, you might find yourself feeling unfulfilled, even if you achieve the title you were aiming for.

Invite people to consider (either to reflect individually or to briefly discuss for five minutes in pairs if there is time):

What are some goals you've set recently? Take a moment to consider whether these goals truly reflect your personal values or whether they might be influenced by external pressures.

Re-introduce the VIA Character Strengths as “Values In Action” (VIA):

To help us get a clearer picture of our values, we can turn to the VIA Character Strengths framework, developed by Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman. Standing for “Values In Action,” these 24 character strengths were chosen by a team of researchers because they were universally valued across different cultures. Think of strengths like kindness, perseverance, and gratitude. These aren't just traits; they reflect your core values in action.

Let's turn to page 190 in your workbook where you'll find a table listing the VIA Character Strengths. Take a moment to revisit the core strengths that you or your classmates identified during our Engagement session. As you review them, ask yourself: Do these strengths resonate with what you value most in life? Or perhaps some other strengths in the table resonate more?

Invite people to pair up and discuss whether their VIA Character Strengths are reflective of their core values:

Now, I'd like you to pair up and share your thoughts on how these strengths reflect your values. How do these strengths show up in your life, and how do they guide your decisions? After discussing, we'll come back together to debrief.

After 10 minutes, invite people to come back and for individuals or pairs to discuss their findings. You may want to ask them questions like: What stood out to you? Did your VIA Character Strengths reflect your core values?

Normalize being unsure of your core values, as well, explaining that they can change with our experiences in life.

Expanding Beyond VIA: Exploring Other Values

Explain that there are other lists of values for them to explore:

While the VIA Character Strengths offer a powerful lens to view your values, they are just one tool in your toolkit. On page 191, you'll find a broader list of common values identified by theorists like Russ Harris that might resonate with you. If not, you can keep researching in your own time or come up with your own. What could be more value-aligned than that?

Take a few minutes to yourself to read the values and circle any that resonate. Then we'll complete the Rapid Reflection on page 193 of your workbook.

Once they've had two to three minutes to read the values, invite them to complete the Rapid Reflection.

OK, it's time for the Rapid Reflection. We'll do this individually.

First, ask yourself: Which of these values immediately stand out to you as priorities in your own life? These are the values that feel most important, the ones that guide your decisions, and the ones you hold close.

Now consider: Are you enacting these values regularly? Why or why not? Think about the ways in which these values are – or aren't – showing up in your day-to-day life. Are there barriers holding you back, or are there opportunities to bring these values into greater focus?

Finally, reflect on this question: What steps can you take to align your goals more closely with these values? Identify specific actions you can take to ensure that your goals are not just about achieving something, but about achieving something that truly matters to you.

Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts, and then we'll open the floor for discussion. I encourage you to share your reflections if you feel comfortable, as this can be a valuable opportunity to learn from one another's insights.

Give people five minutes or so to take notes on their values, then invite people to share their findings. You may wish to do this by reading each question aloud again and asking if anyone would like to share their response to – or their learnings provoked by – this question.

Normalize any confusion or unease if it emerges by reminding them that knowing and living our values is a lifelong endeavor.

Close this part by reminding participants of why values matter:

The goal here is to create a strong foundation for your future accomplishments, ensuring that the goals you set are not only achievable but also deeply satisfying because they reflect who you truly are. Let's ensure that our journey toward achievement is aligned with the direction our inner compass – our values – is pointing.

PART 4: GOALS THAT MATTER

In this section, we'll explore the concept of goal-setting and how aligning our goals with our values can lead to greater fulfillment. Participants will reflect on their current approach to setting goals, consider whether these goals align with their core values, and learn strategies to create goals that truly matter. We'll also discuss how job crafting can support value-based goal setting and provide a template to help participants create valuable, meaningful goals.

Exploring Your Approach To Goal Setting

Ask participants to reflect on their current approach to setting goals. Introduce the Rapid Reflection activity to help them assess whether their goals align with their values.

Now let's move into exploring how we can set values-aligned goals.

Let's begin by reflecting on your current approach to setting goals. How do you typically choose your goals? Are they guided by what truly matters to you, or are they influenced by external expectations, like what your family, friends, or society expects you to achieve?

