

## What's in this document

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**For:** iyarn research partners

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**Purpose:** In order to provide an evidence-based tool for supporting young people's wellbeing, we need a clear understanding of what factors underpin wellbeing, and what models of change would support improvements in wellbeing. This document does two things:

1. It is intended to map the existing iyarn segments (which express factors and in some cases items or components within factors), to established models in the evidence base.
2. It is intended to give an overview of how theory can inform practical interventions in a tool such as iyarn (e.g., through teacher resources, automated emails, reflection prompts, representation of data over time, etc.).

## Contents

|   |   |
|---|---|
| What's in this document.....                                    | 1 |
| Wellbeing factors, and Resilience and Wellbeing in Schools..... | 2 |
| Summary of factors.....   | 7 |

## Wellbeing factors, and Resilience and Wellbeing in Schools

There is increasing consideration in education policy at both a national and state level about how to support the wellbeing, resilience and mental health of students in Australian schools. Research on the effectiveness of these programs in schools have found both universal and targeted interventions in school settings but argued that 'Enhancing youth engagement in these programs is necessary if program adherence is to be improved' (Werner Seidler et al., 2017).

Many of these programs focus on a positive psychology approach based on work by Seligman (2002), Noble & McGrath (2012) and others. This approach, known increasingly as 'positive education', focuses on 'The empirical study of human wellbeing, strengths and resilience to negative life events and the conditions that allow individuals, groups and organisations to flourish' (Noble & McGrath, 2012).

These programs aim to build self-esteem, wellbeing and the ability to 'bounce back' from difficult experiences. The focus of these programs is primarily on developing individual skills and social and emotional competencies as well as communication skills.

Three principles underpin the definition and selection of factors/segments

1. **Conceptual:** They should be distinct (and ideally mutually exclusive), e.g., sport & exercise overlap, while 'activity' might mean physical activity, or being busy
2. **Research:** Supported by research as being important for young people (and alignment with iYarn theoretical grounding in values-based education)
3. **Practical:** How often they're currently used, with your existing secondary user base (build on what you have)

We have reviewed the existing iYarn segments and descriptions; the [NSW wellbeing framework](#)<sup>i</sup>; and two evidence-based widely used frameworks: PERMAH and 5 Ways.

| Framework | Iyarn student wellbeing   | PERMAH  | 5 ways to wellbeing   | Proposed segment / factor  |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|
| Overview  | <p>More context needed for the prompts in many segments to ensure:</p> <p>(1) each student interprets the question in the same way.</p> <p>(2) there is an understanding of normal fluctuations in mood, motivation, academic performance and sleep.</p>  | <p>The PERMAH model presents a set of building blocks which can contribute to 'flourishing' in an individual's life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P – Positive Emotions</li> <li>• E – Engagement</li> <li>• R – Relationships</li> <li>• M – Meaning</li> <li>• A – Accomplishment:</li> <li>• H – Health</li> </ul>   | <p>New Economics Foundation (NEF) commissioned by UK Government to develop a set of evidence-based mental health concepts and actions that could improve the wellbeing of the UK's whole population <sup>ii</sup>. Has been adopted in various settings including schools, workplaces and healthcare internationally, including in Australia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect</li> <li>• Be Active</li> <li>• Take Notice</li> <li>• Keep Learning</li> <li>• Give</li> </ul> <p>The framework provides an evidence-base for focusing on each pillar and a list of actions to strengthen each one.</p> | -  |
| Friends   | <p>"Are you feeling supported by your friends and being a good friend to yourself?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ different definitions of support</li> <li>○ what constitutes being a good friend to yourself?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>The PERMAH pillar 'Relationships' aligns very closely with the iYarn friends segment – however, considers relationships more broadly to include family and other relationships, as well as friendships.</p> <p>The PERMAH model emphasises that building relationships with others an "innate need" and that "satisfying, positive relationships are created when we feel supported and cared about and feel socially integrated with others".</p> | <p>'Connect'</p> <p>The Framework distinguishes between two types of social relationships which are both important to "build and maintain wellbeing".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong and deep</b> relationships (e.g., friends and family) take time to develop and provide "support, enjoyment, encouragement and meaning".</li> <li>• <b>Broad</b> relationships are more "superficial" relationships with the community and wider world, which "provide a sense of familiarity, connectedness, self-worth/position in community". <sup>iii</sup></li> </ul>                                      | <p><b>Friendship and connection.</b></p> <p><b>Relationships (PERMAH) /connect (5 ways):</b> iyarn segments: Friends, family, Social, relationships, trust, pets, community, romance, people</p> |

