



Starlight
Children's Foundation

6 WAYS TO WELLBEING

**Applying positive psychology
to enhance your happiness**

Happiness matters to everyone

Starlight exists because happiness matters.

And while we create joy and laughter for sick kids each and every day, we know happiness matters to everyone. That's why we teach our whole team the principles of **positive psychology**.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of 'optimal human functioning', known as flourishing. It is based on the belief that people want to:

- Lead meaningful and fulfilling lives
- Cultivate what is best within themselves
- Enhance their experiences of love, work & play.

Put simply, applying positive psychology is a way of being proactive about looking after our own wellbeing.

Wellbeing is determined by the complex combination of our physical, mental, emotional and social health. It represents how we feel about ourselves and our life.

Looking after and prioritising our wellbeing is something we must take deliberate action on to thrive. We can identify the factors that are essential for flourishing, but what they look like and mean to each of us will be different.

Starlight has worked with Dr Suzy Green from The Positivity Institute for many years. Our own Positive Psychology Advisor Melissa Barker has developed some wonderful resources to help our team look after their own wellbeing, so in turn we can continue to create much-needed happiness for sick kids and their families.

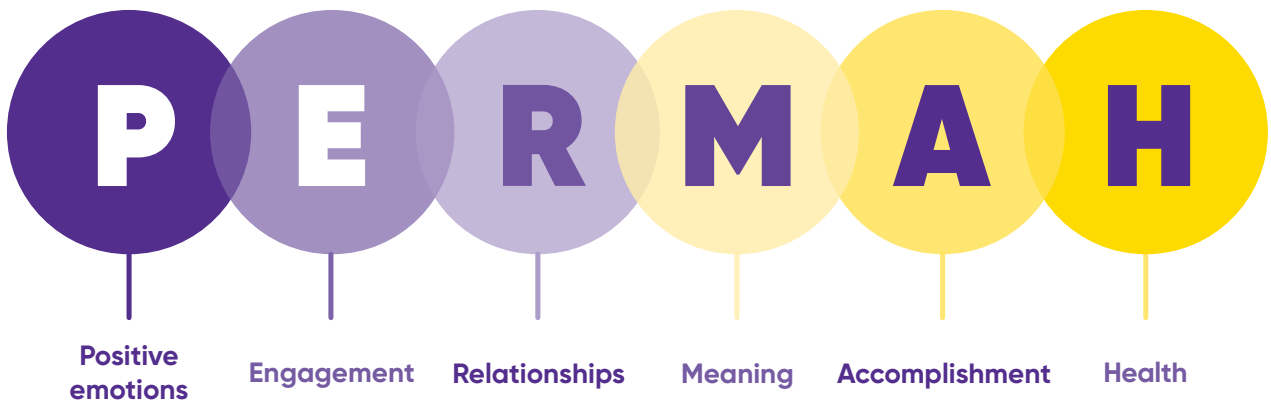
The information shared in this eBook is backed by decades of credible scientific research. We hope you find it useful in shaping your own positivity journey as you optimise your wellbeing.

Jo Barkl

Head of People & Culture
Starlight Children's Foundation Australia

Factors essential for flourishing

The PERMAH model was originally developed by positive psychology pioneer Martin Seligman with further luminaries contributing to the science of human flourishing. PERMAH identifies six essential elements to wellbeing:



Cultivating each element of PERMAH is a scientifically proven pathway to improving our happiness and quality of life.

We can't focus on just one element. We need all elements of the PERMAH model in order to flourish!

Positive emotions

Positive emotions are essential drivers of flourishing.

Flourishing is about experiencing authentic positive emotions more frequently than negative emotions.

It's **not** about being happy all the time! We can't deny our challenging emotions, which of course need to be explored and processed appropriately.

Positivity is being aware of our mindset and emotions rather than denying them; feeling and processing what we need to, acknowledging the emotions and experiences of others, and seeking support where needed.

The goal is to experience positive emotions more frequently than the challenging ones.

Joy Doing something that makes you happy.	Love Connecting and being present with someone and/or being able to be yourself with someone.	Gratitude Recognising and expressing your appreciation.	Serenity Experiencing a sense of peace, calm and presence in the moment.	Interest Pursuing or exploring something you're curious about.
Hope Being optimistic about what the future holds. Having things to look forward to.	Pride Taking steps towards achieving a meaningful goal.	Amusement Doing something for enjoyment and/or entertainment.	Inspiration Connecting to sources where you gain feelings of enthusiasm and new & creative ideas.	Awe Noticing what makes you feel a sense of wonder and respect.