Turn to page 194 in your workbook, where we'll engage in a Rapid Reflection exercise. You'll reflect on these questions individually for a few minutes.

Ask yourself: What is your current approach to setting goals? Do your goals reflect your personal values? Or have you found that sometimes you're pursuing goals that don't align with what's truly important to you? Take a moment to reflect on how effective this approach has been in helping you achieve what you want.

Next, consider: On a scale of 1–10, how effective has your goal-setting approach been in bringing you fulfillment, both during and after you've achieved your goals? Did you feel a deep sense of satisfaction after achieving your goals, or was there a sense of emptiness that followed? Reflect on why this might be the case. Could it be that your goals weren't fully aligned with your values?

Finally, think about the role your values played in the satisfaction you felt. When your goals align with your values, the journey becomes just as rewarding as the destination. But when there's a disconnect, even the biggest achievements can feel hollow.

Give people 5 –10 minutes to individually write responses to these questions. Afterward, bring people back together and invite them to share any insights they have. You may wish to do this by reading each question aloud again and asking if anyone would like to share their response to – or their learnings provoked by – this question.

Are We Setting The Right Goals?

Transition into discussing why setting the right goals is essential:

Let's discuss the importance of setting goals that align with our core values. Have you ever worked hard to achieve something only to realize that it didn't bring the happiness or satisfaction you anticipated? This is a common experience, especially when our goals are driven by external pressures rather than our own intrinsic values.

Russ Harris, a leading figure in acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), emphasizes that our goals should be deeply connected to our values. For example, if you've set a goal to advance in your career but your core value is family, you might find yourself feeling conflicted or unfulfilled, even if you achieve that promotion.

Why? Because the time and energy spent chasing that career milestone might pull you away from what truly matters to you – time with loved ones.

Similarly, Steven C. Hayes, the creator of ACT, suggests that goals should serve as milestones on a path that's guided by our values. Think of values as the North Star that directs our journey, ensuring that every goal we set and achieve contributes to a life that feels meaningful and fulfilling.

Job Crafting As Goal Support

Explain how job crafting helps us set and achieve valuable goals at work:

You've already explored the concept of job crafting earlier in this program. Job crafting involves making small, intentional changes to your work that help you align your day-to-day tasks with your core values. Today, we're going to look at how job crafting can specifically support the goals you've set for yourself – goals that are deeply connected to your values.

*Think about a value that's central to you – something that really drives your sense of purpose. Let's say one of your core values is **creativity**. You might set a goal to bring more innovative thinking into your role. To support this goal, you could use job crafting to seek out projects that require creative problem-solving or propose new ideas during team meetings. You might also set aside time each week to brainstorm new approaches to your work or experiment with different tools that stimulate your creativity, like using design software or collaborative platforms that encourage idea-sharing.*

*Here's another example. If one of your core values is **service**, you might set a goal to enhance how you contribute to the wellbeing of others in your work. To align this goal with your daily tasks, job crafting could involve volunteering for roles that allow you to directly assist customers or clients, such as taking on more responsibility in customer support or community outreach programs. You might also look at your existing tasks and find ways to make them more service-oriented, like improving a process that benefits your team or clients, or creating resources that help others succeed.*

These examples show that job crafting isn't just about making your work easier or more enjoyable – it's about making sure that your work aligns with your values, so that every step you take toward your goals is meaningful and fulfilling.

Creating Valuable Goals

Introduce the Valuable Goals Template and guide participants through the process of setting a small, playful goal that aligns with their values:

To help you create goals that truly matter, we've developed a Valuable Goals Template that combines the principles of SMART goals with values-based goal setting and job crafting.

Does anyone know what SMART goals are?

Invite someone to share what SMART goals are, if they know. If they don't, explain that:

SMART goals are goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. An example would be, instead of just saying, "I will get fit," we say, "I will go to the gym four days a week straight after work for the next month." Can anyone else think of another example?

After discussing SMART goal examples (if required), explain the Valuable Goals Template further:

This template will guide you through the process of setting goals that not only align with your values but also support your overall wellbeing.