| Framework     | lyarn student wellbeing   | PERMAH  | 5 ways to wellbeing  | Proposed segment / factor  |
|---------------|---|---|--|--|
| Mental Health | <p>“Are you feeling good at the moment?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ could be feeling good/bad for a variety of reasons that are not necessarily indicative of a mental health concern.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Describing this segment as ‘mental health’ may cause students to downplay negative feelings due to stigma, and/or conflate not feeling ‘good’ at all times with mental illness.</li> </ul> | <p>The ‘Positive Emotions’ Pillar of the PERMAH Framework is fairly closely aligned to the prompt from iYarn’s Mental Health segment: recommending that positive emotions should be pursued and maximised for lasting wellbeing via talents, strengths and positive connections.</p> <p>However, PERMAH appears to frame positive emotions as a pursuit or product of activities and relationships rather than a baseline – therefore, it does not suggest that a student must feel positive emotions at all times in order to be mentally healthy.</p> | <p>‘Take Notice’ is the most closely related to mental health in 5 Ways – though this pillar instead focuses on practising mindfulness.</p> <p>This pillar promotes activities such as breath work, meditation and ‘walking on the slow side’.</p>   | <p><b>Self-care</b></p> <p>Positive emotion (PERMAH) take notice (5 ways): Happiness, Self Care, Energy, wellbeing, mindfulness, Mental health,</p> <p>Could also be ‘emotional wellbeing’. Self-care emphasises not only positive emotion but more on the ‘take notice’ and act side.</p> |
| School        | <p>“Are you enjoying school at the moment?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ could be enjoying/not enjoying school for various reasons e.g., bullying, one specific class or the stage of one course atm.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <p>The PERMA pillar of ‘Accomplishment’ – “making progress towards realistic goals gives us a sense of accomplishment and pride and pushing ourselves beyond our comfort zones gives us opportunities to thrive and grow”<sup>iv</sup> – may be most reflective of the iYarn segments ‘homework’, and school. There is likely to be variation in this (particularly homework) across age groups..</p>   | <p>‘Give’</p> <p>Though only vaguely related, the 5 Ways pillar of ‘Give’ could inform a re-focusing of the concept of school onto community and reciprocity. This pillar focuses on the positive impact that ‘giving’ can have on personal wellbeing including active listening and gratitude, in addition to more traditional modes of giving back such as volunteering.<sup>v</sup></p> | <p><b>Learning and school</b></p> <p>Accomplishment (PERMAH) and keep learning (5 ways): School, learning, homework, work, organisation, job,</p>  |
| Homework      | <p>“Are you managing your homework and not feeling like you are getting behind?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factual – though does not discern the why behind the answer.</li> </ul>   |   |  |  |

| Framework | Iyarn student wellbeing  | PERMAH  | 5 ways to wellbeing  | Proposed segment / factor   |
|-----------|--|---|--|---|
| Learning  | <p>“Do you feel like you are learning new skills and growing as a person?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning new skills and growing as a person not necessarily synonymous</li> </ul>  | <p>PERMA may re-envisage ‘learning’ to align with their pillar Engagement (or ‘flow’): the “blissful immersion... in an activity or pastime that you are passionate about or have talent in”.<sup>vi</sup></p> <p>In light of PERMA, the iYarn prompt may be re-phrased to focus on the student’s level of engagement (passion) with the activity e.g., “Do you feel like you are participating in activities that you enjoy and are passionate about?”</p> <p>Is there a danger of this enabling fixation on video games/tv at this age?</p> | <p>‘Keep Learning’</p> <p>The Five Ways Framework has a similar approach to the concept of learning as the iYarn wheel: it recommends that individuals should make a habit of learning new skills and exposing themselves to new thoughts in order to in order to “gain insight into life, ourselves and the world around us”.<sup>vii</sup> Though it is implied, there does not appear to be explicit reference to growing as a person – instead 5 Ways focuses on impacts to personal health and wellbeing.</p> | <p><b>Growth, challenge, and your passions</b></p> <p>Accomplishment/Engagement (PERMAH) and keep learning (5 ways): Hobbies, Activity, growth, personal development, challenge, comfort zone</p>           |
| Activity  | <p>“Are you being active daily, walking, exercising or playing sports?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factual – however, no metric placed on what ‘active’ means (e.g., walking could be construed as walking to school)</li> </ul> <p>Though is it trying to be inclusive of students with disability?</p> | <p>The PERMAH pillar ‘Health’ incorporates exercise alongside nutrition, sleep and other healthy lifestyle factors.</p> <p>It may be worth adding a separate segment on nutrition to iYarn’s standard student wellbeing wheel.</p>  | <p>‘Active’</p> <p>The Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework emphasises that whilst physical activity is good for physical and emotional health, it should also be enjoyable. It recommends starting simple and focusing on an activity that you enjoy in order to integrate it into your routine.<sup>viii</sup></p>   |   |
| Sleep     | <p>“Are you getting at least 7-9 hours of restful sleep at the moment?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definition required of ‘restful’ sleep?</li> </ul>  | <p>As stated above, the PERMA pillar ‘Health’ incorporates sleep alongside nutrition, and exercise among other healthy lifestyle factors.</p> <p>Consideration to these lifestyle factors may impact sleep, and overall health. However, considering the importance of sleep for learning<sup>ix</sup> and emotional wellbeing<sup>x</sup>, particularly among adolescents, I believe it makes sense to keep Sleep as a separate segment whilst adding a separate segment on nutrition.</p>   |  | <p><b>Healthy body.</b></p> <p>Intersects with ‘be active’ (5 ways) and ‘health’ (PERMAH), and the iyarn segments: Sleep, exercise, Health, Sport, Nutrition, gym, healthy body, digital diet/tech use.</p> |