How to cultivate positive emotions

Have a look at the table below and understand what each of these emotions mean to you. Ask yourself...

- "What gives me positive emotions?"
- "When do I feel most like me?"
- "How often am I experiencing or engaging in the things that give me positive emotions?"

Consider if there are things that are detracting you from experiencing positive emotions, and then think about how you can personally experience more of the positive ones.

Identify a focus area to help you experience positive emotions more frequently.

Engagement

Engagement is about playing to your strengths, enjoying what you do and having the opportunity to go into a '**state of flow**'.

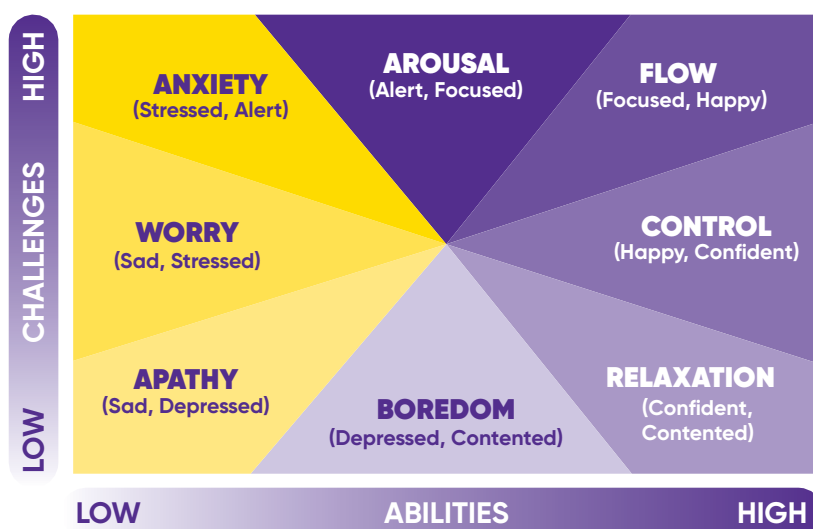
Flow is where challenge and skill perfectly meet.

- Challenge without the skills = anxiety or stress.
- Low level challenge and high-level skill = a state of boredom.

When we go into a state of flow we are at our most effective and efficient selves, and that is when we are at our best.

The following elements help us reach this state of flow:

1. We're involved in tasks that we have a good chance of completing
2. We're able to concentrate fully on the activity
3. The task has clear goals
4. The task gives immediate feedback on how well we are doing
5. Our involvement is "deep but effortless"
6. We exercise a sense of control over our actions
7. Our concern for self disappears
8. We lose our normal sense of time



How to cultivate engagement

Understand what flow means, and what it looks like for you. Ask yourself ...

- "When do I feel in flow?"
- "What am I doing when I feel that way?"

If you need help identifying activities that might get you into a flow state, understanding your strengths is a great place to start.

We recommend completing the free [VIA Character Strengths Survey](#).

Relationships

Relationships have greater impact on our wellbeing than any other element of the PERMAH model. The **quality of our relationships determines the quality of our lives.**

Relationships encompass our interactions with partners, friends, family members, colleagues and the broader community

Quality positive relationships are characterised by authentic connections with others, where both parties are actively contributing to and nurturing the relationship in a positive way. Both parties gain equal value from the relationship and there is no power imbalance. A positive relationship is typically characterised by satisfaction, happiness and stability.

Research shows:

- *The most important factor in human flourishing is building close relationships with others (Seligman, 2011).*
- *Socialising is one the most positive activities you can do in a day to increase wellbeing (Kahneman et al., 2004).*
- *People with strong and broad social relationships are happier, healthier, experience less cognitive decline and live longer. (Harvard Health 2010)*

Cultivating positive relationships

Think about the relationships in your life and ask yourself ...

- "Who am I spending most of my time around and are they supporting me in living a life that is authentic to me and my values?"
- "What are my most important and positive relationships?"
- "What do I do to positively nurture and contribute to the relationship?"
- "Are there any relationships in my life which I feel could benefit from my focus or a little more nurturing?"