Let's go ahead and turn to page 197 in your workbook and take a look at the Valuable Goals Template. This template will help you clearly define your objectives, identify which aspect of your wellbeing your goal supports, and understand why this goal is important to you.

The template also asks you to define what success looks like for your goal. How will you know when you've achieved it? Additionally, it prompts you to think about the support you might need along the way. Remember, you don't have to achieve your goals alone. Who can help you on this journey? Finally, the template encourages you to plan a celebration for when you achieve your goal. As we've learned from our work with Rooted Routines, celebrating small wins is key to staying motivated.

Let's take a few moments to fill out this template with one small, playful goal you'd like to set for yourself. There are no wrong answers here. This is about experimenting and seeing what resonates with you.

Are there any questions about the prompts in the template or the activity before we start?

As always, once we're done, we'll come together to discuss your experiences and insights.

Once people have had 10–15 minutes to write their goals down, invite at least three people to share the Valuable Goals they created. Invite them to discuss why they chose that goal and what the process of creating it was like. Invite them to share how this process was similar or different to other goal-setting processes they may or may not have tried in the past.

PART 5: STRIVING & SAVORING

In this section, we'll explore how balancing the pursuit of our goals with the practice of savoring can enhance our overall sense of accomplishment. We'll look at the importance of enjoying the journey, not just the destination, and how this can be integrated into our daily routines to boost our wellbeing.

Balancing The Journey With The Destination

When we think about accomplishment, we often focus on the end result – the moment we finally achieve what we've been working toward. But research shows that the journey toward our goals is just as significant, if not more so, than the final outcome. This is where the practice of savoring comes into play. Savoring means fully engaging in and appreciating the positive experiences we encounter along the way. It helps us stay motivated, enjoy the process, and enhance our overall wellbeing.

Have you ever completed a goal and felt a brief moment of satisfaction, only to find that the feeling quickly faded? This is a common experience when we don't take the time to savor the journey. By staying present and mindful, we can find joy and satisfaction not just in reaching our goals, but in the small victories and moments of growth along the way.

Let's take a moment now to practice this concept of savoring through a mindfulness exercise called "taking in the good," developed by Dr. Rick Hanson. This exercise is designed to help us focus on and absorb the positive aspects of our current experience, which can help build a sense of happiness, resilience, and overall wellbeing.

Play the clip of Rick Hanson performing the "taking in the good" exercise. However, if it doesn't work, or you'd prefer to lead it yourself, you can guide it using the script below.

Step-By-Step Guide: Taking In The Good

I'll lead us in it now.

Let's begin by bringing our attention to something positive in our current experience. It might be something small, like the feeling of the chair supporting you, the warmth of the room, or a pleasant sound you hear. It could also be a positive aspect of your life or a person you appreciate.

Step 1: Notice the good

First, take a moment to notice this positive aspect of your experience. Whatever it is, allow yourself to focus on it fully. It could be the satisfaction of being here, the sense of accomplishment from participating in this session, or the gratitude you feel for someone in your life. Simply bring your awareness to it.

Step 2: Enrich the experience

Now, enrich this experience by staying with it a bit longer. Let the positive feeling expand in your awareness. What do you notice about this moment or thought? Are there specific sensations, emotions, or images that come to mind? Allow the experience to become richer and more detailed, letting it fill your mind and body.

Step 3: Absorb the good

Next, imagine that you're absorbing this positive experience into yourself. Visualize the good feelings and sensations soaking into you, becoming a part of who you are. Picture the positive energy settling in your heart or mind, where it can nourish you and strengthen your resilience.

Step 4: Reflect and integrate

Finally, take a moment to reflect on how this exercise made you feel. Notice any shifts in your mood or perspective. Consider how you might bring this practice into your daily life, taking time to appreciate the good moments as they happen, no matter how small they may seem.

Regularly practicing taking in the good can help train your brain to focus on the positive, building a reservoir of inner strength and happiness that supports you through challenges.

Rapid Reflection

Encourage participants to reflect on their experience with the exercise:

Let's rapidly reflect together:

How was that experience of taking in the good?

What did you bring to mind?