| Framework                   | Iyarn student wellbeing                            | PERMAH   | 5 ways to wellbeing | Proposed segment / factor  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------------|--|
| No equivalent IYarn section | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul> | <p>'Health' – as stated above, no segment considering nutrition.</p> <p>'Meaning', under the PERMAH framework, refers to the belief that life has purpose or value, can refer to "feeling connected to something bigger than ourselves" (e.g., faith, humanitarian) and that "engaging in activities that help you feel valuable and that are beyond the simple pursuit of pleasure or material wealth is critical to living a fulfilling and happy life". However, this may not be as relevant to the years 7 to 9 age group due to a relative lack of control over their daily life.</p> |                     | <p><b>Giving back and community</b></p> <p>Meaning (PERMAH) and give (5 ways): Spirituality, gratitude, love, giving back, contribution, teamwork, help,</p> |

## Summary of factors

Based on the PERMAH and 5 ways summary, we propose a wheel as below. There are two things to consider

1. It is best to avoid 'double barrel' prompts (i.e., "and"), because these can be confusing and result in lack of clarity over which prompt is being probed
2. However, prompts should also be descriptive and 'stand alone'. Thus, e.g. "take notice" may not be transparent without further descriptors.

We should also consider how proposed factors align with the specific issues students & schools highlight, and if that alignment happens at the segment level, or if there might be ways to e.g. specifically target "friendship" or "family" over one period, while keeping within 'connection' for both.

|  | Recommendation                                    | lyarn segments covered (*= in top 8, +=in student wellbeing wheel)   | PERMAH           | 5 ways        |                         |
|--|---|--|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Healthy body / be active</b>                   | Sleep*+, exercise*<br>Health, Sport, Nutrition, gym, <b>healthy body, tech use/digital diet</b>  | Health           | Be active     | Healthy body            |
|  | <b>Friendship and connection</b>                  | Friends*+, family*,<br>Social, relationships, trust, pets, community, romance, people, mentors, coaches, team participation, social support. | Relationships    | Connect       | Social emotional health |
|  | <b>Self-care, awareness, and positive emotion</b> | Mental health*+, Happiness*,<br>Self Care, Energy, wellbeing, mindfulness,   | Positive emotion | Take notice   | Self care               |
|  | <b>Learning and school</b>                        | School*+, learning*+, homework+, work, organisation, job,  | Accomplishment   | Keep learning | School learning         |
|  | <b>Growth, challenge and passion</b>              | Activity+,<br>Hobbies, growth, personal development, challenge, comfort zone   | Engagement       | Keep learning | Personal development    |
|  | <b>Giving back and community</b>                  | Spirituality, gratitude, love, giving back, contribution, teamwork, help, Savings, holidays,   | Meaning          | Give          | Community               |

**NOTE:** Lockie indicated many schools are interested in 'school' as a distinct thing, as in 'how students feel about school', independent of their attitudes towards learning or personal development.

- <sup>i</sup> Briefly, incorporates: emotional wellbeing, cognitive wellbeing (success and achievement, motivation, persistence), social wellbeing (relationships and sense of belonging), physical wellbeing (health), spiritual wellbeing (meaning and purpose). This broadly aligns with (in order) P, A + E (split), R, H, M, in the PERMAH model. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/wellbeing-framework-for-schools>
- <sup>ii</sup> Paula Robinson, *Practising Positive Education: A Guide to Improve Wellbeing Literacy in Schools ; Research, Models and Activities to Assist Educators, Practitioners and Families*, 2nd ed. (Positive Psychology Institute Pty Ltd, 2018), 79.
- <sup>iii</sup> Royal Melbourne Hospital, 'Connect', *5 Ways to Wellbeing*, n.d., <https://5waystowellbeing.org.au/5-ways/connect/>.
- <sup>iv</sup> Robinson Ph.D, *Practising Positive Education: A Guide to Improve Wellbeing Literacy in Schools*, 77.
- <sup>v</sup> ReachOut, 'Give', *Understanding Wellbeing*, n.d., <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/give>.
- <sup>vi</sup> Robinson, *Practising Positive Education*, 77.
- <sup>vii</sup> ReachOut, 'Keep Learning', *Understanding Wellbeing*, n.d., <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/keep-learning>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Royal Melbourne Hospital, 'Active', *5 Ways to Wellbeing*, n.d., 5 Ways to Wellbeing, Active, <https://5waystowellbeing.org.au/5-ways/be-active/>.
- <sup>ix</sup> R Sharman and G Illingworth, 'Adolescent Sleep and School Performance – the Problem of Sleepy Teenagers', *Current Opinion in Physiology* 15 (2020): 23–28.
- <sup>x</sup> S Lin et al., 'Positive and Negative Emotions: Differential Associations with Sleep Duration and Quality in Adolescents', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 47, no. 12 (2018): 2584–95.