

# **PERMA Model of Well-Being**

# Introduction

The pursuit of well-being and happiness is a fundamental aspect of human existence. In recent years, positive psychology has emerged as a field of study dedicated to understanding and promoting well-being. One influential framework within positive psychology is the PERMA model, developed by Martin Seligman. This model encapsulates five essential elements that contribute to a flourishing and meaningful life: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

Positive emotions play a vital role in well-being, encompassing experiences such as joy, gratitude, and contentment. By cultivating positive emotions, individuals can enhance their overall happiness and life satisfaction. Engagement refers to the state of being fully absorbed in activities, leading to a sense of fulfillment and personal growth. Building and nurturing positive relationships with others fosters social connections, support, and a sense of belonging, which are critical for well-being.

Finding meaning in life is another key element of the PERMA model. It involves aligning one's actions and goals with personal values and a larger sense of purpose, contributing to a deep sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Accomplishment, the final element, focuses on pursuing goals, achievements, and a sense of mastery. By experiencing a sense of competence and self-efficacy, individuals can enhance their overall well-being.

The PERMA model provides a comprehensive framework that can be applied in various contexts, such as education, workplaces, and personal lives. Educators can incorporate the elements of PERMA to design learning environments that promote student well-being and engagement. Employers can utilize the model to create positive work cultures that foster meaningful relationships and a sense of accomplishment. Individuals can apply the principles of PERMA to enhance their personal well-being and lead more fulfilling lives.

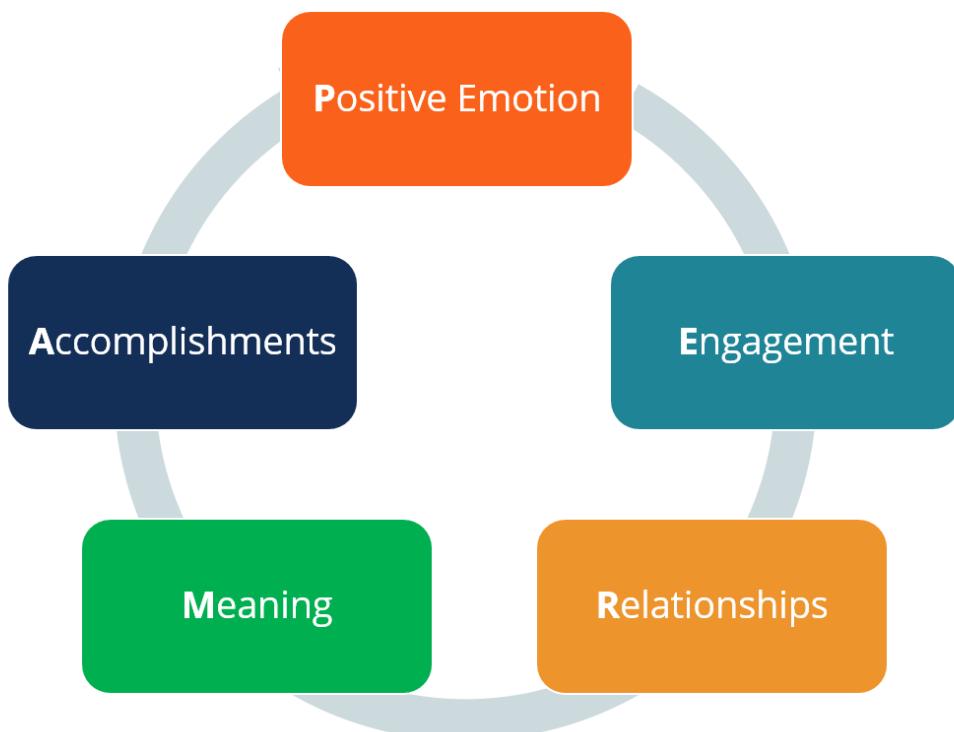
# Introduction

This abstract explores the significance of the PERMA model in understanding and promoting well-being and happiness. By recognizing and cultivating positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, individuals can embark on a journey towards a more satisfying and meaningful existence. The PERMA model serves as a valuable tool for individuals, educators, and professionals seeking to enhance well-being and foster positive mental health.

# PERMA model of well-being

The PERMA Model represents the five core elements of happiness and well-being. PERMA basically stands for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments.

American psychologist and educator Martin Seligman designed the PERMA Model. As a psychology practitioner, Seligman understands how natural it is for individuals to continuously seek for what makes them happy, regardless of their age, orientation, and status in life.