How did you take in the good (with your thoughts, body sensations, hearing, smell, and so on)?

Give people space to share their individual experiences with the group if they're willing. If not, perhaps share your own experiences of savoring or taking in the good.

Normalize that they may not have felt a lot of very intense positive emotions. Explain that it is a practice and that it takes time to rewire our brain to take in the good more.

Smart Striving

Discuss how consistent, purposeful actions toward our goals can drive us forward, and how the principles we've learned over the past sessions can be applied to help us achieve lasting success.

While savoring helps us stay connected to the journey, striving – taking deliberate, purposeful actions toward our goals – is what propels us forward. Over the past six sessions, we've repeatedly seen the power of small, consistent actions in shaping our behaviors and lives. After all, it's not about making drastic changes overnight, but about taking small, manageable steps that build momentum over time.

Let's take a moment to reflect: How often have you set big, ambitious goals only to feel overwhelmed or lose motivation along the way? This is a common challenge, but the good news is that by breaking down these big goals into smaller, actionable steps, we can make significant progress without the stress or burnout.

BJ Fogg's research on behavior change underscores the importance of starting small. He suggests that small actions, when consistently repeated, can create powerful, lasting changes. For example, if your goal is to get fit, rather than committing to an hour at the gym every day (which might feel daunting), start with a small habit like doing just two push-ups every morning. This small action is easy to do, and once it becomes a habit, you can build on it, gradually increasing your exercise routine without feeling overwhelmed.

Research emphasizes that it's not just about the size of the action, but about the consistency with which we perform it. This consistency builds confidence, creates positive reinforcement, and ultimately leads to more substantial changes over time. Reflect for a moment: What small habits have you adopted over the past six sessions, and how have they started to shape your daily life?

In addition to Fogg's insights, James Clear, author of Atomic Habits, provides compelling evidence on the effectiveness of small, consistent improvements. Clear's work shows that if you improve by just 1% every day, you'll be 37 times better by the end of the year. Think about that for a moment. Just a 1% improvement each day can lead to a dramatic transformation over time. This statistic illustrates the power of small actions compounded over time.

Clear also highlights the importance of focusing on systems rather than goals. While goals are important for setting direction, it's the systems – our daily habits and routines – that determine our progress. For instance, if your goal is to write a book, the system might involve writing for 15 minutes every day. Over time, this small, consistent effort adds up, and before you know it, you've made significant progress.

Reflect for a moment: What systems or routines do you have in place that support your goals? Are there areas where you could apply the 1% rule to make small, daily improvements?

By combining the principles of savoring with smart striving, we create a balanced approach to reaching our goals. This approach allows us to enjoy the journey while steadily making progress, ensuring that we find satisfaction in both the process and the outcome.

Any questions?

Luckily, we have a handy tool to help you both strive towards your goals and savor the journey along the way. It's called the Daily Striving Sheet.

Daily Striving Sheet

Introduce the Daily Striving Sheet, a tool designed to help participants integrate the principles of savoring and striving into their daily lives:

The Daily Striving Sheet is a practical tool designed to help you plan your day with intention, aligning your actions with your values and supporting your overall wellbeing. By setting clear goals and incorporating moments of savoring and rest, you can create a more balanced and fulfilling daily routine. Here's how the sheet is structured:

Three Main Goals: *Start by identifying the three most important goals you want to accomplish today. These should be specific, achievable, and aligned with your broader life values.*

Values I'll Enact And How: Next, think about which values you want to honor as you work toward these goals. How will you bring these values into your actions? For example, if kindness is a core value, you might approach your tasks with a focus on helping others or offering support to a colleague.

Rest & Recovery: Plan how you'll take care of yourself throughout the day. This might include short breaks, a walk outside, or a moment of mindfulness. Rest and recovery are essential for maintaining your energy and focus.

Support I Might Need: Consider the support you might need to achieve your goals. This could be in the form of help from a colleague, a resource you need to access, or even just a bit of encouragement from a friend.

How I'll Take In The Good: Think about how you'll savor the positive moments of your day. This might include pausing to appreciate a job well done, enjoying a good meal, or taking a few moments to reflect on something you're grateful for.