Meaning

Meaning is about having purpose in your life. It comes from knowing what is important to you, what it is that you value and then actively making choices in alignment with your values.

**Meaning helps us focus on what is important to us
and where we place our time, energy and focus.**

When we have clarity on our core values, we can make active choices to live in alignment with them. When we do this, we experience more ease and much less friction in our life.

Our values help guide us to make decisions, choices and life changes we are comfortable with, instead of simply doing what we think others may expect.

When we notice ourselves using words such as "should do", "need to" or "have to", these are great indicators there may be external factors at play which might not be aligned with our values.

On the other hand, using words such as "want" is a great indication that we have intrinsic motivation or reasoning behind our thinking.

How to cultivate meaning

Start by identifying your top 5 values. If you need some help you can download a Core Values worksheet at <https://starlight.au/CoreValues>

Then ask yourself ...

- "In what areas of my life am I already living in alignment with my values?"
- "Are there any areas I could explore to live even more in alignment with my values?"

Accomplishment

Experiencing a regular sense of accomplishment is also crucial to our ability to flourish.

Accomplishments, great or small, can provide a sense of autonomy and mastery, allowing us to feel in control of our lives and competent in our abilities. Positive emotions, such as joy and pride also accompany successful accomplishments, further enhancing our overall happiness.

The pursuit and attainment of **personally meaningful goals**, those stemming from internal motivations, offers a sense of purpose and direction, contributing to a life rich in meaning.

How to cultivate accomplishment

Set SMART goals to motivate you.

Think about what stage of life you are at, and what's most important to you. The goal doesn't need to be huge. It might be strengthening a relationship with a loved one or getting a greater sense of balance in your life.

SMART goals are:

- S** Specific: Your goal states what you want to achieve and why. E.g. To _____ (your what), so that _____ (your why)
- M** Measurable: What will progress or outcomes of achieving this goal look like? How can you determine if your goal is on track or a success?
- A** Aligned: Ensure the goal is aligned to your values so you are motivated to complete it. Why does it excite you? Why does it matter to you. The 'your why' part of your goal statement is where you capture why the goal is important to you.
- R** Realistic: There are realistic steps you can start taking to achieve your key results and overall goal
- T** Time-framed: Your goal has a due date.

Health



Physical health is about functioning well in your body, but physical health can significantly affect your mental and emotional wellbeing.

The three pillars of physical health are:

1. **Movement/Exercise:** The body is designed to move. Engaging in moderate to physical activity can improve your fitness, muscle strength, flexibility and balance.
2. **Nutrition:** Eating a variety of foods that your body needs to function properly.
3. **Sleep:** Getting quality sleep allows your body the rest and recovery essential for repairing tissues, regulating hormones, consolidating memories and maintaining immune function.

How to cultivate greater health

Consider the following...

- What are your favourite ways to move, and how can you incorporate more of them into your life?
- What are your favourite feel good foods? Are they giving your body the nutrition that it needs?
- Are you getting at least 7-8 hours of sleep? If not, how could you put steps in place to achieve that?

Where to start?

Now that you know the six essential elements to wellbeing you can start to think about how you can put these into action to help you flourish.