According to Seligman's research, he believes that the PERMA Model's five core elements are what people need in order to achieve a healthy sense of well-being, fulfillment, and satisfaction in life that can lead to finding life's true meaning.

# PERMA model of well-being

The PERMA model makes up WBT, where each dimension works in concert to give rise to a higher order construct that predicts the flourishing of groups, communities, organizations, and nations (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011).

Research has shown significant positive associations between each of the PERMA components and physical health, vitality, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and commitment within organizations (Kern, Waters, Alder, & White, 2014).

PERMA is also a better predictor of psychological distress than previous reports of distress (Forgeard et al., 2011). This means that proactively working on the components of PERMA not only increases aspects of wellbeing, but also decreases psychological distress.

According to Seligman, 2002 "Positive psychology takes you through the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment, meaning and purpose".

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

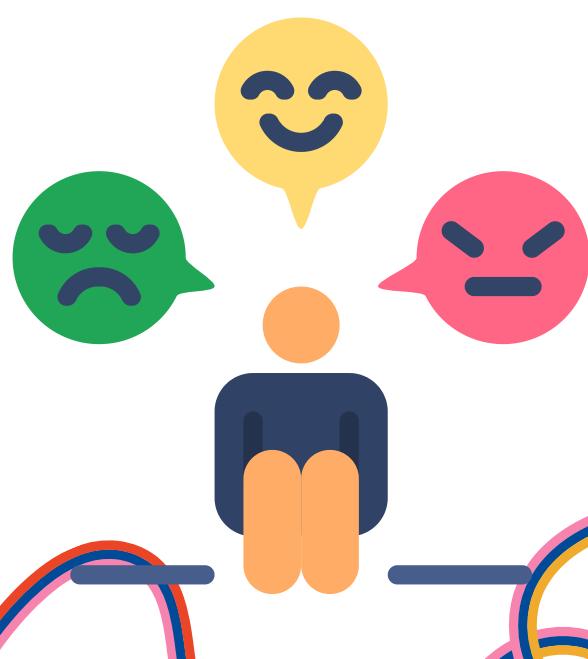
## Positive Emotion

Positive emotion is about feeling good and is obviously the most direct path to being happy. When one feels good, one feels positive. However, such positive emotion doesn't just stop at someone flashing a great smile because that is something anyone can do or, sadly, fake.

Positive emotion goes beyond that and may even involve acceptance of the past regardless of how bad it was and anticipating positively what the future holds.

However, such emotion does not necessarily mean that the person should be happy 100% of the time because that is impossible. But trying to achieve a positive emotion greatly affects many other aspects of life, such as the other elements found in the PERMA model.

The words pleasure and enjoyment are easily associated with happiness but are mistakenly understood to be equal and the same. Pleasure, according to the model, refers to one's physical needs being satisfied such as food, shelter, water, clothing, and safety. Enjoyment, on the other hand, is the satisfaction and fulfillment derived from doing something such as painting, cross-stitching, or exploring a car's engine. When enjoyment is achieved, happiness tags along, too.



# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Positive Emotion

Positive emotions are a prime indicator of flourishing, and they can be cultivated or learned to improve wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2001).

When individuals can explore, savor, and integrate positive emotions into daily life (and visualizations of future life), it improves habitual thinking and acting. Positive emotions can undo the harmful effects of negative emotions and promote resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Increasing positive emotions helps individuals build physical, intellectual, psychological, and social resources that lead to this resilience and overall wellbeing.

Ways to build positive emotion may include:

- Spend time with people you care about (Kok et al., 2013).
- Do hobbies and creative activities that you enjoy (Conner et al., 2018).
- Listen to uplifting or inspirational music (Juslin & Sakka, 2019).
- Reflect on things you are grateful for and what is going well in your life (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Engagement

The second element in the PERMA Model is Engagement, which refers to something that an individual can get engrossed with or absorbed in. Almost everybody has experienced getting lost in a book or living in “one’s own world” because of something so engaging. It is actually a very positive thing for a person’s intelligence, emotions, and skills, which is why a child who is busy putting together different Lego parts or piling blocks should be allowed to do so and let be.



Doing something that engages an individual also brings happiness even if it has nothing to do at all with one’s work or if it is deemed by others as silly. For example, a woman in her mid-30’s who loves to play the violin can do so, and while engaged in doing it can momentarily leave the present and live in the music.

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Engagement

Flow, or this concept of engagement, occurs when the perfect combination of challenge and skill/strength is found (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989).