How I'll Celebrate My Wins: Finally, plan how you'll celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small. Celebrating your successes helps reinforce positive behavior and keeps you motivated to continue striving.

Using the Daily Striving Sheet can help ensure that our daily efforts are meaningful, aligned with our values, and supportive of our overall wellbeing.

Are there any questions on this?

Your Turn: Daily Striving Sheet

Encourage participants to take some time now to complete their own Daily Striving Sheet. Remind them that this is an opportunity to plan a day that reflects their values, supports their wellbeing, and allows them to enjoy the process of working toward their goals.

Now, it's time to take a few minutes to complete your own Daily Striving Sheet. Think about the goals you want to achieve tomorrow, how you'll incorporate your values into your actions, and how you'll take time to savor the positive moments.

You'll have 10 minutes to do this exercise, then we'll come back and share our findings as a group.

Remember, this isn't just about getting things done; it's about creating a day that you'll both be proud of and enjoy.

To really see the benefits of this practice, consider making it a part of your morning routine for the next week. It could set you up for the success and satisfaction you've been striving for.

After people have had 10+ minutes to complete their Daily Striving Sheet invite people to individually share. You might ask: What was that experience like for you? How was it different or similar to other to-do lists you've written in the past? Would you try using this in the future?

Rapid Reflection

After participants complete their Daily Striving Sheet, encourage them to reflect individually and then share in pairs about their experiences of accomplishment and savoring.

After all this goal striving, let's take a moment to reflect together. Turn to page 202 of your workbook and use the Rapid Reflection questions to have a brief conversation about accomplishment and savoring with the person next to you. These are the questions:

Reflect on your last accomplishment. How did you feel during and after achieving it? Did you take the time to savor that moment, or did you quickly move on to the next task?

How can you take in the good in your daily life? This might include simple actions like pausing to appreciate a beautiful sunset, enjoying a moment of quiet after a busy day, or celebrating small wins.

After 5–10 minutes to share in pairs, invite a pair or two to share any insights they had together. Then, move on to the next section.

PART 6: STRUGGLE & SELF-COMPASSION

In this section, we'll explore the concept of struggle and self-compassion. Participants will engage in activities that reveal their inner dialogue during challenging tasks, and they'll learn how to transform that dialogue through the practice of self-compassion.

The Backwards Alphabet

Invite participants to turn to page 203 of their books and get ready to take 30 seconds to write the alphabet backward.

We will start with a fun but challenging exercise to see how we handle a little struggle. It's not about perfecting the task, but about observing how we treat ourselves when faced with something difficult or unfamiliar. Are we kind to ourselves, or does our inner critic take over?

Encourage a playful mindset before beginning the activity. Emphasize that the purpose is to observe their thoughts and reactions rather than achieve perfection.

Take 30 seconds to write as much of the alphabet as possible, but here's the twist: you must write it backward. Once you're done, put your hands on your head. Ready? Three, two, one ... Go!

Watch people's reactions and the feel of the room as people frantically try to write the alphabet backward. Do they laugh? Focus? Cheat?

After the activity, invite participants to reflect in pairs on their experience using the Rapid Reflection prompts below.

Rapid Reflection

Let's take a moment to jump straight into pairs and share their experience using the Rapid Reflection prompts on page 203 of your workbook.

How did that exercise make you feel? Were you frustrated, amused, or something else?

What kind of thoughts were running through your mind as you tried to complete the task? Were you kind to yourself, or did your inner critic take the stage?

Think back to other times when you've faced challenges or made mistakes. What do you typically say to yourself in those moments?

Give people 10 minutes to share and then invite a few pairs to share about their experience of the activity and any other reflections they had on the inner critic.

The Misunderstood Inner Critic

Introduce the concept of the inner critic and its impact:

Many of us are all too familiar with that harsh inner critic – the voice that insists we're not good enough or that we'll never succeed. But here's the thing: that voice isn't trying to hurt us; it's trying to protect us from failure, rejection, or disappointment. It's like an overprotective parent who ends up doing more harm than good.

