



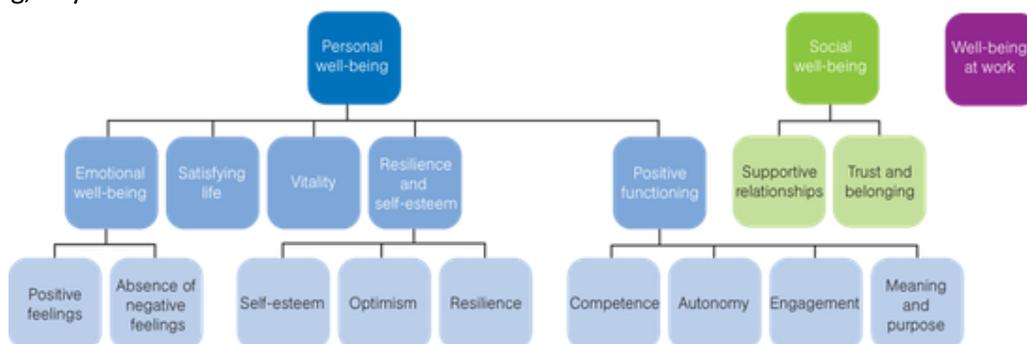
FACT SHEET

What is well-being?

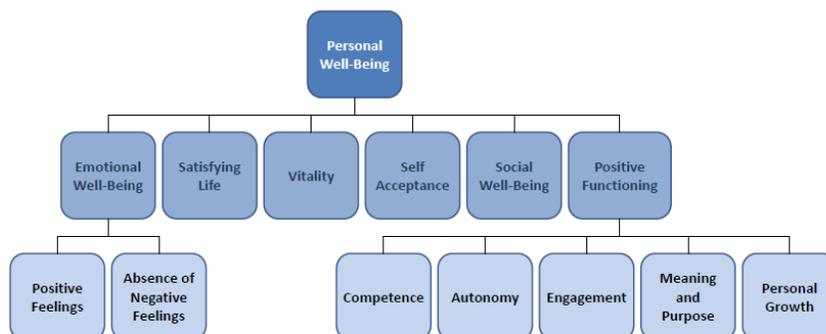
When we talk about personal or subjective well-being, what do we mean?

Generally, the word well-being refers to one’s overall sense of how well life is going. This means that well-being isn’t a single entity – many different experiences and factors contribute to quality of life and welfare. Well-being encompasses more than just feeling happy or having financial security, but includes experiencing positive and negative emotions, believing oneself to be competent and capable and having supportive social interactions and high self-esteem, to name just a few. Each of these factors, alone and through interactions with the others, contributes to a person’s overall sense of personal well-being.

In fields such as psychology and health research the study of well-being is increasingly gaining in momentum as more researchers discover ways to help people maintain high well-being, life satisfaction and quality of life throughout the lifespan. However, not all research studies define the concept of well-being in the same way. Though often similar, the specific definition of well-being varies with the study’s purpose and areas of interest. For example, the National Accounts of Well-Being, an initiative launched by an independent British think-tank, divides it into the general categories of personal, social and work well-being, as you can see below.



The work done in the Laboratory for Integrative Lifespan Research (iLife) at UVic uses a similar model which includes social well-being as one part of six under overall personal well-being:



Yet another way of conceptualizing well-being is at community level, instead of focusing on the individual. This is the approach taken by the Canadian Index of Well-Being, which considers well-being as made up of eight domains such as democratic participation, education and standards of living.

Wellbeing is the presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression, focused on but not necessarily exclusive to

GOOD LIVING STANDARDS
a sustainable environment
HIGH LEVELS OF
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION
access to participation in leisure and culture
ROBUST HEALTH
an educated populace
Balanced Time Use
VITAL COMMUNITIES

Finally, it's important to remember that well-being is not static; it's dynamic and changes over both long (years) and shorter (days and weeks) periods of time. Not surprisingly, major life events such as births, deaths, marriages and career transitions, have a substantial effect, such that one's sense of well-being at the age of 20 may be very different from well-being at the age of 50. But can relatively minor daily events, such as the people one spent time with, amount of time spent exercising and stressful experiences, also impact well-being and quality of life?

The answer is yes! Recently, new research, including that done in the iLife lab at UVic, has discovered that ordinary daily events play a major role in the fluctuations of well-being from one day to the next. Understanding which types of behaviours have negative effects on well-being and which, like coping positively with stress and engaging in physical activity, tend to improve it, helps researchers, health care professionals and individuals take steps to maximize well-being wherever they can.

To learn more about well-being and what it means, visit some of the sources below.

- Canadian Index of Well-Being. <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/>
- Laboratory for Integrative Lifespan Research. <https://www.ilifespan.org/?q=research/well-being>
- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5, 1-31.

- National Accounts of Well-Being. <http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/>