People are more likely to experience flow when they use their top character strengths. Research on engagement has found that individuals who try to use their strengths in new ways each day for a week were happier and less depressed after six months (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

The concept of engagement is something much more powerful than simply “being happy,” but happiness is one of the many byproducts of engagement.

Ways to increase engagement:

- Participate in activities that you really love, where you lose track of time when you do them (Bonaiuto et al., 2016).
- Practice living in the moment, even during daily activities or mundane tasks (Belitz & Lundstrom, 1998).
- Spend time in nature, watching, listening, and observing what happens around you (Petersen et al., 2021).
- Identify and learn about your character strengths, and do things that you excel at (Lai et al., 2018).

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Relationships

Relationships are the third element of happiness and well-being, according to the PERMA model. As human beings, it is our natural desire to want to be connected and be part of a group such as a clique, school organization, or a circle. We were wired to not just want but need love, affection, attention, and interaction. It is why people need to create relationships with family, co-workers, friends, and peers, because it is from these groups that we are able to receive emotional support when things get rough.

A simple yet clear example of the need for belongingness and interaction is when high school girls go together to the comfort room even if only one actually needs to use it.



# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Relationships

Relationships in the PERMA model refer to feeling supported, loved, and valued by others. Relationships are included in the model based on the idea that humans are inherently social creatures (Seligman, 2012). There is evidence of this everywhere, but social connections become particularly important as we age.

The social environment has been found to play a critical role in preventing cognitive decline, and strong social networks contribute to better physical health among older adults (Siedlecki et al., 2014).

Many people have a goal of improving relationships with those they are closest to. Research has demonstrated that sharing good news or celebrating success fosters strong bonds and better relationships (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Additionally, responding enthusiastically to others, particularly in close or intimate relationships, increases intimacy, wellbeing, and satisfaction.

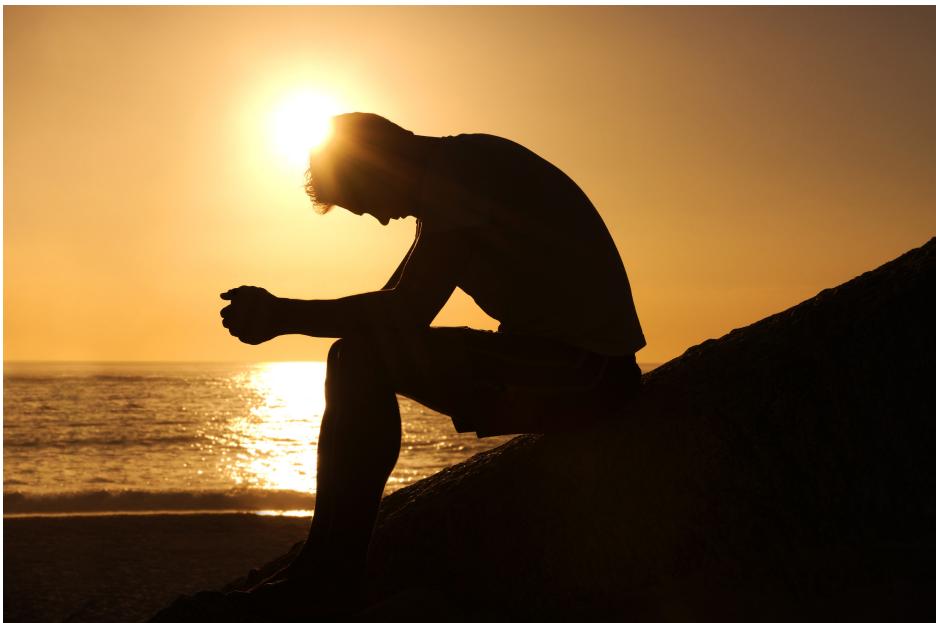
How to build relationships:

- Join a class or group that interests you.
- Ask questions of the people you don't know well to find out more about them.
- Create friendships with people you are acquainted with.
- Get in touch with people you have not spoken to or connected with in a while.

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Meaning

Many people wonder why many celebrities who live in multi-million-dollar mansions and go on monthly vacations to the Maldives and the Caribbean end up taking their own lives. What they do not understand is that there is so much more to life than just money and material possessions. Above it all, what makes a person want to live is the meaning they find in their lives.



Parents with young children understand how important they are in their children's lives and so they work hard to provide for their families. A beautiful lady, though unmarried, is happy because she takes care of her aging parents. These things are worth more than any amount of money and meaning keeps people happy and persistent.

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Meaning

Having meaning or purpose in life is different for everyone. Meaning may be pursued through a profession, a social or political cause, a creative endeavor, or a religious/spiritual belief. It may be found in a career or through extracurricular, volunteer, or community activities.