Kristin Neff, a pioneer in self-compassion research, explains that this inner critic is often a misguided attempt to keep us safe. The problem is, instead of motivating us, it usually does the opposite. Excessive self-criticism can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and a sense of being stuck.

Think about a time when your inner critic was loud and clear. Did it push you to improve, or did it make you feel paralyzed and discouraged? How might things have been different if you had approached that situation with a bit more kindness toward yourself?

Self-Compassion Isn't A Path To Complacency

Introduce the idea that self-compassion can actually improve our performance:

Let's be honest for a moment. Has anyone ever been worried that if they become too self-compassionate, they might become slack or lazy? Contrary to what some might think, self-compassion isn't about letting ourselves off the hook or avoiding responsibility. Instead, it's about treating ourselves with the same kindness and understanding that we would offer to a close friend.

Kristin Neff's research has shown that self-compassion is linked to greater emotional resilience, lower levels of anxiety and depression, and an increase in overall wellbeing. Brene Brown, known for her work on vulnerability and shame, also emphasizes that people who practice self-compassion are more likely to take responsibility for their actions and engage in personal growth. Why? Because when we're kind to ourselves, we're more motivated to improve – not out of fear of failure but from a genuine desire to do better.

Think of it this way: When a friend struggles, we don't criticize them; we offer support and encouragement. Imagine the impact on your life if you treated yourself with the same kindness. How might your approach to challenges and setbacks change?

Defining Self-Compassion: The Three Pillars

Explore self-compassion in more depth:

So, we have some idea about what self-compassion is, but let's dig a little deeper. Key researcher Kristin Neff defines self-compassion as having three main elements: mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness.

1. **Mindfulness:** *This is about being aware of our thoughts and feelings without judgment. It's acknowledging our pain rather than avoiding it or becoming overwhelmed by it. Consider how often you push away difficult emotions instead of facing them with compassion. What might change if you simply allowed yourself to feel what you're feeling without adding criticism?*
2. **Common Humanity:** *Recognizing that suffering and imperfection are universal experiences. Everyone struggles; everyone feels inadequate at times. Remember, you're not alone in your challenges. How does it feel to know that others have walked this path before you?*
3. **Self-Kindness:** *This involves treating ourselves with warmth and understanding, especially during tough times. Instead of berating ourselves for our mistakes, we offer a kind word or a comforting thought. Next time you're hard on yourself, ask: What would I say to a friend in this situation?*

Research consistently shows that self-compassion can significantly boost our mental health. Lower anxiety, reduced depression, and enhanced emotional resilience are just some of the benefits associated with practicing self-compassion.

Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Judgment

To better grasp the power of self-compassion, let's compare it with self-judgment, its harsh opposite. When we judge ourselves, we reinforce feelings of isolation and inadequacy. But when we practice self-compassion, we create space for healing and growth. Let's take a closer look.

Now let's explore the contrasting sides of self-compassion and self-judgment. These two approaches to how we handle our inner world can significantly impact our overall wellbeing:

On the **self-compassion** side, we start with **mindfulness**. Mindfulness is all about observing our negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity. It's about acknowledging what we're feeling without judgment, simply allowing those thoughts and emotions to exist without letting them define us. When we practice mindfulness, we can step back from our thoughts, viewing them as passing events rather than getting entangled in them.

Can anyone think of an example of this in action?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

However, on the **self-judgment** side, we encounter **over-identification**. This is where we get caught up in negative self-narratives, allowing them to dominate our mindset. Instead of observing our thoughts, we become overwhelmed by them, often resisting or denying our emotions. This can lead to a cycle where negative thoughts fuel more negative emotions, creating a downward spiral that's hard to escape.

Who can share an example – doesn't have to be your own experience – of what this might look like?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Next, we have **common humanity** on the **self-compassion** side. Common humanity involves recognizing that suffering, mistakes, and personal inadequacies are part of the shared human experience. It's about understanding that we are not alone in our struggles; everyone goes through difficult times. This recognition helps us feel connected to others, rather than isolated.

In contrast, **self-judgment** brings us to **isolation**. When we're in a state of self-judgment, we often feel that our struggles are unique to us, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and shame. This sense of separation from others can exacerbate our difficulties, making it harder to reach out for support or to see that others may have experienced similar challenges.