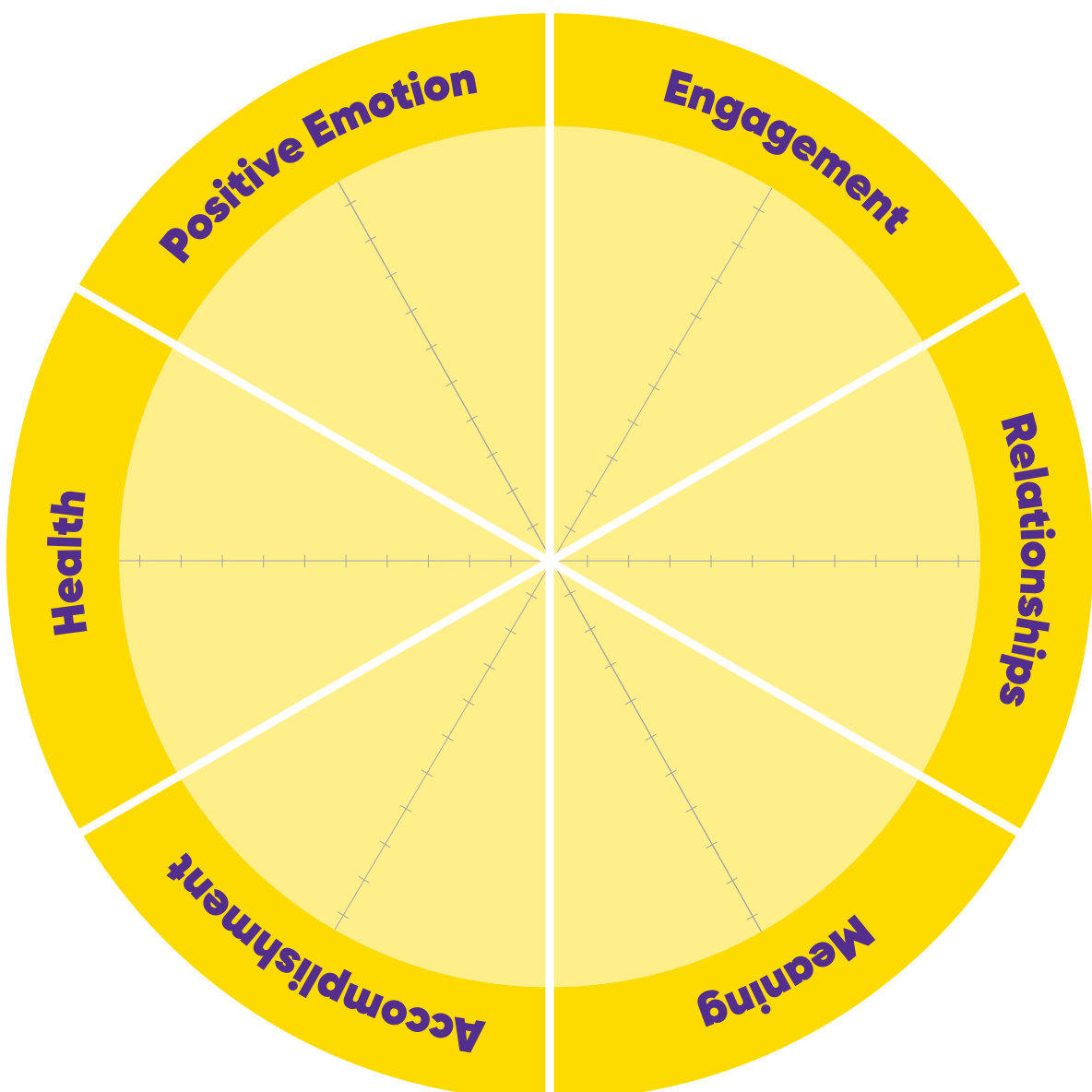
It's completely fine if at first you feel a little overwhelmed with all this information.

While we do need all six elements of the PERMAH model to flourish, we don't need to work on all of them at once!

And it's not all about making sweeping big changes either. It is about making manageable and meaningful tweaks in alignment with what matters most to you.

We suggest you start by scoring yourself on the PERMAH map. Give yourself a high score (by placing a dot towards the outer edges of the reel) for the elements you think you already do a great job of cultivating, and a lower score (with a dot more towards the centre) against the elements most in need of attention.

Consider developing a SMART wellbeing goal for yourself against the element with the lowest score, and work your way out from there.



Happiness matters to sick kids

At Starlight, we know there are serious benefits to having fun for sick kids!

When a child is diagnosed with a serious illness, life can become consumed by hospital and treatment. It's scary and overwhelming.

That's why Starlight exists.

Through play, creativity, and social connection, we create the fun and happiness sick kids and their families need to get through their toughest times.

Happiness is clinically proven to help sick kids cope better and feel better, and that's good news for their health and wellbeing!

From [Captain Starlight](#) creating fun for sick kids in hospitals and remote community clinics, to [Livewire](#) creating engagement and connection opportunities for teens, and [Starlight Wishes](#) giving sick kids and their families something amazing to look forward to, Starlight creates happiness when and where it is needed most.

Donate now

Donate now to help sick kids of all ages across Australia.

Fundraise

Join one of our fundraising challenges and events.
You can swim, cycle, walk, run, livestream, and much more.