A sense of meaning is guided by personal values, and people who report having purpose in life live longer and have greater life satisfaction and fewer health problems (Kashdan et al., 2009).

Ways to build meaning:

- Get involved in a cause or organization that matters to you (Tang et al., 2022).
- Try new, creative activities to find things you connect with.
- Think about how you can use your passions to help others.
- Spend quality time with people you care about.

# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Accomplishments

Finally, the fifth PERMA model element is accomplishments. We all take pride in something we've done or accomplished. It is these accomplishments that strengthen our self-esteem and our confidence that we are worth something. When we achieve something, we feel good and want to do more and become more. It can be seen even in very young children.

For instance, a little girl learns to use the spoon and fork when eating and when she knows how proud her mother is upon learning this, the child continues to use her spoon and fork. She also seeks new things to learn that are more challenging than what she can already do, such as pouring water into her glass or putting her toys back in the cupboard. In short, these accomplishments drive individuals to achieve more and make them feel good.



# Five Elements of PERMA Model

## Accomplishments

Accomplishment includes the concepts of perseverance and having a passion to attain goals. But flourishing and wellbeing come when accomplishment is tied to striving toward things with an internal motivation or working toward something just for the sake of the pursuit and improvement (Quinn, 2018).

Achieving intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) leads to larger gains in wellbeing than external goals such as money or fame (Seligman, 2013).

Ways to build accomplishment:

- Set goals that are SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (Falecki et al., 2018).
- Reflect on past successes.
- Look for creative ways to celebrate your achievements.

# How can the PERMA Model be Used in the Workplace?

The workplace is where we spend a big part of our day, working with people who are not related to us in ways other than being colleagues. It is true that the level of happiness experienced by each worker, as well as the atmosphere of a workplace, greatly and directly affect an organization's productiveness.

Therefore, the PERMA Model is one thing that should be applied in the workplace to foster a positive work environment that will eventually result in a happy and productive workforce.

- Positive emotions can be created by simply congratulating a colleague who has achieved something at work. It can also be as simple as dropping a note of thanks with a bar of chocolate to another employee who did a favor by covering a shift.
- The workplace doesn't need to always solidly feel like a place where things need to get done. If offices now have pumping rooms for breastfeeding employees, why not put an "engagement room" in where there is a small piano, book corner, or several sketchbooks and canvases to let workers take a break and do something engaging? This way, workers can recharge and reset their 'buttons' to be more efficient.
- Belongingness is an important key to a productive workplace. However, belonging to a team or a small circle isn't the only way to do it. Conducting team building is one of the HR Department's best tools for fostering healthy relationships within the office. Relationships can be built at any time of the day by things such as inviting one or two officemates to lunch.

# How can the PCRMA Model be Used in the Workplace?

- An organization shouldn't only be productive, but it should also be meaningful to the society where it functions. In fact, a lot of companies already devote a lot more time and finances into their corporate responsibility.

Let's take as an example Walt Disney English, which is an English Learning Centre in China that is under the company's publishing sector. As it deals with kids, its Voluntears Program chooses an orphanage or school for special children as its recipient for fundraising. Employees visit the chosen school and bring Mickey Mouse dolls for every kid, apart from the monetary donation to the school.

- Accomplishments exert a bigger impact if they are acknowledged by the "higher-ups." Normally, companies hold a gala night each year where citations are given to exemplary employees. But why wait for the once-a-year event when companies can recognize their employees on a regular basis without being too extravagant?

A Kudos wall is simple, yet the impact it creates on the person whose name is up on that wall for a job well-done can be immense.

# PERMA Model Activities & Interventions

PERMA activities and interventions are applicable to individuals suffering from mental health disorders as well as those who simply want to improve levels of flourishing. The following interventions can be implemented during any point in a treatment program or as standalone activities to increase wellbeing.

## 1. Your character strengths

Find your character strengths using the [VIA Survey](#). Much of the research on PERMA uses the assessment of these 24 character strengths.

Learning your unique character strengths can help guide you into meaningful activities (engagement) and work (accomplishment).

## 2. Track and measure success

This worksheet helps clients set goals and track progress. Often, we take the first step in setting goals but do not take the time to reflect on the emotions elicited when we have achieved them.

## 3. Gratitude journal

One of the most common activities mentioned throughout research on flourishing and wellbeing is the impact of gratitude. This article about creating a [Gratitude Journal](#) provides comprehensive background information and specific details and activities to implement a gratitude journal or routine into daily life.