Finally, on the **self-compassion** side, we find **self-kindness**. Self-kindness means treating ourselves with the same warmth and understanding that we would offer to a close friend. It's about being gentle with ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, recognizing that we are worthy of compassion and care. This approach fosters resilience and promotes emotional healing.

What might this look like in practice?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Conversely, **self-judgment** leads us to **self-criticism**. When we engage in self-criticism, we harshly judge ourselves for our perceived shortcomings. Instead of offering ourselves compassion, we may shame or berate ourselves, which can undermine our confidence and wellbeing. This harsh inner dialogue often leads to increased stress and a diminished sense of self-worth.

We don't need an example here. I think we all know this one quite well!

Reflect on these contrasting approaches and consider which path you find yourself on more often. What might change if you leaned more toward self-compassion?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Practical Steps To Cultivate Self-Compassion

So how do we practice self-compassion in the busyness of our modern lives?

Kristin Neff emphasizes the importance of tuning in to our bodies, testing our self-talk, and taking kind action to meet our needs. Here's how you can apply her teachings in your daily life:

1. **Tune In:** Become aware of the signs of struggle in your body and mind. Engage all your senses to fully experience what you're going through. Are you noticing tension in your shoulders, a pit in your stomach, or racing thoughts? Acknowledging these signs is the first step to self-compassion.
2. **Test Your Self-Talk:** Pay attention to the words you're using with yourself. Would these words pass the "best friend test"? What would someone who loves and cares about you say in this situation? Imagine your best friend or a loved one is listening to your inner dialogue. Would they approve, or would they be concerned?
3. **Take Kind Action:** Consider what you need in this moment. How can you support yourself with kindness and understanding? Is it taking a break, reaching out to someone, laughing at yourself, or simply giving yourself permission to rest? What action can you take right now to be kind to your body and mind?

By practicing these steps whenever you find yourself struggling, you can cultivate greater self-compassion and lessen the impact of self-criticism.

Backwards Alphabet #2

Re-introduce the activity:

I have some good news: we're going to have another go at the backward alphabet activity again. Once again you'll have 30 seconds to write as much of the alphabet as you can – backwards.

This time, however, when the time's up, I want you to turn to the person next to you and immediately take turns to ask each other each of the three self-compassion step prompts: Tune In, Test Your Self-Talk, and Take Kind Action.

Notice the sensations in your body and the thoughts in your mind, and get curious about how you might be kind to yourself in that moment. Any questions?

Well, let's go again then, shall we? Three, two, one... Write that alphabet backward!

Once the 30 seconds go by, remind people to share in pairs. Give them 10 minutes – five minutes each – to share. You may wish to remind them to swap at the five-minute mark.

Once people have shared invite pairs to share with the group about their findings. You may wish to ask the whole group each of the three prompts, and invite a few people to share about each of them. Thank them for their open-mindedness and playfulness.

Rapid Reflection

As an optional extra reflection: Invite people to reflect on the questions on page 202 of their workbook in pairs:

As a final reflection on this topic, take a moment to turn to page 208 in your workbook and share in pairs about your relationship with self-compassion:

How do you usually respond to setbacks, beyond the playful exercise we just did? Do you beat yourself up, or do you offer yourself kindness?

What might change in your life if you approached your struggles with more self-compassion?

Could this shift in mindset help you achieve your goals more effectively or feel more at peace with yourself?

PART 7: CREATING A WELLBEING RIPPLE

In this final part of our session, we'll reflect on the journey we've taken together through the Wellbeing X program and introduce the concept of creating a Wellbeing Ripple.

Reflecting On Our Journey

This is our final session of the Wellbeing X program, so it makes sense that we take a moment to reflect on the path we've traveled together. Each session has been a building block, providing you with the tools, insights, and strategies to enhance your wellbeing and create positive change. Think back over these sessions. What stands out to you the most? Which insights have stuck with you, and how have they begun to shape your daily life?

Session Highlights

In our very first session, we explored the timeless quest to define wellbeing, and together, we established a shared understanding using the PERMAH framework.

Remember when we dived into what it truly means to live a life filled with Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health? How did that shape your understanding of wellbeing?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

We also introduced the idea of the Wellbeing Ecosystem, emphasizing that our wellbeing is interconnected with others and communities. Lastly, we discovered the power of small habits – those small, consistent actions that can make a big difference over time.

When we moved into our Health session, we focused on the foundational aspect of PERMAH. We looked at the small yet powerful changes that can impact how we eat, move, sleep, and recover. Reflecting on your health habits, did you find yourself making any small adjustments? How have these changes supported your overall wellbeing?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Next, we explored Positive Emotions, where we broadened our understanding beyond just feeling “good.” We discussed how all emotions, even the difficult ones, play a role in our wellbeing. By learning to use emotions as data, we became more equipped to make value-based decisions that enhance our lives. Can you recall a moment when you used your emotions to guide a decision in a new way?

During our Engagement session, we delved into the power of strengths. Identifying and balancing our strengths helped us to achieve a state of flow – those moments of deep engagement and satisfaction. Did you notice how applying your strengths more consciously has impacted your daily activities?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

In the Relationships session, we explored the essential role of connection in our wellbeing. We talked about high-quality connections and psychological safety as the foundation for creativity and belonging. How have you fostered these types of connections in your life, and what impact have they had on your relationships?

Our session on Meaning led us to reflect on the importance of purpose in our lives. We discussed how meaning contributes to our health, happiness, and resilience, and explored ways to align our work with our values and strengths. What changes have you made to bring more meaning into your everyday activities?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Finally, in the Accomplishment session, we focused on setting and achieving goals that are aligned with our values. We emphasized the importance of savoring the journey, practicing self-compassion, and creating a Wellbeing Ripple. What insights did you gain about the nature of accomplishment and how to balance striving with savoring?

Allow time for responses and discussion.

Creating A Wellbeing Ripple

And now, we arrive at the concept of the Wellbeing Ripple. You've been practicing Wellbeing Habits throughout this journey, and now it's time to consider how you can extend these benefits to others. Who could benefit from what you've learned? Perhaps it's your workplace, a community group, or even your family. Think about the impact you can have. How will you share this wellbeing knowledge?

For inspiration, you might consider something as simple as asking, "What went well?" at the dinner table or introducing your team to the VIA Character Strengths Survey. The idea here is to create a small, manageable ripple that can grow into something more significant over time.

We'll be working on your Wellbeing Ripple plan, which is designed to help you clarify and plan how you'll take this step. You can find it on page 214 of your workbook. Let's read it together.

Introduce the Wellbeing Ripple plan, guiding participants to reflect on the prompts provided in their workbook.

You'll now have 10 minutes to reflect on each prompt and note down your ideas on your first draft template in your book. Feel free to scribble all over and play and recreate this and redraft as much as you like.

Let's get playful with it. Don't stress about getting it perfect. Remember, as Brene Brown says, perfection is the enemy of progress. We'll start working on a first draft together, so let's embrace this opportunity to brainstorm and explore possibilities.

Give them 10 minutes to write down some key thoughts. Perhaps inviting them to share with a partner if there is time. Invite anyone to share their initial ideas if they're willing to.

Celebrating Our Journey

Before we conclude, let's take a moment to celebrate. Celebration is an essential part of accomplishment. Reflect on your journey through the Wellbeing X program. What are you most proud of? How have you grown? As we wrap up, share with the person next to you what has been the most meaningful part of this course for you, and something you're proud of achieving along the way.

Invite participants to turn to page 216 in their workbook for final reflections. Encourage them to share their thoughts with a partner and then with the larger group.

Final Thoughts

Finally, I want to thank each of you for your dedication and commitment to this journey. You've done something truly significant by investing in your wellbeing and by considering how you can spread that wellbeing to others. Remember, even the smallest ripple can create waves of positive change. I look forward to hearing about your Wellbeing Ripples during our final Reflection Round.

Wrap up the session by giving final thank yous and sharing information about the upcoming Wellbeing Ripple planning coaching session and the Wellbeing Ripple Reflection Round, if applicable.

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